Communication and the Culture of Peace in Africa

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Abstract

This paper examines the nature and consequences of armed conflicts in Africa, and the responsibility of communication scholars and practitioners in building the culture and infrastructure of peace in the continent. It argues that they have taken sides on matters concerning ethnic and religious differences, reporting "episodes rather than the entire process of a conflict," and seriously eroding professional ethics with their "new concept of embedded journalism and instant reporting of warfare." The paper calls on media practitioners to concentrate on investigating trends, processes, and fundamental factors connected with conflict situations and focus on how to resolve them.

Résumé

Cette contribution étudie la nature et les conséquences des conflits armés en Afrique, ainsi que la responsabilité des universitaires et des experts en communication dans la construction d'une culture et d'une infrastructure de paix au niveau du continent. Cette présentation soutient que ces derniers ont manifesté un comportement partial, à propos de questions liées aux différences ethniques et religieuses, en relatant les « épisodes plutôt que tout le processus d'un conflit », mais également en malmenant l'éthique professionnelle avec leur « nouveau concept de journalisme intégré et de reportage instantané sur les guerres ». Cette contribution lance un appel aux praticiens des medias, pour que ceux-ci dirigent leur attention vers les tendances et processus en matière d'enquête, vers les facteurs fondamentaux liés aux situations de conflit, et qu'ils s'intéressent aux moyens de résolution de celles-ci.

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Introduction

No nation or continent is ever truly free from conflict. Similarly, no epoch in human history can be said to be totally free of conflicts. Every continent and every epoch has had a period of stability as well as instability. Whether in Europe, Asia, America or Africa, there have been wars and conflicts between and among communities, peoples and empires. In Africa, for example, there have been the rise and fall of the Songhai, Mali, Borno and other empires; wars instigated and assisted by foreigners which led to the trans-Atlantic slave trade; the colonial wars, the liberation struggles; disputes over boundaries inherited from the colonialists; inter-ethnic and communal upheavals within many countries and so many other forms of conflict.

The questions that arise are, among others:

1) Does Africa have the political will to install and maintain a culture of peace?
2) Does Africa have the sophistication to manage the complex conflict situations in the continent?
3) Can Africa overcome the problems caused by colonial legacy?

While one should leave it to this conference to produce answers to these and other questions, it is pertinent to mention that, through the OAU and the AU, Africa has been endeavoring to resolve its many conflicts and has set up conflict management machinery, using some of its elder statesmen. In recent times, Nigeria's former Head of State, Gen Abdusalami Abubakar, President Nelson Mandela of South Africa and President Quett Masire of Botswana have undertaken conflict resolution missions in Liberia, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo respectively.

At any point, conflicts of various types are taking place in at least one-third of the countries of Africa. Their consequences are well-known to us: deaths of thousands or millions of men, women and children – most of them innocent; maiming and traumatization of even greater numbers of people; destruction of property; displacement and forced migration of millions leading to their becoming refugees; disruption of agriculture and other economic activities; retardation of economic development; environmental degradation; rape; epidemics; child soldiers; a culture of violence; and social/political instability.

Why are there so many conflicts and wars in Africa in view of the obvious devastating consequences? Some of the immediate and remote causes are: inequity, poverty, repression, discontent, greedy and corrupt leadership, undemocratic regimes, contested leadership, and failure of

conflict management efforts. This situation must change. What is currently needed in Africa is a culture of peace which recognizes that, unless Africa manages its conflicts wisely, it will perpetually remain far behind other continents. We know that Africa cannot develop without peace. We also know that peace, justice, equity and development are all intertwined and can only be achieved through the deliberate efforts of men and women. As UNESCO observed in its constitution: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace must be constructed."

The year 2000 was observed as the 'International Year for the Culture of Peace' and the period 2001–2010 has been declared 'The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence'. The search for peace must be a continuous and permanent mission of all, and UNESCO has provided a road map for it by identifying its basic elements. According to it, "the culture of peace is based on the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations and on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral approach to preventing violence and conflicts, and efforts aimed at the creation of conditions for peace and its consolidation." (A/Res/52/13, January 1998).

Communication and conflicts

Since wars and the solution to them begin in the minds of men and women, the use of communication between and among people can be a means of moving the world towards a culture of peace. It is clear that many of the conflicts and wars in Africa, as in other parts of the world, can be traced to ignorance, prejudice, misunderstanding and misinformation. These are issues which are directly linked to communication or lack of it. The connection between conflict resolution and communication has been buttressed by UNESCO which has identified "the free flow of information" as a key element of the desired culture of peace.

The media, in particular, plays a vital role, for good or bad, in all conflict situations. In the way it reports, analyzes and editorializes on social, economic, political and other conflict situations between individuals, groups and countries, the media sets the agenda for war or peace. In many of the conflicts in Africa, the media, in particular, the radio, has been used to fan the flames of war. One can remember the use of the radio for propaganda during the Nigerian civil war in the late 60s and the recent genocidal war in Rwanda. The media has been known to take sides in conflict situations;

it has given voice to belligerents; it has tended to concentrate on sensational incidents; it has reported episodes rather than the entire process of a conflict; television has glamorized warfare; and with the new concept of "embedded journalism" and instant reporting of warfare, professional ethics are being seriously eroded. All these can contribute to the worsening of conflict situations.

On the other hand, the media can be a catalyst for peace and help to build a culture of peace by providing full, fair and balanced reporting of conflict situations; by drawing attention to potential threats to the peace; by promoting dialogue and negotiation; by de-glamorizing warfare; by refraining from sensationalism; and by educating leaders and their followers on the consequences of war. The media in Africa, in particular, should make it one of its missions to promote the development of a culture of peace on the continent. It can help to develop an infrastructure of peace by promoting the emergence of a leadership that is committed to equity, justice, accountability, transparency, democracy and sustainable development. It should also use its immense power and influence to encourage the people to imbibe the ideals of tolerance, compassion, empathy, and love of country, self and one's neighbors; preach the message of 'faith, hope and charity'; and to promote gender equality and equity and education for all.

It must be admitted that for the media to be able to perform any meaningful role in the building of a culture of peace, African governments must recognize and support the important role of the media in the promotion of such a culture. They must ensure freedom of the press and freedom of information and communication. They must endeavor to make effective use of the media for advocacy and dissemination of information on a culture of peace; and they must promote mass communication that enables communities to express their needs and participate in decision-making. A culture of peace can only thrive in a democratic environment. Fortunately, the African continent as a whole has decided to follow the path of democracy. African countries must, therefore, set in motion a full range of actions to promote democratic principles and practices. They must also place special emphasis on democratic principles and practices at all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education. In addition, they must establish national institutions and processes that promote and sustain democracy and strengthen democratic participation through the conduct of fair and free elections.

The media and conflict management in Nigeria

Issues of ethnic and social differences and their management underlie some of the major challenges of nation-building and governance in African countries generally and in Nigeria, in particular. We have had ethnic, communal and religious tensions and conflicts from time to time, as our people try to assert themselves, exercise or protect their rights and test the limits of the new democratic dispensation.

Coping with this situation has also presented the media with some of their major challenges in recent times. In trying to reflect the tensions as well as the positive developments of their country in the past decade, the media in Nigeria have been perceived as either part of the problem or part of the solution. Sometimes, some sections of the media have appeared to be fanning the flames of ethnic, religious or other forms of social tension and contributing to conflict. At other times, the media have been commended for helping to douse the fires. Media self-perception seems to hover between these two poles, but usually tends towards the position of the 'principled and innocent', objective and independent bystander, or responsible 'participant observer' anxious to provide solutions.

Whatever the perceptions, the reality is that ethnicity and religious differences are important ingredients of the daily life in this country, and inescapable in any attempt to understand the transformation which the Nigerian society is undergoing. The media cannot avoid reporting them. In fact, it has a duty to do so. It also has an important part to play in creating a culture of peace and an enabling environment for peaceful resolution of conflicts in this country.

There is an obvious need for media practitioners to examine themselves on how they have performed in the past, and how they will deal with matters concerning ethnic and religious relations in the future. They need to know what is required to enhance media understanding of underlying issues so as to sharpen their reporting and make their editorializing more meaningful in future. The media need to search their hearts and ask themselves if they can afford to be 'neutral' or pretend to be unconcerned on such issues; whether it is enough for them to merely report the events and forget about them when the tension subsides; whether they have a responsibility to seek solutions to these problems; and how they can do so and remain credible. Obviously, this is a matter which will be thoroughly dealt with at another workshop or a conference bringing together the Nigerian media and other stakeholders.

Challenge to African communicators and scholars

The Nigerian situation is not very different from what obtains in other African countries. I would therefore like to challenge all the communicators and scholars at this conference to ask themselves the following questions: Do we glamorize violence and engage in sensational reporting of conflicts? Do we take sides in our reporting and editorializing? Do we close our eyes to corruption in high and low places? Do we glorify iniquity and irresponsibility? If we do all these, then we are not yet ready to participate in the building of a culture of peace. Africa needs honest, courageous, competent and committed communication practitioners and scholars to lead the struggle for the establishment of a culture of peace in our countries. In the effort to build this culture, both the message and the messenger should be considered as playing pivotal roles. They must promote understanding and consideration for the view of others.

African communicators must push for a shift from military solutions to dialogue and peace-building. They must de-emphasize the sensational, spectacular and violent passing events and investigate and study the trends, processes and the fundamental factors connected with conflict situations. They must strive to improve their knowledge and understanding of the underlying and related issues and enhance their professional skills in order to be able to cope effectively with the challenging task of playing the very important role that is theirs by right in the efforts to build a culture of peace in Africa.

Communication and Conflict:
A Commentary on the Role of the Media

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Abstract
In this commentary, the author argues that conflict is irresistible to the mass media. The editorial content of both print and electronic media, she says, demonstrate this strong appetite. However, while media practitioners have a duty to report conflict situations as they see them, the author insists that they also have a responsibility to enhance the opportunities for peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Résumé
Dans cette présentation, l'auteur soutient que les conflits présentent un attrait irrésistible pour les mass media. Selon elle, le contenu rédactionnel de la presse écrite et électronique est la parfaite illustration de ce grand appétit. Mais même si les praticiens du monde des médias ont le devoir de restituer les situations de conflit tel qu'elles se présentent, l'auteur insiste sur le fait qu'ils doivent également améliorer les chances de résolution pacifique de ces conflits.

Introduction
Quite often, whenever the word 'conflict' is mentioned, our minds dwell on 'hot' wars or armed conflict and images of physical destruction of life and property flash through our minds' eyes. This narrow conceptualization of conflict has the tendency to make us lose sight of the other types of conflict that strain human relationships at local, national and international levels. One such type of conflict takes place daily in the field of politics, particularly in a democracy where people have the right to voice contending and conflicting opinions, some of which create sharp divisions among people.

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As defined by BBC *English Dictionary*, a conflict is a "disagreement and argument". The same dictionary also defines conflict as a "war or battle". Writing about the two different definitions of conflict, Thomas and Lee (1996:2) refer to conflict as:

> clashes over economic and political principles that are debated and fought over in the corridors of power in local, national and international arenas, and the real bloody battles in the cause of God and country, nation and ethnic group in the killing fields.

In whatever way the term is defined, conflict is of intense interest to mass media practitioners who must report events from conflict situations. Thus in a conflict-ridden world, conflicting reporting is a very important aspect of journalism practice. Thomas and Lee (1996) are right in their observation that "conflict is the bread and butter of journalism." This is to be expected, because conflict sells. Take up any newspaper, listen to any news broadcast, watch any documentary on television and one is confronted by stories of conflict.

This view of the ubiquity of conflict in the media is echoed in Tehranian's (1996:3) statement that "Conflict attracts the media as powerfully as flies gather around sweets." In explaining this media interest in conflict, Tehranian refers to the age-old journalistic dictum that the news media concentrate particularly on bad news. Such human and natural disasters as wars, terrorism, and earthquakes are undoubtedly vintage bad news!

Role of media in conflict

Any meaningful discussion of the role of the media in conflict therefore should look at a number of issues and/or questions. Consider the following questions, for instance, as raised by Thomas and Lee (1996:2):

1. How should those responsible for public communication and education respond to potential and actual conflict?

2. What role should journalists play in covering conflicts?

3. Should such professionals merely report, comment on and interpret it, or should they be actors in the resolution – or, more importantly, the prevention of conflict?

4. In a mass-mediated world, what are the moral and social responsibilities of journalists involved in reporting conflict situations?

The role of the media in conflict could be distilled from these and similar questions. This role should revolve around clearly defined responsibilities, which require the media to do the following eight tasks:

Provide truthful information
Truth is arguably the most fundamental of the universal ethical values in journalism. As Traber and Davies (1991:7) point out in their discussion of the ethics of war reporting, journalists have a commitment to telling the truth. Generally, in their coverage of conflict, the media should be guided by the fundamental principle of truth-telling and be perceived as armor against the avalanche of propaganda and disinformation usually churned out by opponents in a conflict. In this type of situation, the exhortation to journalists is: "Ignore the propaganda of either side and tell the truth. You are not a partisan for either" (Siddiqui 2002:5). Sadly, this exhortation is not always heeded, and truth is often the first casualty in conflict. In this context, communication scholars and practitioners must seriously engage the following question: What causes the media to abandon the cherished ethical value of truthfulness when they cover conflicts? How can this abandonment be prevented?

Avoid sensationalism
In journalism, 'sensationalism' is a word used to show disapproval for a newspaper/magazine report or television/radio broadcast that presents facts in a way that is intended to produce strong feelings of shock, anger or excitement, by making a situation more shocking or worse than it really is. Conflicts, particularly armed conflicts, are situations that ordinarily produce shock, anger and excitement. We can all, therefore, appreciate the havoc that could be caused by sensationalist reporting of conflicts. Here, communication scholars and practitioners must engage the following question:

What factors cause the sensationalization of issues in conflict situations? How can the media guard against this deplorable conduct?

Sensitize people by providing full information
The public's right to be informed should include their being provided with relevant details about the horrors of conflict. There is merit in the argument that if the media provide such details, they will help to sensitize people to the intensity of the conflict and this could play a positive role in the search for peace. Making this point in the context of media coverage of ethnic conflict in Nigeria, Iyare and Ojielo (2001:40) say: "… you have to be able to understand that you give people enough so that they

can understand the intensity of that report or what is happening. … If 500 people were killed in Kaduna in an ethnic crisis and then you come and say it's only 50, or only 10, what you have done is to perhaps underplay that crisis and to also underplay the intensity of the ethnic crisis confronting us because we have refused to address our mind in all these issues in the past and that is why the thing has heightened."

Presenting the same argument from a general perspective, Thomas and Lee (1996) point out that the media's "role is one of telling the stories of the victims of war so that ordinary citizens are sensitized to its horrors." Nevertheless, providing full information, in terms of giving details of the horrors of conflict, should be handled with caution and a sense of decorum. How best the media can do this must forms part of the discourse among communication scholars and practitioners.

Observe balance/fairness in coverage
Another journalistic value that should condition the role of the media in conflict is balance or fairness. In this regard, journalists are urged to report conflict fairly, without bias and offer balanced coverage of all sides of the conflict. The guidelines which Dunsky (2002:9) prescribes for fair media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian war are relevant to the role that the media should play in conflict in general: "Consider both sides of the story as equally valid and give them balanced representation and voice, not only in direct quotations but also in characterization and analysis." Here again, communication scholars and practitioners must address the following question: What forces compel the media to sacrifice balance or fairness on the altar of bias in the coverage of conflict?

Have a full understanding of the context of the conflict
It is necessary for the media to fully understand the context of the conflict being reported. To effectively cover any conflict, journalists should be knowledgeable about the historical, political and other aspects of the context of the conflict, so they can explain to the audience the basic reasons why both sides are engaging in the conflict. Conflict reporters will do well to keep in close contact with the environment of the conflict, learning as much as possible about the people and their environment. Journalists who plunge into coverage of a conflict in ignorance of the context of the conflict, are described as "parachute journalists" (Thomas and Lee 2003:2). For such journalists, their brief and aloof appearance in the location of the conflict does not provide them with enough background knowledge

of the conflict or of the local culture and cultural practices – knowledge that is necessary for proper contextualization and interpretation of events.

Overall, conflict reporters are urged to always "be aware of relevant context – be it historical or recent – and include it even briefly via a parenthetical phrase or a few paragraphs" (Dunsky 2003:9).

De-emphasize the profit motive

As a business enterprise the media must make money, and conflict is one good way of doing this because conflict sells. Nevertheless, the profit motive should not be allowed to upstage ethical considerations in conflict reporting. In the bid to garner the huge audiences to be delivered to advertisers, many journalists often resort to unethical practices. The media should guard against the tendency to 'commercialize' conflict for their own financial gain.

Play the role of peacemaker

The media should not merely report, comment on or interpret conflict; they should also play a role in enhancing the process of conflict resolution. Ekwo (2001:6) voices this view when he advises that "we must be conscious of evolving a conflict-resolving media." After presenting a catalogue of conflicts of different dimensions in virtually every part of Nigeria in the first year of the Obasanjo presidency, Ekwo makes the point about the need for the media to also play the role of peacemaker:

> It is true that media practitioners may not have handled the coverage of these crises in the best manner. Editors and reporters owe this young civilian government a duty to save it from possible collapse. It is part of our duty to achieve systemic balance in society.

How best can the media balance their responsibility to report conflict with the need to contribute positively to the resolution of such conflict? To begin with, journalists who are assigned to cover conflict should be people who are genuinely committed to peace, both in the context of the particular conflict they are assigned to cover, and in the context of conflicts generally.

Conclusion

Conflict reporting is a fairly specialized activity and should never be seen as an all comers field. Consequently, media practitioners who cover conflict should be properly prepared for the job. After basic journalistic education in a school of journalism, conflict reporters should undergo additional training – either within an institution or through workshops, seminar or

similar activities. The training of conflict reporters should provide them with a style sheet of conflict reporting; it should also make them knowledgeable about the theory and practice of conflict resolution. In addition, the curriculum for such training should include instruction on propaganda, disinformation and mind management techniques typically employed by either side of the conflict episode. Through such specialized training, media practitioners are better prepared to more fully appreciate their unique role in the maintenance of stability, at the same time as they perform their role of reporting the truth.

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The Media Struggles in Zambia: The Need for a Unified Policy on Press Freedom

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Abstract

This paper traces the evolution of the struggles for press freedom in Zambia since the country's independence. While progress has been made in various fronts, the paper notes that sustaining the gains of the struggles requires continuing pressure on the government from the citizenry and on the political will of government.

Résumé

Cette présentation retrace l'évolution des luttes pour la liberté de la presse en Zambie depuis l'indépendance de ce pays. Même si des progrès ont été réalisés sur divers plans, cette contribution soutient que pour conserver les acquis de ces luttes, il faut que l'ensemble des citoyens maintienne la pression sur le gouvernement et sur sa volonté politique.

Introduction

The Zambia people have always known how they have wanted the media in the country to operate – freely and independent of political interference. Unfortunately, this has been at variance with those in power. As a result, the country has never had a media policy that takes into account the interests of all stakeholders.

In Zambia, like in many other developing countries, the media has functioned as a tool of the ruling class to help it mobilise people allegedly for the economic and social development of the country, but in reality, to promote the interests of the ruling class. This has mainly been due to the Government ownership and control of the major means of communication in the country, which include two national daily newspapers (the *Times*

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of Zambia and its sister *Sunday Times;* and the *Zambia Daily Mail* and its sister *Sunday Mail*; and the main national radio and television broadcaster, the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation.

In addition to the above, a historical perspective of the media in Zambia, even before independence in 1964, shows that the press in the country has been one of either building-up or destroying politicians. For example, early publishers such as Moore, Scott and Welensky, all effectively used their newspapers as stepping-stones to political power. And during the African Freedom Struggle, the African press greatly helped African nationalist leaders to unseat the white colonialists from power. These newspapers were the only mass media available to the African nationalists for the mobilisation of their people for the struggle.

After Zambia became a Republic on 24 October 1964, the new African Government simply continued to see and use the mass media as tools for the mobilisation of the people to achieve whatever goals it thought were good for the country. At another level, the history of the Zambian press, especially after independence from British colonial rule, also reveals that the media had been shaped and moulded to pander to the whims of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and its Government under President Kenneth Kaunda. UNIP was in power from independence until the end of October 1991, when Fredrick Chiluba's Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD), won the first multi-party elections after 17 years of single party rule.

The blame for the state of the country's media should fall on the shoulders of Zambia's first President, Kaunda, and his Party and Government leaders who turned the country to the socialist principles of the former Soviet Union and the other Eastern Bloc countries whose economic and political organisation they tried to emulate. Political pluralism and an independent press were shunned and regarded as luxuries, which a country, whose priority was first and foremost, social and economic development, could not afford to enjoy. All institutions in the country were therefore subordinate to the state, especially to UNIP and its Government.

Press freedom under single-party rule
In 1975, just two years into single-party rule, President Kaunda defined the role that the media was supposed to play in the country's social and economic development. It (the media), was expected to promote 'human morals' in line with Zambia's 'Philosophy of Humanism,' and also to promote 'cultural values.'

The President, in his speech to the UNIP National Council, set forth conditions for the operation of the media, which were until the end of UNIP rule in 1991, still largely applied:

> *Times of Zambia* reflects official Party and Government thinking.
>
> The *Sunday Times of Zambia* must carry analysis in depth on the Party and Government and the nation in general.
>
> Zambia News Agency (ZANA) must collect news about the whole nation.
>
> Television Zambia (TVZ) must, apart from disseminating information, express in depth the various cultural aspects of this nation, apart from entertainment. [TVZ has now been renamed The Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC)].
>
> Radio is to continue disseminating information, providing entertainment and education in all its important aspects. (Kaunda, The Watershed Speech, as reproduced by Moore, 1991, p. 68).

While there remained no unified media policy in the country, journalists, in the view of President Kaunda:

> …were expected to be committed to the philosophy of the country's revolution. They were regarded as its vanguard. They were required to always remember that their task was to promote the interests of the revolutionary and struggling masses of Zambia and those of the rest of the world. [Kaunda, as paraphrased by Moore (1991: 68–69)].

The result of all these measures, as Moore (1991) observed, was that the practice of journalism gradually degenerated into uncritical coverage of politicians and political statements. There was (and still is) little investigative reporting done in the country.

Under Kaunda and UNIP, all political and economic life was centrally planned and the culture of speaking with one voice was institutionalised. This culture called for only one official press to 'parrot' the utterances of the President and other officials in his Party and the Government. This situation has changed very little under the MMD Government, which is in its 12th year in power.

The Government has always been cognizant of Article 20 of the Constitution of Zambia which protects an individual's right to expression and is very explicit about the individual's right not only to impart his or her ideas to others, but also the right to receive ideas. So in theory at least, the press in Zambia has always had the freedom to publish what it wants although

throughout its history, especially after attaining independence, state offi-
cials have dictated, and in the majority of cases, have succeeded in telling
the newsmen and women what they should and should not publish. This
was the case because the country had no official unified policy on press
freedom until the end of the 1990s, though even with this, little has changed.

In 1980, the State did try to pass legislation to formally regulate the
press through the abortive Press Council Bill, which would have completely
muzzled the country's media.

Since independence, Zambia has publicly claimed the existence of a
free press. But the reality of the situation is that

> the media are owned by the Government, to serve the Government. There
> are no guarantees of press freedom in the Constitution and, generally,
> individual provisions of freedom of expression do not seem to apply to the
> press (Moore 1991:xxvi).

Moore (1991) has correctly argued that Zambia (before 1991), was a one
party state, and the party, so to speak, "owned" the Government and
therefore, the press. UNIP had elevated itself to a supreme position above
elected Members of Parliament, and above the elected or appointed
Government, hence the phrases, "The Party and its Government" and
"the Party is supreme" to describe the governing structure of the country.
The UNIP General Conference was the highest authority of both the Party
and the Government. The Party's Central Committee issued all instructions
to be carried out by Government ministries.

In such an environment, media practitioners have had to 'toe the line'
on purely political issues or governmental concerns, or they have risked
facing the wrath of those in power.

While this Constitution which dates from early 1973 includes guarantees
of fundamental rights, the 2nd Republican Constitution also created new
political and governmental arrangements which impacted negatively on
operations of the media. To start with, it recognised UNIP as the only
political party and made provisions to ensure that no other political party
could be legally constituted or supported, and no one in the country could
lawfully express an opinion in support of any alternative political organisation
or claim a Constitutional right to do so. These restrictions extended to the
press covering any person involved or engaged in any way in such 'illegal'
activity.

As already noted, this Constitution did embody a "Bill of Rights" from
Article 13 to 19, and the Judiciary could hold laws and administrative acts
invalid if they violated the provisions in the Bill of Rights. These provi-

sions included the right to life, liberty, privacy and a fair trial. Article 21 protected freedom of conscience and belief; Article 22 protected freedom of expression, and Article 23 protected freedom of assembly and association. But all of these provisions, were, however, (until the birth of the 3rd Republic in 1991 when Article 4 was repealed), subject to Article 4 and its provisions concerning the sole political party in the country.

In addition to these restrictions, Article 53 of the Penal Code of Zambia, empowers the President at his absolute discretion to prohibit publications which, in his opinion, 'are contrary to the public interest.' This law is still in existence today.

A prohibition order can apply to any periodical, publication or newspaper foreign or local, and may extend to all publications published by a specified person or association of persons whether published before the date of the order or after.

The Presidential powers to ban publications are supported by penal sanctions provided in Section 54 of the Code which makes it an offence to import, publish, sell, offer for sale, distribute or reproduce in whole or in part, any prohibited publication. The penalty for this offence is imprisonment for two years, or a fine upon conviction. The prohibited publication also has to be forfeited to the President on behalf of the Government.

But after experiencing earthquake-like changes to its political, social and economic structures after June 1991, similar to those experienced in Eastern Europe, Zambia reverted back to political pluralism abandoned at the end of 1972, and also embarked on a market-driven economy.

However, the amendment to Article 17 of the Constitution which allowed the reversion to political pluralism, and the relaxing of some political restrictions had not until the year 2003, by and large, extended to the press. Although members of the press and their organisations have always resisted the control exerted on them by both Party and Government officials, the officials, both UNIP and MMD, have come out on top, more so in the first Republic mainly because of the position that UNIP had placed itself on in the governing structure of the country. As indicated previously, UNIP was supreme.

Press freedom and the new government

Article 22, paragraph 1 of the Constitution of Zambia states that

> Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to impart and communicate ideas and information

without interference (whether the communication be to the public gener-
ally or to any one person or class of persons) and freedom from interfer-
ence with his correspondence. (Constitution of the Republic of Zambia,
Article 22, Para. 1).

Upon forming the new Government in the 3rd Republic towards the end
of 1991, the new MMD Government under President Chiluba pledged to
ensure that the media also fully benefited from the 'new' democracy, which
was growing in the country. As a result, many Zambians expected rapid
changes with regard to the press, to bring them in line with the emerging
democracy in the country, as promised by the MMD in its 1991 Manifesto.

Having made promises to free the press, most people, especially media
personnel, expected the new Government to put into practice almost
immediately what the Party had promised when it was in opposition. And
to the delight of many, the MMD Government started to take measures,
which appeared to pave the way for the implementation of Manifesto
promises.

In keeping with its Manifesto, the Government in 1993 organised a
conference on the Zambian media and the way forward. At that conference,
a Media Reform Committee was formed consisting of representatives
from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services (MIBS), the
University of Zambia (UNZA), the Zambia Institute of Mass
Communication (ZAMCOM), the Press Association of Zambia (PAZA),
the Zambia Privatisation Agency (ZPA), the Law Association of Zambia
(LAZ), and other stakeholders. This committee identified five critical
priorities, which required Government attention. These priorities were:

a) Comprehensive constitutional and legal reform;

b) Privatization of state-run press and addressing the economic and financial
    constraints to the development of an independent and plural press;

c) Strengthening media associations, including the training of journalists;

d) Placing the state-owned broadcasting corporation under public control, rather
    than under the control of the Government and allowing private participation in
    broadcasting;

e) Establishing a media resource centre.

The re-emergence of private-owned newspapers at the start of the 1990s
saw the birth of the *Weekly Post*, which later became a daily newspaper
and changed its name to *The Post newspaper*. Others, which followed,

were *The Sun, Crime News* (later renamed *The Confidential*), and *The Chronicle*. However, all these have discontinued publication for various reasons, including the lack of resource capacity. Other newspapers such as *The Monitor*, took off in 1996.

In its Information and Media Policy published in 1996, Government stated that the principal goals of its policy were:

> To increase media outreach throughout the country, promote and safeguard press freedom, encourage private investment and diversify media ownership. (p. 2).

Government also noted that the role of the media was to provide checks and balances for Zambia's democratic governance, saying:

> In the liberalised media climate, it is the government's responsibility to lay down basic communication infrastructure. This will not only encourage private investment into the media, but also provide an environment for checks and balances while promoting community participation in the democratic governance of Zambia. The media should, therefore, continue to play a watchdog role in society, while creating awareness and respect for Human Rights. (p. 2).

The public, as already pointed out, generally accepted the MMD's policy of liberalising the media industry. However, despite the efforts made to liberalize the media sector during MMD's first term in office, Government ownership of the mainstream media organizations continued. These organisations include the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), the *Times of Zambia*, and the *Zambia Daily Mail* and their sister Sunday papers. On the electronic side of the media, private broadcasting also received a surge of life in the newly liberalised economy. In this area, Radio Christian Voice became the first privately-owned radio station in the country when it began operations in 1994, two years before the end of the MMD's first term in office.

Unfortunately, by the end of its first term in office in 1996, the MMD Government had validated the words of Canadian Information Commissioner, John Grace (1993), who observed that a Freedom of Information Law could be irksome and a cause of political embarrassment to a government. He explained that:

> Political parties are much more supportive of access to information when they are in opposition than when they are in power. There is something self-flagellating in a government proposing such legislation. That is why only some dozen countries, all in the West, have taken the brave step.

Unusual self-confidence or a sense of inevitability—more likely the lat-
ter—is required to adopt an access regime. (Grace 1993:11).

Reversing its position

By the start of its second term, the MMD Government had reviewed its
policy on the extent of the liberalisation of the public media. This move
entailed a reversal on the earlier position on the sale of ZNBC, and the
two Government-owned daily newspapers, the *Times of Zambia* and the
Zambia Daily Mail and their sister Sunday papers. Government decided
that these media would continue under Government ownership and control
in order for them to be able to explain Government policies and development
programmes to the public. In the new policy direction, Government instead
undertook to facilitate the development of the private media, to operate
alongside the State-owned ones. As a result of this development, new
radio stations were registered. The radio stations that have been set up
include:

Ichengelo, Radio Maria, Yatsani Radio, Radio Chikuni, Mazabuka
Community Radio Station, Radio Lyambai, UNZA Radio, Radio Phoenix,
and Radio Chikaya among others. These radio stations are providing a
diversity of information to the public alongside the State-run Zambia
National Broadcasting Corporation.

Due to relatively high initial operating costs, private television
transmission has been growing slowly. As a result, only one new private
broadcasting station – Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), has been set
up in the country. In addition, two television companies have been able to
beam programmes from foreign-based stations into the country. These
companies are Multi-choice Zambia Limited, and Cable and Satellite
Technologies Limited (CASAT), which are both pay channels.

The period between 1996 and 2001, which also marked the MMD's
2nd term in office, witnessed increased pressure from ZIMA and PAZA
on Government to move on the issues of media reforms. There was also a
lot of pressure from backbenchers and members of opposition parties in
Parliament. For example, according to a policy document initiated by ZIMA
and PAZA (2002), the Parliamentary Committee on Information and
Broadcasting Services has so far issued two reports on this subject. In its
1999 report, the Committee recommended, among other things, that:

a. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services must start to implement
   the reforms recommended by the 1993 Media Reforms and the Coopers and
   Lybrand Report, adding that there was need for political will in the
   implementation of the reforms;

b. A time-frame should be set to which Government should implement the recommendations from the Media Reforms Committee;

c. ZNBC should cease sitting on the Licensing Committee forthwith;

d. ZNBC should be turned into a national public broadcaster and legislation to make it so should be passed accordingly;

e. An Independent Media Regulatory Authority should be set up which will have no interference from Government in its decisions. Government's role would be to make media policy, while an independent regulatory body would licence and monitor media institutions, control frequency allocations and enforce rules and regulations; and

f. While recognising that there is no absolute freedom, the Committee recommended that Government should go a step further to enshrine freedom of the press in the Constitution.

In its second report issued in 2000, the Committee reiterated some of its earlier recommendations and made fresh recommendations as follows:

a. The Government through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services should consider putting in place a timeframe to implement the recommendations of the June 1999 Media Task Force which is a follow-up to the Media Legal Reforms Committee of 1993 to demonstrate its seriousness in amending laws that affect the media;

b. The Printed Publications Act CAP 161 be amended in order to provide for penalty fines;

c. The Government should consider establishing a single Independent Communications and Media Authority with one wing that deals with the media while the other wing deals with communication matters. This is more so with the already existing Communication Authority. Also recommended was the amendment of the Communications Authority Act to enable the creation of an Independent Communications and Media Authority;

d. The Government was urged to implement some of the 1993, 1996, and 1999 Media Reforms recommendations to demonstrate its seriousness in amending laws that affect the media;

e. The Constitution be amended to enshrine press freedom and the Government be urged to repeal all laws that affect the media. In addition, the Freedom of Information Act be enacted in order to compel public leaders/figures to release the information in the interest of the public;

f. The Government should amend all laws that impede press freedom as soon as possible;

g. Government was urged to urgently amend the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Act in order to remove licensing powers from the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC); and

h. Government was also urged to implement Media Reforms in Zambia at the shortest possible time.

The seminars and workshops held by other stakeholders have also focussed on suggesting legislation that would result in the media in Zambia being a truly independent means of public communication, which would:

a. Enable the people of Zambia to communicate and receive ideas freely;

b. Serve as a watchdog on Government;

c. Make people in Government responsible and accountable for what they do or do not do; and

d. Make the actions or lack of actions of people in Government transparent.

Specifically, the seminars and workshops have been centred on reform of media legislation, which would make the media achieve the above objectives. A new legislation being proposed has included the setting-up of an Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the reconstitution of the ZNBC into a public broadcaster, and the passing of a Freedom of Information Act.

In its response, Government, according to the Draft Revised National Media Policy (2000:25), has accepted to institute the following policy measures with regard to freedom of the press and good governance:

a. Ensure that Article 20 of the Constitution enshrines the freedom of the press as a fundamental human right distinct from that of freedom of expression;

b. Repeal and/or amend existing laws which will be identified as inhibiting freedom of the press;

c. Enact new enabling laws such as Freedom of Information Act, to ensure freedom of the press, free flow of information, accountability and transparency;

d. Enhance the information capabilities of the ZNBC through the improvement of its infrastructure;

e. Devise a funding mechanism for ZNBC which is directly derived from the public to complement Parliamentary appropriations;

f. Retain ownership of the Times-Printpak and Zambia Daily Mail in competition with private media as State-owned newspapers to advance freedom of the press and good governance, and to effectively explain Government policies and programmes to the Zambian people and the world;

g. Ensure the media abide by provisions of Electoral (Conduct) Regulations 1996;

h. Encourage the media to carry out civic education campaigns on rights, obligations and duties of citizens as well as the mass media in democratic governance;

i. Increase access to information for all as a human right;

j. Review and harmonise laws that limit media practice; and

k. Encourage debate, workshops and seminars on media practices and relations through the broadcast and print media.

In its Manifesto (MMD Manifesto 2001:29), the ruling party in Zambia recognizes that as a democratic nation, Zambia must uphold freedom of expression and that of the media, and that the government has a responsibility to ensure free flow of ideas as well as provide a means of feedback from the public to the Government and vice versa. In touting its achievements since assuming power more than ten years now, the ruling party says it has:

*   developed and adopted a National Media Policy for the first time since independence;

*   liberalised the media industry;

*   encouraged private investment in the media industry leading to proliferation of privately owned newspapers, radio and television stations;

*   reduced duty on newsprint to enable enough private participation in newspaper production;

*   promoted media freedom leading to diversity of views and opinions in both private and public media;

*   identified media laws that impede press freedom with a view of having them repealed or amended;

*   promoted editorial independence in public;

*   improved radio reception through the installation of FM transmitters in all provinces;

*   ensured acquisition of modern information communication technologies; and

*   ensured collaboration between the Ministry of information and broadcasting Services and journalists' bodies.

Beyond 2001, (MMD Manifesto 2001), the MMD Government also undertook to:

*   develop a sustainable media industry and fully liberalise the airwaves;

*   ensure a wider media outreach and accessibility by a majority of Zambians;

*   enact the Freedom of Information Act and initiate more media reforms;

*   improve the Information Communication Technology;

*   encourage the establishment of more community radio stations;

*   continue to create an enabling environment for media development and a free flow of information to encourage informed public debate; and

*   advocate for more public awareness and participation in issues of gender, poverty reduction and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

At the end of 2001 when President Mwanawasa become Zambia's 3rd Republican President, he took over a Government that had been under intense lobbying by civil society, in particular, media associations such as ZIMA and PAZA, as well as the Oasis Forum, forcing it to take some actions and make certain pronouncements regarding press freedom in Zambia. These pressure groups were concerned with the poor quality of the contribution to good governance of the public media in Zambia, in particular, broadcasting.

The work of the pressure groups finally started to yield dividends after the December 27, 2001 elections which ushered in President Levy Mwanawasa as Zambia's third president. A number of media reform meet-ings were held which put across fresh calls for comprehensive media law

reforms, especially with reference to the Freedom of Information Bill, The Independent Broadcasting Authority and the repeal of the ZNBC Act of 1987, and the introduction of the Broadcasting Amendment Act.

Specific members of parliament such as Mr. Dipak Patel, Mr. Sakwiba Sikota and Mr. John Ng'uni, among others, have also been very instrumental in the passage of the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act No. 17 of 2002 and The Zambia Broadcasting Corporation (Amendment) Act No. 20 of 2002. President Mwanawasa signed both bills into law on 31st December 2002. Although the two Acts have been enacted, they have not yet become operational because a number of things still need to be done, such as the appointment of members of the IBA. And the ZNBC Act shall come into operation when the Minister (of Information) issues the necessary Statutory Instrument. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) is intended to promote a pluralistic and diverse broadcasting industry, and is expected to operate without political interference. The Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) Bill is intended to transform the ZNBC from a propaganda mouthpiece of the ruling party to a publicly owned institution.

The Freedom of Information Bill, yet to be passed, is intended to establish a Public Information Commission that will ensure access to information, and to set out the scope of public information under the control of public authorities to be made available to the public. The Bill is also intended to facilitate more effective participation of the citizens in the good governance of Zambia.

Conclusion

Although for a long time media has been recognised as a pivotal tool for the building of and mobilization of a nation's development efforts, the role it has and continues to play in Zambia, is one of safeguarding the interests of the ruling elite. In spite of the success discussed in this paper, the Zambian Government still has a strong hold on the media and still uses it sometimes to peddle hate propaganda against perceived opponents. What is unfortunate is that although the country has gone back to democracy, the people's minds, especially the politicians, have not been democratised. There is therefore more work to be done in democratizing not just the institutions of governance, but also more importantly in democratizing the minds and attitudes of individuals who manage these institutions. While current efforts in the country from pressure groups and stakeholders have helped to introduce media reforms, the public should know that the

introduction of reforms is not enough. Efforts must also be made to ensure that the reforms are implemented in the interest of good governance.

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Gender, Ethnicity and Violence and Their Effects on Livelihoods in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria: The Case of Keegbara-Dere (Ogoni) and Bolo (Okrika) in Rivers State

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Abstract

The Niger Delta Region in Nigeria considered the oil mineral producing area in the country has become a breeding ground for various forms of violence. The inability of residents in these areas to directly gain appreciably from the resources generated by the exploration and exploitation of this natural resource has contributed to this problem. Although it is now recognized that violence severely undermines broader development goals of growth and sustainability, a lot of policy research is dominated by quantitative methodologies. While obviously important, such highly quantitative methodologies fail to capture how people actually experience violence and also how it had impeded their livelihoods. This study, while placing a lot of emphasis on qualitative methodology looks at the interrelationship between ethnicity and violence and their effect on livelihood (on gender basis) in oil mineral producing areas in Nigeria.

Résumé

La région du Delta du Niger, au Nigeria, considérée comme la zone de production du pétrole, à l'échelle nationale, est devenue un cadre propice à différentes formes de violence. L'incapacité des résidents de cette zone à profiter des

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ressources générées par l'exploration et l'exploitation de cette ressource naturelle est en partie responsable de cette situation. Même s'il est reconnu que la violence remet sévèrement en cause les objectifs de développement en termes de croissance et de durabilité, une grande partie de la recherche menée en matière de politique publique est dominée par les méthodologies quantitatives. Bien qu'étant d'une évidente importance, ces méthodologies quantitatives ne reflètent pas la façon dont les personnes vivent réellement le problème de la violence, ni la manière dont ce phénomène a affecté leurs moyens de subsistance. Tout en accordant une grande part à la méthodologie qualitative, cette étude examine l'interaction entre les notions d'ethnicité et de violence, ainsi que leurs effets sur les moyens de subsistance (selon les relations de genre), dans les régions productrices de pétrole au Nigeria.

Introduction

What is being gradually accepted in the literature is that many of the factors and forces responsible for the raging conflicts in Africa lie in the impoverishing socio-economic burden of debt and adjustment, the stresses of environmental and human insecurity and especially ethnic enmity. In the past three decades, Nigeria has demonstrated a very high propensity for ethnic and religious violence. However, in more recent times according to Egwu (2001), there has been a dramatic surge in xenophobic expressions, the hardening of ethno-regional positions and the proliferation of ethnic militias that have unleashed varying degrees of violence. The outcome is an extreme sense of intolerance, which manifested into numerous cases of religious, intra and inter ethnic violence. Consequently, there have emerged several flash points of ethnic and religious violence across the country in the sense of occurrence of direct violence in addition to a number of potential situations of violent outburst.

Presently, an area that has become notorious globally for violent ethnic-based clashes is the Niger Delta Region (NDR) of Nigeria. While some of the incidents of violent clashes are of recent occurrence, others have the history of conflagrations over a relatively long period. The ethnic-based violence between Keegbara-Dere (Ogoni) or K-Dere and Bolo (Okrika) in the Niger Delta is one whose antecedents date back to the early twentieth century in the 1910s. Oral history recalls that the conflict can be traced to claims over ownership of a particular strip of land, along a river channel running between them. Oral history also has it that there was a Supreme Court judgment on the disputed land in 1911. K-Dere people claim ownership of the land, as the area is part of their bush used for rotational farming. The counter claim by Bolo is that the land was the original site of the settlement before their forebears moved across the

creek to the present location on the island. The absence of accurate maps and land records has made the issue a matter of claims and counter claims over the years. Today, several violent incidents have resulted in: loss of lives and property, interventions by successive governors of the Rivers State, and several civil cases in the law courts. Despite these interventions, the problem is nowhere near solution.

Sadly however, the emergence of violent conflict between the two communities has further complicated historical accounts. Whereas history remains unclear, the reality on the ground is the impact of violence on development of the two communities, particularly the threats to livelihoods. In a region that is already facing other threats to their livelihoods from pollution and resource depletion, to neglect by government, violent conflict poses serious problems for sustainable development.

This study focuses on these dimensions of conflict using the K-Dere and Bolo situation as a case study. It is therefore concerned with the differential developmental impact on men, women and youths in K-Dere and Bolo and responses (both coping and adaptive strategies) that they have adopted to ensure livelihoods, the difficulties experienced in daily needs, the uncertainties and fears, suspicions and distrust that are now becoming entrenched in life in these communities. Parts of the responses to be highlighted include the threat of more violence and the people's perception of the role of the state in this conflict over the years. Specific objectives of the study are as follows:

i. To understand and examine historically the social relations between K-Dere and Bolo.
ii. To assess the effect on food production and livelihood systems under changing and volatile situations.
iii. To identify within the household and the community, the emergence of specific strategies for coping with violence and conflict and how this impacts on traditional roles between men and women.
iv. To examine the roles and responses towards peaceful resolution of the conflict from within the communities and by external agents.

The framework used in this study applies the concept of livelihood and how this is impacted upon by ethnic violence. There is a linkage between the struggle for livelihood and ethnic violence. It is this circularly causal nature of the linkage that constitutes the core of our conceptual framework.

Ethnicity and violence in Nigeria

Ethnicity is a multi-faceted concept and one that has been given to diverse interpretations. According to Egwu (2001), it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the concept for two key reasons. First, is the tendency to simply understand ethnicity merely as a derivative from ethnic groups. The problem with this interpretation is that although ethnic pluralism and ethnicity are etymologically linked, ethnicity is a product of interactions between and among people of different ethnic groups. Thus, ethnic pluralism is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the emergence of ethnicity. Second, is the tendency to enmesh ethnicity with other social phenomena with which it shares similar features especially those that come within the categories of communal identities. Mafeje (1997), while recognizing the ideological nature of the concept, added that the real significance in the African context is that ethnicity becomes a principle for organizing power in the arena of intra-class struggles.

Of significance to researchers is the role ethnicity plays in the social process. To this end, there are the perspectives that present African ethnicity as a historical and political construction and a direct product of colonial invention. Others include the elite perspective that argues that elites who compete for power and privileges are the primary users of ethnic weapon. In the past ten years in Nigeria, there had been an increase in the cases of conflict in the country. The reasons for these conflicts vary from ethnic and political interests, religious biases, environmental degradation and territorial and border clashes. These conflicts at the national level have generated the most concern as they pose a threat to survival of the fragile democracy in the country after several years of military rule. Also, they have resulted in widespread killings and maiming, destruction of life and property and indeed sometimes whole villages, displacement of people, suspension of economic activities and loss of means of livelihood in the affected areas.

In this study, it is recognized that NDR, which is the oil mineral producing area in the country has become a breeding ground for various forms of violence. This is as a result of the frustrations experienced by the residents in this area in respect of their inability to directly gain appreciably from the resources generated by the exploration and exploitation of this valuable natural resource. Most of the protests are centered on environmental degradation and absence of facilities or community development projects. The NDR youths especially are always protesting that 98 per cent of the resources for the development of the country is from the region while the people live in abject poverty. Thus, the most widespread incidents have

occurred in the guise of youth militancy in conflict with oil and gas explo-
ration companies and in the use of force by state security outfits against
such militancy. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) in January 1999 pub-
lished a documentation of some of the worst examples of state use of
force including the tragic Umuechem and Ogoni experiences in Rivers
State. More recently in 1999 was another major conflict between the Odi
community in Bayelsa State and the Nigerian military that left only two
buildings standing at the end.

IDEAS (2001) attributed conflicts among the "component ethnic groups,
clans, classes and personalities" in the Niger Delta to the many social
contradictions within the region. IDEAS (2001) further noted, "The common
historical experience of the Niger Delta should not suggest that the region
is homogenous. Its peoples do not even share a single consciousness of
the commonality of their experiences. Divisions within the Niger Delta
are as serious as divisions between the Niger Delta and outsiders. Causes
of intra and inter ethnic conflicts in the Niger Delta varied. While in some
cases the conflict can be traced to the divide and rule techniques of the oil
and gas companies that are condoned by the state, others can be traced to
the long-standing historical differences that external forces play upon. For
example IDEAS (2001) argued that the crisis in the Niger Delta especially
in the 1990s was propelled principally by a regime of state violence mounted
against the people of the region by oil companies and the Nigerian military
governments. In this regard, the military encouraged conflicts between
communities and ethnic groups and then used the violence as a pretext for
repression. Always dangled before communities is the allocation of
resources and projects unjustifiable and inequitably distributed in the form
of social infrastructure, compensation, and other development projects.
Within specific communities the divisive carrot is that of inept and corrupt
leadership leading to agitations for change.

Yet others cite ignorance and poverty as contributory factors arguing
that the fact that people are poor and lack political consciousness makes it
easy for them to be manipulated and goaded to fight themselves. This
argument further points to the significance of the many conflicts in the
region as deriving from the many social contradictions within NDR. One
of these conflicts was in Umuechem in Rivers state. On 30 and 31t October
1990, the women of Umuechem held a protest at Shell Petroleum
Development Company's facility in their community. Mobile policemen
were drafted to the scene. They reportedly killed some 80 women dem-
onstrators who were unarmed and also destroyed 495 houses. Village
women who were demanding provision of electricity, water, roads and

compensation for oil pollution of crops and water supplies triggered off the demonstrations. A judicial commission of inquiry set up by the Rivers State Government concluded that there was no evidence of a threat by the villagers and that the mobile police had displayed a reckless disregard for lives and property. The Kaiama Declaration by the Ijaw youths in December 1998 on the issue of resource ownership and control saw the drafting of troops and navy personnel into the region.

Sources of threats to livelihoods in NDR

According to Moffat and Linden (1995) threats to livelihoods and poverty in the Niger Delta derive from several sources which include physical threats, economic and political threats. The physical threats include erosion and flooding and degradation of agricultural land due to oil and gas production activities and increasing population pressure on available land. Economic threats include fisheries depletion, deforestation and biodiversity loss due to overexploitation and pollution. Political threats include the appropriation of local resource rights and especially crude oil and gas resource use by the federal government and multinational oil companies, the operation of laws that effectuate the appropriation process and the marginalization of local communities.

The gender dimension of securing livelihoods comes in the differences in economic activities and the traditional roles within the homes. Within NDR, as is common with rural parts in Nigeria women are largely responsible for feeding the family. When conflicts and pollution occur women are unable to feed their families. In the area of fishing, women engage in harvesting (by picking shell fish) and also in dragnet fishing usually in swamps. The proceeds are normally sold for cash but always only after what is necessary for feeding the family is removed. Any threat to livelihood thus limits the ability of women to feed their families. It is not surprising therefore that women are often dragged into conflict situations usually as victims. Women have also been dragged into conflict situations in order to broker peace as exemplified by the Umuechem's case in 1990 and the Ugborode case where women actually occupied the Escravos Tank farm belonging to Chevron for ten days in July 2002 until a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the company and the community.

Historical perspective of the Nigerian political economy and oil activities

In the 1990s oil production accounted for over 90 per cent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, 97 per cent of Nigeria's total income, 25 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and 70 per cent of its budget revenue (Frynas 1998). The oil industry is therefore indispensable to the state. As in most other Organizations of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), foreign companies in Nigeria have always dominated the oil industry. Indigenous oil and gas companies have only just become important with Moni Pulo being the only significant one from the Rivers State. In terms of quality, Nigeria produces light, sweet oil of high API gravity the standard of the American Petroleum Institute. Location is another major advantage. Not just is Nigeria closer to the United Kingdom and the United States of America, which means lower cost of transporting oil from Nigeria than the Middle East, politically the West African region is more stable than the Middle East.

Within the country, the leadership of the Nigerian state has all along been under the control of a minority elite made up of top government officials, highly placed military officers, influential businessmen and their allies. The revenue accruing to the state from the oil industry sustains this group. These elites are the power brokers in the society and they play a major part in controlling the cause of events. Their interests in many ways determine the way and manner oil multinationals operate in the country.

Research method

The research method applied in this study involved a combination of systematic observations, questionnaire administration and comprehensive interview schedules. The questionnaires and interview schedules carried out during the months of November 2002 and February 2003 were administered at K-Dere, Bolo and at Port Harcourt where most of the public officers reside.

As the main focus in this study is the interrelationship between ethnicity and violence and their effect on livelihood (on gender lines), the interviews were concerned with household livelihood strategies during and after conflict. The discussions teased out food production and respective roles of the genders before, during and after conflict and also their involvement in resolutions for peace. The field studies yielded the base data for the empirical analysis of existing situations, perceptions of the conflict; its resolution and citizen responses over time to the conflict. Information

sources consisted of both primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised:

i. Reconnaissance Survey that involved unscheduled interviews with key informants from each of the communities. This survey was also used for structuring the interview schedules and questionnaires.

ii. In-depth interviews (through questionnaire administration) in K-Dere and Bolo to chiefs and opinion leaders; women groups; youths (male and female); men groups.

iii. Intervie w of government officials in relevant agencies at state and local government levels.

iv. Questionnaires and interview schedules administered at household levels.

Secondary data sources were obtained from relevant literature in academic journals, government publications and a variety of books well referenced in the text. In all 125 persons in 116 households were interviewed in K-Dere while 117 persons in 92 households were interviewed in Bolo. The study utilized Participatory Appraisal for Rural Areas (PARA) to analyze the data. This was used to identify perceptions of the target groups in K-Dere and Bolo in order to know the causes and consequences of conflict and violence and the coping strategies.

Research results

i. The data from both communities affirm that violence has occasioned change in livelihood sources. For Bolo, traditional sources of livelihood particularly from fishing have declined, the essential factor being fear of sudden attack by K-Dere people rather than the already accepted environmental pollution. As many respondents from Bolo explained that although the river is polluted by oil activities, they still need it as a main source of food and income and moving up and down the river is possible only if they feel safe to do so. For K-Dere people, the use of the river has also seriously declined. The traditional gathering of shellfishes and firewood by women for domestic use and sale has to be undertaken in groups supported by males serving as security cover. The nature of the violence as expressed by both communities appears unlimited. They include destruction of fishing nets, blocking of creeks, raiding of fishing ports and capsizing of boats and drowning of occupants. However, the impact is the same in the two communities i.e. fear and decline in traditional sources of livelihood.

ii. The shift to trading is common to the women in both communities. Households in both villages increasingly have to buy food. However

whereas K-Dere women are able to travel to other places to buy and sell by road, Bolo women seem limited to Port Harcourt by water transport that is not only very expensive but unsafe and not regular. This creates a lot of difficulties especially food shortages for the Bolo people. When the transport difficulties are placed against a background of location isolation being the last village in Okrika kingdom along that axis, the impact of the violence on Bolo in this aspect can be better appreciated.

iii. Of interest also as reported by the women in the two communities, is the impact of the effect of violence on livelihood in the households. This is very prominent in the feeding of the family and education of the children. The use of such words as «hunger», «starvation» connotes how hard it is to feed and educate the children in both communities. Children in both communities were reported to eat after the husbands have eaten and the women eat last. The men were not really aware of this pattern of distribution of food. Noticeable also is the high degree of malnutrition among the children in the communities.

iv. Economically also, there is a loss of linkages between the two villages and between them and others who use the road and nearby regional market in the disputed territory. Apart from loss of exchange of goods, basically farm produce, forest products like wild vegetables, firewood, snails etc, and fish products, there is also the loss of services which people from K-Dere used to provide in Bolo. These include all the services linked to the car park at the water front end of the disputed land such as security jobs and restaurants that have ceased to exist, and masonry and carpentry works essential for house building.

v. Social life has also seriously been disrupted. In the two communities, there is a net out-flow of the active population especially male. From K-Dere, out migration of young virile labor is mainly by sea to the Cameroon, whereas from Bolo it is mainly to Port Harcourt. Social interaction has also suffered between the two communities and with other villages around them. Respondents from both communities expressed the fear of interacting with each other even in Port Harcourt that is the state capital. As close as these communities are physically, they are very distant socially. For example, in all their years of co-existence, there is no known case of inter-marriage although clandestine love trysts occur.

Response to violence and conflict

The first response comes in the form of each side accusing the other of having started the conflict. By and large, ethnicity appears to be the principal factor here. Presently, there is a court action initiated by the Bolo people challenging the Rivers State White Paper based on the recommendation of the Justice Ungbuku Commission of Inquiry into the crisis in 1985 on grounds that the commission went beyond its terms of reference to discuss title to land. The case has been on since 1987. In both communities, male and female members of the communities are levied regularly to prosecute it.

The women of K-Dere reported that they have had Christian prayer sessions in respect of peaceful solutions to the crises and at the same time they had on a number of occasions resorted to offering traditional sacrifices to the gods of the land. One of the opinion leaders from K-Dere claimed that he invited elites like himself to meetings at Delta Hotels in Port Harcourt (which is a neutral ground). Elites from both communities attended. A major event that emanated from this meeting was the initiation of a friendly football match. The first leg took place at K-Dere where Bolo people attended but a date for the return match had not been fixed.

The Bolo chiefs and opinion leaders reported specific actions they took to resolve the conflict. They provided a catalogue of peace moves either initiated by them or those in which they participated. Youths from Bolo claimed that they initiated the football match between the two communities. Bolo youths went to K- Dere to play the first leg of the match. Many of them stayed back after the match for some days. However, K-Dere youths have refused to go to Bolo for the return match since then. In the case of the Bolo women, they like their counterparts in K-Dere, believe strongly in religion and they claimed that they are always offering prayers for peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The two communities at some point expressed their lack of confidence in the intervention of government's law enforcement agencies in the crisis. What was apparent to the research team however is that each community accused the law enforcement agencies of being partial any time their interventions did not favor them.

The Rivers State Government on its own part set up the Justice Ungbuku Commission of Inquiry in 1985 to inquire into the dispute between the two communities. It published a White Paper on its findings in 1987. The commission discovered from mostly oral pieces of evidence and past records available to it that there were three main causes of conflict between the two communities. These were land dispute, dispute over fishing rights in the creeks and rivers, and the belligerent nature of the people of both

communities. The major recommendation was that the disputed land should be given to K-Dere. This, the Bolo people vehemently oppose, and since then the litigation instituted by the Bolo people against the government still stands. K-Dere people accuse the government of failing to implement its recommendation and for the past eighteen years everything is at a standstill in the area.

Major findings and discussions

Several findings provide insight into the links between gender and livelihoods in the context of conflicts. One is the shifts in traditional livelihood sources. The people of K-Dere were principally farmers and fishermen. The fear of violence has reduced the significance of fishing and farming. In response, trading is becoming more important including long distance trading. Even though farming is still done, the outer fields are no longer being cultivated. The implications of this trend are many. The men who use the river as a channel into the open sea where larger scale deep-sea fishing occurs have lost this source of livelihood. Some have re-located to Port Harcourt, the state capital, as laborers. There is also a large incidence of migration to Cameroon, Nigeria's eastern neighbor. Others are idle within the villages not having the skills to find jobs. Yet others who were skilled artisans and went to Okrika villages including Bolo to peddle their trades are no longer able to do so. This has increased unemployment among the men. The women are the ones who are now mostly engaged in trading to provide for their families. However, many items of household consumption previously provided through fishing in the creeks (like picking shellfish e.g. periwinkles) and firewood have to be bought. To be able to engage in cutting firewood and creek fishing the women depend on male escorts. For those who do not have access to such escorts they resort to buying. Some women escaped to other villages where they had kith and kin and hired themselves out as farm laborers.

In Bolo, the shift from traditional livelihood sources is also documented. Traditionally, the main source of livelihood is fishing. The conflict has led to engagement in farming within the town on small plots around the home and also to trading between Port Harcourt and Bolo. The end result is the same as for K-Dere. Households have to buy the bulk of their food where previously they produced for consumption and sold the excess for cash. Within the household, this trend places a great burden on the women who now bear the brunt of sustaining household livelihood. In addition the women are educating the children, as the men can no longer manage. When men migrate out of the community, as is now the case in the two

communities, the household effectively suffers from the absence and separation. The social implications of this are also significant.

Youths in both communities are suffering from unemployment. As traditional sources of livelihood decline because of violence, youths who do not have paid employment have no other source to depend on. The general idleness that results has led to widespread dissatisfaction among the youths who choose to remain in the local community or are unable to move out for other reasons. It is these youths that are easily mobilized to promote violence. As remarked by a female respondent from K-Dere, "the crisis has put the people especially the youths in a violence prone situation (wicked life) ever ready for action". Thus the effect of violence is more violence.

Another livelihood impact comes in the form of visible absence of employment generating activities such as new housing construction, service sector industries and social activities. In K-Dere for instance, people could not get to the river to cut wood and mud for constructing the traditional wattle and daub housing common in the area. People mainly buy and sell food items. Generally in Nigeria, primary sector production dominates the rural economy and not commerce, and whatever commercial activities and services exist are incidental on primary production. A major observation in this study is that violence has changed the fundamental structure of the rural economy in K-Dere and Bolo.

Fear and insecurity pose two serious threats in terms of the use of the creeks around the two communities. One is the loss of livelihood from the creeks. The other is the loss of easy access to the Bonny River that is a major waterway in the state. Many fishing ports are located along this waterway where artisanal fishermen engage in long-distance deep-sea fishing. Fishmongers (mostly women) from urban markets travel to these fishing ports to buy in relatively large quantities for sale in Port Harcourt and beyond. As they come, they bring food supplies to their customers. Thus, a whole system of livelihood dependent on these fishing ports is no longer available due to the incessant raids on fishing ports and sea piracy on the waterways.

There is clear evidence that K-Dere and Bolo are different ethnic groups and even though they have been neighbors for over two hundred years, by their own account, have maintained their ethnic distinctiveness not even inter-marrying. Certainly, the two communities are either not desirous or are unable to engage in any interaction beyond trade. Within the traditional African setting this is strange and can portray feelings of ethnic superiority on either side. In a conflict situation, such feelings of

distinctiveness and supremacy become tools of manipulation. Ethnicity thus becomes a factor that can be used to whip up sentiments and promote violence against one another.

The general level of awareness of the causes of the conflict and the response including the recourse to the law courts is comparable between men and women in both communities. The youths in K-Dere however showed a poor understanding of the conflict. This could be attributed to the fact that even though there is conflict, it is easier to get in and out of K-Dere as it has a road access to other parts of the state and even beyond. The relative sense of isolation youths in Bolo feel is not here. Also, it could be attributed to local structures of authority and how information is handled within the community. In recent times, K-Dere has had its own internal conflicts involving youths.

There are several disturbing aspects of government agencies and their roles in this conflict. The most glaring is their inability to broker lasting peace. All across NDR, government agencies dabbling into conflict never get sustainable solutions. For instance, since 1987 when the last conflagration of violence occurred between the two communities, there has not been a solution. Another dimension is the lack of confidence by both sides in the government. As each side believes government is biased and partial, showing favoritism to the other, there is mistrust of institutional representation in general and of the police in particular.

Some of the blame for the persistent conflict must be attributed to government and oil companies. There are no accurate ordinance survey maps that can show clear and correct boundaries. Also, the frequent demarcation of new local government areas and the lack of appropriate boundaries is a major source of conflict. Boundary adjustment commissions have never satisfactorily solved boundary problems between communities in conflict. Oil companies in their own case have given names to oilfields that are sometimes not even local.

Recommendations

First, the two communities must be brought to a realization that the continuing conflict between them negatively impacts on their development; sapping away the natural potentials in terms of available resources and the ability to harness them for economic growth. This creation of awareness is a task for non-governmental organizations within and outside the communities. There is need to adopt a long-term strategy for such a task. No short- term quick fix solution would work in this situation as deep-seated animosities and suspicions exist. It will require commitment on the

part of intercessors to bring about lasting peace. The current pretentious attitude of government that the cessation of open hostilities signifies peace is deceptive. Our study has shown that attempts initiated by the communities to promote social interactions have deadlocked. There is need for third party intervention but this must be one that can command the confidence and respect of both communities. When violence occurs, government is especially given to the extreme use of force to bring violence under control. However, there is usually no follow-up action in form of rehabilitation, financial assistance or counseling which are necessary. When livelihoods are disrupted, people suffer. It is through such follow up action that lives can be re-built.

Second, the security agents can do a better job of policing the area. Prior to a conflagration, there are usually tell tale signs that can be tapped into by covert operations and open hostilities forestalled. One of the sad commentaries on the security agents is that even when informed of likely conflict, action is not usually taken to prevent it. It is when all hell has been let loose that they try to intervene. Community watch groups can be set up to participate in this initiative. In addition, reported cases of assault, harassment and killings ought to be carefully investigated and perpetrators punished according to law to serve as deterrent to others.

Third, elite opinion leaders and chiefs in both communities must engage in continuous dialogue until a workable solution is found. The dispute is about land. Claims and counter claims have only led to more violence. The land is presently not being used for any productive purpose. In the context of dialogue, options can emerge for the use of the land and the peace of the communities. This research is not in a position to make specific suggestions on such possible uses but since dialogue is all about generating options and evaluating their feasibility further research is hereby suggested for the resolution of conflict for sustainable development.

Fourth, the loss of livelihoods must be addressed. Coping and adaptive strategies need to be strengthened. The women in Bolo for instance need safe and cheap water transport to Port Harcourt. Privately operated speedboats are too expensive and the use of hand paddled canoes on such a busy waterway like the Bonny River is totally unacceptable. The picture of women competing for rights of waterway with tugboats and oil tankers in the twenty first century is not a good image. This is an area where the state and local government can assist by way of providing specially constructed mass transit speedboats.

Fifth, to help build veritable commercial ventures, soft loans can be given to the women to increase their capital base. The men and youths of

both communities cannot continue to remain idle to the degree that is presently evident. The rural economic base needs expansion to include some degree of rural industrialization such as weaving, production of local crafts, pond fishing, soap making, local crafts and even food processing. For the youths, skills acquisition can be promoted so that they can either establish small-scale enterprises for themselves within the communities or move out to fend for themselves. Once usefully engaged, they will no longer be available to be mobilized for violent acts.

Conclusion

This study attempted to document the differential gender impact of ethnic conflict on livelihoods using the K-Dere/Bolo conflict in the Rivers State of Nigeria as a case study. In this regard, field survey covered households using semi-structured questionnaires. Men, elders, women and youth groups were interviewed separately using interview schedules. The results were presented in a comparative fashion in order to identify commonalities and differences in their experiences. In all instances, the study was careful to keep the gender perspective.

Ethnic conflict has negatively impacted on all sources of livelihood with the attendant fear and insecurity. Coping and adaptive strategies have implied a shift from fishing and farming with trading becoming more important. Even the pre–conflict trading links between Bolo, K-Dere and other communities in the locality have been re-located to that between each of the communities and urban centers farther away. The economy is being gradually transformed from a production–oriented to a consumption–oriented economy. This has serious consequences for the rural economic growth as only a very small percentage of the people are in wage labor.

The women have generally borne the greater burden of the economic changes having to provide household sustenance and now taking on the erstwhile key role of the men–that of paying for the education of the children. The men and youths have also shown a greater tendency to migrate out of the villages in search of paid employment. Both Bolo and K-Dere are essentially inward looking communities, providing for their own development from their own resources. There is hardly any government presence in either community in form of infrastructure and services. The conflict has further served to deter any public sector investment.

The study also highlighted the inadequacy of the government's response to the conflict. Apart from the use of police power to quell the violence when it erupts, the other significant attempt at resolution of the conflict

was the Justice Ungbuku Commission of Inquiry. Following the submission of its report and the publication of the Government White Paper (currently the subject of a court case), the government has kept silent.

This study has made a number of recommendations geared towards first, effecting sustainable peace and secondly, improving livelihoods for the present. They include the use of new initiatives on dialogue using NGOs and other third parties that can gain the confidences of both sides. Also, the need for accurate documentation of land matters by government and oil companies was emphasized especially in cases of boundary adjustments following the creation of new units of political administration. Of great importance are the areas of assistance urgently needed now to cushion the effects of declining livelihood sources and the expansion of the economic base to promote production of goods and services.

The two communities of Bolo and K-Dere are the key players in this conflict. Since they cannot resolve it alone, help is required from government and NGOs. There is no doubt that as long as the conflict remains unresolved new dimensions will emerge and positions held on the issue will harden. There is a need to take concrete steps to tackle the issues. Sustainable livelihoods are the key to sustainable development. For Bolo and K-Dere, ethnic conflict has diminished the possibilities for the realization of livelihood systems that can promote sustainable development.

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What My Grandmother Taught Me About Communication: Perspectives from African Cultural Values

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Abstract

In this essay, the author examines the roots of African patrimony and its relevance in developing and implementing an Afrocentric theory of communication, culture and social change.

Résumé

Dans cet essai, l'auteur se penche sur les racines du patrimoine africain, et le rôle important que jouerait ce dernier dans la mise au point et l'application d'une théorie afro centriste de communication, de culture et de changements sociaux.

Introduction: The African imperative

Since the human being is 'the communicating animal', all human societies are endowed with a legacy of communication theory and practice. And because communication is the social mechanism for building society, all communication is rule-governed, providing the basis for expectations and predictions of what others will say and do. The rules of communication-in-society also provide a basis for evaluating what is correct or right or good, i.e., for making ethical and moral judgements about communication practice and communication acts.

The underlying basis for such judgements, i.e. the underlying 'theory' is often dormant, unexpressed, and yet very much active in regulating the behaviour of individuals and groups. Cultures outside Africa have developed, codified and articulated these underlying ideas, based on the

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experience of their societies over the centuries, and are therefore able now to propose them as organised bodies of thought, through appropriate meta-languages. In matters of communication, Africans have a funda-mental right, and a responsibility, to make the wisdom of their ancestors known, accepted and adopted.

What is the African patrimony in this area?

What my grandmother taught me

More than twenty years ago, I was invited by a group of media professionals to give a talk in Benin City. I flew up from Lagos, and first stopped at the family house to see my mother. My grandmother was also there. I spoke to them briefly and went on to give my lecture. Among other ideas, I spoke about freedom of expression and the ethics of journalism.

Mission accomplished, I returned to the family to spend the night. As always, my grandmother was curious about what I did for a living. She had got used to the idea that although I was referred to as 'Doctor', I couldn't do a thing about her cough, since I was only a doctor of books! But exactly what did I do?

I started to tell her about the talk I had just given that afternoon. I was doing quite well in my explanation. I explained about freedom of speech, and how everyone should be allowed to say what was on their mind, in the interest of the family and community, and reminded her, that she, and our elders often said: 'Ron ofo e tse udaju', meaning, 'speaking the truth should not be regarded as insolence', a way of encouraging the young to speak fearlessly without the usual reserve that their blunt speech might offend elders. Then as I tried to explain ethics, and professionalism in journalism, I found myself stammering; the words did not flow so readily; I could not quite find the expressions in my mother tongue to clearly explain what I had said earlier that day in English, with considerable eloquence. I spoke about truth-telling, about bribery and the need to be good and honest. My grandmother listened intently and greeted me warmly, invoking my praise names and those of my paternal and maternal forebears, thanking them for sparing her life so she could witness my progress and success.

But that encounter set me thinking. The next time I had a chance to see my grandmother again, I had some questions for her; and I got some answers. I have been ruminating over them for a long time.

I share them with you now, because I consider that African communication scholars and practitioners need to be inspired by the wisdom of our ancestors, especially our grandmothers, mothers and aunts, as we seek to anchor our discipline in those cultural foundations that will provide

the validity and efficacity that we must produce in our focus on communi-
cation for social change, including communication to sustain a culture of
peace in Africa.

African communication ethics?

What follows is an attempt to sketch an approach to discussing
communication and media ethics through looking at the meta-language of
a few African cultures. First, the intention is to see whether these African
cultures distinguish different types of communication events and products,
and how and whether such differentiation provides unique perspectives
on communication practice, in terms of ethical considerations.

Second, I will attempt to draw implications from the findings for the
international discourse on media ethics, and especially for training of
communicators and the development of communication policies in Africa
that would help promote a culture of peace and social change.

What is truth?

When I asked my grandmother:' Nene, what is 'truth'?, she burst forth
into a song, by way of response, as often elderly women in our cultures
do. The following folk song (translated) in Itsekiri, my mother tongue,
spoken by a minority ethnic group in the Niger Delta area of southern
Nigeria, is her answer:

> That which I have seen, that is what I say;
> I will not say it with fear.
> That which I have seen, that is what I say;
> I will not say it with fear.
> When a piece of yam is planted in the ground,
> The rains come, the season comes; and it grows;
> When a human being is planted in the ground,
> The rains come, the season comes; and he doesn't grow.
> That which I have seen, that is what I say;
> I will not say it with fear.

According to this song, certain facts and events are incontrovertible.
Everyone agrees with statements about these facts, because everyone
has experienced them. You can plant seeds or cuttings and expect them to
grow, and to harvest the fruits; but human corpses 'planted' in the earth do
no grow; they just rot away.

Therefore statements, based on experienced (or 'lived') and verifiable
facts, are accepted as true. In this sense, truth is based on inter-subjective
validation. It is therefore not normally subject to controversy and refutation.

Furthermore, such truth is the product of the community, rather than the individual. The Itsekiri word for 'truth' is 'oron fo', which means 'good word', or 'genuine word'. Truth has a value dimension; it is good and reliable. Therefore it is desirable. The song says 'I will say what I know without fear'; in other words, since what I know is an incontrovertible fact, and everyone can attest to that, I have the courage to proclaim it without fear that it would be refuted, or that it would cause offence.

The Itsekiri idea of truth finds an echo in other languages of Nigeria. Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, truth is 'otito', which etymologically comes from 'oro t'o to', which means 'straight word'; straight in the way that an arrow, or a spear is straight, direct, not crooked. In Igbo, the majority language of the southeast of the country, 'ezi okwu', which is the expression for 'truth' means literally 'a good or real word.' Opata (1998) has dealt extensively with this in his essay, "Truth in Igbo Thought and Life".

In all three languages, Igbo, Itsekiri and Yoruba, truth is seen as representing genuineness and goodness.

What is news?

The Itsekiri recognise 'iyen', as a report of an event by someone else. The hearer did not witness or experience the event; and the teller may or may not have witnessed or experienced it. But the point of view for defining something as 'iyen', is the receiver's viewpoint; 'someone told me.'

It is not expected that 'iyen' would be necessarily true. All that seems important is that the hearer takes no responsibility for its veracity. He can relay it to others, so long as he identifies it as something he heard from someone else, not something that he himself is originating. The subject matter of 'iyen' is usually factual, rather than fictitious. It can relate to a person, or a situation.

In terms of believability, 'irohin', news, among the Yoruba, is rated less than 'af'ojuba', that is 'what was seen with (one's own) eyes'. So while we say in English, 'seeing is believing', the Yoruba say 'being told is not as valuable as witnessing'; in other words, an eyewitness personal experience is more believable than a reported account, presumably, because it is more true.

Opata (1998) refers to a similar point of view, in the validation of truth among the Igbo:

> Because truth is seen as 'ihe mere eme', testimony is one way that the Igbo validate the truth of statements. Thus the Igbo prioritize 'seeing' to

> 'hearing', as in the Igbo proverb: 'afuru n'anya ka anuru na-nti'; meaning: 'what I witnessed with my eyes is greater than what I heard with my ears.'

Thus in deciding on the truth of statements, especially in cases of conflict resolution, the Igbo depend a lot on oral testimony from those who witnessed the event first hand.

Itsekiri faction: 'ita'

Folklore is an important area of Itsekiri oral tradition and cultural expression, as it is for many traditional or transitional societies, especially those still with significant proportions of illiterates. Folk tales, myths, and legends are categories of the oral tradition that are regarded as 'ita'. They differ from 'iyen', news, by not being true or factual in the literal sense. They are accepted as things that may have happened, or that may have been possible, in the dim, distant past, or as things which were handed down from parents and ancestors; therefore, while not literally true, they are culturally acceptable, even as fiction, meaning they never existed, and may have been made up.

'Ita' may be told about human beings, sometimes identified with names that symbolise a significant aspect of their character, (Ajogri 'one who burns quickly, like a raging fire', meaning a hot-tempered person), or about human beings from legendary history, whose names are well known, though not usually from the living memory of anyone alive at the telling.

Berry (1960) makes a distinction between fictional and non-fictional narrative. Explaining, he says:

> 'Under the latter heading I would subsume what has been variously considered as myths, legends and chronicles. They are distinguished from tales proper, that is, from fictional narrative, by the fact that they are regarded in context as true. Ethnographically at least, they are history. Myths, chiefly stories of the deities and the origins of natural phenomena, are especially important throughout West Africa....' Berry also speaks about 'Legends which recount the origins of families and clans and explain the ritual and taboos of the ancestral code...told only for instruction within the group, and rarely to outsiders...'

What seems to be important for 'ita', is their moral validity, based on the moral lesson they are expected to teach. Therefore at the end of every 'ita', there is usually a didactic formulaic statement: 'that is why our people say that... (it does not pay to be greedy). In such versions, 'ita' belongs to Berry's 'fictional' category, which includes 'serious explanatory and moralizing tales, humorous trickster, and tales developed wholly or essentially in human society'. We may also call them 'editorialising' stories.

'Ita', like 'pure fiction' tales, usually take place in the animal kingdom, involving folkloric characters, e.g. the tortoise, who in Itsekiri tales is the protagonist/trickster. (The equivalents are 'ijapa', the tortoise, among the Yoruba, 'mbeku', the tortoise also, among the Igbo, 'kere', the dog, among the Hausa, or 'anansi', the spider, among the Akan of Ghana.)

This brief excursion into various forms of discourse helps to provide the cultural canvas against which it is possible to make valid distinctions among genres that are considered real and those for which fiction is a more appropriate label.

Truth and accuracy

Questions of truth do not concern 'ita'; though there might be challenges about accuracy in transmission of a well-known story. The teller may have a limited repertoire, and may tend to forget the main characters in a story, or may forget the sequence of events or story line; or he may forget the punch line or moral at the end of the story.

Since 'ita' is 'performed' 'live', or face-to-face, the audience would interject with corrections, or someone might offer to retell the story, providing what they consider the 'correct' version.

Here accuracy is a function either of what is remembered, or how it compares with what others who are present remember, or of what version each person was exposed to. The arguments that arise are therefore not of an ethical or moral nature; true they have to do with 'fidelity'; but it is 'fidelity of recollection', rather than 'fidelity to reality.'

But even here, the teller of the story is allowed, even expected, to deviate from the 'original' tale as he was told it, imposing his own verbal virtuosity and creativity in the telling; so long as such deviation does not destroy the essential elements and moral vision of the story. Different story-tellers are evaluated according to their verbal skills in relating stories that everyone may know. In the retelling, parts of the story may be dramatised, or 'illustrated', or, even 'performed', with music, dance and costumes, in the manner of what Ezeokoli (1974) has called 'story theatre'.

Sources in/of communication

We have already seen that 'iyen', news, is the report of an event. The receiver is not required to identify who told him the 'iyen'; but he could choose to do so, especially in cases where the veracity of the source is challenged. Someone may ask: 'Who reported this news to you? To which the response may be: 'It is some human being/person or some people who told me'. Or: 'I was told by some people/someone I met in the market yesterday.'

Usually, such an answer would be enough for the questioner, and no further source identification would be required. There is no intention here of protecting the source; though confidentiality is recognised and cherished in another context.

However, there are statements which are attributed to unidentified sources: 'they say/said....' These types of statement seem to be suspect in many people's view; and if a person is perceived as fond of making such vaguely attributed statements, especially if they concern uncomplimentary information or news about other persons and their character or situation, that reporter/speaker may become guilty of what the Yoruba call 'nwon ni nwon ni', which means, 'they said, they said'.

This is the same expression that the Yoruba use for 'rumour'. They regard a rumour as a statement that is attributed to a general, unspecified source, possibly fictitious. Among the Igbo, the expression for 'rumour mongering' is 'igba asili', meaning "circulating 'they said'". Therefore a rumourmonger has low credibility because his allegations or accusations are not seen as authenticated by possible nameable sources. Often the rumourmonger is challenged. A famous saying in West African pidgin English makes the point: 'Dem say, dem say; who say?'

Usually the person asked cannot name anyone; or, to increase their credibility, they may be forced to lie, and to name someone, to accuse someone falsely of being the source of the information whose veracity had been suspected.

Lies, damn lies

A lie is deliberate falsehood; saying something that is not true. In Itsekiri, 'ita ekun' means ' a vain or unjust story'. The liar cannot be trusted; and trust is seen as being at the centre of good social relations. A lie can be the falsification of fact; as the Itsekiri would say, 'presenting something which is black and saying that it is white'. Lying is not making a factual error; it is deliberately misleading others through changing facts, or creating 'facts that do not exist'. The lie cannot be corroborated by the evidence and experience of others; it is not like truth that is common knowledge. In fact, a lie is regarded as contra-factual.

Usually, a lie is directed at another; to undermine them or to gain advantage over them. The notion of injustice is dominant in perceptions of lie telling. There is sympathy for the 'victim' of the lie, as of an injustice; the person lied against is seen as someone who has been wronged, by being 'pasted' with a lie' against his reputation (Slander).

Lying calls forth sanctions; and often recourse is had to the ancestors, praying them to punish the malefactor.

In Itsekiri cosmology it is expected that liars would be punished through ancestral intervention. In traditional jurisprudence, proven liars are punished by being asked to retract their statements, and to make amends if they wronged another or injured someone's reputation. They also are asked to appease the ancestors through rituals, both to cleanse themselves and for the protection of the community or family forced to harbour such an evil-doer; for deliberate falsehood is considered an evil.

So the sanctions for deliberate falsification, 'ita ekun,' are both legal and moral. But there are ethical dimensions to lying as well. People can be induced to lie through promise of reward, or through threat of punishment. Thus professionals such as diviners or traditional healers may be induced, for whatever considerations, to give untrue predictions or incorrect prescriptions.

The Itsekiri do not approve of people being induced to lie, of taking or 'eating' bribes; and as for lying because of threats, physical or spiritual, they expect courage to repulse evil, as they believe that the courageous are assured of spiritual protection which is always available for the righteous and morally correct, through the force of ancestral and power and 'natural justice'.

So we often hear a principled Itsekiri say:' a ma pa mi ara bo, me wa je se e', meaning 'even if you were to whip me to the point where my skin peels off, I will not agree to do it (what you ask of me)'. Courage is being willing to undergo the most severe physical torture. And why accept torture? Because the individual believes in doing what is right, what the ancestors accept and what they teach as right. There are persons who have a reputation, and are admired for being principled, for refusing to deviate from the truth, when to do so would have brought them obvious and easy personal gain.

Learning to tell the truth

The family and the community are where people learn to tell the truth, or at least, learn 'not to lie', and it is there that sanctions against lying are first applied, usually in the form of corporal punishment for the young liar. It is at tender ages also that people learn to be willing to suffer for refusing to lie, to be willing to be whipped until the skin peels, rather than to say that which the individual knows is not true. The struggle to maintain integrity is thus learnt early as a moral battle for which the individual must be prepared to pay a heavy price. And in that battle, many young people are brutalised

into succumbing, learning to lie; and yet there are also others, probably the majority, who learn to refuse to succumb to falsehood.

Statistics: How many have died?
Africans can and do count. Every African language has a numerical system, for expressing quantity, and for undertaking numerical operations. Some systems are based on primary numbers from one to ten; and the multiples of ten. This is somewhat similar to English, for example. Others are based on twenty, and multiples of twenty, with a sub-system based on five. The basic issue is that every language can express numbers fairly exactly, if there is need to do so. The expression may become clumsy after one thousand, but it can be done.

The interesting communication problem is not only how number/quantity is expressed, but what significance is attached to quantity, psychologically. In Itsekiri culture, there is a reluctance to count human beings. Nevertheless if asked: how many people ate this meal? An Itsekiri would be able to say, "ten persons", or "five men and ten women", or even "fifteen people, ten of them women, and five of them men". But the same person would say: "People were very many at the funeral." If you pressed for an estimate, you would be told either that they were really very, very many persons, or that the people there were just like the sands of the sea; or you may be told that there were so many people, they could not be counted. In this wise, one may say that the Itsekiri ability scale of numbers and estimate of quantity, goes fairly comfortably from one to about fifty; thereafter it jumps to infinity!

A large banner in various parts of the business district of Cotonou, Benin Republic, proclaims: "AIDS IS IN BENIN! 168,000 people are living with AIDS in Benin. 500 Beninese are dying every day". In 1998, 700 people were said to be dying from AIDS- related causes in Zimbabwe every week. Now the figure is 1000+. What difference do these figures make to many Africans, even those who have been to school? Do they serve as a deterrent? When is a number large enough to be alarming? Fifty? Uncountable? Does it matter?

Igbogbo revisited
In 1977–1982, with funding from UNFPA , UNESCO executed a research and training project implemented by the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The project dealt with "Communication strategies for family planning in rural and semi-urban areas." As Head of the host department, I was named National Director of the project.

The first activity was a study tour of Asian countries organized for two of my colleagues. One of them, Onuora Nwuneli, visited the Philippines, India and Korea. The other, Frank O. Ugboajah, toured the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. The findings of the visits were published in our first monograph. Onuora Nwuneli was appointed Research Coordinator of the project to assist in carrying out the work plan over the next five years.

Igbogbo: The people and community

After several months of searching, we finally located a research and action site. Igbogbo, a semi-urban largely Moslem community of about 10,000 farmers and traders, was situated about 36 kilometers north of Lagos, near the town of Ikorodu. There, for over three years, we carried on our research and action programs related to project objectives.

We conducted social surveys designed to provide empirical data on the demographic, socio-economic and cultural realities of the village. We involved various local groups and individuals, men as well as women, in extensive discussions and structured in-depth interviews; and accumulated dozens of hours of audio-tape recordings. In retrospect, we had been conducting 'focus group discussions' FGDS, before they became popular in the literature and practice of population IEC. Our goal was to uncover the value structures, attitudes, knowledge and practices of the people of Igbogbo in areas of interest to planning and implementing communication strategies for promoting family planning services.

At the time, family planning was not a public issue in Nigeria. There was no indication that government was interested in considering a population policy; even though population questions related to census operations and results were already of national importance. The references to family planning tended to be either hostile, and some thought of it as unacceptable and unnecessary in the Nigerian context. It can be said that during that period of affluence, public attitudes were pro-natalist; and family planning was confined to the activities of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, PPFN, the local IPPF affiliate.

Igbogbo: The approach

Our initial surveys in Igbogbo, and our own theoretical orientation suggested to us that targeting 'family planning' as an issue and promoting it directly would not be an effective approach. We were deeply convinced that the question of family size, and the value and meaning of having children, of marriage and family relations, were interrelated ideas connected with development and improvement in the condition of living of individuals and

societies, and that family planning and population issues should consequently be examined in a multi-dimensional value context. We therefore, quite early decided to change the focus of our work to include family health, and family welfare in addition to family planning.

Reflecting our broad multi-disciplinary approach, our research team was composed of an economic historian (Babatunde Agiri), a public health physician (Larry Hunponu-Wusu), a Nursing Sister, a nutritionist (Remi Adegbenro) an environmental geographer (Jonathan Ekpenyong), in addition to communication researchers (Alfred Opubor and Onuora Nwuneli). Students of the Department of Mass Communication were recruited as research assistants and trainees on the project, since one of the objectives of the project was to institutionalize population communication in the curriculum of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos.

Preliminary steps

As we reviewed relevant literature, and studied the local environment, further reflection led us to a few important conclusions:

(i)   the ideas and experiences which we will encounter about family life, and especially, husband-wife relations, child-rearing and family health, exist within a structure of values deeply rooted in the cultural and religious ideas and practices of the people of Igbogbo;

(ii) traditional practices of family planning/contraception, and attitudes towards family size are part of a structure of ideas within a logical framework, with underlying rationality, as well as contradictions and inconsistencies;

(iii) communication interventions designed to affect the knowledge, attitude and behavior of semi-urban and rural Nigerians should take into account, their cultural dispositions and social activities, and exploit them systematically;

(iv) exposure to modern mass media is selective on the part of villagers; but leisure time use of media is heavy, especially through exposure to ethnic-language entertainment radio programs and sports broadcasts;

(v)   participation in ethnic group social activities is considerable, occupying much leisure time. Visiting relatives and friends, and engaging in communal socializing are valued, and generally practised;

(vi) consequently the theoretical orientation should focus on how to insti-gate attitude and behavior change on fertility, contraception and fam-ily life issues through exploiting the 'chinks' in the cultural armor. The

idea of 'logical inconsistency' lent itself as a potentially useful entry point for such a venture.

Proposed communication strategy: Community festival

As a logical extension of these and related findings, it was decided that we base our communication strategy on the 'community festival' as a culturally appropriate mass medium for social mobilization through participation. We therefore planned, with the collaboration of the people of Igbogbo, a Family Health and Family Welfare Festival that was held in December 1979.

The Festival took place over five days featuring particular events on each day. The fist day was the formal opening of the Festival, involving representatives of the Lagos State government, the local government, and traditional leaders. The activities were well covered by the media. The second day focused on health, especially maternal and child health, with immunization of children and a contest for the healthiest babies, the best three of whom were rewarded with prizes donated by commercial firms .The third day highlighted agriculture, food and related technology; coordinated by our nutritionist in collaboration with extension staff from the Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture, and technology inputs from agricultural engineering students. Demonstrations on improved food preparation and new farming implements were much appreciated by the crowds that attended the Festival. On the fourth day, local culture was celebrated, with male and female age-group dance troupes from Igbogbo and surrounding villages. This was a truly participatory event with other villagers joining the dancers at will.

The fifth and final day, was the climax of the Festival, and for us the big event of our strategy. It was the premiere of the dramatic performance that we had been preparing for close to five months. In our in-depth discussions with the men and women of Igbogbo, we had come to appreciate the intricacies of family life issues. Bode Osanyin, our resident playwright/ dramatist from the University's Centre for Cultural Studies, had participated in our research work and discussions. Out of his insights and our briefing, he created a play: "AYITALE, the story of the fruits that crush the trunk."

Ayitale: The play

Briefly, "Ayitale" tells the story of Ibisola, wife of a village bicycle repairer, Agboola. After eight children, in as many years, she is beginning to listen to the advice of the nurse in the health centerthat the time has come to put a halt to child bearing. But her husband would not hear of it. No argument was good enough to convince him that his wife's body was tired; that he

could show he cared for her by agreeing to limit the size of his family, and by taking steps to prevent further births. Ibisola becomes pregnant again. Unable to survive the difficult birth of twins, she dies in childbirth, thus becoming the tree trunk that was crushed by the fruits.

In the final scene of the play, the husband, Agboola, walks onto the stage with the newly-born twins in his arms, ashamed, confused, in tears; a tragic victim of his own cultural rigidity and selfishness.

The actors, students of the local teacher-training college, had rehearsed hard and long for nearly four months straight, with our dramatist and research team, and gave a convincing and professional performance. The play's use of local folklore and history as well as the local dialect of the Yoruba language created an instant bond with the largely indigenous audience of over 800 persons. Right from the opening dance drama, with its invocation of the praise names of the culture heroes and founding leaders of Igbogbo, and the accompanying sounds of talking drums, the audience was drawn into the action, and stayed with it all the way through to the inevitable tragic end.

There were few dry eyes in the open air village square in Igbogbo that December night in 1979 when the play was first performed. Men and women sniffled quietly. Some wept openly for Ibisola, and for Agboola and maybe even for themselves, in a kind of collective catharsis. It was a powerful emotional experience shared by the community, demonstrating the potential of drama as a mass medium; and vindicating our original intention of the festival and cultural performance as effective media of persuasive communication.

In the follow up research, three months and six months afterwards, more than 80 per cent of those interviewed remembered the story line and understood the lesson of the play, that unregulated fertility can bring misery and even death, and that it can and should be prevented.

Ayitale: Theory and practice

The theoretical underpinning of "Ayitale" was "logical inconsistency». Basically, it was argued that the same individual can hold, at the same time, thoughts or ideas which may be in contradiction. So long as these contradictory thoughts and ideas are not brought into direct confrontation, the individual is quite at ease. But should there be reason for these thoughts to confront one another, the individual will be forced to make a choice. The choice made implies a change of attitude with reference to one or other or both of the ideas in conflict

For example, in our focus group discussions, the men of Igbogbo were adamantly opposed to abortions; they considered them evil and contrary to traditional values of responsible family life, attributing induced abortion to immoral women and girls trying to escape the results of their promiscuity or infidelity, both reprehensible.

We then presented the men with the following scenario:

> 'Imagine your twelve year-old daughter on her way from school one afternoon. As she is passing through a secluded farm near the village, the local 'madman' grabs her, forces her down and rapes her. A little while later, she is discovered to be pregnant. What would you do'?

The reactions were immediate, violent and predictable. The men all expressed revulsion at the possibility that their daughters could carry the child of a man who was mentally ill; and that they would be grandfathers of such a child. What would they do? Without hesitation, they all would decide on abortion, which they considered traditionally justifiable under the circumstances.

For us the discussions were enlightening; they demonstrated that even strongly held attitudes and beliefs could be 'moved', if the right environment was created for re-evaluating them. We further argued that other issues involving family size and family planning could be approached in the same manner, and that the logical inconsistencies related to these issues could be exploited as a strategy for attitude and behaviour change. It was in that light that "Ayitale" was written and produced.

Conclusion: The way forward

The importance of the excerpts from my work-in-progress, provided above, is that although it shows how communication is perceived within some ethnic communities in Nigeria, it opens up a way of looking at the relationship between communication and culture. It thus provides a basis for understanding how people will view what they hear, what they see, what they are told, including about development problems, including HIV/AIDS, as a function of what communication categories and values they have learnt in their cultural background. It may be that this kind of close analysis is relevant for considering persuasive approaches for attempting culture-specific behavior and social change programs required for tackling HIV/AIDS.

Are there African theories of communication? Are there African theories of behavior and social change? What would these theories consist of? What would they focus on? Would they stress: individuals or social

groups or the individual-in-the-group? What communication strategies would be applicable for creating change, from an Afrocentric perspective? What are the meta-languages of African communication? Should we study them language by language and culture by culture, or their generalizable communication framework related to 'Africanity'? What tools or combination of intellectual skills do we need to accomplish the task of answering such questions? What contribution can African social scientists: anthropologists, socio/psycho-linguists make to creating a knowledge base? Would comparative studies be valuable?

What can the Igbogbo experience teach us? How can we capitalize on it for our research and action programs? Perhaps one of the lessons from Igbogbo is in fact, that long before the current fad, we in Nigeria, at the University of Lagos, had developed a model of behavior and social change communication, based on the African community festival.

I have often advocated an 'ethnography of communication' approach. This would be a good time and place to take this agenda forward and see to what heights it might take us in our effort to understand how African societies view communication and how that knowledge may assist our efforts to place our discipline within our cultural contexts, and by so embedding it, provide us greater explanatory and applied power in our research and teaching as well as our programs of social change.

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