**MEMBER OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION TEAM**

1. **Kings**: The political culture evolved in African societies recognized the traditional rulers (king) as the overall boss and father of the kingdom. He is at the apex of a royal hierarchy of chiefs and statesmen. He is the sacred representative of the supernatural on earth and the personification of his kingdom. Indeed, he is the link between the sacred world and the physical universe. The liaison personality between the gods and the people over whom he governed.

The royal titles are limitless but they are significantly symbolic of the suzerainty of the divine personality. The nature of kingship in African traditional societies was that of a human being in the garb of godliness, which endowed on the personality, the power to issue out authority that cannot be queried. Herein lies the power of Africa kings towards social control and establishment of law and order in the society. In most cases, therefore, the word of an African king as understood, was law never to be flouted by anyone in his kingdom. There are also members of conflict resolution team because there are seen as peace ambassadors in the society, there major in the team is to listen to both parties either individually or collectively and pass fair judgment.

1. **Chiefs and Elders in Council:** Chiefs as Partners in Progress with the Kings in the society One needs to understand that Chiefs were subordinate to the kings and therefore had chiefdom as their area of jurisdiction. Chiefs were of lesser status and power than the kings in the societies. While kings were rulers, chiefs were leaders. The meeting point of their constitutional rights and duties was their commitment to governance and inauguration of peace and harmony in African societies. The chiefs in partnership with African kings carried out executive, legislative and judicial duties in their respective domains. They were duty bound to resolve conflicts regularly and facilitated peace and harmony which enhanced development in the society. The chiefs acted as safety verve in the conduct of conflict resolution meetings for the kings, who perhaps by loss of memory, would have missed certain procedure associated with the art of resolving conflict. The chiefs were often respected for the wealth of knowledge in reconciliation and enduring sense of history of the culture of the kingdoms. That is why there also consulted and made members of the resolution team either to stand in for the king or on a personal note. They function is to reconcile both conflicting parties and also send feedback to the people they represent and the king.
2. **Ancestors and chief priest:** The ancestors/ancestress have been conceived as the living dead sharing dual existences, the living world and the spiritual community. The experience gained while on earth usually informed the level of reflections of earth activities in the spiritual community. Such an experience was never given off since the connective veins and blood continually flowed in their offspring’s, who though, lacked the requisite experience, must be guided to gain the experience of life. Such an experience is that of motivation and coordination in the art of conflict resolution. Indeed, it is never in doubt that the ancestors would bring to bear on their ancestral and serene community, the art of facilitating peace and harmony, which undoubtedly, one will find out resonated in the modular exhibition of peaceful development. Thus, the art of conflict resolution would not have been limited to earthly living and sojourn but that it continued in the ancestral community. The chief priest is also one of the conflict resolution team, the chief priest represents the truth and justice in the society and there stand as the oracle of justices in the land. They stand between the ancestors (the spirit) and the people.
3. **Elders and Family Heads**: Elders had the capacity to initiate developments, gave foresight into the future of the society and facilitated peace and harmony, the preserves of law and orderliness. elders have been imbued and endowed with the art of conflict resolution, the defence of truth and projection of progress in the society. These elders were attributed with sterling qualities which stood them out of the society. These included: i. forbearance ii. tolerance iii. patience iv. foresight v. innovative spirit vi. self-control vii. forthrightness and viii. commitment to development process.

It is believed that the knowledge and wisdom of the elders were bequeathed to them by their ancestors who earlier had the foremost of knowledge and understanding of the earthly conflict resolution model. It is on this note that the elders and family heads as selected as members of conflict resolution team in the society. With the significant to infer from the ancestral impartation of knowledge on the elders that African societies had existing conflict resolution model before western influence came. The living elders, therefore, were the instruments of transition of knowledge and experience of conflict resolution in African societies.

**Leaders of various Age-Grade Association:** Conflict resolution was tailored towards the restoration of peace and enhancement of harmony in African indigenous societies. Obviously, one must know that it was not an easy task. It was esirous of knowledge, wisdom and experience. It was also aligned on social responsibilities of the age-grade association. The age-grade associations, therefore, played significant roles in the process of conflict resolution. Members of age-grade association in Africa had the capacity for ensuring mutuality and harmony. Thus, they are: a) forceful in action, b) dynamic by mindset, c) enthusiastic in manners, d) versatile in social engineering, e) intimidating in the struggle, f) spectacularly youthful; and g) blunt in the pursuit of truth. These sterling qualities enabled the age-grade association wherever noticeable in African indigenous societies, to be power to reckon with in the reconciliatory process of restoring peace and harmony back to the society. The existence of the age-grade association was one good innovation which has proven quite successful in the sustainability of law and order in African indigenous societies. Secret Societies The acts of conflict resolution require some elements of power and authorities. The enforcement of order enables peace facilitators to persuade parties to the conflict so much that peace becomes the order of the day and development can then take place in the society. Members of secret societies in Africa, through the ages, have had the mandate to lubricate the engine of societal development. Secret societies performed such role as to resolve conflict in traditional African societies. As earlier indicated, members of secret societies enforced social ethic and public probity in the society. They had facilitated justice was also part of the concern of secret societies. They had never shirked their responsibility to ensure a thrivable and proven social engineering which had checkmated dastardly and criminal acts in the society where the secret societies operated. In some cases, they had served as the supreme tribunal for conflict resolution. Conflict resolution demands maturity on the part of peace facilitators, openness of mind, great sense of history and enthusiasm anchored on capacity to wield enough power. Members of various secret societies in Africa before the colonial rule had enough of the foregoing attributes. The Poro society in Sierra Leone and the Ogboni cult among the Yoruba of south west Nigeria had long established the models of conflict resolution geared towards peaceful co-existence of people in their environment. Secret societies in Africa had devised the extra-judicial means of seeking to resolve an almost difficult conflict. It usually involved ritual performance, oath taking and the administration of ordeals. For example, one will get to understand that the edan was a symbol of ritual detection of crime in ogboni cult among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria.

**RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETY**

In Africa, there are levels or phases of conflict resolution as well as dispute resolutions at the inter-personal or family level, the extended family level and village or town level (chief in council). These tiers represent the political units making up the community. The smallest unit called Idile (Nuclear family) is headed by a Bale. The next unit is the Ebi, (extended family headed by Mogaji who is the most influential or usually the eldest person in the Ebi. Extended family includes all people who have blood ties. The last tier of the units is the quarter which comprises of several family compounds is headed by a Baale, (the chief-of-ward/quarter, while the head of household which includes the man’s immediate family of wife or wives and children (Albert, 1995) Cases resolved by Bale include conflicts among co-wives, brothers and sisters, truants, and street fights involving his children and his foster children or dependants. Conflict solved immediately includes minor conflicts by scolding the trouble makers and appeasing whoever was offended. The “bale” is required to visit the offended person, even to thank him/her for accepting a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It is the duty of Bale to call together his household and warn them to desist from making any more trouble.

However, appeals could be made from court to the second court which is the court of the ward chief (Ile-ejo ijoye Adugbo). This court tried civil cases. It could not try criminal case but it had the authority to conduct preliminary investigation into criminal cases before transferring them to the court of the king (Ile-ejo Oba) (Oguntomisin, 2004). Baale (chiefs) also controls the relationship between members of his family and outsiders. Such cases can threaten the survival of the entire lineage or ward. Once the matter is resolved, emphasis is put on how good neighbourliness can be achieved and preserved.

Land dispute, lack of good care for women and children by the husband, infidelity by the women, dispute over inheritance are the commonest in this category. However, dispute resolution by the Chief-in-council (Igbimo Ilu) in Yoruba land was the highest traditional institution for conflict resolution. In the pre-colonial era, the council had the power to pass a death sentence on any offender brought before it. The court of the king was the highest court. It was also the last court to which appeal could be made but, among Egba and Ijebu, however, the Ogboni court seemed to be the last court of appeal (Oguntomisin, 2004).

Whatever judgment is given is accepted. In the traditional judiciary system in Yoruba land, fines of damages are not usually awarded by the mediators in civil cases. The utmost aim is to restore peace by setting disputes amicably. In other words, restoration of harmony is what is paramount in the traditional judicial system. Sometimes, however, mediators award simple fines as a deterrent to the occurrence of particular anti-social behaviour. This may be demanded in form of kola nuts or local gins both of which have ritual significance. Some of the kola nuts are broken and passed round for everyone to eat as a way of celebrating the resolution of the conflict. The drink is also passed round for all to taste. If no gin or palm wine is available, ordinary drinking water can be used. In some traditional settings, the palm wine or gin is used to pour libation to the gods and ancestors of the people involved in the dispute. These actions help to reinforce the term of the reconciliation.

**RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY**

Conflict resolution in contemporary African society is a social capital, defined as the capability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together by effectively setting and facilitating the terms of their relationship, sustainability facilitates collective action for achieving mutually beneficial ends (Fred-Mensah, 2005). Over the years, there have developed inter group conflict over land; increasing reliance on formal contracts to regulate relationships and create understanding; and shifts in methods of conflict resolution in that mediation seems to have given way to more confrontational statutory approaches based on formal court procedures (Fred-Mensah, 2005). The task is to re-establish the energy flow within individuals, families and communities so as to re-build social harmony. In this context, reconciliation often has gone beyond requires symbolic gestures and associated rituals including exchange of gifts, and slaughter of animals (chickens, goats, sheep, cows) (Ndumbe, 2001). Conflicts may be managed so that they do not escalate and lead to crisis. Conflict management is different from peace building which seeks to prevent conflicts from developing in the first place by engaging all stakeholders in processes that facilitate peaceful coexistence. Conflict resolution deals with settlement of conflicts that may already exist. The spiritual dimension of conflict resolution refers to creating and restoring impaired relationship with God, the spirits, ancestors, family and neighbours as the case might be (Mbiti, 1991). This is critical in restoring other relationships at the physical level. In this context, rituals play an important role in the reconciliation process. They help to link people to the past, present and future. Conflicts must be understood in their social context, involving “values and beliefs, fears and suspicions, interests and needs, attitudes and actions, relationships and networks…” (Brock– Utne, 2001). Thus, the root causes of conflicts must be explored to emphasize shared understandings of the past and present. Brock–Utne (2001) notes that, the immediate objective of such conflict resolution is to mend the broken or damaged relationship, rectify wrongs, and restore justice. Another aim is to ensure the full integration of parties into their societies again, and to adopt the mood of co-operation. The objective of conflict resolution, therefore, is to move away from accusations and counter accusations, to settle hurt feelings and to reach a compromise that may help improve future relationship. The effectiveness of the process and sustainability of the outcomes, generally, are attributed to such factors as simplicity, participatory nature, adaptable flexibility, complete relevance, and comprehensiveness (Brock–Utne, 2001). According to Asafo-Agyei (2003), traditional societies resolved conflicts through internal and external social controls. The internal social controls use processes of deterrence such as personal shame and fear of supernatural powers. External controls rely on sanctions associated with actions taken by others in relation to behavioursthat may be approved or disapproved. Indigenous us conflict resolution mechanisms focus on the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation in dealing with common problems which underline the essence of humanity (Murithi, 2006). Cultural approaches to resolving and managing disputes play a vital role in promoting peace and social order in communities. Cultural values and attitudes provide the basis for interaction and the norms by which individuals and communities live. These also promote sharing and equitable distribution of resources, thus promoting a climate for peace. African cultural principles relate to the very essence of existence and being human and how all humans are inextricably related. Therefore, peace-making is underscored by the principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between people. It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness. This is because society places greater emphasis on communal life. Therefore, creating and sustaining positive mutual relations, are shared tasks involving everyone. It is believed that people are linked to each other including disputants as perpetrators or victims (Murithi, 2006). Conflict is as natural as the concept of peace contrary to the global or universal conception. Africans have particular ways of conceptualizing conflict. Traditional definitions of conflict regard it as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals” (Onigun, Otite and Albert, 2001). However, conflict may generally exist wherever or whenever incompatible activities occur and may result in “win-lose character. The resolution, transformation and management of conflict may also produce a win-win situation.