

Interrogating the Political Solution to the Tiv/Jukun Conflict in Taraba State: The Participatory Communication Approach

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Abstract

The Tiv/Jukun conflict in Taraba which dates back to pre-independence period has been one of the most recurrent ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The conflict has claimed lives and valuable property. There are so many factors responsible for the conflict such as fear of political domination and political control, indigene/settler dichotomy, land issue and population growth among others. The conflict has for long defiled traditional solutions to conflict management and the cycle of violence continued unabated with both the Tiv and the Jukun complaining of political and economic marginalization in Taraba and Benue. This paper interrogates the political solution to the conflict using participatory communication approach. It adopts development communication theory and uses descriptive and analytical research method as basis for analysis and discussion. The paper relied on secondary data and personal observation in its analysis and discussion. The paper discovered that the Tiv who are considered immigrants in Taraba by some of their Jukun neighbours continue to reject the ascription of a settler status on them and their agitation for inclusion in Taraba has been the major source of the conflict. The paper concludes that lack of political will in implementing resolutions reached on the conflict in the past has been part of the reasons why the conflict has refused to albeit. The paper also concludes that indigene-ship question, fear of political domination, lack of access to elected political offices, denial of indigene certificate and systematic marginalization has been identified as the reasons for the unending feud between the two groups in Taraba State and can only be addressed with the right political will. The paper then recommends that the government both at federal and state level should show the political will in addressing issues of marginalization claim by the Tiv by implementing previous resolutions reached in the conflict and that the government of the two states should change strategy from engaging with a select group of people (the elite) to engagement with the local people to harness their views on how to ensure peace in their area. It also recommends that the two states governments should set up joint peace and reconciliation commission to spearhead peace building process.

Keywords: Indigene/settler dichotomy, Jukun/Tiv conflict, Political solution, Participatory communication and Reconciliation

Introduction

The Tiv/Jukun conflict in Taraba State which often times spread to the neighbouring Benue State has been one of the most recurrent ethnic clashes in Nigeria's history. Moti (2019), noted that there has been periodic fighting between the two groups since the late 1950s, with sporadic outbreaks in 1959, 1964, 1976, 1990-1992, and again in 2000-2001. Till date, there is an ongoing crisis between the two groups which started on 1st April, 2019.

In Nigeria most conflicts are link to indigene/settler dichotomy and the Tiv/Jukun conflict is not an exception. Most communal conflicts in Nigeria are linked to this dichotomy because a person's status as "indigene" or "settler" in Nigeria has an impact in his social life, public service opportunities and access to certain privileges. Even though "settlers" may have lived in an area for hundreds of years, they are persistently discriminated against in terms of land ownership, control of economic resources, political patronage, jobs and educational scholarship among others. Unfortunately, this division continue to widen due to the inability of the Nigeria state to regulate the mutual coexistence of her citizens in the harmonious sharing of the competed resources that have led the parties to resort to struggle among themselves for survival, believing that allowing room for inclusiveness will further shrink the available resources.

It is failure of the Nigeria state to tackle the indigene/settler division or dichotomy that led to the 'settler/ 'indigene' question such as the Zangon-Kataf conflict in Kaduna State between the Atyaps (natives) and Hausa/Fulani tribes; the Tiv-Jukun ethnic conflict in southern Taraba State which has continue to linger, the Aguleri and Umuleri conflict in Anambra State, the Itsekiri-Urhobo-Warri inter-community conflict in Delta State, Ezza-Ezillo communal conflict in Ebonyi State; the Ife-Modakeke communal conflict in Oyo State, the Hausa/Fulani and Berom/Anaguta/Afizere crisis in Jos, Plateau State to mention but a few.

The Tiv/Jukun conflict in Taraba which date back to pre-independence period cannot be divorced from the politics of colonialism and the indirect rule policy of the colonial masters which they used to penetrate the north. It is a fact that the Tiv who were among the last set of people to be colonized had no recognized traditional kingship until 1945 when the first Tor-Tiv was appointed. Before then, the colonial masters had placed a good portion of Tiv land under the rulership of the Aku-Uka of Wukari for easy administration of their indirect rule policy.

When Tiv Division was created in 1938, the Tiv in Katsina-Ala District were placed under Tiv Native Authority in Gboko. Segments of Tiv clans namely; Gaambe Tiev, Shitile and Ukum who were in Wukari Division were left under the authority of the Aku Uka of Wukari (MAKPROF/FED/4/1/4377, paragraph 5, page 2). The creation of Tiv Division which followed the 1923/24 border line separating Tiv Native Authority Division and Wukari Native Authority, which later became Wukari Federation divided Tiv homogeneous Villages like Gbeji, Vaase, Abako, Sai, Chanchanji and Kashimbila in such a way that some members of the same families were divided with some in Tiv Division and others in Wukari Federation. Those who fall under the Wukari federation and those who later migrated after the border line was created are today referred as settlers in Taraba by some persons, especially the Jukuns.

According to Human Right Watch (2002) in Moti (2019), the Jukun people have always consider Benue as the home for all the Tiv and Taraba as theirs. Political polarization has gradually turned into physical segregation too: as violence has intensified in Taraba. The Tiv have complained of persecution in Taraba and talk of a deliberate campaign of "ethnic cleansing" primarily by the Jukun and the governmental authorities. The Tiv have complained that these operations allegedly backed by security agencies are deliberately timed to ensure that the Jukun have the political advantage in Taraba state in run-up to scheduled elections. The Tiv outnumber the Jukun and have always used their population advantage to decide electoral contests in Wukari and Taraba state in general. This has not been acceptable to the Jukun and the vicious circle of violence continued till date.

The age-long Tiv/Jukun conflict has continued to defy solutions probably because of lack of political will on the part of successive administrations in Taraba State. For instance, the 10-point agenda arrived at in 1992 by the Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida led Military administration was never implemented as the Jukun alleged that the resolutions were skewed in favour of the Tiv. The resolutions of the Obasanjo intervention in 2001 and other notable peace resolutions reached in the conflict have not being implemented and the conflict continued to rear its ugly head.

The latest in the series of the age-long conflict started on 1st April, 2019 at Kente in Wukari Local Government following a misunderstanding between a Jukun and a Tiv man in Kente market. Since then the crisis has escalated to Ibi, Donga, Takum, Bali, Gassol and Jootar in Benue State, killing many with thousands deserting their communities for the past one year and two months from April 2019 to June 2020.

Some of the deadly attacks in the conflict which were still ongoing. For instance, between 30th April and 5th May, 2020, there were reports of fierce battle between the two groups in Donga local government. As usual, the State government convene a meeting on 12th May, 2020 which ended with a 9- point communique towards peace, yet pockets of attacks were reported after the meeting. Attacks and killings were still being reported, and in some instances, major high ways like Bali-Takum road, Wukari-Jalingo and Wukari Takum road were allegedly being blocked by militia groups, targeting certain tribes' people to kill.

Now that the conflict seemed to have defiled series of interventions and other resolutions reached in the past, this paper seeks to interrogate the applicability of the 'political solution' to the conflict using the power of communication to dissuade the people to lay down their arms and embrace peace.

To interrogate this approach further, this paper adopts development communication theory and uses descriptive and analytical research method as basis for analysis and discussion. Through this methodology, the paper relied on secondary data and personal observation in its analysis and discussion.

Conceptual clarification

Conflict

In ordinary parlance, 'conflict' has been broadly associated with tensions surrounding decisions on various choices, sometimes being manifested in confrontations between social forces. Conflict represents the persistent and pervasive nature of inter-group and international competition among disparate interests and values that underlies power dynamics (Jeong, 2007). Differences in opinions, disagreement, and arguments are ubiquitous in every human relationship, whether organizational, communal, or international. In most times competition over values and claims to scarce resources and power is the most common trigger to conflict. Bearing this in mind, Azar (1986) noted that long-term grievances over economic and social inequities are derived from a failure to enhance the quality of life of a particular group which often result to conflict.

Simply put conflict refers to struggle over values and claims to scarce resources, power and influence in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals. Mark and Snyder (1971) in Jeong (2007), in agreeing with this submission opined that the concept of conflict has been stretched and moulded to describe any discord resulting from almost every aspect of social situations. The existential, penetrable nature of decision making over incompatible choices can impact politics down to such mundane choices as where to shop and eat.

Conflict which often leave destruction, trauma, social dislocation, death of loved ones, mistrust and suspicion in its trail also creates poverty and underdevelopment in communities ravaged by conflict as is evident in the Jukun/Tiv communities in Taraba and parts of Benue States. Moti (2019, p6) commenting on the effects of the Jukun/Tiv conflict observed that;

Conflict not only creates specific manifestations of poverty, but also affects wider structures and institutions. All these points highlighted below are present in the Jukun/Tiv conflict; A breakdown in the rule of law coupled with a lack of government services, human rights abuses committed by the different parties to the conflict, disruption to economic activity, illicit and unregistered economic activities (circulation of arms, smuggling, looting, banditry), specific local manifestations of poverty and vulnerability.

Political solution: A conceptual analysis

It is generally assumed that if social forces are allowed to take their course, they will produce the best political solution. However, unbalanced development is known to exacerbate conflict, and many conflicts require a political solution and not merely an investment in development (Cambridge English dictionary). This implies that negotiation and dialogue are key in advancing a political solution to a problem as parties involved need to agree on certain terms.

Elsewhere in Morocco, political solution was adopted to solve the problem in the Maghreb. Morocco's conception of a political solution was to bring the parties, through dialogue and negotiations, to agree on a negotiated and mutually acceptable political solution on the basis of a proposal of autonomy with respect for sovereignty and keeping with the recognition of self-determination as the preferred means of exercising individual and collective rights, and therefore overcome the impasse and achieve progress towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution in the Maghreb region.

Political solution has been one of the best forms of conflict resolution and that is why the United Nations (UN) in a bid to solve the problem between Israel and Palestine, has been pushing for a two State political solution. The same political solution is on board as part of efforts and initiatives aimed at unifying the viewpoints of interest groups in Syria. The UN is also pushing for a political solution that will bring an end to the crisis in that country. In doing this, the UN is making efforts to get the two parties to agree on the recommendations of the communiqué of the first Geneva conference issued on 30 June 2012, and to draw attention, in that connection, to the outcomes of the conference of the Syrian opposition, which was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 8 and 9 September 2015, and the dialogues and conferences that were held in Moscow, Brussels and Paris aimed at making progress towards a political solution.

Participatory communication

The concept of communication has numerous definitions and enjoys the attention of not only professional communicators, but that of other specialists from fields like sociology, political scientists, psychologists and philosophers. For Baran (2001) in Chiakaan and Agaku (2014) communication is the transmission of message from a source to a receiver. This implies that two elements are involved in a communication process- the sender and the receiver. According to Obilade (1987) in Sambe (2005) communication can be seen as a means of effecting particular kinds of behaviour in our receivers. Though this definition is far from what communication really is, it attempts to establish the fact that there is always a reaction in a communication process.

Communication therefore, is a process of sharing information from the sender to a receiver through a channel. And for the process to be complete there must be feedback.

In appraising the importance of Communication, Sambe (2005, p.11) states that;

communication serves as an instrument or vehicle of social interaction, it helps us to understand ourselves, keep in touch with other people, understand them and be able to predict their response to situations. It is a means by which power is acquired, exercised and sustained. It is a medium through which relationships are established, extended and maintained.

The concept of participatory communication therefore, stresses the importance of the cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels international, national, local and individual. Participatory communication model focuses on the effects of individuals on mass communication with special emphasis placed on the development of the third world (McPhail, 2009).

Freire (1983) refers to participatory communication as the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their word: 'This is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone nor can he say it for another in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words'. In order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process for development.

This model according to MacBride (1980), stresses reciprocal collaboration throughout all levels of participation. MacBride argues that it is at the community level that the problems of living conditions are discussed, and interactions with other communities are elicited. Through participation, people become actors in their own development rather than just passive beneficiaries. The concept of 'participation' can be seen as a process of equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development policies, strategies and in the analysis, planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development activities. To allow for a more equitable development process, disadvantaged stakeholders need to be empowered to increase their level of knowledge, influence and control over their own livelihoods, including development initiatives affecting them.

Development Communication Theory

Development used to be taken as bridging the disparity between the first world and the third world countries before the 20th century. It was believed to be the process which made the third world countries follow the first world countries/ western countries, which were considered to be fully developed. The under-developed countries had to follow their kind of political and economic systems, like heavy industries, capital intensive technology, etc. All other countries had to replicate a single form of development process which was practiced in some specific countries.

This theory according to Madaki and Musa in Chiakaan and Agaku (2014) arises from the technological imbalance and lack of skills which in most cases lead to the slanting of news to the dictates of the industrialised nations especially in the electronic media. As society evolves, the applicability of the other normative theories of communication in the third world countries became problematic due to the great variety of economic and political conditions and the changing nature of situations in developing countries (McQuail, 1987).

Development Communication theory affirms that developing nations or third world nations must use their initiatives to surmount overbearing influence and unidirectional flow of information to them. According to Ojobor (2002) in Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014), development media theory essentially tasks the media to embark on activities that can bring about total national development in the country. This theory emphasizes the need for the media to promote economic development and nation building as over-riding objectivities.

McQuail (1987) in Chiakaan and Ahmad (2014: P, 187) summed up the tenets of the theory as follows:

- Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
- Freedom of the media should be opened to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
- Media should give priority in news and information to link with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically.
- Journalists and other media workers have responsibility as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- In the interest of developing ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operations, and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified.

The strength of the theory lies in the fact that; specified tools for communication makes communication effective, helps in international development projects and participation in communication media makes it inclusive. But despite the benefits of the development communication theory, there are some weaknesses identified with the theory such as; enforcement of westernization more than modernization, cultural hegemony occurred through development communication implementation and that the theory gives the state the right to intervene in, or restrict media operations, and devices of censorship which is likely to be abused.

The development communication theory is relevant to this study. Its relevance lies in the fact that it emphasizes the need for the media to promote economic development and nation building as over-riding objectivities. In the context of the Jukun/Tiv conflict, the media, beaming its searchlight on the reportage of the negative effects of the conflict on the political, social and economic development of the zone where the crisis is happening and the state in general will change people's orientation about the crisis and the application of any genuine political solution will be naturally accepted by the people.

Issues in the Jukun/Tiv conflict

The Jukun/Tiv conflict in Taraba State which has been going on since the precolonial days is centred around contestation over land, fear of Tiv domination as well as political and economic control. While the Tiv form the majority in Benue with a good number of them in Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau States. The Jukun are predominately in Taraba with only a small portion of them found in Benue. The Jukun in Taraba see Taraba and particularly Wukari as their ancestral home and the presence of the Tiv in Taraba in large numbers becomes a threat to their economic and political survival.

This position has some historical background. For instance, Akombo (2005) noted that what is today Southern Taraba was known as Wukari Federation in the colonial years. The Federation comprised three Districts, namely; Wukari, Takum and Donga. The dominant ethnic groups in the area before British colonial administration were the Tiv, Kuteb, Jukun, Ichen (Kentu) and the

Chamba. All the groups found themselves in the Federation through the incidence of migration. None of the groups had any other place called its “home” where it would one day go back to. Interestingly, even though the groups were distinct from one another, they built and sustained very cordial relationship before the arrival of the colonial masters in the area.

When Tiv Division was created in 1938, the Tiv in Katsina-Ala District were placed under Tiv Native Authority in Gboko. Segments of Tiv clans namely; Gaambe Tiev, Shitile and Ukum who were in Wukari Division were left under the authority of the Aku Uka of Wukari. The boundary divided Tiv villages like Gbeji, Vaase, Abako, Sai, Peva/Chanchanji and Kashimbila in such a way that members of the same family were divided with some in Tiv Division and others in Wukari Federation.

Akombo, Yenda, Lawson, Rose, Haruna, Talatu, Audu, Ngah, Abubakar, Kinsley, Abubakar and Nzikachia (2016) submitted that some of the Jukun sources argued that the Tiv factor started right from the first time the Tiv community at Akwana resisted the attempt by the Jukun leadership to bring it under control. According to Fremantle’s (1919) account in Akombo et al (2016), the Aku Uka Awudumanu (c1871-1902) had twice fell on the Emirs of Muri, Buba (1869-1873) and Muhammed Nya (1874-1896) to challenge the growing Tiv factor in his domain.

Even with such move by the then Aku Uka, Akombo (2005) noted that the relationship between the two groups was very fascinating such that a Jukun elder had to interlace his ten fingers to describe Tiv-Jukun relationship. This formed the basis for one of the Wukari District Officers Mr. Gunn’s remark that “the Tiv and the Jukun are complementary to one another.” The election victory of Hon. Charles Tanguel Gaza- a Tiv man under the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) against a Jukun man Ibrahim Sangari Usman of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) to represent Wukari Federal constituency in the Federal House of Representatives in 1959 heightened hostility between the Tiv and the Jukun. The general political hostility that emerged between the Tiv and the Jukun after the 1959 elections produced serious complications in their relationship which eventually resulted in the “*Nande Ior*” and the “*Atem Tyo*” episodes of 1960 and 1964 respectively.

Masa-Ibi (2016, p104) re-echoed the fear of the Jukun when he said;

...to the Tiv, the UMBC would enable Mr. Joesph Tarka to carve out a region where the Tiv would be in control of affairs. Therefore, the UMBC was the Nzoru Tiv (sic) (Tiv party). The slogan that Tarka was fighting politically to create a region where the Tiv would control political power frightened some ethnic groups in the middle belt area, especially, we the Jukun who have fought to maintain our identity throughout the ages. This ethnic perception of politics gave rise to intense inter-ethnic acrimony and inter-ethnic tension culminating in the January 15 coup of 1966.

In his view on some of the causes of ethnic crises in Nigeria, Masa-Ibi (2016) identifies cultural differences, modern democratic ideas and ethno-religious sentiments, home grown terrorism, ethnic politics and British Protectionism policy among others. But top on the issues which the Jukun complained of is the fear of Tiv political domination and land and economic control. This fear was clearly demonstrated after the 1979 elections where two Tiv persons, Hon. David Mtuem and Hon. Simon Awua won the two House of Assembly seats to represent Wukari in the defunct Gongola State, and Hon. Hitler Gba’aondo won the House of Representatives seats to represent Takum federal constituency. The Tiv also supported the Jukun to go to the senate and the House of Representatives, representing Wukari constituency.

Even though the foregoing election results were products of political alliance between the Tiv/Jukun and other groups in former Wukari Federation, the Jukun elite were soon to declare that the arrangement was not only an ill wind, but a political mistake. Akombo (2016, p.49) reproduced the position of the Jukun elite thus:

A review of the 1979 General Elections and careful study of the development in our place will reveal a very dangerous trend of development as far as politics is concerned. These elections have come and gone, but their lessons and effects are still very much alive with us. We cannot run away from the fact that we committed blunders and the repercussions have been biting. However, what is most disconcerting is that we seem not to have learnt anything from those elections. It is a truism that it is only in Wukari Division where you have a different ethnic group (Tiv) representing the indigenous ethnic group in various legislatures in the country.

This mark the beginning of more vicious political lines between the two groups after the alliance of 1979. The Jukun since then never trusted any alliance with the Tiv, particularly in Wukari. Though Hon. Dooga Gbashi was elected to represent Donga State Constituency in 1992 his election was short lived as the military strike again.

For Masa-Ibi (2016), the British colonial administration made a mistake when they created provinces and divisions based on tribal boundaries, because their aim was to protect and preserve each cultural group but never made conscious efforts to prevent others from encroaching into others' territory. According to Masa-Ibi (2016, p.108)

...certain ethnic groups in Nigeria are in the habit of encroaching into others' territories without first obtaining permission. To such ethnic groups, forceful possession of things or occupation of land is not an offence even if it belongs to other people. When this kind of behaviour takes place, it bound to bring the two or the affected ethnic groups into a headlong collision as is the case between the Tiv and communities in Wukari, Ibi, Donga and Takum in Taraba State. Worst still, these migrants who forcefully and illegally occupy lands belonging to others have no respect for the existing authorities and traditional rights of the people in the areas they came to occupy.

The perspective of Masa-Ibi presented above has been disputed by Akombo and other colonial records. For instance, Akombo (2005) citing national archival document (MAKPROF/FED/4/1/4377, paragraph 5, page 2) noted that when Tiv Division was created in 1938, the Tiv in Katsina-Ala District were placed under Tiv Native Authority in Gboko. Segments of Tiv clans namely; Gaambe Tiev, Shitile and Ukum who were in Wukari Division were left under the authority of the Aku Uka of Wukari. Akombo further submitted that the creation of Tiv Division which followed the 1923/24 border line separating Tiv Native Authority Division and Wukari Native Authority, which later became Wukari Federation divided Tiv homogeneous Villages like Gbeji, Vaase, Abako, Sai, Chanchanji and Kashimbila in such a way that some members of the same families were divided with some in Tiv Division and others in Wukari Federation. With this submission, it will be wrong to conclude or agree with the position of Masa-Ibi (2016) that Tiv in Wukari, Ibi, Takum and Donga are settlers or migrants into areas they are occupying.

The issues of illegal migration and forceful occupation of lands by Tiv in Taraba has been the brain behind the quest for the adjustment of the border between Taraba and Benue States which is currently before a committee headed by the Deputy Governors of the two states from both sides.

There have been disputes over the sitting of the boundary between Benue and Taraba States as Jukun claimed lack of proper boundary demarcation is the reason for the recurring crisis.

Put it more clearly, the Jukun claim to be the original inhabitants of Taraba (southern Taraba) and Tiv are settlers. The Tiv on their part reject this position on the grounds that they migrated to their places in Taraba long before the arrival of colonial masters as co-owners of the land. The Tiv who claimed they occupied the Benue Valley long before the Jukun retreated from their defeat in kano and Borno accused the Jukun of marginalizing them; denying them of employment in the state civil service as done recently in the employment of 300 civil servants without a single Tiv person, denial of employment at the local government level, denial of indigenes certificates and other sundry issues in Taraba because of their privilege positions in government. For instance, in 2018 when the administration of Governor Darius Ishaku -a Jukun man upgraded and created 54 chiefdoms in Taraba without considering even one for the Tiv, the Tiv saw the move as a deliberate move to technically gazette them out of Taraba despite historical background in the state and their population across eight local government areas.

Another issue of concern is the indigene-ship question. The Jukun who sees the Tiv as ‘settlers’, or non -indigene in Taraba are worried over the growing population rate of the Tiv, which creates a need for more and more farmland and using same to fight for political control. The Jukun accuse the Tiv of often inviting their relations from Benue state into Taraba which now put pressure on landed resources only to carry the corpses of their relation back to Benue for burial when they die...an indication that they are not indigenes of Taraba. The Tiv who rejected this assertion repeatedly got the official endorsement of their indigene-ship status when former Governor Jolly Nyame on 26th December, 1992 officially end the ascription of a settler status on Tiv with his famous Peva declaration. Tyopuusu and Ugase (2013), quoted the former Governor Nyame as saying “the Tiv people of Taraba State are true indigenes of the State; they can vote and be voted for. Any qualified Tiv person can be appointed into any key position at all levels of government.” This declaration was also re-echoed by Governor Darius Ishaku on August 29, 2019 during a meeting with Tiv stakeholders at the Exco Chambers of Taraba State Government House Jalingo in the wake of the renewed crisis between the Jukun and Tiv in the State.

Political solution to the crisis and participatory communication: connecting the nexus

From the forgoing discussion it has been clearly established that Tiv are indigenous to Taraba as affirmed by two Chief executives. This is not to say that every Tiv man in Taraba is an indigene of Taraba as some are in Taraba on business trip, work transfer, farming and other reasons just as there are other tribes in other states including Taraba on similar grounds. Former Governor Nyame who first made the official pronouncement went further and started the implementation of articles 4.5 and 4.9 of the resolutions of the joint consultative peace meeting held in Makurdi between 27th and 28th February, 1997, when he appointed Mr. Dennis Orkuma Nev and Hon. James D. Nungwa as Permanent Secretary and Commissioner respectively, in the Taraba State civil service and the State Executive Council. He also appointed another Tiv son, Hon. Justine Adagi, as his Special Adviser on Poverty Alleviation. When late Governor Danbaba Suntai took over in 2007, he retained Mr. Dennis Nev as Permanent Secretary Government House Administration. In 2011 Danbaba appointed Mrs. Rebecca Manasseh as Special Adviser on Political Matters, Mr. Emmanuel Orabunde as Commissioner of the State Independent Electoral Commission, Mr. Orbee Uchiv as adviser.

Governor Darius Dickson Ishaku who took over on May 29, 2015 appointed Mrs. Rebecca Manasseh as Commissioner in State Executive Council and deployed to the ministry of

Environment, Hon. Dennis Orkuma Nev as Special Adviser/NEPAD , Hon. Samson Tor-Musa S.A to the Governor on students's Affairs, Hon. Kura Kurason SSA to the governor on Grassroots Mobilisation, Hon. Jerry Tyolanga SSA to the governor of Revenue Mobilisation, Hon. Samuel Tsua as Special Assistant, Hon. Tetegh Tetegh Shaakaa, Board Member, Taraba State Specialist Hospital and Hon. Stephen Butu, Board Member, Taraba State College of Nursing and Midwifery, while Hon. Emmanuel Orabunde retained his seat as Commissioner, Taraba State Independent National Electoral Commission (TSIEC). Even in the present administration, all except Hon. Stephen Butu have been reappointed as assigned various portfolios while Mrs. Bridget Twar who made her first entrance has been appointed Commissioner, Ministry of Social Development.

Now that the state government has demonstrated inclusiveness by these appointments, involving participatory communication approach and bringing on board local politicians at the grassroots in the crisis zone as well as traditional, religious and opinion leaders to discuss issues in the crisis with the right political will, will surely soften grounds for peaceful coexistence as both groups haven stayed together for centuries now know the complementary roles of one another in the political, economic and social stability of the area.

MacPhail (2009), noted that participatory communication stresses the basic right of all people to be heard, to speak for themselves and not be represented or reworded by another party. This open approach to communication attempts to facilitate trust and is aimed at recruiting the participation of the native populations in their own development. Participation here does not imply that there is no longer a role for development specialists, planners, and institutional leaders. It only means that the viewpoint of the local groups of the public is considered before the resources for development projects are allocated and distributed and that suggestions for changes in the policy are taken into consideration. Other than the continuous engagement selected stakeholders in meetings which have failed to yield the desire result, the government can consider harnessing the views of the people at the grassroots to discuss themselves how they can live together peacefully.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the Jukun/Tiv conflict has been one of the most protracted and disturbing ethnic violence in Nigeria. Lack of political will in implementing resolutions reached on the conflict in the past has been part of the reasons why the conflict has refused to albeit. Issues such as indigene-ship question, fear of political domination, population growth, lack of access to elected political offices, denial of indigene certificate and systematic marginalization identified as the reasons for the unending feud between the two groups both in Taraba and Benue can only be addressed with the right political will using political solution. Indeed, the age-long crisis has led to the loss of uncountable number of human lives, economic resources and destruction of valuable property. Hence issues in the crisis revolves around political and economic parameters, shying away from the political solution with the right determination and fairness will not solve the problem and the cycle of violence will continue with devastating consequences.

Recommendations

Drawing from the above, the paper recommends the following;

- i. The government of Taraba State need to show the political will in addressing issues of marginalization claim by the Tiv in the state and apply political solution in bringing about immediate end to the age-long conflict.

- ii. Government should change strategy from engaging with a select group of people (the elite) and employ the participation of local people to harness their views on how to ensure peace in their area.
- iii. The two states governments (Taraba and Benue) should set up joint peace and reconciliation commission to spearhead peace building process. The commission should also be saddled with the responsibility of promoting awareness campaigns, through radio, television, social media, folk media town hall meetings among others.
- iv. Security agencies should mop up illegal arms in the hands of the restive youths and also develop an early warning and response mechanism to check breaches of peace.
- v. Government should promote youth empowerment to take restive youths off the streets.
- vi. Government should organize social and cultural festivals that will bring the two groups together as that will evolve a spirit of accommodation, tolerance and mutual coexistence among the contending groups.

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