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TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN IGBO LAND AS AN APPROACH FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Man's nature and his assignment compel cooperation and concerted application of both tangible and intangible resources at all levels of human association. Man in society therefore is by his nature, victim of inter-personal relatedness.

According to Chukwudozie (2000) "man receives the first consciousness of himself as a being in relation to the physical universe, in relation to the various aspects of the created order but especially in relation to other person". Thus man is never a solitary being. Hence there is a common saying that "No man is an Island". Actually, man is a being endowed with a gift of relationship with others. Although he is an individual being, at the same time has innate push to relate to others. He yearns for union with fellow human beings. Hence man's existence in the world is essentially to co-exist with others.

Bradley (1996) talks of this basic constitutive state of man as a being with others. For him "Man is ontologically constituted in such a way that he is especially related. Man is therefore, a social being. The world is the world he shares and inhabits with other people. This sharing ushers in rules and code of conducts, and assigns roles and responsibilities to people in their social contact with one another". Therefore, it is peculiar for man to act with other men to get his needs satisfied. Without this capacity, he should not be referred to as human being. The individual apart from the community is not anything real. Infact, man's social nature cannot be over-emphasized. Hence every situation of conflict is settled in human society. Conflict is endemic in all human environments. It however varies in forms and intensity, from places to places and from time to time. According to Ezeani (2000) "Human societies at various stages of their development have been characterized by diverse forms of conflicts". Conflicts in its different forms are therefore an omnipresent fact of human existence.

It is often emphasized that conflict brings about progress but conflict often includes dysfunctional and destructive components. As a result of these negative effects of conflict men have explored different procedures for conflict resolution as is the case in Igbo land. Traditional Nigerian communities do not have a common strategy for the resolution of conflict. However, with colonialism, modern methods and institutions for conflict resolution such as police, courts, military panels etc were introduced. Despite the popularity and the use of these modern methods and specialized institutions of conflict resolution, instances abound where parties to a conflict have withdrawn their case (s) from these modern courts for settlement through traditional procedures and methods. Thus, the need for this work on conflict resolution as an approach for rural development. The Igbo people in South-East Nigeria will form the focus of this work because they have well developed traditional conflict resolution procedures which date back to pre-colonial times. This work among other things will cover:

- Conflict and conflict resolution, a conceptual clarification of conflict and procedure.

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- Structure and organization of traditional Igbo society.
- Different forms of social conflicts in Igbo society.
- An overview and synthesis of conflict resolution in traditional Igbo land.
- Some specific conflict resolution procedures and mechanism in Igbo land.
- Traditional conflict resolution and rural development.
- Conclusion

In Igbo society, traditional conflict resolution procedures exist side by side the western oriented ones. The courts are not substituted for the Igbo traditional forum for settling dispute. Up till today conflicts between individuals in the villages, offenders in law are brought before the appropriate traditional tribunal. In fact, in many villages in Igbo land of today, laws are made prohibiting members of the community from taking cases to the courts except such cases that could not be settled in the traditional ways.

A. CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURES: A CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION:

The phenomenon of conflict has attracted scholars for a long time. There is no single definition of conflict that is totally acceptable among the scholars and the use of the term –conflict varies accordingly. Conflict connotes disagreement, quarrel, lack of compromise etc between individuals, groups and communities. According to Ezeani (2000) conflict is disputes and tensions as well as manifest or overt clash between social forces or groups. Implicit in this conception is the notion that conflict varies in magnitude and ranges from antagonistic relationships between groups to manifest violence or civil war.

Simmel (2000) viewed conflict as the pursuit of incompatible goals such that gains to one side come about at the expense of the other. The definition implies that conflict is the outcome of competition. It also presupposes a high degree of interdependence which the parties concerned is bound to work out their relationships across boundaries set by specific interest, values, aspirations and expectations. Some sociologists explain that conflict arise because of the domination that flows from the power and structure of authority in society. Radical sociologists deriving influence from Karl Marx, see the society as an organized conflict between two classes, based on the ownership or non ownership of the means of production. The former comprise a rich group of capitalist who appropriate more than their fair share of the society wealth. The latter is made up of mainly wage earners peasants who are largely deprived, marginalized and frustrated. The relationship between the two classes is inherently antagonistic and conflict ridden.

Bass (2008) states that failure to live to subordinate expectations is likely to result in conflict. He further emphasized that conflict may result from distribution of rewards which one member rejects certain rewards that ordinarily would have obtained his compliance on the basis that he sees another member earning more for similar compliance. Thus, conflict is caused by many factors. Also there are different types of conflict. Levine (2001) attempted a compact classification of structural levels of conflict and they include:

- a. Intra-family – interpersonal conflict between family members
- b. Inter-community – intra personal conflict between members of different families within the small local community.
- c. Inter-community – all levels above the single local community but within a single ethno linguistic entity, and

- d. Intercultural conflict between groups belonging to different ethno linguistic entities or between such entities acting as units, for instance intertribal conflicts.

In this work conflict should be seen as disputes and tensions as well as manifest or overt clashes between individuals, groups or social forces in a social setting or a given community. Similarly, this work is concerned with the first three levels of Levine (1971) classification of conflict, that is numbers a, b, and c above. Conflict resolution procedures in this work implies different methods and institutions employ in the process of ensuring that antagonistic relationships are resolved or eliminated and peace is resorted in the interaction of the individuals, groups or community concerned.

B. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF TRADITIONAL IGBO SOCIETY:

According to Okafor (1992) in the context of Igbo traditional society, the word "family" has a much wider meaning than its has in the western societies. In Igbo communities, there are no vernacular terms which denote the various categories and depths of social groups unlike in western societies where such terms abound.

In the traditional Igbo society, each family is made up of territorially Kin based units called *UMUNNA*. The family is made up of a number of compounds. The compounds called *Ezi* or *Obi* in Vernacular consists of a number of economically independent household each with a man or woman as a householder. A big compound is an ideal one – one consisting of a large number of households.

A high degree of harmony and order is achieved through the respected office of the compound head. All the householders and their dependant recognized the full authority of the compound head and are expected to consult him before taking a major political decision. The *Obi* as the compound head is addressed in some parts of Igbo land has numerous ritual, moral and legal rights and obligations. He offers sacrifice for the welfare of his compound members, whom he helps to extricate from their ritual, social and legal difficulties; he settles matrimonial cases and confers a special name on each child born in his compound. He represents them in their external dealings with other like social groups. Any injury inflicted on any member of his groups without his having first been notified is considered a personal injury for which he makes a personal reprisal if need be. Such is the authority exercised in true spirit of democracy. He does not interfere in their internal affairs. He does not normally initiate political action either, but he is always aware of what action is planned for he must give his opinion on their conflict with custom and tradition.

The family head is in turn entitled to periodic tributes and gifts in kind from other members of the family. This is not however a legal entitlement. Succession to the office of the head of the family follows the line of primogeniture. At the death of the family head, the oldest member of the family automatically takes his position.

According to Uchendu (1995) in the secondary sense of the word, it is a social imperative for a man to raise his own family. "If a young man waits too long before he marries, he is regarded as an "Okalioli," a useless vagabond. Polygamy as a symbol of high social status is the ideal.

Igbo marriage is an alliance between two families rather than a contract between two individuals. It establishes a new social link not only between families but also between the villages of the bride and the bridegroom.

Children of such marriage are regarded as direct blessing from God. Childless marriage is therefore a tragic failure.

The husband – wife relationship is very cordial and not that of a master and slave. The husband does not treat his wife as a mere property in Igbo community. If a woman's husband neglects her or treat her badly, she may return to her parent's home. When this happens, the husband is expected usually to take a conciliatory gift to her father – in – law to beg the woman to return. However, in public matters, women have not much to say. But by means of various kinds of women organizations or groups, their opinions and their impacts are felt in village affairs. As pointed out earlier, in Igbo society after the family comes the *umunna*, which is a group of families which have a common descent. Also the *umunna* is a very essential institution both religiously and politically. *Umunna* is the main land – owing unit in Igbo-land and *umunna* also constitutes the minimal polity within the village group.

The *umunna* is followed closely by village or quarters or wards. The village is made up of *umunna*'s which have a common descent. Its organization, function and method of operation are similar to those of *umunna* on a wider scale. The village has a village assembly which deliberates on recommendations of the village council and village council consists of the village elders, Ozo title holders and the priest of the village oracles. The village council initiates its own proposal for village laws or a code of behavior for the villagers. Next after the village, is the town which is the highest political unit among the Ibos for all practical purposes and functions. The town is made up of villages which have a common descent or have united for some reasons. The town usually has a town assembly in which decisions are made.

In Igbo system of government, the political institutions in Igbo land differ in their structure. Some of these like the kingship institutions of Onitsha, Nri and Aguleri are intrusive traits. Although age grade association, title making societies, Dibia fraternities (medicine men), secrets societies and oracles are among the traditional instruments of government, the role of each in the political processes of a given village groups differs markedly. Nevertheless, there emerges a general pattern of political process which is shared by all Igbo. The concept of central government and central authority is alien to Igbo political system. In Igbo land, two main layers of political structure are identifiable and these are the village and the village group. Political activities revolve around these two social units. To reemphasize on the concept of village and village group. A village is a social unit comprising the lineages; a village group is a agglomeration of individual villages to form a political community which is also known as town. The Igbo achieved a political structure which is referred to as Ohacracy.

Economically, the Igbo society is predominantly an agricultural economy and all other activities were part time and seasonal in nature or the primary concern of specialized communities. For instance, the Awka people are known as predominantly black- smiths and Akwete people are known as good weavers.

C. DIFFERENT FORMS OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN IGBO SOCIETY:

The following include the different forms of social conflicts in Igbo society:

1. **MARITAL CONFLICT:** This is the type of conflict between the husband and the wife, that is, the couple. In Igbo society, the institution of marriage enables a child to have a socially recognized mother and a socially recognized father. The

institution of marriage constitutes a socially accepted rite for recognizing the undertaking which two or more people may take to play the role of husband and wife. At times, misunderstanding and disagreement arises and this results into serious relationship problem between husband and wife. The end result of this type of situation is marital conflict. Marital conflict constitutes a threat to the marriage of the couple. What this implies is that the couple cannot live in peace as husband and wife. There will be violence in such family, which means the use of threats or actual use of physical force between the husband and wife. Also this results to lack of communication between the husband and the wife.

2. **LAND DISPUTES:** Land is the most important asset of the Igbo people. Most conflicts have passed as inter – tribal wars, sparked off mainly by land disputes. Such conflict usually affects mostly rural peasant producers. Land disputes in Igbo land remains one of the endemic social problems. Land disputes in Igbo land take two forms, namely, intra- community and inter community disputes. The intra – community disputes occur in different forms such as disputes between families or between brothers within the same family, disputes between lineages or between or among people within the same lineage, disputes between villages or between or among individuals within the same village. On the other hand, intercommunity disputes involve two communities or towns and are usually more violent (Ezeani: 2000).

According to Isichei (1996) “Oral tradition suggests that as the nineteenth century progressed and population pressures increased, wars over boundaries became more frequent”. There are many cases of land disputes in Igbo land and some examples are that between Umuleri and Aguleri in Anambra state and that between Nkpor and her neighboring towns- Onitsha, Ogidi and Obosi. According to Isichei (1996) “the role of land disputes is very marked in the history of warfare in the Owerri area. Obidi, for instance, was surrounded by no alternative but to endeavor to extend her boundaries by war. Wars in some other part of Igbo speaking areas like Ezza in Ebonyi State and their neighbours were inspired by an equally single minded passion for land”. The situation in most parts of Ibo land today is that land is very scarce and very costly to acquire on freehold basis.

3. **CHIEFTAINCY AND LEADERSHIP DISPUTES:** The British colonial Administration encountered obstacles of great magnitude when it first came to Igbo land. It had enjoyed considerable success in the western and northern parts of Nigeria. Through the agencies of the western Obas and northern Emirs, the British Authorities successfully introduced a system of indirect rule in those areas. Failing to find powerful chiefs in wielded influence over a large territory as were found in the northern and western parts of Nigeria, the British colonial government introduced the system of warrant chiefs. The warrant chiefs were hand picked by the British without any particular consideration as to their position in their communities and without regard and reference to the customs and traditions of the communities. They were assigned powers which were unknown in their different communities. The newly introduced warrant chief system in Igbo land created problem because the people refused to accept the system that is alien to them. They see the warrant chief as an imposition on them and resentment against the activities of the warrant chiefs was one of the causes of the Aba women riots of 1929 in which many lives were lost.

Conflicts emanating from chieftaincy and leadership tussles have been a serious problem in Igbo land. According to Ezeani (2000) "in the former Anambra state of Nigeria, chieftaincy and leadership disputes took a turn for the worst with the promulgation by the former governor of Anambra State, Col. John Atom Kpera, of the chieftaincy Edict which came into force in September 2, 1976. According to this Edict, only the Obi of Onitsha, Ofala Okagbue I, was deemed to be recognized as a chief. The remaining communities in the state were required to select and present their chiefs to the government for the purposes of recognition. Since then a lot of chieftaincy disputes have taken place in different Igbo speaking communities. In some of these communities, the race for selection proved to be a long drawn out struggle that was often disrupted by bitterness and unhealthy and unnecessary rancour. It is still the worst in some communities where chieftaincy and leadership is rotational. Communities in Nkanu like Amagunze has witnessed a long time chieftaincy tussle and this halted her rural development activities.

4. **FAMILY CONFLICT:** When couples were threatened by marital problem capable of dis-uniting them, this may further lead to family conflict. The maltreatment of children in such family will be the order of the day. Both the children and their parents can never find love and peace in such family conflict situation. Parents-child relationship will be strained, resulting into parent-child conflict in the family. Positive family life experiences usually escape as a result of family conflict. A family in conflict is a troubled family.

According to Ekpe and Mamah (1997) "a troubled family or family conflicts is characterized by the following factors:

a. Family violence, which means the use of threats. This may be a result of extreme possessiveness which in turn may result from extreme jealousy. b. Externalization of blame due to self absolving rationalization. c. Confused role play which occurs when one member expects the other to perform both maternal, paternal and spousal functions that are inappropriate to the member's status, or age grade. d. Displacement of anger which means transferring anger from place of work, social gathering, school etc. to a family member. e. Inappropriate marital expectation due to the fact that people enter marital relationships harbouring unrealistic expectations about the quality of marital life. f. Limited knowledge of parental role, where parents regard children as mini-adults with knowledge and skills far beyond their ages. g. Lack of appropriate communication between the family members, inability to tolerate stress." Others include addiction to alcohol or drugs by any member of the family, poverty, unemployment, etc.

D. AN OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN IGBO LAND:

In traditional communities in Nigeria, various methods are used in conflict resolution. In a typical Igbo society legal rules are of two main classes and are recognized as such. According to Okafor (1992) there are those which might be called ordinary human laws and those whose breach is held to be not only illegal but also an offence against the supernatural. Thus the methods of conflict resolution in traditional communities like in Igbo land depend on the nature of the cases and the existing relationships among the people. The Igbos have well established and defined traditional methods of conflict resolution. According to Ezeani (2000) although there no specialized courts as such entrusted with judicial matters in traditional Igbo land, there are known institutions to which, judicial matters could be referred to and such cases are properly treated."

These known institutions include the age-grade association, women societies like Umuada, the family, the Umunna, village elders or the privileged groups, the village council, the masquerade (Mmanwu) society and other super-natural tribunals to which offences of grave nature or against the land which cannot be treated by the ordinary, judicial procedures are referred. These strategies may be adopted singly or in combination. As said earlier, the nature and the parties involved in the conflict influences the choice of institution to handle the conflict. Conflict between or among people within the same family are first managed and treated at the family level by the Okpala and other members of the family. Efforts are made to arrive at a decision which will be acceptable to both parties involved in the conflict. If this fails, the injured person or party may appeal to the Umunna or lineage and the case will be tried and resolved by the Umunna or the lineage assembly. It is pertinent to emphasize that there are few instances as in which conflict between members of the same family failed to be resolved at the Umunna or lineage level. There are also some instances where parties to a family dispute who ignored the Umunna and appealed directly to the village or town assembly, were persuaded by friends and relatives to take their case back to the Umunna or lineage assembly.

However, if attempts to resolve a conflict at Umunna or lineage fails, further appeals may be made by the injured person or party or dissatisfied person or party to other institutions such as umuada and umuokpu, title societies like the Nze na Ozo title men. Often conflict resolution in Igbo land results to the imposition of sanctions on the defaulting or guilty person (s) or parties to the dispute. The types of sanctions imposed also depend on the nature of offence committed against the law of the land. When all these recognized judicial conflict resolution procedures have failed to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of both parties, appeal is made to a supernatural tribunal which is the last court of appeal. This appeal to the supernatural tribunal takes the form of swearing.

The fact that the use of traditional methods of conflict resolution is possible is because the Igbo make laws on a wide range of subjects including, economic, social and political matters. Though the Igbo do not have a permanent legislative body or a specialized legal institution with powers to make laws, laws are made by an adhoc general assembly (Oha) which is in fact an all purpose assembly (Okafor : 1992). Whether in the making of laws affecting the wider Igbo political unit, the village group (obodo) or in the enactment of Laws affecting a smaller political unit, village (Ogbe), the legislative procedures are much the same. In a typical Igbo society, an act is bad either because it is contrary to *omenala* (Law and customs of the land). The Igbo human laws are social instruments by which diverse and often conflicting interests of the members of the society are regulated in such a way that common interest of the community as a whole is placed above individual interests and on the other hand, the divine laws, the breach of which is an abomination, have spiritual harmony as their ultimate end.

In line with the various traditional methods of conflict resolution mentioned above, Nwanuobi (1992) emphasized that traditional societies do not have a common strategy for the resolution of conflict. According to him, we may nevertheless, group the ranges of strategies into five headings, namely:

- a. Self help
- b. Peer group assembly
- c. Village council
- d. Council of elders/privileged groups, and
- e. Game solution.

E. SOME TRADITIONAL APPROACHES AND INSTITUTIONS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

1. COUNCIL OF ELDERS/PRIVILEGED GROUPS:

According to Nwanuobi (1992) societies in which authority follows the gerontocratic principles repose a lot of confidence on the council of elders in both the governmental and legal spheres of activity. The rationale is that in environments where experience and wisdom tend to be correlated with age, decisions by the elderly are the best to be expected. The elders play prominent roles in conflict resolution. The public belief in the uprightness, dignified candour and the ability to dispense justice equality of the elders. Such cases as land dispute and other serious civil cases are handled by the elders including appealed cases. For example, the Ekpe among the Efik and some cross River Igbo groups as well as the Igbo elders group exert a lot of influence in conflict resolution.

2. TOWN UNIONS: The town unions take far – reaching decisions and play very essential role in conflict resolution in Igbo land as well as in other societies though it may be called different names. The cases that could not be treated at the family, lineage and village levels and such cases as chieftaincy disputes are usually brought to the town unions for settlement. The town unions normally invite the two parties to the dispute and they are allowed to present their case before the town unions. After the persons or parties to the dispute have presented their cases, they are asked questions based on the cases they presented to the town unions. Also witnesses are invited for questioning. When the necessary data have been collected the main parties are asked to go out from the immediate area or where the town union is holding the discussions on the matter. At this point, the town union members argue and deliberate on the merits of the case, the truth or otherwise of any of the persons or parties claims. Thus decision is reached on the case and the town union spokesman then pronounces the verdict before all the parties. Sometimes sanctions are imposed on any person or party found guilty but the type of the sanction depends on the nature of the offence. In modern times, the town union is led by elected executive chosen from the various villages that make up the town.

3. PEER GROUP/AGE GRADE ASSEMBLY: This approach of conflict resolution is mostly associated with societies based on age grades like Igbo land. In some Igbo groups certain offences involving women are reviewed by women's groups in the first instance. Age grades are important in conflict resolution. It is only when such age grades admit inability to settle the case that the case is referred to the wider society. According to Nwanuobi (1992: 156) the guiding assumption in the reliance on peer groups in conflict resolution is that such groups' best understand the intricacies of issues in which members are involved. This assumption is strongest when both parties are of the same group. The age grades are believed to provide the least inhibitive environment for members to speak out their views and grievances. The age grades provide a democratic atmosphere for the members to air their views on matters.

4. UMUNNA ASSEMBLY: Another name for Umunna Assembly is the lineage Assembly and it is very vital group in the settlement of conflict in Igbo land. Almost all cases are handled by the Umunna assembly and many cases that would have been taken to courts are stopped by the lineage assembly. The Umunna usually give enough time to the persons or parties involved in a dispute to air their views and deliberate on the case

before giving final verdict on the case. Witnesses are allowed to give evidences and data collected are reconciled in order to give judgment. When decisions are reached, the Umunna appoint a spokesman who is usually the eldest man in the lineage or the appointed chairman who pronounces the verdict before the persons involved in the case. Appropriate punishment is given by the Umunna to the guilty person depending on the nature of the offence committed. The cases usually cover by the lineage assembly ranges from economic, social to political matters.

5. **UMUADA AND UMUOPKU ORGANIZATION:** The umuada organization is made up of the married and unmarried daughters of the lineage group. Those who were married may either marry within their towns or outside their towns. Marrying outside their towns cannot stop their membership in umuada organization. Any of the umuada who have performed any ceremony for a title belongs to umuokpu. In the umuada organization, the leadership is based on seniority in age. The most senior daughter whether married or unmarried is the leader of the umuada.

The umuada organization acting through their leaders assist in treating cases, especially family conflicts in their father's town. Amadiume (1987) states that no matter how difficult a case may be, the umuada due to the prestige and respect given to them settle such case. It is the duty of the umuada to ensure that their father's household is at peace.

The umuada organization handles cases among lineage wives, and even between husband and wife. At time the umuada is known to treat cases among the lineage men. According to Olisah (1971) "occasionally, the umuada step in to settle long standing kindred disputes which the male members have been unable to treat. They could also impose collective sanctions on the male members and could force the offender to conform". The Umuada in order to make sure that the penalty which they give to the offender is carried out may resort to boycotting funeral which is one of the important roles they play in their patrilineages. The umuada usually wash the corpse of a lineage member, decorate it and guard it through the night until it is buried.

6. **SELF HELP:** According to Nwanuobi (1992) this approach to conflict resolution include all the sanction mechanisms whereby society allows and indeed, expects an injured person to take action on his own to redress the wrong done to him. The self help actions include recourse to satirical song and various other forms of ridicule that are frequently used by the women against the other women when they have conflict in their relationship. An example of such satirical song used by women is "*ihe osoro gi mebee, ekwensu aga m emeri gi. Nwachi obubu gi ka m na agwa. Ihe osoro gi mebee onye iro, agam emeri gi*". This in English is devil I will win you whatever you like, do it, I will win you, you enemy.

Also, included under self help are various physical acts of self defence found all over the world as in Igbo land as well as blood feud associated mostly with societies organized around the principle of lineage segmentation. Every injured person takes action entirely on his own to secure justice in any situation in which his person, property or interest has been violated.

7. **VILLAGE COUNCIL:** This approach to conflict resolution provides for the whole community to listen to the issues under contention and offer suggestions for the resolution of the conflict (Nwanunobi: 1992). The settlement of case is arrived at in a public setting and village councils allow room for intervention by contestants, their kinsmen and other allies. The village council approach is time consuming. The persons

involved in the dispute are allowed to freely air their views and decision is taken on the matter.

8. **GAME SOLUTION:** The game solution approach to conflict resolution resembles the western judicial machinery with graded systems of courts, specialized advocates, judges and laid down procedures. According to Nwanunobi (1992) the game solution provides for litigants to argue their cases before neutral officials and witnesses are allowed in the process of sifting evidence. Judgment follows well known procedures. The system is well defined predictable.

9. **SUPERNATURAL TRIBUNE:** In this approach to conflict resolution, swearing is done and this is through consultation of oracle. In vital issues in Igbo land, oracles are consulted when divine justice is needed on cases. According to Ezeani (2000) when all the recognized Igbo judicial institutions have failed to resolve a dispute to the satisfaction of the injured party, the final option is to seek redress from the supernatural which alone can dispense absolute, pure and final justice". Any judgment passed by the supernatural tribunals is unquestionably acceptable to all parties concerned no matter how sour the judgment may taste. This is due to the fact that divine judgment is held to be impartial. It is a sure way of obtaining absolute justice.

However, in using this method of conflict resolution, the persons involved in the dispute are usually being questioned by their kinsmen before they are allowed to take an oath on the matter. This is done in order to warn the persons involved the implications of taking the oath and also to see that the persons involved in the dispute is not trying to deceive himself and his kinsmen. Swearing falsely means that the person who takes the oath exposes himself or herself to a grave illness or even death and brings vengeance of the deity on their kinsmen as well. That is to say that when one finger touches oil, it will spread to the others. This method is very popular in Igbo land.

10. **SITTING ON THE MAN:** According to Ntunde (2009), when a man does something against his people or kinsmen and the matter is looked into and the man is found guilty. The man is requested to apologize to his people. If the man refuses to do so, sitting on the man method of conflict resolution may be used by his people. What is done is that the women or *umuada* will go to the man's house and sit in his house. They will not allow the man to go out and they will not go out themselves. This will force the man to apologize and do all he was asked to do for the offence he committed. They may stay in his house for days or weeks. They will be singing and doing all sorts of things in the man's compound and the man must be feeding them until the man complies to their demands. An example of this type of conflict resolution approach is found among the people of Ntueke community in Ideato local government area of Imo state.

F. TRADITIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

According to Aniche (2002), rural development is important in Nigeria because the bulk of the Nigerian population lives in the rural area and poverty is wide spread over the entire rural areas. Also conflicts in different forms are endemic and rampant in these rural areas in different degrees and intensities. Rural communities could have been highly developed today if there is peace and unity between individuals, groups and communities. The greatest country is that in which its citizens are living in peace and unity and doing what they want to do for a living and doing it well to develop their areas

because they are living in peace. Peace and unity are important in human existence and development.

According to Nweke (2003) development can take different forms. One aspect of development can be in terms of helping human beings to resolve their conflicts in their interpersonal, inter - group and inter - community relationships through the different conflict resolution procedures. Conflict resolution should form an indispensable factor in rural development in Igbo land and other rural areas in Nigeria. The ultimate goal of conflict resolution is to help the individuals, groups and communities to live in peace and love and achieve self actualization, self realization, and self enhancement and need fulfillment. When the individuals, groups and communities achieve the goal of conflict resolution, they can mobilize forces to plan effectively for development both in their rural and urban areas.

G. CONCLUSION: What then constitutes traditional approaches to conflict resolution varies from society to society. The approaches are relative to society and they depend on what constitutes crime in that society. Thus, traditional approaches to conflict resolution are innumerable. The traditional approaches to conflict resolution have been resilient despite the increasing popularity of the modern methods like the use of courts. Indeed, court action is regarded in Igbo land as the last resort whenever a conflict could not be resolved traditionally. Even then most of the cases in the courts are later referred back to be treated traditionally. People involved in the cases readily accept such move because the environment of conflict resolution through traditional approaches is usually friendly while modern methods like courts engender so much animosity and rancour between the persons to the dispute even after the disputes has been settled. The traditional approaches to conflict resolution are very essential in fostering justice, fairness, honesty and equality among the members of the society. The approaches employ democratic principles and everybody is free to air his or her views about the case(s). What is then needed in Nigeria is integrating the traditional approaches to conflict resolution and the modern practices for improvement and better usages, thus, creating conducive atmosphere for rural development.

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