



Evaluating the Effectiveness of Transformational Conflict Resolution Strategy in the Management of Agricultural Sector Crisis in Africa

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Abstract

Agricultural related conflicts date back to human efforts toward survival in the midst of competitions. These conflicts are generated from interpersonal contacts which sometimes are historic connections with deep ancestral roots. The nature of the crisis resulting from these conflicts are usually entrenched in disagreements over land boundaries or total ownership of land or waterway. In situations where conflicting parties share common ancestral heritage, age-long and generational animosity have often been the reason for conflict and attacks. In cases where domineering tendencies can be ascribed to a party to the dispute, land grabbing by conquest is usually the experience. This study thus sets out to evaluate the effectiveness of deploying conflict transformation strategy in pursuit of a permanent solution. This strategy underscores the crucial importance of bringing out the humanity in the parties and helping them to bring about innovative solutions that can transform their conflicts into more beneficial ventures or opportunities. The study relied on the theoretical framework of conflict and crisis management in addition to the classical views of the major religions in respect of permanent solutions to conflict situations. In view of these postulations, the study proposed a mathematical expression that indicates the cyclic nature of most agricultural land conflicts. This expression can thus be used to make predictions in preparation for future challenges if transformational conflict resolution strategies are not applied.

Keywords: industrial and communal dispute resolution, productive ventures, behavioral analysis, structures of society, violent actors

1.0 Introduction

Agricultural sector crisis is as old as man's survival efforts on earth. It accounts for many other menace in the society, ranging from internal disagreements, to communal clashes and armed conflicts. As has been reported, these agriculturally related conflicts can be traced to boundary disputes from opposing vested interests who are claiming title to the same land, nomadic and native land settlers, disputes arising from distribution of other forms of resources such as fertilizers, seedlings, land sizes, etc.

Irrespective of these conflicts, the peasant sedentary farmers contribute a great deal to national food productivity and as such deserve some attention of the major stakeholders in the agricultural chain of events; on the basis of the fact that most productive ventures are not without conflicts (Tamuno, 1999). Consequently, it can be safely said that the core reasons for most of the disputes is land ownership. Secondly, as shall be discussed in detail, the availability of fertile soil is also an attraction for farmers to migrate in search of greener pastures.

The foregoing implies that upon locating a place with good farmable qualities, the migrants can settle down; and studies have shown that before long conflicts normally commence between the migrants and those they met on the land. This is a major source of conflict, especially where the land owners that the migrants met were very accommodating and allowed them enjoy certain benefits of the native aborigines.

As could be seen, another source of conflict, are aborigines that can trace their ancestry to a single progenitor. In this case, they both lay claim to the land on the basis of native inheritance. These extremes accounts for many land cases in courts and arbitrations-both statutory and native.

In view of the foregoing, this brief study is to determine if the strategy of transformational conflict resolution can be used to bring about peace co-existence among warring factions on land disputes. As shall be seen in the work of Shekarau (2002) on the conflicts in Taraba State in northern Nigeria; the possible reasons for such conflicts are disagreements on the basis of roots of ownership of farming and grazing lands. This Taraba State case study would be used to establish the possibility of conflict resolution using the ideal transformational method that guarantees success on both sides of the disputes. Thus, transformational conflict resolution deals with studying the fundamental basis of the conflict, including its root causes, its actors or any other reason for its existence. It is also designed to maintain sustainable peace among the conflicting parties.

Further, transformational conflict resolution is a social tool for reshaping the fundamental structures of society, by understanding the dynamics and social connotations of the conflicts- by utilizing analytical tools that are applicable in systems behavioral analysis. Consequently, transformational conflict resolution is a crisis management strategy that enhances the transformation of relationships by promoting areas of common interests to the parties and by so doing, positively influence the societal components or persons that encourage the conflict (Miall, 2004).

In this regard, most conflict situations have ethnic origins, this makes transformational conflict resolution a crucial and suitable antidote to issues of management of agricultural conflicts. Further, it is majorly beneficial to the conflict resolution process, since it borders on identification of the nature of relationship that exist between the parties and then find ways to exploit the gains of such relationships. As a build up to this study, it is important to distinguish between (i) transformational conflict resolution, (ii) conflict management and (iii) conflict resolution as a distinct field of practice. A better understanding of these approaches is important to whatever industrial scale application could be attributed to each of them. Accordingly, Miall (2004) distinguished them as follows:

- i) *Transformational Conflict*: This approach is viewed as conflict transformation and specifically deals with identifying the relationships that exists between the parties and under such situation. It thus isolates or distinguish the aspects of the relationship or the persons in the relationship who support or ignite violence.
- ii) *Conflict Management*: The approach tries to contain the conflict while encouraging activities to proceed. It only manages the conflict to enable the parties to individually succeed in their endeavor in little but significant measures.
- iii) *Conflict Resolution*: Conflict resolution is an approach that endeavors to move the conflicting parties away from their individual standpoints towards a point of consensus where both parties only focus on their achievements and outcomes of their decisions, using the assistance afforded by persons who are not party to the conflict.

In the foregoing regard, transformational conflict resolution lies at the heart of dispute settlement where the core interest for the crisis is agricultural land (Tamuno, 1991). Further, as opined by Yahaya (2005), land is central to humans, both in life and in death. This cultural perception of land also determines how disputes arise between the persons who lay claims to the land. An example of this natural claim to land is a case where a farmer plants vegetables along a natural water course as to have access to water for the crops; at same time, the herder needs to take his cattles for drinking of water on the same water course. The cattle would natural eat up the vegetables and crops and that becomes a

source of conflict between the farmers and the herders. The implication of this illustration is that both the farmer and the herder are drawn to the natural course of water and both lay claims of entitlement to it; thus it becomes conflict on the basis of a natural resource outside land ownership. This means that a deep understanding of the central nature of the problem resulting the conflict is fundamental to evolving a transformational conflict resolution strategy that would be adequate for its permanent settlement.

In addition to the foregoing transformational conflict resolution draws attention to a proper inward evaluation of a person's conduct, by taking cognizance of generally acceptable behavior that is socially permitted and geared towards societal wellbeing, general wealth and happiness. Thus, human management strategy provokes the individual's mind in respect of his humanity and exploits his inner positive feelings. When carefully handled, this progressive psychological tool can be used to transform the thinking pattern of the individual farmer or herder. Once their thinking has been influenced in the direction of maintaining peace, transformational conflict resolution strategy can be said to have achieved its purpose as a proactive strategy of communal and industrial dispute resolution.

2.0 Understanding the Basis of Disputes for Conflicts Transformation

It is imperative to note that there is the clear need to understand the real issues in any disputes before an appropriate strategy can be developed to transform the conflict to something better. In further response to this, a resort will be made to the fundamental theory of conflict, in considering the views contained in the work of Galtung (2000), who observe that in its real nature, conflict has a life cycle and this makes it organic. Thus, being organic it can be said that its existence follows a natural pattern in the sense that in almost all cases, conflict appears, drives on with its attendant ills, culminate into emotional or violent climax and disappears for a moment and thereafter repeats the cycle again. Thus, understanding of this logical pattern is crucial to resolving the problem; and in the foregoing regard, the following issues are central to all disputes situations: -

- i) individual community, states and nations have goals and these goals maybe incompatible i.e. exclusive of each other's in interest for instance both parties may be interested in the land for same reasons.
- ii) when goals are at variance or incompatible, contradiction may result.
- iii) unrealized objectives or goals generate frustrations.
- iv) frustration may result aggression; internally it could be seen as attitudes of hatred and externally it can be displayed as verbal abuse or physical violence.

From the foregoing, it could be safely said that conflict induced hatred and violence could be leashed out on the person(s) perceived to be holding the goal or standing in the way to actualizing the goal. In this regard, the resulting violence could become harmful even to the aggrieved person, who at the time of the violence has become irrational and unreasonable. The unleashing of violence is intended to assuage the feelings of frustration and in return, this may result a consuming posture of counter-attacks that are equally violent in nature as a means of defense, wade-off or revenge.

The foregoing thus results killings, destruction of properties and general obstruction of the flow of life. This further results all forms of deprivation, lack of opportunities, loss of basic sources of livelihood, etc. In the long run, the resultant effect is the entrenchment of deep seated hatred which often becomes an external conflict for which revenge and counter attacks take a toll on the conflicting parties until the real issues or the origin of the conflict disappears. Thus, the parties over the generations only concentrate on evolving strategies to violently outwit the other persons or party, and the cycle continues indefinitely until a permanent solution is entrenched. In the foregoing regard, the life cycle of conflict indicate that it could be mapped as follows:

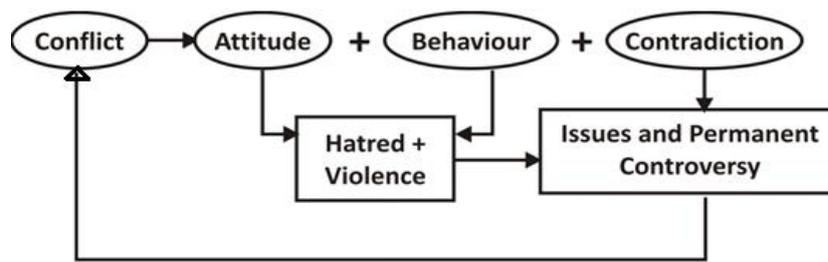


Figure 1: Conflict Cycles

As a fall out of figure 1 above, it could be safely concluded that before the outbreak of violence, conflict was already in existence. Thus, violence is usually a build-up of conflict. This approach or line of reasoning, thus establishes the following four pillars of conflict as could be shown as follows:

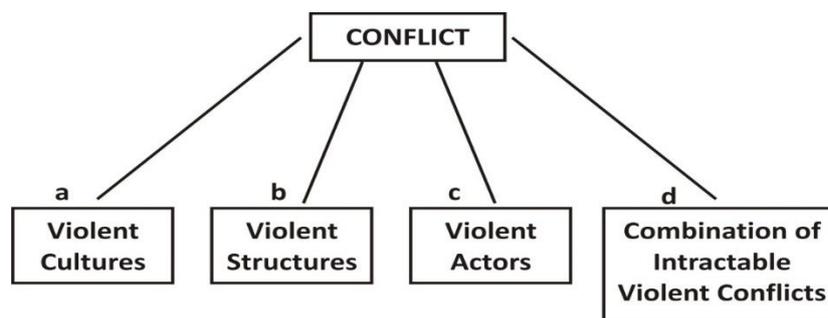


Figure 2: Conflict Pillars

From figure 2 above, the following crucial analysis could be made:

- a) *Violent cultures:* This pillar of conflict is specific for disputing parties with cultural or sub-cultural patterns that legitimizes violence and violent behaviors. Thus, negative human traits are not only ethnically based but religiously rooted. As could be seen, certain religions support the violent acquisition of land for purposes of dominating their real owners or their neighbors. This religious culture thus lends credence to the use of force or violence.
- b) *Violent Structures:* This pillar imply an established tendency to exploit the weakness of the other person and by this means repress and alienate them from their due benefits in the resources that they legitimately own. Violent structures also utilize every opportunity to change the leadership patterns of societies by installing the leaders of their own stock or puppet leaders from the oppressed people. The puppet leader must do their biddings.
- c) *Violent Actors:* The culmination of various conflicts is violence. This pillar is the aggressive or fighting component of the conflict cycle. These actors are bullies with no regard to the pains they inflict on other people and the lives of those persons means nothing to them provided they can eliminate them to achieve their goals. Conflict actors possess dangerous criminal qualities that makes them carry out inhuman attacks; and a lot of the time, they are social deviants with little or no regard to human life and existence.
- d) *Combination of Intractable Violent Cyclic Conflicts:* The fourth pillar of conflict deals with intractable violent disputes that maintain the cycle of violence. This combination brings the three previous pillars that was been discussed together and makes them work in synergy under and interdependence subset as shown in figure 3 below.

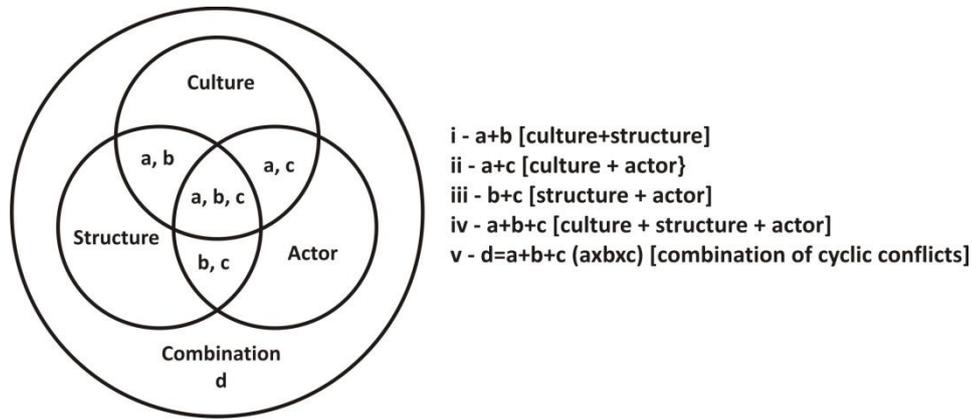


Figure 3: Conflict and violent set and subset analysis

From figure 3 above, land and agricultural related communal conflicts take the undertone of a cyclic events. In this regard, the various pillars are a subset of each other as they all interplay to produce the cumulative result. Further, their interdependency is a clear indication that they are all pillars of one building and their combination pillar aggregate their individual strengths into a single combinatorial factor.

In the foregoing regard, if a, b, c, could be quantified and assigned values, then equation 1 can be used to mathematically represent the structural behavior of *d* as shown below:

Thus:

$$d = \sum a, b, c (a. b. c.) = a (a. b. c) + b (a. b. c) + c (a. b. c) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where a.b.c = *i*, then;

$$d = \sum ai + bi + ci \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Given that *d* is an intractable factor, its recurring polynomial characteristic results equation (3) which is expressed it is polynomial characteristics as follows;

$$d = \sum(ai + bi + ci)_{r_q}^n \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

where *n* = no. of cumulative occurrence of measured conflicts durations and,
r_q= quantified losses in terms of human and material resources where each loss component is defined as, *r₁, r₂, r₃ r_q* and *r_q* a central predictive quantity.

Although the human lives that are lost to violent conflicts cannot be treated as a mathematical quantity, equation (3) go to show that conflicts are of communal, ethnical and religious nature; and in those regards are cyclic in nature and as such; should never be allowed to start in the first place.

Having established the likely basis of most industrial disputes, it is important to state that various panels set up by the various governments in respect of the said Jukun/ Tiv conflicts that resulted violence between 1990 and 1992 and between 2000 and 2001, did not put the perspective of this study into consideration. According to Idowu (2001), the various panels of enquiry failed due to their inability to examine the historical basis of the conflicts; which transformational conflict resolution strategy is all about. Thus, the pillar of violent structures in this regard imply that since the Jukuns were the aborigines and often engaged the Tivs to work for them, it is expected that the Tivs who are polygamous in nature over the years would have more population, and that this increasing population

would be interested in acquiring more lands for farming and animal husbandry. This is the root cause of the conflict. Accordingly, while the Jukuns provided land, the Tivs provided the labour (Lodiya, 2002).

Thus, the presence of violent structures will also result violent actors, as we have seen in the reports of Bolarinwa (1997) and Yahaya (2000), that the mean age of farmers in Taraba State that were drawn to the conflict were between 25-63 years giving a mean of 42.5 years, implying that 80% of the farmers who may have constituted the *violent structures* and *violent actors* were men in their active and productive years. According to the view of Oyeyinka (2002) people who are educated tend to develop broadminded approach to issues. This imply that the presence of broad minds among conflicting parties reduces the cumulative interest in violent activities. Consequently, this fact means that majority of the violent actors in the crisis under review were not formally educated and hence do not have broad minds that would have enabled them have or possess the understanding of the value and sacredness of human life.

3.0 Institutional Framework Incidental to Conflict Transformation Ideologies

Conflict transformation has been viewed in contrast to conflict resolution as a dispute engagement process that does not only intend to demolish the perceived contradictions that result a conflict, but specifically target the identification and resolution of structural issues such as root causes and historical sentiments that has fueled the conflicts. Conflict transformation also deals with attacking of all forms of injustices that has resulted the conflict, thereby relying on the findings to transform the crisis into opportunities that better the lives of the conflicting parties. Part of the achievements expected from an effective conflict transformational engagement process is that it brings about restorative justice, where human relations and its ideals are brought within modern perspectives which produces ethical and value-oriented results.

The foregoing implies that conflict transformation is about the change of mindset in order to achieve the required social balance. In this regard, conflict transformation must be practicably comprehensive, effectively compassionate and significantly creative (ICP, 2015). It should be observed that conflict transformation or transformational conflict resolution is a long time multi-level intervention that targets the changing of perceptions, thinking, removing of interpersonal engagement barriers, improving on communication skills of the parties, digging out the root inequalities that has resulted the perceived or observed social injustice.

In view of the foregoing, institutional framework that practicalizes the conflict transformation component of crisis eradication considers the following facts:

- i) conflict should be seen as an integral component of societal evolution rather than an isolated event that can be handled summarily.
- ii) conflict should be viewed as a potential force or stepping stone that can produce positive and productive benefit for societal development rather than being a destructive venture that reduces societal expectations of growth.
- iii) conflict transformation is far from conflict resolution, since it addresses the problems from their root causes and sets agenda for future sustenance of peace by evolving strategies of co-operation and collaboration in decision making by both sides. It promotes forgiveness.
- iv) conflict transformation is a long term harmonization process, that is complex in nature and only succeed by sustained measures of engagement and honest interactions.
- v) conflict transformation is specifically intended for situations of intractable conflicts, where age-long differences are responsible for never-ending violence.
- vi) conflict transformation goes beyond an approach or technique but a way of thinking about the conflict itself with the motive of unraveling the real essence of its existence.

In addition to the foregoing facts, Galtung (2000) drew attention to the following fundamental premises upon which transformational conflict is built. They are as follows:

1. **following Hindu thought...**

Conflict the Destroyer and Conflict the Creator; conflict as a source of violence and conflict as a source of development. The conflict [i.e. conflict transformation] worker has the third role as Preserver, transforming the conflict by avoiding violence, promoting development.

2. **following Buddhist thought...**

Codependent origination, everything grows together in mutual causation. Conflicts have no beginning and no end, we all share the responsibility; no single actor (like statesmen) carries all the responsibility (monopoly) and no single actor carries all the guilt.

3. **following Christian thought...**

Ultimately, the responsibility for conflict transformation lies with individuals and their individual responsibility and decisions to act so as to promote peace rather than violence, and the principle of hope.

4. **following Daoist thought...**

Everything is yin and yang, good and bad, there is the high likelihood that the action chosen also has negative consequences and that action not chosen may have positive consequences; hence the need for reversibility, only doing what can be undone.

5. **following Islamic thought...**

The strength deriving from submitting together to a common goal, including the concrete responsibility for the well-being of all.

6. **following Judaic thought...**

The truth lies less in a verbal formula than in the dialogue to arrive at the formula, and that dialogue has no beginning and no end.

The foregoing views of the major religious beliefs indicate that transformational conflict resolution strategy is an approach that can guarantee long time permanent solutions since both parties are guided to make significantly permanent rewarding decisions with far reaching peaceful consequences for their generations to come.

Further, the paper drawing inference from the views postulated by Austin, Fischer, Ropers (2012) report their position in respect of transformational conflict resolution as follows:

A generic, comprehensive term referring to actions and processes seeking to alter the various characteristics and manifestations of violent conflict by addressing the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term. It aims to transform negative destructive conflict into positive constructive conflict and deals with structural, behavioral, and attitudinal aspects of the conflict. The term refers to both the process and the completion of the process. As such, it incorporates the activities of processes such as conflict prevention and conflict resolution and goes farther than conflict settlement or conflict management.

In conclusion of these incidental ideologies, it can be safely posited that interpersonal relationships often generate frictions that degenerate into conflicts. Thus, in response to this seeming tidal flow of social conflicts, this ideology is a life-infusing opportunity that results constructive and sustainable social change; which is achieved by evolving co-operative engagements between the parties that guarantee a reduction or eradication of violence, increase in the promotion of issues of natural justice, strengthening of the structures of society in response to practical problems arising from human relationships that interconnects several aspects of the conflict. Thus, where a particular aspect of conflict is not well articulated, there is the tendency that it can result some violence.

4.0 Causative Factors of Land Related Conflicts: The Taraba State Incidence as Case Study

In the build-up to the various engagements that resulted the different recorded conflict regimes in Taraba State in the northern part of Nigeria, it was found that the active participation of the violent actors and violent victims succeeded because both sides have their individual age-long generational grievances and reasons. This implies that all sides to a conflict have reasons for their participation or inactivity. In discussing these reasons, recourse shall be made to the field work report of Bolarinwa,

Fapojuwo and Ayanda (2012), where analysis of various components of the data of that study indicated indicate most of the causative factors. Analyzing the findings of Table 2 of their published work, the following causative factor is attributable to most conflicts that degenerates to violence.

Table 1-Percentage Distribution of Farmers by Suggested Causes of Conflicts in Tarba State

Variables Description	Frequency	Percentages
Cultural Values	28	45.9
Land Space	20	42.6
Land uses autonomy	44	72.1
Creation of local government council	26	42.6
Scarcity of Resources	29	47.5
Population growth	34	55.7
Violation of tenancy agreement	10	16.4
Personal disagreement	39	63.9
Territorial dispute	27	44.3

(Source: Bolarinwa, et al., www.researchgate.com)

- i) *Land Ownership and Control* – In the Jukun-Tiv dispute, it could be safely said that land ownership tussle accounted for majority of the conflict situation as 72.1% of the respondents believed. This mean that loose land tenure system may have been in place for a very long time for which the occupants of the land must have been accustomed to. Thus, a contrary claim however small might become or result a violent conflict.
- ii) *Advancement in population*: The report indicated that while the Jukun men had fewer wives and are mostly of monogamous marriages, the Tivs were polygamous and this resulted population growth which required more lands for the Tivs who had large families. Further, historical perspectives to the conflicts according to Bolarinwa *et al* (2012) indicated that the Tiv may have migrated from Cameroon to meet the Jukuns in the land. This constructively places the Jukuns as original owners who may have granted part of their lands to the Tivs in return for providing them with labour. In this regard, 55.7% of the sample population believes that population growth is also responsible for the drive for land which resulted the crisis, thus meaning that land owners denial of more lands to their tenants who were more in number was responsible for the problems. The views expressed by Jibowo (2002) supports this finding.
- iii) *Autonomy Against Ancestral Covenants*: Since historical facts supports that the Jukuns were earlier settlers, the exponential growth in population of the Tivs implies that with time they will demand for greater autonomy and where opportunity presents, will exercise such. This quest for autonomy may be against the ancestral territorial conditions for cohabitation and is likely a point of potential danger. It should be noted that 44.3% of the respondents agreed that this factor also contributed to the crisis.
- iv) *Personal Disagreements*: This view as adopted by 63.9% of the respondents is responsible for the conflicts. Thus, where personal disagreements are allowed to degenerate, then conflicts is imminent and in this regard tribal sentiments can fuel wider and longer conflicts on the basis of ethnic association and protection.
- v) *Cultural Values and Practices*: This point as recorded by 45.9% of the sample space is also a crucial factor. This means that over a period of time, certain practices and values that were accommodated by more liberal forbearers may not be acceptable to the newer generations and could thus become serious cause for concern.
- vi) *Scarcity of resources and inequitable distribution*: As population grow, and resources are not developed to accommodate the rising population, a time comes when scarcity of resources or uneven distribution will result feelings of marginalization and deprivation. This situation makes it difficult to achieve a balance of peace. Thus, table 1 above indicates that 47.5% of the respondents believe this to be one of the reasons for the crisis.

In addition to other key indices, the report project that 70% of the farmers participated in the violent conflicts, between the Jukuns and Tivs. The relevance of this finding is that disputes as to ownership and control is the basis or fundamental reason for conflicts resulting violent attacks.

5.0 Recommendations of the Study

Having traced the historical basis of this study and the attendant relevance it portends, suffice to state that conflicts in relation to agricultural land is not only an undesirable consequence of lack of planning and communication, but also a weapon of *social de-stratification*; implying that conflict can also be used to advance the cause of society either constructively or destructively. In this regard, the following recommendations are proffered:

- 1) Farmers should as a matter of communal policy be made to compensate land owners for the use of their lands. This means that when the need arises to expand the size of land used, such needs should translate to more income to the land owner. This makes conflicts generated from issues of this nature to be nipped in the bud.
- 2) In areas with recurring conflicts related to land, police or military security should be deployed to establish their base or station in order to maintain the peace. In this vein, no police or military personnel will watch violence escalate or grow out of proportion.
- 3) There should be clear demarcation and defined boundaries between farmers. This also imply that farming and land grazing areas designated for grazing should not be farmed on and areas designated as farms should not be grazed on.
- 4) Farmers should at all times maintain single loyalty to a known community leader as multiple loyalty have been shown to be disadvantageous. They are also required to participate in every form of co-operation that guarantees mutual benefits of all parties.
- 5) Since reconciliation is crucial, farmers should imbibe the spirit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation, this will assuage the feelings of loss of humans, revenue and opportunities.
- 6) Sharing of ancestral values and communal co-operations like sports and joint festivals should be promoted as this guides the future generation to stay away from conflicts (Rycher, 2001)

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