

Land, A Seed of Discord in Bahumono: An Assessment of Ebom-Usumutong Conflict of 1979.

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is a recurrent feature of inter-group relations in human society, but when poorly managed, it often escalates into violent confrontations and prolonged warfare. Among the communities of Cross River State, Nigeria, the Ebom and Usumutong people have experienced recurrent communal conflicts, with land ownership and boundary disputes constituting the principal source of hostility. This conflict have resulted in the loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of residents, disruption of socio-economic activities, and deterioration of inter-community relations. The study specifically, seeks to identify the historical origins of the land dispute, examine the factors responsible for its persistence, assess the socio-economic and political consequences of the conflict, and evaluate the mechanisms adopted to resolve the dispute. The study adopts the historical research methodology, relying primarily on qualitative data obtained from oral interviews with community leaders, elders, youth representatives, and government officials, complemented by documentary evidence from books, journal articles, archival materials, government reports, and newspapers. Findings reveal that competing historical claims to land ownership, unclear colonial and post-colonial boundary demarcations, population pressure, and the economic value of the disputed land have sustained the conflict despite repeated peace initiatives. The study further reveals that while traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and government interventions have contributed to reducing violence, they have not produced a lasting settlement. The paper concludes that sustainable peace between the Ebom and Usumutong communities requires an impartial boundary demarcation process, strengthened institutional conflict resolution mechanisms, continuous dialogue among stakeholders, and community-based peacebuilding initiatives capable of addressing the underlying causes of the dispute permanently.

Keywords: Conflict, Communal, Bahumono, Ebom and Usumutong.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Conflict is a global malady irrespective of the level of sectoral and other dimensions of development. This is to say that there is no known human society that is quarantined from conflict, and no human society has been spared from the turmoil of war and its various gradations. As viewed By Gerald Priestland's, 'future of violence', extreme violence has ebbed and flowed through history. With this assertion, there have been wars at different levels in the world, ranging from countries, states, and community levels. Example of these conflicts include the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1973, the Banana wars of 1898, the Nigerian civil war of 1967, Congo crisis of 1996, Ugep-Mkpani 1987, Ebom-Ebijakara 2006 and the Ebom-Usumutong conflict of 1979. All these wars have their causes centered around marginalization, deprivation, domination, exploitation, inequality, injustice and subordination. Thus, cases of war with one another is seen as an integral part of human nature, as man is both an aggressive and a defensive being (Calabar historical journal, vol 5). In all wars of human history, their negative impact has always been devastating and no state or community has benefited from conflict without recording loses and Ebom/Usumutong conflict is not an exception. The concept of war and conflict has been seen by some scholars as a part of social Darwinism which presupposes the survival of the fittest. According to Gerald Priestland. War is the inevitable forces in the process of natural selection, as a tool of historical surgery playing the role of national stimulant. The Ebom and Usumutong communities belong to the Bahumono ethnic

group in Abi local Government Area of Cross River State. They speak a common language known as Kohumono. Their existence prior to 1979 was characterized by peaceful co-existence and social relations. However, the migration of these communities from their ancestral home known as Ohumusa (old town) to their present settlement gave rise to the 1979 conflict as a result of expansion and growth (Calabar Journal of the Humanities Vol. 13).

Statement of problem

Communal conflict has continued to generate security problems among local dwellers, leading to the destruction of lives and properties. In the context of this paper, Ebom and Usumutong communities have lost lives and properties and this has created the atmosphere of distrust and insecurity between the two communities, making it difficult for development to soar in the area. All of those wanton destruction and obstruction to progressive development is the reason for this research, with the aim of finding causal factors, remote and immediate, enormity of destruction, intervention efforts, peace negotiations and aftermath of the conflict.

Study Area

This paper is focused on the Bahumono ethnic extraction in Abi Local Government Area Of Cross River State. Bahumono is a conglomeration of eight villages which include, Usumutong, Ebom, Ediba, Ebijakara, Abeugo, Afafanyi, Igonigoni And Anong. Geographically, the area is located on the eastern side of the middle Cross River Basin, about 129 kilometers away from the state capital (Calabar) and 54 kilometers from Obubra. It lies between latitude 5.40N and longitude 8.3E, with land area of approximately 1.422 square kilometers and an estimated population of 58,000 people in 2006 (NPC). linguistic evidence dismissed the claim by some scholars that Bahumono is an Igbo sub-group.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a dispositional view in which meaning is found in the use of words. Words do not possess meaning in and of themselves, rather, meaning is formed in the usage of words (Baldwin, 2001). Baldwin explained that concepts are to be viewed as express abstractions repeated in social interactions with which common attributes begin to be associated. To provide a dispositional, rather than an entity view which would treat concepts as “things”, Rodgers’ evolutionary method of concept analysis was employed. Based on this method, verbal interview from both communities and neighbouring communities like Ediba and Afafanyi was carried out in order to present a balanced overview of the study. Supporting documents include archival materials like reports of committees and government commissions of enquiry, court rulings and petitions also served as data sources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The documentary evidence on Ebom and Usumutong past is scanty. Thus, this paper reviewed relevant literature on the causes and consequences of ethnic and communal conflicts in Nigeria, this is intended to present a deep understanding of both the study area and subject matter.

S. Eteng Ekpo’s “Rise And Fall of The Bahumono Cultural Heritage”, it is generally believed that the Bahumono ethnic group emerged from Akpa, the old belief is that the place known as “Akpa” lay in the southern part of Cross River State. Linguistic investigation reveals that the place Akpa, is an area now in the Benue valley and partly in Kogi state of Nigeria. However, the name seem to have disappeared from contemporary geography of Nigeria. The people left Akpa to Othumusa (old town) from where there occurred series of events that led to the separate movement of the Bahumono people into various settlement. Oral traditions holds that they had however, been several movement from about the 16th century due to inter-tribal wars, as a result, there was continuous movement away from where the Bahumono communities settled as one. The migration of Bahumono people is confirmed by Strides (1971) who concluded that the general pattern and direction of migration on the West Atlantic Coast was from North to South and East to West. Strides and his collaborators postulated three reasons why men migrate. **First**, men migrate for the tendency to seek for other fertile lands when the already occupied land gets over populated. **Secondly**, men migrate due to political or religious crisis which leads the oppressed group to seek refuge in other lands. **Thirdly**, economic drive is one major reason for migration. Thus,

the three reasons postulated by Strides were partly contributory to the migration of the Bahumono extraction from their ancestral home to their various locations. However, to enhance smooth economic relations in the area due to similar culture, they had their market days on a rotational basis. On one hand, it increased inter-group relations and on the other hand, it created uneasy relations between various communities, culminating in the insecurity challenges faced in the area. Adesoji Abimbola's "Indigeneship And Citizenship In Nigeria, Myth And Reality", States that the issue of citizenship could address the recurring politicization of ethnicity if the Nigerian constitution emphasize its inviolability. In the article "Rekindling Ebom/Ebijara", published in the *Nigerian chronicle*. Isong Isong declared that militancy in Nigeria no longer arouse curiosity as it has become common place. Though he was careful not to apportion blame to either warring communities of Ebom and Ebijara, he believed such bloody conflict was as a result of the absence of basic social amenities in the area especially institutions that encourages peace and security. The judicial commission of inquiry presented its report to the Government of Cross River State, it state that the conflict between the two communities of Ebom/Usumutong is as a result of bitter hostility due to hatred and animosity that had built up between the two communities for over 20 years and it is centered on land ownership leading to the 1979 boundary conflict.

Okon Eminue assert that boundaries have relative roles, they could act as bridges and windows to establish contact and ensure cooperation among people of different cultures and background, or act as irritant to conflict and wars. He went further to state that the post-independent history of most African states has been bedeviled by actual and potential border tensions and conflict which serve best as obstacles in the part of peace, security, regional planning and development of the continent and sub-regions. Michael Bonchuks, states that traditional boundaries has the potential for conflict but the cooperative features are more prominent as they are not sacrosanct, this invariably promotes inter-group harmony. Similarly, to Edward Luttwak, modern wars comes as an act of developing and using military and other resources in order to achieve objectives defined by national policy. However, the objectives of war may not possess a national orientation and configuration, but rather they may have to do with vested interest whether at the micro level of an individual or the macro level of the community, clans and so on. The study is on the spatial analysis on the objectives of conflict as to how it creates consequences that are most times far more than gain. Akpomuvie J. B. and F. Forac's work titled "Ethnic Communal Conflict In Nigeria", acknowledged the fact that much has been said and written on the debilitating effects of both ethnic and communal conflicts in Nigeria. The perception and policy formulations towards resolving problems of ethnic and communal conflict portrays a poor understanding of this social malaise and has only implicated issues the more. Thus, they argued that ethnic or communal conflict stem from structural imbalance of the larger Nigerian polity, which has put many ethnic groups in positions of perpetual disadvantage, due to wide spread injustice occasioned by the feeling of alienation, stemming from environmental degradation provide a common ground for status and class consciousness, which manifest in the form of agitation or rebellion against each other as a system that has fallen short of the expectations of the people. The report of peace committee on Adadama/Amagu conflict carried out by Abi And Ikwo Local Governement councils of Cross River and Ebonyi state respectively, the report encouraged peace between the border communities by providing an enabling environment for the socio-economic development of the area through joint developmental programs. However, for lasting peace, the committee recommended the planting of beacon as a baseline for boundary tracing.

Origin of Ebom and Usumutong People

The origin of the Bahumono people, in particular the Ebom or the Bhazokpo and Usumutong people is based on oral traditions as handed down by the ancestors of the people. Their origin is traced to a small group of Bakpa people who settled in the middle Course of Cross River and came to be known as Bahumono. Apart from Bahumono, they exist other groups of Bakpa people who continued to settle along Cross River as they migrated south. This settlement have been traced as far as Calabar under such names as Quas and Efuts. The Agbo people on the other hand settled almost opposite the Bahumono people on the other side of the river. The Bakpa groups can still be traced northward from Cross River through Ogoja, Obudu and Otukpo. However, in the late 18th century, the Bahumono group left the Bakpa settlement to a hillside of Ruhura known as hotumusa (old town) which lies in a region between the present day Ediba and Usumutong villages (Etang,1998). Generally speaking, life in hotumusa was primitive and the inhabitants of the area were often involved in conflicts which resulted in brutal consequences ranging from lost of lives to lost of land to her neighbours. The communities that settled in hotumusa include: Ebom, Usumutong, Ediba, Anong, Abeugo, Afafanyi, Igonigoni and Ebijikara, each of them

trace their ancestry through the Eshi which means womb or navel. These inhabitants lived in hotumusa for about one century before they eventually migrated to their present location (oral interview). For reasons not known, oral tradition holds that the Ebom or Bhazokpo people planned to be the last to migrate out of hotumusa, but this plan was not achieved as Fonavai and Bhenwetiti (families in Ebom) were among the first people to migrate north-west and settled near the Refome-lake. Realizing they had moved too far from the main stream of the rest of Bahumono, they retraced back to their present location (oral interview).

Usumutong migration from hotumusa happened at a time all the Bahumono people were faced with frequent harassment by Yakurr and Abayong people. These two group from time to time engaged in continuous hostility due to the north-ward expansion of the Yakurr people and the south-ward expansion of the Abayong people. In about 1835, some indigenes of Usumutong left the river side to settle at Eror-Aji (hill top). while other families like Bhanokpore and Bhanikporotum settled on the low hills, west of the present day Usumutong primary school. However, the present location of Usumutong was discovered by a renowned hunter from Abeominimini by name Ugbako who discovered the location during one of his hunting expeditions. The migration to the new site was done in dissension as the various clans moved to settle close to the Rohozi stream (Ekpo, 1998). Thus, Abi Local Government area where Ebom and Usumutong are located is made up of three groups of Agbo, Bahumono and Igbo. These three groups formed the word "Abi" with A for *Agbo*, B for *Bahumono* and I for the *Igbo* people. The groups also speak different languages, with the *Bahumono* people speaking "*Kohumono*, the *Agbo* and *Igbo* people speak *Lagbo*". Significantly, the *kohumono* and *Lagbo* for the *Agbo* languages or dialect "are of the Bantu linguistic family". Accordingly, the word "Bantu" means "the people". It is also a "linguistic classification of a group of closely related languages spoken in the linguistic boundary known as the Bantu line, which runs from the south-eastern area of Nigeria, through Central and Eastern Africa to Southern Africa (Okoi-Uyouyo4).

Ebom-Usumutong Conflict

The origin of Ebom/Usumutong conflict is traced to the indigen settler phenomenon. The source of the conflict is a disputed piece of land known as Ogbandu-etansen which dates back to 1948 when the three wards out of six in Usumutong such as Bhakpeizu, Bhanisorie and Bhanidom pulled out of Ekomono central high school in 1947 as a result of quarrel between Mr. James Ebri Ofigwe Bassey (founder of Ekomono central high school) and chief Ibe Iyamba (ward chief of Bhanisorie). The break out of the three wards led to the establishment of a new school known as "homeland school Usumutong", founded by the three wards. The new school was built on Oword-etansen, a place the Ebom people claim ownership. By 1953, the remaining wards of Bhanikporotum, Bhanokpere and Ebokwo joined the other wards and the school became known as Usumutong united school (oral interview). However, by 1970 the disagreement took a different slant when ASP Effiom Osim Onya and Sampson Ejah, both natives of Usumutong occupied parcels of land for development purposes on the disputed area. It was at this point the first litigation of trespass was instituted against Usumutong, and while the case was receiving attention in court, on the 8th of June 1970, hostility began on the disputed land. Women of both villages were said to have fetched stones for their men to throw at each other leading to series of several fighting in the bush and the seizing of farm implement by both villages. Within the period of hostility spanning from 1970-1979, great losses in finance, human and materials were suffered by both villages (oral interview).

Immediate Cause of the Conflict

The immediate cause of the 1979 conflict was centered in an argument between youths of both communities leading to wounded causalities on both sides. this event led to increased animosity and by 23rd april, 1979. Ebom community invaded Usumutong and the war lasted for three days as the Usumutong people embarked on a reprisal attack on the Ebom people. This incident recorded several lost of lives and properties on both side including the forceful migration of natives of both communities to neighbouring villages. The war was brought to an end with the intervention of a special squad sent by the then Cross River military governor in the person of Lt.Col. Babatunde Elegbede (oral interview). At the end of seize fire which the state government initiated, several peace accord was embarked upon which include:

Olumba Peace Accord

At the intervention of police squad which led to a seize fire on the 26th of april, 1979. Peace resolution was initiated through the mediating effort of leader Olumba Olumba Obu, spiritual leader of the Holy Order of

Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, which paved way for land demarcation by a peace committee set up by the Cross River State Government. The consolidation of the peace agreement as led by leader Olumba took place in a colourful ceremony at the disputed boundary area, traditionally known as Ogbandu (Osim, 2018).

Social Consequences

The Ebom and Usumutong people have had several occasions that brought them into contact with quite a number of activities which took place before and after settling in their abode. They have a rich and cherished socio-cultural organization which has long stood as a bedrock of unity, annual events as festival stood as an emblem of togetherness. According to Obasi Ettah, “Festivals constitute an emblem of unity. The rites associated with such festivals rekindled the sentiments of solidarity and neighbourhood among the Bahumono people. Festivals such as Chieftaincy coronation, and new yam celebration were the most potent means of keeping the people together on the friendliest of terms”. The unity enjoyed in the area was affected by this conflict as seen in the following order.

Distrust and suspicion

The conflict weakened the social relationship that existed among the people and gave way to mutual suspicion. This is evident in the annual celebration of new yam festival in the area. The tradition of celebrating new yams is an event that draws villages far and near to the area, some grace the occasion with their masquerades, dancing groups and financial support. The emergence of the conflict left behind fear which influenced both villages and neighbouring villages on the grounds of visitation. In recent times, both villages attend new yam festival of each other by sending gifts through an emissary who delivers the package to the chief of the host community and return same day. Natives of either communities were not allow to attend the occasion on the grounds of security. The tradition of masquerade dance by neighbouring villages, dancing competition from various dancing groups of other villages among others, died a natural death. Therefore, entertainment of this sort is only brought by the host community.

Hence, due to increased fear and suspicion, by 1982 Usumutong suspended her new yam celebration. This was to enable them secure their territorial boundaries and to control the kind of noise that was made. The idea was for them to quickly understand the sound of an enemy gun or war songs and how to respond in a case of attack. The Ebom community joined Usumutong in suspending her new yam celebration in 1983, and the fear of subsequent attack became tensed. This way of life continued to 1985 when Chief Okpani of Usumutong uplifted the ban on high noise and shooting of knockout during Christmas season, stating in local dialect “Ekuwarajunor, ono-onor Onuwa-hewormene, Onor Isohmene orjo-Sumana” (we are in peace, everyone should live freely but no one should forget himself).

The Decline of Traditional Competition

Wrestling competition is a means of social interaction in African society. This contest was organized on a rotational basis among Bahumono communities. This was aimed at giving every village a hosting right, as well as create a sense of equality among the various groups. Wrestling contests was occasioned for initiating new contacts which in some cases culminated in marriages or the learning of new dances. The unbeatable wrestler was known and respected far and near. Through this contest the various strands of historical, cultural and linguistics relationship which characterized the various groups was illuminated, showing that the Bahumono do not only have long history of contact and linkages with her neighbours, but also in much closer touch with others in the past than had hitherto been realized. In the words of Ayandele, “From earliest times, people have been neither incorrigibly insular, nor irrationally impervious to external ideas and influence whether those were ideological, religious, economic and political, nor have they been amateurishly Impractised in the art of neighborliness”.

Created Developmental Initiative

In the period under study, they existed limited routes (roads) that were used for transportation purposes and most of the routes were created by joint efforts of more than one community. Usumutong, Ediba, Ebijakara and igonigoni, shared the same route. After the war, the tension and distrust that emanated as a result, led the Ebom

traditional council into enacting a law that prohibits her natives from using the route they share with Usumutong community. Hence, throughout the 1980's the Ebom people made use of the Ijom-Abayong road for her transportation purpose. By 1990's they open up their route linking Biase. This development encouraged other communities in the area to create their own route to avoid dependence (interview with Mr. Igiri).

Economic Consequences

The people of Bahumono are mostly agrarian people, bond to their lands by tradition. Interaction among the various units is derived majorly from economic activities and their inability to produce everything they need. It has been stressed that the kind of crops cultivated and the system of agriculture adopted in the area involved shifting from one area to another. This system as a matter of necessity involved the crossing of people, the system brought about the intermingling of people which ultimately culminated in the borrowing of economic values, techniques and tools. The point being made is that, while the people remained politically distinct with their level of kingship that has a particular pattern of coronation and kingship laws. The daily needs of life shift from one end to another with various economic engagement influenced by geography, vegetation and land. Therefore, occupational zones produced a situation in which the mutual exchange of day to day requirement became a major determinant of economic relations. Hence, while Bahumono villages had always depended on each other, the conflict created economic disparity and setbacks in the years after the war. This consequences is made evident in the following areas:

Market Disparity

Records indicates that the Bahumono communities have four market days cycle. The traditional week days are reckoned as follows: Isa, Bhikwo, Eche and Rebhom. The first market day (Isa) is usually for Ebom. Ebom traditionally trade on oil as a major product and other minor crops or goods like fish and groundnut. Other Bahumono villages like Usumutong, Ebijakara, Ediba among others have their own unique products which they come together on a market settings to buy and sell (Etang Ekpo). This practice decline greatly, especially between Usumutong and Ebom after the war. Usumutong being a supplier of garri and yams in large quantity with other products like rice no longer take goods to Ebom market, Ebom on the other hand no longer graced Usumutong market which falls traditionally on the third day of the week. Rather, the two communities prefer taking their products to other communities such as Akpet central, Igbo Ekureku, Ijom, Ibogo and Ugep market, leaving the area (Ebom/ Usumutong) in constant need of these products (Interview with Mrs. Beatrice).

According to Falola Toyin, "Traders of communities often acted in a way that depict peaceful co-existence. This is why during Ebom and Usumutong market days, traders from Ugep, Biase, Itigidi and even Efik women arrive the the area to buy and sell. The market disparity existing between Ebom and Usumutong created several boycott leading to the perishing of goods, low attendance of market women on Ebom and Usumutong market days.

Increased Poverty

According to Merriam-webster dictionary, poverty is seen as the state of one lacking a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. Available record show that unemployment is a major cause of poverty. Violent conflict also contribute immensely to creating poverty, as economic activities are either disrupted or available manpower reduced due to death of able men and women. This was seen in Ebom and Usumutong conflict. Life during the period under study became difficult because the involvement in farming activities reduced, leading to increased hunger. According to the committee on World Food Security (WFS), a sub-organ of the United nations (UN), food security exist when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The 1979 conflict therefore constitute a grave factor to food insecurity in the area. This is also evident in the findings of the global food security index report of 2013, which reported political conflict in Mali, Yemen and Syria to have reduced food security in those countries. Food insecurity born out of conflict is further explained as the loss of social capital, which is the relationship between different family members that determines how individual members can take advantage of whatever financial and human capital other family members posses in times of hardship, natural or man-made. Therefore, the barrier to this work-ability in the area

was posed by this conflict as it further pauperized the people with scourge such as uprooting of crops, blocking of routes to economic areas and even the beating of motorist, among others. The result was poverty.

Decline in Migrant Labour

According to Etang Ekpo, the evolution of the Isa market in Bahumomo led to the influx of migrant labourers from Igbo communities. He asserts that originally, the Igbos from across the Cross River in Oziza in present day Afikpo North Local Government Area, were coming to Usumutong to do some paid jobs in the farms. They were paid with various products as maize, yams, cocoyams etc. During the corn season the men would come very early in the morning of each Isa, and they arrive with items such as coconuts, cocoyams, etc, their women come with shrimps, groundnuts and local chalk. Ekpo, posits that the people of Oziza sale their items in Usumutong from house to house during their period of labour. Since these goods were useful to the Bahumomo people, they encourage them to come in great numbers. The Oziza people however expressed fear of harassment, they agreed to do business with Usumutong if they guarantee their security. Both parties eventually had agreement. Thus, the result of the agreement was the influx of Oziza people into Usumutong, Ebijakara and even Ediba. By 1979 when the Ebom/ Usumutong war broke out, the guaranteed peace entered between Usumutong and Oziza people was bridged as a result of the instability, the Oziza people no longer feel safe in bringing their items to the area for sale, leading to the shortage of these items.

Political Consequences

The political relations within Bahumono over the years was no contingent upon one instituted administration alone, but a political will developed and practiced by the people. The important point to stress is that, there was the cross-fertilization of political ideas. Today, the requirements and paraphernalia of office including chieftaincy installation, age grade and Ekpe initiation ceremonies among the two communities are identical. The installation of a chief or any other important ceremony in one village attracted the presence of people from neighbouring villages. In the same dimension, it was nothing unusual for one polity to go to another for the settlement of dispute that seemed to threaten their peaceful co-existence. This stem from the fact that the two communities are near neighbors aimed at economic expansion which in turn raised periodic problems that subsequently led to the 1979 conflict. The factors that led to the conflict include, boundary disputes, struggle for economics tress, fighting. Hence, the impact created on the political space in the area can be see as follows:

The Collapse of Bahumono Democratic Forum

This forum was a major platform in the area in which the interest and unity ties of the people was harnessed. It was founded on political grounds with adjectives such as: Attracting political dividends to Bahumono, and to resolve issues in other to avoid warfare within the Bahumono enclave among others. The forum was formed as a formidable force to jointly secure political interest. This stemmed from the over dominance of the Agbo's which the Bahumono interpreted as marginalization. Therefore, the forum created the platform that produced two natives of Bahumono as local government chairmen. The forum attracted state appointment to the area, creating a sense of belonging and inclusiveness to natives. However, at the outbreak of Ebom and Usumutong conflict, it left behind rivalry and animosity between the two communities and it extended to other Bahumono villages. This led to interest and counter interest in the Bahumono Democratic forum. For instance, when Charles Iwara from Usumutong contested for Abi/Yakurr Federal constituency, he was opposed by Enyi Ekpe from Ebom. The result of this was the collapse of the forum giving way for individualism as against communalism in political guest.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The movement of Bahumono people from one area to another due to increased demand for arable land especially during draught period, have led to series of clashes between Bahumono communities. This have worsened conflict patterns and can be said to have grown more complex if not duly address by actions that will contain and manage boundary in a way that it wont metamorphose into confrontation in real time. Therefore, this paper contends that most of the under-development challenges faced, is a product of struggles for land ownership. Hence, there is poor political will by the government to strengthen its legal and constitutional structures above personal and communal consciousness.

The findings of this paper shows that the patterns of resource conflict has taken some dominant relationship between Ebom and Usumutong people. This situation has resulted to incessant fear of terror between the interest groups. Thus, this paper indicates that in Nigeria, the level of institutional failure on the part of government to promote people-centered bills in order to accommodate, mediate and resolve lingering differences is still at infancy and have implode into sustained fear and distrust that have become part of the people's norms for the sake of survival.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that conflict associated with land politics are some of the most profound issues perverting socio-economic predicaments of our present day development uncertainties in Bahumono. The leading cause is centered on the backdrop of policy and institutional weakness towards rural economic development. The ineptitude in conflict management of land resources and sustainable rural economic development have presented untold challenges to communal relations in Bahumono.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the information from sources such as interviews, journals, books and Judicial Commission's Draft Report.

- i. There is need for conscious and active policy drive by government to review land boundaries, since most of our boundaries are products of colonial legacies
- ii. Efforts should be increased on resolving conflict interests for peaceful co-existence among the Bahumono communities
- iii. Resilient policy structures should be encourage to address complexities arising from limitations and imbalances of land conflict in Bahumono.

Finally, the authors also recommends that the Cross River State Government should embark on post-colonial boundary demarcation in all the communities in Bahumono, so as to promote durable peace in the area.

Compliance with ethical standards

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There is no conflict of interest with any person or authority.

Name of Interviewees	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
Okon Enyi	62	Retired civil servant	Akamkpa	26/03/2023
Beatrice Solomon	49	Business woman	Usumutong	01/04/2023
Ukene Igiri	71	Retired civil servant	Ebom	16/04/2023
Rekpene Bassey	62	Retired school teacher	Calabar	12/05/2025
Ukene John	54	farmer	Usumutong	22/05/2025

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