

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING: THE IMPACT OF  
MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM (MCDF) IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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## DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to my beloved parent, Lolo Madeline Udunehu Dimokpala and Late Nze Charles Okpala Dimokpala, Late Miss Christiana Dimokpala and all in Dimokpala's family.

Finally, I also dedicate this project to all those who works tirelessly to restore peace in Nigeria.

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May, 2013

Dimokpala Christopher Chukwudi

## STATEMENT

I declare that *Conflict resolution and peace-building: the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or assessment at any other university, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

## COPYRIGHT

I, Dimokpala Christopher Chukwudi, hereby cede to the MF Norwegian School of Theology Oslo the entire copyright that may in the future subsist in any research report or thesis submitted by me to the University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MRSGL, in the Department of Religion, Society and Global Issues.

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Dimokpala Christopher Chukwudi

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The issue of conflict has become one of the regular headlines in the daily news of the world media today. Many countries in the world have suffered from one conflict or another, ranging from religious, civil, political, cultural, regional and ethnic violent such as in Nigeria, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Liberia, Cambodia and so on. The most disturbing part of these acts of conflicts around the globe is that most of them have traced their roots to religion. Even some perpetrators of these acts of conflicts most of the time justify their actions with religion, thereby making religion an object of conflict.

Prevalent violent conflict on the African continent has been addressed by numerous scholars, advancing various reasons to explain the continuous conflicts on the continent. The scholars (such as Jackson 2000, 2002; Okoth and Ogot 2000; Adedeji 1999; Khadiagala 2006; and Taiser and Mathews 1999) agree in their description of Africa as the least developed continent economically, yet the most conflict prone politically. What has been the main focus of these scholars is the shift in Africa's conflicts, from conflicts between states to conflicts within states, internal conflicts, civil wars, intra-state conflicts or new wars (Kaldor 1999:33-118; 2006:72-94; 2012:71-118).

In the post-independent period, statehood in Africa has been characterized by internal wars. Every region has experienced armed conflict at some time since the early 1960's (Busumtwi 1999:259). Writing in 2002, Jackson observed how in the last twenty years, internal conflict has occurred in half of Africa's countries. For example in the mid 2001 there were serious internal conflicts in Algeria,, Chad, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea, Liberia, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Angola. Many other African states face instability, high levels of domestic political violence or rebel movements such as in Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Kenya,

Ghana, and Nigeria (Jackson 2002). This trend of events continues to this date and Africa has arguably had the most significant share of these conflicts (Souare 200:369).

Conflict starts within the boundaries of a single state but fighting spills over into the neighbouring states; conflicts are protracted over many years, involve multiple actors, ranges from government armed forces, militias, warlords, to criminal gangs presenting a multitude of challenges and demanding different responses from the International communities. Africa's conflicts have ranged from ideological conflicts, governance, to racial conflicts, identity conflicts, religious and environmental conflicts. One should also note the employment of extreme means of pursuing conflict goals, such as extreme forms of violence. Violence is deliberately targeted at civilians, and at entire groups rather than individuals, and it presents a complete blurring of the lines between war, organised crime and large scale human rights violations (Kaldor 1999:2).

Furthermore, internal conflicts in Africa have led to various outcomes, for example some have resulted in total state collapse as in Somalia or semi state collapse as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and others have led to secession as in Eritrea. Also, there have been civil wars where regimes have changed as in Liberia, warlord cases have been seen in Sierra Leone, and others have led to temporary ceasefires as in Angola and Chad (Jackson 2002). Important to note however is the continuous conflicts in Nigeria which have been going on for some years now. Most of them have been targeted on Christian churches, mosques, government and international organisation offices, and even high institutions and public squares in the country.

Religion today, instead of serving as a source of healing sickness, hunger and poverty and stimulating tranquillity and peaceful co-existence among human beings, is used to cause sadness. It is bringing pain instead of relief, hatred instead of love, division instead of unity, sadness instead of joy, discrimination and destruction instead of accommodation and development (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:4). Meanwhile, in the real sense, religious

people should be involved in conflict resolution and peace-building rather than causing conflicts.

On the other hand, religion has also been seen as an object of peace by involving itself in maintaining peace and order through works on conflict resolution and peace-building by religious actors in warring nations such as Sri Lanka, Tibet, Bosnia, South Africa, Mozambique, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Uganda, Sudan, and Nigeria.

Religious individuals and faith-based organisations from a variety of religious traditions were actively involved in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict reconciliation between warring parties in the developing world (Haynes 2007:89). Examples include: mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford foundation in the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970; the Catholic organisation Sant' Egidio played a key role in ending the civil war in Mozambique in 1992; the work of the World Council of Churches and the All African Conference of Churches in mediating a cessation to the Sudan conflict in 1972; efforts made by John Paul Lederach who is a professor of international peace-building at the university of Notre Dame in Nicaragua in the 1980's; and the recent works of the imam, Muhammad Ashafa and the Christian pastor, James Wuye mediating the conflicting communities in Nigeria from 1995 to this date.

### 1.1 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Many scholars like Haynes 2007, Korieh 2005, Ashafa and Wuye 1999 have understood the conflicts that have been going on in Nigeria to be religious conflicts between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South.

Firstly, I want to argue in my research that, the Nigerian conflicts are more than religious conflicts. Rather, they involve political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic aspects, and problem of regionalism in the country which implicates itself with religion most of the time to fight their cases. Meaning that, the three major regions in Nigeria (North, West, and East) are rivals with one another because each region wants to control the Nigerian federal government posts. Therefore, other regions with minority positions in the federal government seats, automatically becomes rivals to the leading region, and this is what I called the problem of regionalism. The above statement conforms to the words of Toyin Falola that “the first Republic was defined by the politics of regionalism. The North was dominated by the Hausa's/Fulani's, the West by the Yoruba's, and the East by the Igbo's. The three regions were bitter rivals and they all wanted to control the federal government” (Falola 2001:21).

Secondly, I shall present the impacts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria, which is an interfaith religious organisation working to create dialogue and peace-building in the Nigerian conflict.

The final aim of this study is to make available relevant research knowledge on some of the issues that have been neglected during conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria which are some of the major causes of conflicts in Nigeria and to urge the Nigerian Government and other institutions that would be involved in resolving the conflicts in Nigeria to deal with these areas in the pursuit of a better future of our country Nigeria.

## 1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The Nigerian conflict has been continuous and seems insurmountable, why? It is because most of the main causes of the conflicts such as politics, culture, ethnic and regional problems have been neglected as contributing factors to the Nigerian conflict. Instead the

reason has been attributed to religious conflict between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South.

I want to demonstrate that without dealing with all these neglected areas (by the previous authors) as major causes of conflicts in Nigeria, the conflict situation in Nigeria will continue as it is and may even get worst.

I have decided to choose this topic and Nigeria in particular for this thesis because, first, as a little boy I always enjoyed watching documentary movies on the television especially when it had something to do with wars and conflicts. My special interest in such movies became stronger as I advanced in age. One evening as a teenager, I enjoyed with some of my teenage friends a documentary movie about the South African apartheid regime and most of the massacres that took place during that period. After the movie we all went out and started sharing our experiences and what we were going to do to protect ourselves and families if we had been in South Africa during that period, such as learning how to shoot a gun and other ways to fight back for protection. But as teenagers we did not know exactly what it means to be in South Africa under the apartheid period.

One night, I went to my father and narrated the documentary to him and asked him what he would do if such an incident would happen in Nigeria, and his reply to me was that he would find a way to make peace. Then I asked him how and my father replied that he would show me how to make peace in few days time. After four days, I was called by my father to accompany him to a meeting and I accepted his invitation and went with him. But on our way I was wondering in my mind what kind of meeting am I going to with my father in a neighbouring village. But when we got to the place, it was just a village square full of people sitting while some of them were standing in a circle. One of them came to welcome my father and me and gave us a seat and my father told me to sit next to him so that I would be following what was going on. Later I noticed from what was going on in the meeting that two different families in that village were involved in a conflict because each was claiming the ownership of a piece of land. By the end of the day after several

hours of contributions, discussions and arguments from different people during that meeting including my father, the problem was resolved by sharing the land among the two conflicting families. On our way back home my father told me that what I have just witnessed was one of the ways to make peace among conflicting families or groups and that incident made me gain more interest in peace making.

Second, it was the desire I had in peace making that made me work for eight years (1994 - 2002) as a voluntary social worker under Okigwe diocese which is one of the Catholic dioceses in Nigeria; that gave me the opportunity and time to be involved in settling conflicts in different communities, groups and families; since then I developed an ardent desire to be involved in conflict resolution and peace-building. I chose Nigeria as my case study because I am a Nigerian and Nigeria at the moment is faced with serious conflicts. This project will serve as my personal contribution to the solution to Nigerian conflicts.

### 1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problem of the research is that the Nigerian conflicts are due to some other major factors such as cultural, social, ethnic, regional, political and economic issues which complicate itself with religion rather than religious conflict between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South as Wuye and Ashafa, 1999 and other authors have mentioned in their studies. This means that the division of Nigeria into three major regions by the British was based on their cultural, ethnic and religious differences. For example the Northerners are mainly Muslims where as the Easterners are mainly Christians. Each of these regions has their own religion and cultures. Based on this kind of division, many Nigerians always view any conflict between each region as a religious conflict, thereby implicating religion in the conflicts. The religious ideas and worldviews in Nigeria are inherited as part of the socialization process. In view of this, that Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life

which is played out more in the north because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than it is in the south.

#### 1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Many authors have written about the conflict in Nigeria, (such as Wuye and Ashafa 1999:16) and concluding that, it is a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. Researches have given some solutions to solve the conflict in Nigeria, for example the multi-track and consultative approach which was applied by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and Law and order approach by the Federal Government of Nigeria as in People Building Peace 11 (People Building Peace II, 2012). I believe those solutions have been applied by the Nigerian government and other conflict resolution organisations in Nigeria such as Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and the United States Institute of Peace which is one of the international organisations that works with conflict resolution and peace-building and has contributed immensely to the Nigerian conflict resolution and peace-building.

My questions are:

1. Is the Nigerian conflict really a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians? Why do we have conflicts in Nigeria and why is the conflict continuous and insurmountable?
2. What efforts does the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum make to bring peace in Nigeria?
3. What hope does the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and Nigeria have for the future?

#### 1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Attempts at conflict resolution and peace-building have been going on in many continents such as Europe, Asia and Africa. Religious individuals, inter-faith organisations and

international organisations have contributed immensely, working in all the countries that were faced with one conflict or another.

I shall however not deal with all the conflicts and conflict resolution in all parts of the world. I shall limit my study by dealing with conflict resolution and peace-building in general and use Nigeria as my case study, with the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum.

I shall not be going to Nigeria for my data collection. Therefore, all my data collection will be done from here in Norway. My reason for this decision is that the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum group which I planned to meet in Nigeria for the interviews, advised me not to come due to their tight programme that makes them travel most of the time. They accepted, however, to respond to my interviews by email.

## 1.6 SOURCES OF MATERIAL

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature written on conflict resolution and peace-building, however it has not been so easy to find authentic materials associated with Nigeria as a case study and in particular the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum related to its conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria.

I have however been able to fulfil the goals of this study through written literature, documents and media sources. Some of the written sources are the following;

- i. Achebe, Chinua 2012. *There was a country: a personal history of Biafra.*
- ii. Wuye, James and Ashafa, Muhammad 1999. *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to conflict.*
- iii. Appleby, Scott 1997. *The ambivalence of the sacred: religion, violence and reconciliation.*
- iv. Coward, Harold and Smith, Gordon S 2004. *Religion and peace-building.*
- v. Haynes, Jeffrey 2007. *Religion and development: conflict or cooperation?*

vi. Eynikel, Erik and Angeliki, Ziaka 2011. Religion and conflict: essays on the origins of religious conflicts and resolution approaches.

vii. Kaldor, Mary 2012. New and old wars: organized violence in a global era.

### 1.7 SOURCES OF DATA

Some visual documents such as movies from the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum will be utilized for this study. Finally, a focused interview will be conducted online with Wuye James and Ashafa Muhammad, who were the founding fathers of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, which is an inter-faith conflict resolution and peace-building foundation that has worked tirelessly to restore peace in Nigeria during the time of conflicts. I shall also conduct a focused interview with Samson Auta who also works with the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria. This method of data entails the use of either web or online communications such as email, as a platform for collecting data from individuals (Bryman 2008:632).

### 1.8 METHODOLOGY

The methodology I shall use for this study is a qualitative research strategy, which can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than the quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman 2008:22). It will take the form of literature and empirical method analysis.

The chapter one of this thesis will be the style and methodology I shall use for the research.

In chapter two, I shall analyze Jonathan Fox, Jeffery Haynes and Huntington's definitions of religion, the theories on conflict resolution and peace-building in general and will make Nigeria the centre point of the discussion.

Chapter three shall be the exposition and discussion of the impacts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria with particular reference to inter-faith mediation and peace-building.

Chapter four shall be an analysis of the visual documents and focused interviews of the two founders, Wuye James and Ashafa Muhammad, which includes also Samson Auta, one of the workers of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria.

As a Nigerian, I have the advantage of possessing first hand information; in addition I have also observed some of the conflicts that took place in the eastern part of Nigeria. In order to make my materials more credible, authentic and meaningful, I shall use documents from official and private sources. I shall, however not treat these documents as firm evidence of what they report or as simply reflecting reality; rather I shall give my own analysis based on the knowledge and experience I have to the situation at hand. Chapters three and four shall be the major parts of my discussion because the answers to my research questions shall be provided in these two chapters.

#### 1.9 THE RESEARCH OUTLINE

In order to do a good qualitative academic research on my topic, I have decided to divide the chapters as follows;

Chapter one shall give the general introduction, aim of the research, the motivation of the study, the research problem and questions, limitations of the study, sources of material and data, methodology and the research outline.

In chapter two, I shall deal with religion and peace-building which includes the definition of religion, conflict, conflict resolution and peace-building, dimensions and modes of

religious conflict transformation. This chapter shall end with the analysis and discussion of some of its sub-headings.

Nigeria and conflict mediation shall start chapter three, followed by a brief history of Nigeria, recent historical examples of conflict in Nigeria, followed by the factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria, the effects of conflicts, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and their strengths and weaknesses, the role of religion in conflict and peace-building, comparison of the Nigerian conflict resolution with *Sant' Egidio* in Mozambique and the *Dhammayietra* Walk of Cambodia, the future of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and Nigeria in general. I shall end up this chapter with my own discussion of some of the above headings.

Finally, chapter four shall be my analysis of the interviews and visual documents, followed by evaluation and conclusion of the research and references.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 RELIGION AND PEACE-BUILDING

From the religious crusades, inquisitions and holy wars of the past to the jihads and so called religious conflicts of the present day; religion has a long history of implication in violence and war. The predictions that religion would become privatized, removed from the public sphere have proven false. From the 1970s and 1980s, religion manifested itself repeatedly in the public sphere, often to the surprise of onlookers. The *Shi'ite* led revolution in Iran was the most prominent example of the religious resurgence of political Islam. Sunni based movements have also swept across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

David Little and Scott Appleby notes “that Africa was not left behind in this shift because Sudan and Afghanistan joined the ranks of Islamist governed nations, while powerful Islamist parties fomented revolution or threatened political stability in Algeria, Pakistan, Egypt and Nigeria”(Little and Appleby 2004:1).

These expressions of religion in the public sphere tend to put religion as a source of conflict among many educators, students, journalists, policy makers and public officials. Others have, however, looked beyond the headlines to appreciate the multiple constructive dimensions of religion in its publicness. Some of these observers as Little and Appleby writes “even recognised that the genius of religiously inspired social welfare and peacemaking activism is rooted in the same zeal for holiness, powering the holy wars and religio-political crusades” (Little and Appleby 2004:2).

### 2.1 WHAT IS RELIGION?

The Oxford English dictionary traces religion from its Latin root “*religio*” meaning obligation and reverence. It defines religion as the belief in and worship of God or gods, a particular system of faith and worship, a pursuit that is very important to someone (Soanes and Hawker 2005:867).

Deneulin and Bano, following the idea of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, define religion as “a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men/women by formulating conceptions of a general order to existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Deneulin and Bano 2009:58).

Jeffrey Haynes sees religion as a system of beliefs and practices, often but not necessarily related to an ultimate being, beings or to the supernatural. For him, religion involves that which is sacred in a society, including beliefs and practices which are widely regarded as inviolate (Haynes 2007:14).

Furseth and Repstad define religion as a set of beliefs which postulate and seek to regulate the distinction between an empirical reality and a related significant supra empirical segment of reality, the language and symbols which are used in relation to this distinction and the activities and institutions which are concerned with its regulation (Furseth and Repstad 2006:17-18).

Furthermore, they use Emile Durkheim's idea of religion as a basis and view religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say things that are set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them (Furseth and Repstad 2006:18-19).

Steve Bruce sees religion as “beliefs, actions and institutions that assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of judgement and action” (Bruce 2003:10).

Scott Appleby defines religion as “a human response to a reality perceived as sacred” (Appleby 1997:8). For him, religion embraces a creed, a cult, a code of conduct and a confessional community. A creed defines the standard of beliefs and values concerning the ultimate origin, meaning, and purpose of life. It develops from myths, symbol-laden

narratives of sacred encounters and finds official expression in doctrines and dogmas. Cult encompasses the prayers, devotions, spiritual disciplines and patterns of communal worship that give richly suggestive ritual expression to the creed. A code of conduct defines the explicit moral norms that govern the behaviour of those who belong to the confessional community. Therefore, religion constitutes an integral culture, capable of forming personal and social identity and influencing subsequent experience and behaviour in a profound way (Appleby 2000:8-9). This is exactly the case in Nigeria, where religions have been used by some Nigerians to form social identity. For example the Islamic extremist group *Boko Haram* in the northern part of Nigeria whose activities have been a disturbing issue to the Nigerian communities in general.

Huntington claims that in the modern world, religion is central, perhaps the central force that motivates and mobilizes people (Huntington 1996:27). According to Marty, religion focuses on our ultimate concern, builds community, appeals to myth and symbol, is enforced through rites and ceremonies and demands certain behaviour from its adherents (Marty 2000:11-14).

Jonathan Fox defined religion into four different ways;

First, religion is one of the sources of people's world views. It influences people's behaviours and those people in turn influence the behaviour of others. These world views are a powerful way in which religion intersects with individual and societal behaviour.

Second, religion is a source of identity. In addition to influencing people's beliefs, it also influences who they are. It gives them the feeling of affinity to other members of religion. This may cause them to feel responsible for their co-religionists wherever they may live.

Third, religion is a source of legitimacy. It can legitimize or delegitimize actions, including the foreign policies of states and the behaviour of other international actors.

Religion intersects with international relations; this explains the reason why many policy makers use religious terms and images to justify their actions.

Fourth, religion is associated with formal institutions. In some cases these institutions are themselves international actors, as is the case with the Catholic Church. In other cases these institutions play a role in domestic politics supporting regimes, opposing them and lobbying them (Fox et al 2004:176-177).

Based on these different ideas of religion from the above authors, I define religion as the different activities and ways people express their respect for and communication with the transcendental in their everyday lives.

## 2.2 WHAT IS A CONFLICT?

Etymologically the word conflict comes from the Latin word “*confligere*” which means to strike together. Conflict is a situation that involves at least two actors. These actors should somehow interact directly or indirectly in order to be engaged in a conflict. Therefore, conflict is a relation among actors (Eynikel and Ziaka 2011:234-236).

In more general terms, conflict is a type of disagreement among two or more actors related to a particular situation. It is a hostile positioning of the actors that could evolve into some kind of aggressive behaviour.

The Foundation Coalition defined conflict “as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals” (The Foundation Coalition, 2012). Conflict within teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined. Conflict might escalate and lead to non-productive results, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products.

Kalu Kelechi, says that “conflict is a process of interaction between two or more parties that seek to thwart, injure or destroy their opponent because they perceive they have incompatible goals or interests” (Kalu 2003:19).

According to Goodhand and Hulme, “conflict is a struggle, between individuals or collectives, or even values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are to assert their values over those of others” (Goodhand and Hulme 1999:14).

Ross Stanger defines conflict as “a situation by which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one of the other but not by both”(Stanger 2011:234-236). For example, two different states dispute a territory that both perceives as an entitlement but only a single can possess just like Israel and Palestine conflict over the West Bank territory. A conflict emerges in the framework of a perceived threat. It becomes manifest when actors respond based on their perception of the threat with a degree of aggressive conduct.

### 2.1.1 TYPES OF CONFLICT

There are many types of conflicts but I shall limit my study to the following five major ones according to the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum handbook;

- i. Interpersonal Conflict: This is a type of conflict that occurs within a person. For example, the use of time, choice of partner, moral questions, goals and aspirations.
- ii. Intra personal Conflict: Conflicts between two or more individuals over an issue.
- iii. Intra group Conflict: These are conflicts between groups such as clubs, class versus class, and family versus family.
- iv. Intra national Conflicts: Conflicts within a nation which involves different groups within the nation. This can be interethnic, inter-religious, competition for resources as manifested in the revenue sharing in Nigeria.

v. International Conflicts: These are conflicts between nations and could be for ideological reasons, territorial claims and political competition (Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, 2007).

### 2.3 THE MEANING OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING

Scott Appleby views conflict resolution as the removing as much as possible of the inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation, advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict (Appleby 1997:212). For him, when these processes are successful it results in structural reform. This means the efforts to address the roots of the conflict and to develop long term practices and institutions that are conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in society.

Coward and Smith used the term religious peace-building to describe a range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social and political institutions characterised by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence (Coward and Smith 2004:5). It is the efforts of people working at a distance from actual sites of deadly conflict, such as legal advocates of religious human rights, scholars conducting research that is essential to cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, theologians and ethicists within the religious communities who are probing and strengthening their traditions of nonviolence. This means the replacement of violent with nonviolent means of settling disputes, which occurs through overlapping processes of conflict management and conflict resolution (Coward and Smith 2004:5).

According to John Paul Lederach “peace-building is a process that is made up of a multiplicity of interdependent roles, functions, and activities, with the goal to create and sustain transformation and the movement toward restructured relationships” (Lederach 1997:71). For him, peace-building implies both a “descriptive” and a “prescriptive”

understanding of change. Descriptively, peace-building refers to the various dynamics that characterise conflicts. These dynamics may include the patterns, relationships, communication, issues and perceptions that impact or arise from conflicts exacerbated by interfaith differences. Prescriptively, peace-building emphasizes a comprehensive or holistic approach to dealing with conflict. Considerations must also be given to addressing the underlying causes of violence and the goals and motivations of those interested in getting involved in the conflict (Lederach 2002:56).

Peace-building includes a wide range of activities that contribute towards the transformation of society into a just and harmonious order and the development of an infrastructure capable of maintaining this arrangement. This process begins with pre-war conflict prevention and ends with post-war reconstruction. In all the stages of conflict, interested actors, both institutions and individuals can perform a variety of constructive functions. These intervention roles include observer, educator, advocate and intermediary (Steele 2002:73).

The observer's role is to be a vigilant presence that can report or sometimes prevent violence and other forms of injustice. The educator's role is to raise the population's awareness regarding injustices and misconceptions, nourish positive values, promote healing and train people in conflict intervention skills. The advocate's role is to actively promote, through nonviolent forms of pressure such as lobbying, demonstration and public statements, a particular outcome to the conflict, a specific process for resolving the conflict, or the interests of one party to the conflict. The intermediary's role is to act as a go between, facilitating communication through message carrying or face to face encounter, in order to build better relationships or resolve specific disputes.

#### 2.4 DIMENSIONS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The religious conflict transformation has the following three major dimensions; conflict management, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building.

#### 2.4.1 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management entails the prevention of the conflict from becoming violent or expanding to other arenas (Coward and Smith 2004:6). It includes the enforcement of existing treaties and peace accords. When the process of conflict transformation is successful, it results in ceasefires and peace accords designed to contain the conflict in anticipation of an important element of peace-building, namely structural reform.

Structural reform means the efforts to build institutions and foster civic leadership that will address the root causes of the conflict and develop long-term practices and institutions that are conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in the society (Coward and Smith 2004:6).

Appleby points out that the development of effective measures to prevent or contain deadly conflict begins with the articulation of the problems generating the conflict and it requires the mobilization of social forces desirous of addressing those problems (Appleby 2000:213).

Catherine Morris, writing of Cambodia, underscores the capacity of the *sangha* (Buddhist fellowship) to anticipate and prevent violent conflict within Khmer society (Morris 2004:6). Religious figures have been exceptionally active in this arena as social critics. An example of such effort was the annual Buddhist peace marches across Cambodia. Also Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma denounced the military extremism of the Burmese government as well as the complicity of their fellow Buddhists in supporting or failing to resist political leaders who ignored the basic needs of their people and allowed corporations to spoil the natural environment. She then called for the restoration of the basic civil liberties (Appleby 1997:213-214).

Conflict management also involves enforcement and peacekeeping operations. Coward and Smith write “religious actors are underutilized in these roles, to the detriment of peace processes and several authors in this volume lament the missed opportunities of

this kind” (Coward and Smith 2004:9). For example in Northern Ireland, most experts agree that the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 would not be effective on the structural-political level until and unless grassroots and cross-community peace practitioners are involved. A significant percentage of the latter are religiously motivated to build new local Catholic-Protestant institutions and networks and to strengthen the ones put in place since the troubles began in the 1960s.

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflict can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. It involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for management of conflict in our environment (The Foundation Coalition, 2012).

#### 2.4.2 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This is a systematic effort to combat prejudice and ethno-religious hatred through dialogue and education. For example, in Northern Ireland, para-church organizations such as Corrymeela provided peace and expertise for conversation among politicians as well as ordinary citizens from the Protestant and Catholic communities, and behind the scenes mediators prepared the way for meetings between leaders of the opposing militias. Also in India, the Gandhi Peace Foundation from its headquarters in Delhi and in thirty-three field centres across India, conducted research and training programs in nonviolent conflict resolution (Appleby 1997:217).

According to Scott, the most direct and decisive involvement in conflict resolution came when religious actors provided good offices and served effectively as mediators (Appleby 1997:217). For example, the Catholic Church was deeply involved in this area in the beginning of 1968 in Bolivia, helping to resolve every major clash between the miners and the national government and the many impasses that were produced by the elections for the presidency.

### 2.4.3 POSTCONFLICT PEACE-BUILDING

Appleby emphasizes that religious actors contribute to the processes of structural reform that is necessary for the restoration of conflict and human rights abuses. For him, nations recovering from oppressive regimes and civil wars, as in South Africa and Nicaragua, called on religious leaders to help determine and implement appropriate instruments of transitional justice (Appleby 1997:220).

For him, religious actors were prepared to assume leadership of key dimensions of social reconstruction after a deadly conflict because they had been intimately involved in the attempt to end the violence from the beginning whether as social critic, prophetic voice, humanitarian relief agency, or advocate for the poor and defenceless (Appleby 1997:220). For example in the 1960's and 1970's when the military seized power in most Latin American countries, leaving only Colombia and Venezuela with democratic polities, the Catholic Church which was the dominant religious body on the continent, stepped up its public denunciations of the abuses of power. The bishops of Brazil, Chile and Argentina issued pastoral letters condemning state sponsored murder, torture, and the denial of fair trial; the letters traced the root causes of systematic human rights violations to the lack of basic social, political and economic rights for the poor and dispossessed, and to an ideology of national security that subjugated individual rights to the expediency of the state.

### 2.5 MODES OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

There are different manners by which the religious actors have pursued peace but we are going to deal with the three major ones namely, crisis mobilization mode, the saturation mode and the external intervention mode of conflict transformation (Appleby 1997:230-243).

### 2.5.1 THE CRISIS MOBILIZATION MODE

Crisis mobilization mode of religious conflict transformation is where religious participation in conflict resolution has been spontaneous and largely unexpected, and where existing religious institutions have adapted to the exigencies of the moment (Appleby 1997:230).

Appleby notes that this is the most stunning example of religion serving as an agent of conflict transformation. It is stunning because unplanned and unexpected churches, mosques or other indigenous religious bodies found themselves as mediators and agents of conflict solution as a result of their historic role and institutional presence in a conflicted society and their active involvement in the social dynamics of political change. For example, in South Africa's struggle against apartheid and in the nonviolent revolutions that led to the fall of communism in the Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 (Appleby 1997:230).

In these cases, mainstream religious institutions were largely unprepared to play the role of conflict transformer. Yet charismatic leadership emerged, ethicists' retrieved and modified traditional arguments defining morality in times of warfare and theologians applied innovative concepts like South Africa's *ubuntu*.

Crises afforded midlevel leaders and grassroots peace activists a fresh hearing, and religion's institutional resources, such as mass media, financial and social service networks, were turned towards conflict transformation.

### 2.5.2 THE SATURATION MODE

As in the crisis mobilization mode, religio-cultural conflict transformation in the saturation mode begins as a spontaneous, diffuse and unstructured series of reactions to the threat or onset of deadly conflict. This is the reason why Appleby postulates that "indigenous religious institutions diversify, creating offices, inter-religious or inter-communal dialogues and programs of education and formation for peace; para-religious

and other community structures find a niche and personal vocations and professional commitments form around the notion that conflict transformation is a full-time, long-term enterprise” (Appleby 1997:237).

For example, Northern Ireland was saturated with religious and cultural practitioners of conflict transformation because the peace advocates operated at several levels of religion and society and persisted through decades of continuous activity, which made them part of the institutional and social landscape.

Furthermore, the Northern Ireland experience suggests that, conflict transformation in the saturation mode stands the best chance of evolving into actual religious peace-building. Also continuity was maintained both through organisations like Corrymeela, which grew over the years to become permanent fixtures, and through a series of specific programs, reconciliation groups and short-term initiatives that had a cumulative impact over time. External religious actors such as the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church United States of America and the United States Catholic Conference contributed to the work of the peace-building community which achieved a viable balance of autonomy and interdependence in its relation to such actors (Appleby 1997:237).

Emerging gradually from within the peaceable heart of conflicted societies, the saturation mode offers a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy for ending violence and achieving and sustaining reconciliation. The strategy focuses on the social dynamics of relationship building in a conflict setting, acknowledging that the process can never occur apart from analysis and reform of the structures that divide people (Appleby 1997:238).

### 2.5.3 THE INTERVENTIONIST MODE

The interventionist mode is the most promising approach to religious peace-building today and the one to which external actors might contribute productively in the future (Appleby 1997:239). This is where the external religious and cultural actors intervene in conflict situations, usually at the invitation of one or more parties to the conflict, in order to initiate and help to sustain a peace-building process.

The external actors work in collaboration with religious parties and institutions on the ground, either their coreligionist or believers from other traditions, with the goal to develop a saturation mode, in which local religious actors assume leadership positions and responsibility for sustaining the momentum (Appleby 1997:239).

In this mode, mediation has been the most common form of intervention. The external religious mediators have played the critical role in getting talks off the ground or in overcoming an impasse. For example, conflict resolution efforts of *Sant' Egidio* in Mozambique, Algeria, Uganda and Kosovo; and Mennonite consultation in the negotiations between the Sandinista government and the Miskito Indians on the east coast of Nicaragua in 1988. Also the United Nations and its various agencies, secular and humanitarian NGO's, local secular actors and interested states have often taken the leading parts (Appleby 1997:239). For example the United Nations peace-keeping to avoid wars in Democratic Republic of Congo, south and north Sudan, Somalia and so on. Also in March 2003, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria and the United States Institute of Peace jointly promoted a five day dialogue workshop in Kaduna which is one of the most conflict-ridden states in Nigeria.

In mediation, external religious actors dealt almost exclusively with top-level officials and rarely enjoyed the opportunity to discuss implementation and establish relationships with midlevel and grassroots leaders on the ground. For example, the *Sant' Egidio*, Mennonite and other religiously based teams attempted to overcome these restrictions, through the continuation of long-term presence in the conflict communities and working

with national and local religious communities to train indigenous peace builders (Appleby 1997:239 – 240).

According to John Paul Lederach, peace-building depends on the contributions of leaderships at three major levels, namely; the top level, the middle range and the grassroots levels (Lederach 1997:38).

Firstly, the top level includes the key political and military leaders in the conflict. Few in number, they are somewhat removed, in social location and sensibility, from their constituencies. Highly visible, they are more likely to be influenced than other actors by media pressure and personal career ambition, especially as the latter is affected by the prosecution and outcome of the conflict. The public's perception that these are the players with real power and influence raises the stakes for them, and the inflexibility for fear of being perceived as losing ground to a stronger opponent can be the result. At the post-conflict level in which structural transformation ought to take place, these leaders often are concerned with consolidating their power and preserving stability by whatever means possible; they allow real structural reform, if at all, with these considerations primarily in mind.

Secondly, the middle range level which are the top level national officials such as Patriarchs, Bishops, Chief Rabbis and Ayatollahs. Lederach explains that at this level one finds persons who function in a leadership capacity within a setting of prolonged conflict but whose position is not directly beholden to or defined by the authority or structures of the formal government or the major opposition movements. The midrange leaders have contacts with officials at the pinnacle of the social pyramid but are not bound by the political calculations that govern every move and decisions made at the highest level. Similarly, they are aware of the context and experience of people living at the grassroots level, but yet they are not encountered by the survival demands facing many at this level. Their position is not based on political or military power, nor are such leaders essentially seeking to capture power of that sort. Rather, their status and

influence in the setting derives from ongoing relationships such as professional, institutional, formal and other matters of friendships and acquaintances; they may for example belong to a professional association or have built a network of relationships that cut across the identity divisions within society (Lederach 1997:41-42).

Thirdly, the grassroots represent the masses, the base of the society which often is forced to live by a survival mentality in conflict zones. The leadership at the grassroots level, whether NGO based, religious or social, operates in a reactive mode on a day to day basis. For Lederach the midrange leaders are best positioned to lead long-term peace-building efforts. This is because, they have greater flexibility of movement and are more numerous than top level leaders. Also they are connected to a wide range of individuals in the conflict settings through their networks and professional associations. Within the religious community the midlevel leaders are the highly respected monks, priests, ministers, rabbis and others who serve as heads of the regional religious bodies such as dioceses' representatives to ecumenical, inter-religious, or civic bodies, or as pastors of prominent local congregations (Lederach 1997: 42-43).

Having dealt with the theoretical part of chapter two which covers the meaning of religion, conflict, dimensions of religious conflict transformation and its modes, I shall now analyse and discuss some of the above subheadings and make Nigeria the centre point of my discussion in the following chapter.

## 2.6 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Jeffrey Haynes sees religion as “that which is sacred in a society, including beliefs and practices which are widely regarded as inviolate” (Haynes 2007:14). Reflecting on the above definition, one can see that it exactly points to what is going on in the contemporary world of religion. In the world today, there are so many different kinds of religions such as Christianity, Islam, Atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on. In the

same way, the believers of these different religions take their respective religious beliefs and practices to be sacred and inviolable. This is one of the reasons why we are experiencing the global rise of religious violence whereby people from different religious traditions commit crimes in the name of defending their faith. For example within Christianity, Rev. Michael Bray of the United States of America is one of the notorious Christian activists who have been involved in several abortion clinic bombings in the United States. He strongly justified his actions by thinking that he did it to defend others. After he bombed the abortion clinic in Dover he said, “The only abortion chamber in Dover was gutted by fire and put out of the business of butchering babies” (Juergensmeyer 2003:20). Also Meir Kahane, who believed in the Jewish religion, claimed that the creation of a Palestinian government on the West Bank poses a danger to Israel as a nation, to the Jews and to Judaism as a religion. He claimed that he did not hate the Arabs, he respected them and he felt that they should not live in disgrace in an occupied land, for that reason they should leave. For him, the main problem is that they were not Jews but live in a place that was designated by God for the Jewish people (Juergensmeyer 2003:56).

In conflict resolution and peace-building, the presence of a facilitator is very important. As Trond Bakkevig notes “the knowledge of and curiosity about the relevant religions are necessary qualifications of a good facilitator” (Bakkevig, 2011). Knowledge is necessary in order to possibly foresee which issues are relevant for and can be brought up in relation to an actual peace process. Curiosity is important because it demonstrates the personal involvement and engagement of the facilitator. The role of the facilitator should start with deep respect for partners and their faith. A facilitator will be respected in her or his identity, but will be expected to rise above his or her own religious adherence. The same holds true for a facilitator’s political viewpoints. What is most important, is that a facilitator must be able to value and respect positions and concerns at each side. Such actions must supersede any religious conviction, personal or political opinion a facilitator might have.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 NIGERIA AND CONFLICT MEDIATION

The conflict situation in Nigeria is usually traced to the time of Uthman Dan Fodio (1757-1809), when he launched a jihad against the Hausa communities in the north with the intension of establishing an Islamic state. Jeffrey Haynes writes “since the 1960s, religion has been prominent in Nigerian civil conflict where missionaries and religious partisans see themselves in a zero sum game to win souls, sometimes entering into deadly conflict” (Haynes 2007:94). The most disturbing condition Nigeria finds herself in today is the intra national conflict which traces itself back to the time after her independent in 1960.

Despite its political struggle, mediation has been one of the major ways to console the conflicting communities in Nigeria. For example, the mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford foundation in the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970; and the recent efforts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum from 1995 to this date.

### 3.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF NIGERIA

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa with over a hundred million inhabitants. The country is divided into thirty-six states. The capital is the inland city of Abuja although Lagos retains its preeminent position as the leading port and centre of finance and commerce. She is often called the giant of Africa because of the vastness of its land, the diversity of its people and languages, its huge population and its oil and other mineral resources (The National Geographic, 2012). Nigeria is located in the West Africa with its two major rivers: River Niger and River Benue which have their meeting point in

Lokoja. The terrain ranges from the oil rich Niger Delta in the south to a belt of rain forests inland and to high savannah covered plateaus in the north.

The Republic of Nigeria has about 250 ethnic groups but the most widely used languages are Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Fulani, although English remains the official language. Islam and Christianity are the two main religions in the country, with African traditional religion as a minority. While the northern Nigeria is mostly Islamic and dominated by the Hausas, the southern Nigeria is more westernized and urbanized than the north with Yorubas in the southwest and the Igbos in the southeast. It is estimated that about half of the Yorubas are Christians and half Muslim, though many maintain the traditional beliefs. The Igbos in the southeast tends to be Christians and many are Roman Catholic.

Nigeria is an agglomeration of hundreds of indigenous nations conquered by the British in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1914, the Protectorates of southern and northern Nigeria were amalgamated to form modern Nigeria (Falola 2001:1-53). The country got her independence in 1960 from the British and became a republic in 1963. From 1967 to 1970, the Igbos fought to separate themselves from Nigeria and form a state called Biafra, but after the civil war they were re-integrated into Nigeria (Achebe 2012:91-228). Since then, an enduring democracy has eluded the country as military regimes have been the most pervasive phenomenon. It was only in May 1999 that the democratic government replaced the military, with the hope of a new beginning after decades of political and economic crisis (Falola 2001:1-53). Nigeria is rich with different mineral resources but oil mainly from the Niger Delta fields is the leading revenue earner. Despite of all its problems, Nigeria's economy remains the third largest in Africa, following that of South Africa and Egypt. The election of the current president Goodluck Ebere Jonathan marked the most recent democratic election the Republic has ever had.

### 3.2 RECENT HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Kubai and Adebo in their book “Striving in faith: Christians and Muslims in Africa” gave detailed examples of conflicts that have rocked Nigeria in the last two decades as the following;

In 1980 there was the *Maitasine* conflict between Muslims and Christians which began in *Kano* and spread to *Maiduguri* and *Jimeta*. The immediate cause of the conflict is traced to the claims of a local Muslim leader to have received a special revelation, which rendered all other practicing Muslim infidels. He introduced the ritual practice of sucking male blood. At first Christians were exempted from the ritual, but later on at the height of these untoward activities Christian males were also included. The intention was to purify the local practices. While this was happening in *Maitasine*, Muslims were rather stigmatized in the area by this practice. However, the government intervened by destroying their main base in *Kano* and since 1985 the *Maitasine* group has not emerged anywhere else. But it is important to know that their struggle was directed against their fellow Muslims (Kubai and Adebo 2008:99).

The conflict that erupted in *Kafanchan* was a result of preaching by a Muslim convert to Christianity. The Christian students’ fellowship of Federal College of Education in *Kafanchan* invited this convert for a week long annual campus crusade. His sermon dwelt on the wonderful ways in which Jesus worked in his life. He said to have extolled the virtues of Jesus Christ to the detriment of Muhammad. This led Muslim students to rush in and one of them seized the microphone from the preacher on the pulpit and accused him of speaking ill of Prophet Muhammad. The crisis escalated in Kaduna and spread to the *Kaduna* Radio Broadcast Corporation, then to *Funtua*, *Zaria*, *Kastina*, *Kano* and other parts of the northern Nigeria. The government intervened to restore law and order only after a great deal of damage had been done.

Another conflict erupted in *Bauchi* in 1991 over one *Naira suya* (roasted piece of meat with some spices). A young man in the cause of hawking grilled meat stumbled onto a

group of Hausa and Fulani who had gathered under a greenwood tree. One Fulani took a bite of his *suya* with distaste and called the hawker an infidel who was selling pork instead of beef. After a brief exchange of words, a motley crowd gathered around them. Religious fanatics hijacked the situation and embarked on a killing spree.

Events outside Nigeria have also been known to trigger communal conflicts as can be illustrated with the case of an anti-Western Shiite cleric who campaigned in Nigeria against the allied forces at the height of the war against Iraq. He had earlier instructed a local Muslim leader from his home base in *Zaria* to lead a march of the faithful on the Daily Times office in *Kastina*. The instruction was carried out with military precision. The faithful burnt the Daily Times offices and copies of Fun Times. The real cause of this is still unknown but there was speculation that the papers were burnt either for covering the crisis, which perhaps the *Shiite* cleric did not like, or for inaccurate reporting. The Nigerian government brought the situation under control when the President gave instructions that “the conflict should stop or else sympathizers should make themselves available to go and fight in Iraq and a plane would be available to fly volunteers to Iraq” (Kubai and Adobe 2008:100-101). The Nigerian sympathizers were motivated by the idea of universal Muslim brotherhood, and as members of the *Shia* movement the demonstration was carried out to show their solidarity with Iraq. The Muslims who attacked the newspaper office maintained that any aggression against a fellow Muslim at the hands of an opponent is considered to be an attack on the Muslim community as a whole. The information disseminated by the newspaper was seen as an exposure of weakness of Islam. As it were, there was no direct link between the war in Iraq and the media office that was damaged. It was a way of expressing their solidarity with a Muslim country which was under attack from the West.

The *Jos* crisis which enveloped the entire city on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001 was partly caused by the appointment of one Alhaji of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic origin as the coordinator of the national poverty eradication program in an area where his ethnic group

was in minority. Although other ethnic groups strongly resented this appointment, there was nothing they could do to change the situation. With these grievances still simmering, some religious zealots triggered off a wave of riots. On that day, they closed a popular street on which there was a mosque, blocking all motorists. Trouble started when a woman who drove through the street suddenly encountered a barricade which she felt was illegally mounted in a state capital. The woman was bent on her way because in her opinion nobody had the right to block a public road. In the midst of this conflict she was assaulted and she retreated.

A few minutes later, the woman came back with a group of young men who engaged the worshippers in a brawl and within a short period of time, the violence had engulfed the entire town which turned into a war zone.

The *Tafawa Belewa* crisis that occurred in April 1991 is seen from three different perspectives: political, ethnic and religious. From the political perspective, it is claimed that the *Sayawa* were agitating for freedom from the Fulani overlords who constitute the ruling class even though they are said to be immigrants into the area. In this case sustained domination and resistance are the underlying causes of frequent crises between the *Fulani* and *Sayawa* who belong to different ethnic groups (Kubai and Adebo 2008:101-102). The *Fulani* in this area believe that they are the rulers while the indigenous people feel that they have been deprived of their right to leadership.

From the religious perspective – the *Basayi* are predominantly Christian and the Fulani are Muslims - the religious dimension of the crisis was manifested in the attacks of *Sayawa* Christians on *Basayi* Muslims. Christian/Muslim relations in this area were cordial until the emerging local elite began to challenge Fulani/Hausa supremacy. The state government comes into this religio-political arena in an attempt to stop the violence but this further complicates the situation because people who are considered to be immigrants and whose dominance must be challenged wield control in the government and occupy other positions of authority. We can therefore say that this is a clear case of

the combination of ethno-political and religious factors in fomenting conflict in Nigeria society.

Another perspective of the *Tafawa Balewa* conflict was said to have been rooted in the traditional hostility, but escalated when some Christian *Basayi* attempted to slaughter pigs in the Muslim section of the town's only abattoir. Admittedly the practice was abhorrent to the Muslims and thus it provided an opportunity for the aggrieved to vent their frustration.

The caricatures of Muhammad published by the Danish newspaper elicited different reactions from Muslims in different parts of the world and Nigeria was not an exemption. In *Kano* state, a peaceful demonstration to condemn the cartoon publication was held on 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006 and in several other states the governors and law enforcement agents took precaution to ensure that demonstrations on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006 were peaceful and they addressed the demonstrators. In some other places the demonstrations triggered a wave of violence that left many people dead and much destruction of property.

In *Maiduguri*, violence escalated after a lecture on the personality of Prophet Muhammad which was delivered on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2006 by the *Borno* Muslim forum, an umbrella body of for Muslim organisation in *Borno* state. The event which was meant to last for about three hours started peacefully had entered the last stage of prayers for the unity of the country after condemning the cartoons which were considered to be blasphemous.

While the meeting was still in progress, there was a commotion when a thief was caught there and handed over to the police, causing panic in the crowd which scattered in various directions. In the ensuing chaos some people seized the opportunity to vent their anger at the blasphemous cartoons by burning churches and looting shops of Igbo traders, killing some in the process. Here the assumption was that "the Danes who had published the offensive cartoons are Christians and by extension, all Christians were responsible for the

blasphemy and therefore they should bear the consequences” (Kubai and Adebo 2008:103).

The wave of the crisis in *Maiduguri* spread to other parts of northern states. The tension was aggravated when Igbo saw the corpses of their loved ones being brought home on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006. Also the Hausa communities in the affected areas such as *Enugu*, *Abia*, *Anambra* and *Delta* states became victims of the aggression. Many Hausa Muslims were killed and mosques were destroyed and burnt down.

### 3.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA.

History has shown that the Federal Republic of Nigeria has gone through several kinds of conflicts since after her independence from the British to this date. Many different factors escalated the conflicts in Nigeria but these are the major ones:

- i. Ethnic and religious differences have been a source of tension throughout Nigeria’s turbulent post-independence history, which has been marked by decades of military rule.
  
- ii. The official appointments of federal posts have often been made on the basis of patronage as opposed to merit which has favoured northerners who have been quite dominant in the Nigerian military. This unmerited appointment also causes conflicts in Nigeria.
  
- iii. Another factor that has contributed to Nigerian ethnic tensions has been the country’s poor progress toward economic development (People Building Peace II, 2012).
  
- iv. Identity politics is also one of the contributing factors to Nigerian conflict.
  
- v. The introduction of *shar’ia* law into twelve northern states of Nigeria in 1999 serves as one of the major factors that escalate conflict in Nigeria (United States Institute of Peace, 2012).

vi. The Nigerian government's concentration of too much power at the centre contributes to her conflicts (Falola 2001:21).

vii. One of the major factors of conflict in Nigeria includes the political campaigns prior to the election when leaders and their supporters engage in debates and discredit each other in the process in order to win a community's vote into a political office. In such cases the supporters of discredited politicians might engage in violent conflicts as they try to defend their candidate. This is always reflected in the majority-minority divide (Kubai and Adebo 2008).

viii. The criminality of the Nigerian politics and the rampant corruption of officials at all levels have been one of the major causes of conflicts in the Republic (Campbell 2011:138).

ix. One of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria according to Chinua Achebe is the economic deprivation, exacerbated financial and social inequalities in the Nigerian population which fuel her political instability (Achebe 2012:250).

x. The high rate of human rights violations is also one of the major contributing factors to conflict in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

xi. Kubai and Adebo observe that there are deeply ingrained biases that shape people's attitudes in Nigeria, which leaves no room for openness, since people dogmatically stick to their own interpretation of ideas and events (Kuabi and Adebo 2008:103).

xii. The issue of control, independence and resistance of the indigenous communities is also one of the factors that contribute to conflict in Nigeria.

### 3.4 WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS?

John Paul Lederach identified three different effects of conflict in a deeply divided society:

Firstly, cohesion and identity in a contemporary conflict tend to form within increasingly narrower lines than those that encompass national citizenship. In a conflicting society, people seek security by identifying with something close to their experience and over which they have control. In today's settings that unit of identity may be clan, ethnicity, religion, geographic or regional affiliation, or a mixture of these.

Secondly, one of the complexities found in many conflicting societies is the multiplicity of groups and collectivities vying for recognition and power, often in the form of armed movements.

Thirdly, conflicts create a long-term nature of the conflicting groups' animosity, perception of enmity, and deep-rooted fear. This is coupled with the immediacy of having the enemy living virtually next door as in many areas of Bosnia, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Rwanda and Colombia (Lederach 1997:12-14).

A well functioning state can become a failed state because of conflict in that state as Chinua Achebe writes: "A failed state is one that is unable to perform its duties on several levels. When violence cascades into all-out internal war, when standards of living is massively deteriorated, when the infrastructure of ordinary life decays, and when the greed of rulers overwhelms their responsibilities to better their people and their surroundings" (Achebe 2012:250).

Another effect conflict can cause among a conflicting communities is a possibility of unnecessary competition such as religious competition, power and so on. Among other effects are destruction of property and environment, loss of lives, displacement of the citizens and migrants in the affected areas. An example of this was an incident I witnessed in 2006 conflict in the city of *Onitsha*, *Anambra* state which is one of the

major commercial cities in Nigeria, when the Igbos went on a mass killing of the Hausas in that city after they saw a truck loaded with the dead bodies of the Igbos who lost their lives during the riots in the northern part of Nigeria.

### 3.5 THE MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM (MCDF)

In Nigeria, the religious competition between Muslim and Christian communities has led to several conflicts. First, from the 1980's when many Christians believed that the Muslims in the north of the country were enjoying a major portion of both political power and economic resources. Second, tension was raised by the government's secret decision to join the 45 member Organization of the Islamic conference (OIC) in 1986; many Christians feared that the country's membership of OIC would jeopardize the Nigerian status as a secular state and reduce the status and position of Christians in the country.

Third, the suggestion by the Muslim members of the constituent assembly for Nigeria to have a *Shari'ah* law in her constitution, while Christians will not support such a move. Fourth, between 1987 and 1993 there have been anti-Christian riots in parts of northern Nigeria in which over 3,000 people lost their lives. Fifth, in 1992 Christians *Kataf* fought the Muslims which claimed about 1,000 lives, the destruction of both Christian churches and Muslim mosques. Sixth, the anger and frustration among Muslims were turned to religious issues which made many ordinary Muslims turn into fundamentalists who looked at their Christian counterparts as their biggest enemy, while Christians, fearing what to them threatened to be a growing threat from Islam, replied with retaliation (Haynes 2007:94-96).

The Nigerian intra-national conflicts have claimed more than 10,000 lives in the 1990's and *Kaduna* is the most affected state. These intra-national conflicts in Nigeria led a Christian Pastor James Movel Wuye and a Muslim imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa to

founding the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum (MCDF) in 1995 which is an inter-faith mediation to foster Christian-Muslim dialogue in Nigeria (Haynes 2007:96).

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum developed the following five objectives to govern the organisation in its conflict resolutions in Nigeria:

- i. To re-establish relationships that has been damaged due to recurring violence over the last five years (1990 – 1995).
- ii. To minimize the reoccurrence of violence amongst various groups in the Nigerian communities.
- iii. To initiate programs and projects that require and encourage the involvement of Christians and Muslims, including dialogues, workshops, cultural events, and the establishment of a resource centre.
- iv. To enhance inter-religious relationships and cooperation within the state.
- v. To support and build the capacity of local partners who are involved in peacemaking (People Building Peace II, 2012).

### 3.6 THE STRENGTHS OF THE MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria has developed several strengths; but the following are the major ones:

According to People Building Peace II, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria organizes a range of activities to bring together religious leaders, policymakers, small business owners and traders, grassroots participants including women, youth and stakeholders.

The inclusion of women is essential because of the role women play in educating children at home. Engaging the youths is vital because it is the youths who are often the perpetrators of violence especially in Nigeria. The operators of business and traders have a vested interest in peace and stability in the community, which is the reason why they are viewed as valuable potential partners in the peace and reconciliation process (People Building Peace II, 2012). This is so because during conflict, the business operators and

traders always face losses such as profits, shops and valuables in their shops and even customers.

Some of the activities that take place include programs focusing on dialogue among the various constituencies; intensive problem solving workshops for women and youth groups; annual cultural events; capacity-building programs for local community leaders and members of civil society, and programs designed to address the trauma that citizens have suffered as a result of the violence.

One of the most significant achievements of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has been the drafting of the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration which is an articulation of a common vision to put in place effective machinery appropriate for building and sustaining long-term peaceful coexistence between the Christians and the Muslim communities. The document was carefully formulated so as to be broadly acceptable and realistic in its goals and the potential signers were encouraged to review it together with their constituents. In August 2002, some twenty senior religious leaders signed the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration and declared that each year the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August would be observed as Peace Day in *Kaduna* state.

Since the signing of the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration, grassroots efforts to maintain peace have continued but the challenges have remained as well. Any incident runs the risk of turning into a crisis. For example in November 2002, protests over a newspaper article connecting the prophet Mohammed to the Miss World beauty pageant caused much tension. The Interfaith Mediation Centre in union with the religious leaders drove around the affected neighbourhoods in a bus and arranged to appear on television to appeal for calm. The intervention made in the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration was an important factor in containing a volatile situation.

Religious leaders who have signed the declaration are also credited with helping to control violence and vote rigging during elections at both the state and federal levels. In

addition, they have on several occasions intervened in conflicts in the schools when minor arguments threatened to turn into major incidents.

Indeed some instigators are intent on using schools as a breeding ground for intra national conflicts. To stem this tide, the Interfaith Mediation Centre in collaboration with signers of the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration has embarked on a peace program to provide conflict resolution training to religious instructors and secondary school officials (People Building Peace II, 2012).

One other positive effort of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has been a successful initiative to bring together two warring communities of the *Plateau* state, the nomadic Fulani cattle rearers and the native *Beroms*. To settle long-standing disputes, the Interfaith Mediation Centre arranged talks and actively facilitated a mediation process. In 2003, the two parties made a start on engaging in a healing process and exploring pragmatic solutions to the conflict.

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum seeking for joint support from international peace-building such as the United States Institute of Peace plays a strong role in the Nigerian conflict resolution. This is because engaging a group that is neutral as a mediator in settling conflicts encourages the disputants to create some trust in them because of their neutrality, knowing that the invited mediators will not side with either of them, rather they opt for a peaceful ground for both parties. This confirms Appleby's idea of an outside-neutral mediator in a conflict resolution who is a third party and not connected in any way to the disputants; the mediator has no investment in the conflict except settlement and derives legitimacy from his or her rational legal professional role (Appleby 1997:219).

Involving the Nigerian inter-religious council which is locally based improves the strengths of the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum effort for peace-building in Nigeria.

This means that such combined efforts can foster mutual understanding among the religious traditions involved in the conflict.

### 3.7 WEAKNESSES OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM

As Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has the above major strengths, they also develop certain weaknesses.

First, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria is individualistic by nature. This means that both the Christian pastor and the Muslim imam singled themselves out and negotiated to call for peace rather than more violence based on their personal loss during the conflict. This kind of negotiation does not last for long because, not all the militias in their respective communities would support such a move. This confirms the words of Juergensmeyer that “a negotiated compromise with activists involved in a conflict is fraught with difficulties. It is a solution that does not always work. This is because a few activists may be appeased with such negotiation but others may be angered by what they regard as a sell-out of their principles” (Juergensmeyer 2003:240).

Second, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum organised some workshops where the participants agreed on a seventeen point declaration containing various recommendations including:

- i. Both Christians and Muslims should love each other unconditionally as brothers and sisters.
- ii. Both communities should show good will to each other at all times.
- iii. It was essential to inform members of each religious community about the beliefs and tenets of the other faith.
- iv. It was necessary to cooperate with government in order to hand over to justice those people who continue to use religious violence contravention of the law (Haynes 2007:97).

Based on the above first two sentences in i and ii, I can say that the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum's declaration agreement with the participants was only paper based and not in practice. In addition it is also discriminative. This means that both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria are still rivals until this date. Examples include all the bombings and killings carried out in Nigeria by *Boko Haram*, from the last two years' bombing on the Nigeria 50<sup>th</sup> year independence anniversary, the United Nations' office in *Abuja*, to the killings and destruction of Christian churches and homes including the Muslim mosques and homes in most of the northern states of Nigeria such as *Kastina*, *Kano*, and *Maiduguri*. Christians do not want to see a Muslim as a leader in Nigeria because this is seen as a threat to Christianity and the same applies to Nigerian Muslims. Based on these incidents, can we say that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria love each other as brothers and sisters? Do they show any good will to each other? The answer to these questions is no. This illustrates one of the weaknesses of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum conflict resolution in Nigeria.

My third point is that, even if Muslims and Christians inform their respective members about the beliefs and tenets of the other faith, as stated in iii, I still see it as very difficult for their members to accommodate since each group has its conservatives who will not abide by such views. This means that the extremists in both religious groups will see it as a threat against their religion, thereby making them defend their respective faiths in a fundamentalist manner.

Fourth, to cooperate with the government, as mentioned in iv, is not a big deal but the major problem is that the size of corruption in the Nigerian government may not allow them to achieve their aim. As long as the Nigerian government systems remain so corrupt, any efforts to resolve conflict in collaboration with the Nigerian government will not be successful. You cannot bring any group or individuals who were involved in causing conflicts in the country to justice since they can easily bribe those officials who are in a position to bring them to book. Even some of the top officials in the government

are also sponsors of such groups as *Boko Haram* which makes it difficult to deal with them.

Fifth, Appleby writes “when the processes of conflict resolution and peace-building are successful, it results in structural reform” (Appleby 1997:212). Based on this statement, I can say that the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria lacks a structural reform. This means that they failed to address the root cause of the conflict in Nigeria which I call “socio-ethnic and politics of regionalism” that implicates itself with religion instead of religious conflict as the Inter-faith mediation in Nigeria called it. Rather, the conflicting communities in Nigeria are using religion as a tool of disturbance to fight their case in a way that favours them.

### 3.8 COMPARISON OF THE NIGERIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING WITH THAT OF SANT’ EGIDIO IN MOZAMBIQUE AND THE DHAMMAYIETRA WALK OF CAMBODIA

The Nigerian Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and *Sant’ Egidio* in Mozambique were both involved in dealing with conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Both the Inter-faith mediation in Nigeria, the *Dhmmayietra* in Cambodia and the *Sant’Egidio* in Mozambique believes that inter-religious dialogue is both something good in itself and a powerful resource for peace-building.

The Community of *Sant’Egidio* was born in Rome in 1968 at the initiative of a young man who was then less than twenty, Andrea Riccardi. He gathered a group of high-school students like himself to listen to and put the Gospel into practice. In that year of great hopes, of utopian visions and political ideologies, Riccardi and others believed that if they wanted to change the world, they must begin with the Gospel. Very quickly, the Gospel led them to the world of the poor. The small group immediately began to the

outskirts of Rome visiting the slums, and then crowded with many poor people and they began an afternoon school named “schools of peace” for children.

Since then the community has increased. It is now working in more than seventy-three countries in four continents such as Europe, America, and Africa. The number of community members is also constantly growing. There are about sixty-thousand members as well as many more that are permanently co-operating in the service to the poor people and in the various activities of *Sant’Egidio* without being part of the community in a strict sense. There is also a large service that the community performs (Sant’ Egidio, 2013). Appleby explains “that *Sant’Egidio* began its activities with charity, humanitarian action and development cooperation uppermost in its thinking, concerns moulded by spirituality and shared principles including prayer, communicating the gospel, solidarity with the poor and dialogue with other religions” ( Appleby 2006:10).

During the early 1980s *Sant’Egidio* became engaged in various international dialogues. The aim was to try to prevent or reduce tension between conflicting groups and to seek to mediate between them. One of the clearest success stories of *Sant’Egidio’s* peacemaking efforts occurred between 1989 and 1992 when the organisation was extremely influential in resolving the civil war that had ravaged Mozambique since the mid 1970s. Bouta et al writes “the effort took months but eventually *Sant’Egidio* not only contacted the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) leadership but also encouraged Mozambican government officials to agree to meet with them” (Bouta et al 2005:71-72). *Sant’Egidio* was successful in its efforts because both RENAMO and the Mozambican government perceived *Sant’Egidio* as an organisation characterised both by welcome neutrality and a compassionate outlook, with but one interest in Mozambique – to end the civil war and promote peace. *Sant’Egidio* was understood to have no political or economic agenda, throughout the negotiations this perception was bolstered as the organisation demonstrated a position of both even-handedness and neutrality.

According to Jeffrey Haynes, the *Dhammayietra* walks had their origin in the UN-monitored repatriation of Cambodians from border camps in Thailand in 1992. *Dhammayietra* walks whose central tenet was compassion and non-violence inspired people throughout Cambodia. Its message of the hope of peace to rebuild the war-torn country was in contrast to what had gone before by the rule of *Khmer Rouge* in Cambodia, representing an essential initiative drawing on core Buddhist norms and values. It was said to be an important contribution towards the revival of Buddhism in Cambodia after the *Khmer Rouge* and consequent political instability (Haynes 2007:98).

The concept of the *Dhammayietra* walks draws upon discourses and practices revealed in the context of a socially engaged Buddhism that has gained visibility not only in Cambodia and Thailand but also in other Asian countries where Buddhism is a significant religious tradition since the early 1980s. Haynes points to the fact “that socially engaged Buddhism in Cambodia is often linked to the return of Cambodian Buddhist exiles from Thailand and other regional countries” (Haynes 2007:98). This development required two simultaneous moves in order to maintain its usefulness. On the one hand, it is represented as an exemplary *Khmer* Buddhist response to Cambodia’s entrenched conflicts, as it forges its discursive identity within the local space of the nation. On the other hand, this local space is also mobile and this is where the *Dhammayietra* walks acquire both religious and peace-building significance. The leading figure behind the walks was a Cambodian called *Maha Ghosananda* who instructed the walkers to move step by step towards peace. The aim was symbolically to reverse what *Maha Ghosananda* identified as examples of dangerous mobility, including massive internal and external relocations and refugee flights of the *Khmer Rouge* era that affected millions of Cambodians as well as the still serious danger of treading on landmines in many parts of the country which turns the act of walking itself into mindful act. As Poethig writes, “it is this discursive move that loosens the *Dhammayietra*’s ties to the nation allowing it to slip across political and religious borders and ally itself with a broad and diverse

network of interfaith peace groups that are its transnational public forum” (Poethig 2002:28).

While the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria focused only on conflict resolution, the *Dhammayietra* of Cambodia was based on social and conflict resolution while *Sant’Egidio* of Mozambique combined its conflict resolution with social and humanitarian works. For example, during the Mozambican civil war, with the help of *Sant’Egidio*, the Mozambican churches were able to draw on an international religious network of social services and channel desperately needed assets into Mozambique, and thereby relieve some of the pressing economic needs of the country (Appleby 1997:160).

Unlike the *Dhammayietra* in Cambodia and *Sant’Egidio* in Mozambique which have been involved in conflict resolution for many years, the Nigerian Inter-faith mediation was the first of its kind.

According to Jeffrey Haynes “the Nigerian Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum was involved with Protestant, Muslim, religious and community leaders while *Sant’Egidio* in Mozambique involved a Roman Catholic NGO, where as *Dhammayietra* of Cambodia was the efforts of a Buddhist monk, *Maha Ghosananda* (Haynes 2007:99).

*Sant’Egidio* combined the gospel with its work of peace and reconciliation where as the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria utilised both the Bible and the Qur’an in the inter-faith dialogue. The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum is nationally based and *Dhammayietra* walk of Cambodia is trans-nationally based where as *Sant’Egidio* has tried to promote a culture of peace and reconciliation both at the international level and in local communities. While *Sant’Egidio* is committed to the world of welcoming the marginalized and immigrants in daily solidarity, *Dhammayietra* walks used compassion, non-violence and a message of hope of peace to rebuild the war-torn country. The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and *Sant’Egidio* believe that in any given situation, through dialogue with specific people, peace is possible.

### 3.9 THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACE-BUILDING

Religion frequently plays a role through its leaders in transitional societies at the time in which distribution of power is unclear and stability is far from being established. As at the time of transition from the Roman Empire to the middle Ages, religious leaders today share some basic characteristics:

- i. Knowledge of language and culture
- ii. Access to firsthand information
- iii. Political expertise
- iv. Long-term vision.

Coward and Smith write “these characteristics can especially help to bridge the hermeneutical gap that is frequently the most serious obstacle to peace-builders” (Coward and Smith 2004:158).

Conflicts need to be seen and read properly, especially those that have major cultural, ethnic and religious dimensions. The external actors may find it difficult to have access to knowledge that is unique to the situation and that enables them to use their analytical framework properly. Religion through its leaders, because of their training and their role, can be better positioned in interpreting a conflict. Since they are closer to the scene of events, at ease with many actors, and familiar with the language and the issues at stake, religious leaders may offer important interpretative frameworks. According to Coward and Smith “this was certainly the case in Mozambique where Christians such as the Community of *Sant’Egidio* and Archbishop Jaime Goncalves played a significant role. Religious actors were consistently able to contribute to the peace process through their interpretation of events, issues and possibilities and to orient the debate towards a positive solution” (Coward and Smith 2004:158).

Religious leaders are uniquely positioned to foster non-violence conflict transformation through the building of constructive, collaborative relationships within and across ethnic and religious groups for the common good of the entire population of a country or region. In many conflict settings around the world, Appleby writes “the social location and cultural power of religious leaders make them potentially critical players in any effort to build a sustainable peace. The multigenerational local or regional communities they oversee are repositories of local knowledge and wisdom, custodians of culture, and privileged sites of moral, psychological and spiritual formation” (Appleby 2006:1).

According to Jeffery Haynes “religious individuals and faith-based organizations are actively involved in attempts to end conflict and to foster post-conflict reconciliation and peace-building between the warring parties” (Haynes 2007:89). Illustrations include, the mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford Foundation in the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970; the work of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches in mediating a cessation to the Sudan conflict in 1972; and the recent work of the imam of *Timbuktu* in mediating various West African conflicts.

Religion plays a special role through faith-based organizations in areas of religious conflict, but their peace-building programmes do not need to be confined to address only religious conflict. David Smock notes “these organizations’ peace-building agendas are diverse, ranging from high level mediation to training and peace-building through development at the grassroots. Peace can be often promoted most efficiently by introducing peace-building components into more traditional relief and development activities” (Smock 2001:1).

Religion through her leaders has a special responsibility of identifying religiously charged elements of a conflict. They also have to provide theological reasoning as to why and how these elements are charged and how they possibly can be solved. Also religious actors, as Appleby notes, “contributed to the processes of structural reform

necessary for the restoration of productive social relations and political stability after a period of conflict and human rights abuses” (Appleby 1997:220), for example nations recovering from oppressive regimes and civil wars such as South Africa, and Nicaragua called on religious leaders to help determine and implement appropriate instruments of transitional justice.

High profile inter-religious diplomacy also has made its mark in conflict transformation. For instance, appointing a delegation of prominent Jewish, Protestant and Catholic leaders to visit China was the appropriate choice for the delicate, politically charged mission envisioned by the U.S States Department to pressure the Chinese government against the maltreatment of different religious traditions in China by the Chinese government.

Religion through her transnational religious movements has contributed to peace-building, operated at different levels of society and performed distinctive functions such as providing neutral and secure space for talks, active mediation, advocacy, education or serving as a liaison to external governments or relief agencies. An example of this are the efforts of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists which trained Buddhist peace-makers in Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia, thereby overcoming barriers presented by the national and historical schools of Buddhism in the region. In their reconciliation work with prisoners, victims of violence and other aggrieved populations in Northern Ireland, Appleby writes “Mennonite peace-builders offered unique conceptual as well as practical contributions to their Ulster Protestant and Irish Catholic coreligionists” (Appleby 1997:224).

Religion also provides a neutral secure place where antagonists meet, at a physical and psychological distance from the conflict zone and in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect to discuss their differences and discover what they hold in common. For example the effort of *Sant’Egidio* in playing a key role to end the civil war in Mozambique in 1992. *Sant’Egidio* encouraged Mozambican government officials and the rebels of the

Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) to meet and talk on neutral ground in Italy to resolve their differences. Jeffery Heynes notes “*Sant’Egidio* was successful in its efforts because both RENAMO and the Mozambican government perceived *Sant’Egidio* as an organisation characterised both by a welcome neutrality and a compassionate outlook, with but one interest in Mozambique to end the civil war and promote peace” (Haynes 2007:93).

### 3.10 THE FUTURE OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM AND NIGERIA IN GENERAL

After an overview of all the strengths and weaknesses of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria from 1995 to this date in mediating the conflicting communities, one can say that Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has done a good job for the Republic of Nigeria in the area of mediation. They have some challenges facing them, such as political, social and religious problems but despite the obstacles they may face in the future I am envisaging a brighter future for the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in mediating the conflicting communities in Nigeria and beyond.

Nigeria is a very big country and blessed with some mineral resources such as oil, gas, and coal, but because of bad governance the Federal Republic of Nigeria has never seen peace since her independence from the British to this date. This has left so many Nigerians frustrated and angry which has led to ethnic division, political unrest and other problems in Nigeria. Despite this, I am predicting a better Nigeria in the future, but in order to achieve a better future, the Republic has a very long task ahead as regards political, religious, ethnic and social issues. Once the government has taken care of these issues, they would be able to regain the total trust they have lost from its citizens for the past years of economic turmoil and total unrest.

### 3.11 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the Nigerian case, conflict is an everyday phenomenon among Nigerians. For example, the introduction of the *Shari'a* law in *Kaduna* State of Nigeria has made the majority of the Christian communities rethink their future conditions and that of Christianity in Nigeria. Their major concern is that if the practice of *Shari'a* law is allowed fully in Nigeria, the country will become an Islamic state, which will limit the practice of Christianity in the future as it is in most of the Islamic countries today such as Egypt, Syria, and the Sudan. On the other hand, the fast growth of Christianity in Nigeria also worries the Islamic communities, especially in the northern part. This situation makes the Nigerian Muslims claim that Christianity may dominate the northern part of Nigeria. Therefore neither Muslims nor Christians in Nigeria would allow the domination by the other.

Furthermore in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity have been in religious competition, often resulting in conflict between the religious traditions. Evidence of this is found in the statements of Wuye and Ashafa 1999 that “Islam and Christianity from the beginning of this century to date have been in conflict, each struggling for superiority over the other. Islam had its glory days before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria when it controlled a significant percentage of what is today called Nigeria, while Christianity came with the explorers and the colonial rulers through to the first republic of modern Nigeria. From the middle of this century, specifically the late 1960's, there started arising conflicts between adherents of the two faiths” (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:1).

In the religious competitions among Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, conversion is another serious issue in both religions. Converting Christians to Islam or Muslims to Christianity poses a threat. In this way both religious traditions can go to any extreme to get a new member to their faith and will also do the same to stop any of their members to be converted to another religion. For example in Nigeria today, inter-religious marriages between a Christian and a Muslim is quite difficult because neither the bride nor the bride

groom would like to be converted to another religion. In some cases when a Christian man wants to marry a Muslim woman, the marriage is only possible if the Christian man accepts to leave his faith for Islam; and the same applies when a Muslim woman wants to enter into marriage with a Christian man. This means that both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria take their belief and practices to be superior to the other. They therefore avoid any marriage that will make them change their religion.

One may argue that in the contemporary world, the issue of religious plurality which allows inter-faith marriages could solve the problem. I believe in and accept the presence of religious plurality in Nigeria today such as inter-faith worship, meetings and conferences, but when it comes to delicate matters like marriage, those involved may believe in plurality of religion but cannot practice it because none of them want to loose their faith. Even among Christians, a Catholic family may not allow their son or daughter to get married to a person from the Anglican Church; neither may a Charismatic allow the same.

This confirms Scott Appleby's idea of religion as constituting an integral culture, capable of forming personal and social identity and influencing subsequent experience and behaviour in a profound way (Appleby 1997:9).

Huntington views religion as a central force that motivates and mobilizes people (Huntington 1996:27). Based on the above definition, I believe that this is the reason why Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Cape Town was able to mobilize his fellow South Africans for peace marches against the apartheid regime in South Africa and motivate them to opt for peace and reconciliation in the country with his idea of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. This is reflected in his book "No future without forgiveness" (Tutu 1999:1-294).

Negatively, in the Nigerian case, it was religion that motivated the imam Muhammad Ashafa to work to enthrone Islam in the Christian dominated Eastern Nigeria. It was also

religion that motivated the Pastor Wuye James to embark on his mission in *Kogi* state, which is an Evangelical campaign to convert the Igala people from Islam to Christianity, a middle belt tribe in *Kogi* State of Nigeria which is dominated by a Muslim population (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:117). Also it is religion that motivated the Islamist extremist “*Boko Haram*” (which means Western education is forbidden), to carry out several bombings in Nigeria.

On the positive side, it was religion that motivated the Christian pastor, James Movel Wuye and the Muslim imam, Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa to turn away from violence and militia and embrace non-violence, reconciliation and the advocacy of peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria (Haynes 2007:96). Religion also motivated the Sultan of Sokoto State in Nigeria, Alhaji Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar III and the Catholic Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Abuja to campaign against the activities of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria and to stress the need for peace between the adherents of two major religions in the country (Bosede, 2012).

Based on Jonathan Fox’ idea of religion as one of the sources of people’s world views and influences on people’s behaviours (Jonathan Fox 2004:176-177), I believe that the religious ideas and world views affect the ways millions of Nigerians explain their reality, understand how the country works, and relates to other members of the society and reacts to events and changes in Nigeria. For example many Nigerians seek solution to their problems such as illness, hardship, progress and prosperity from God rather than from the Nigerian government or their fellow human beings. They believe that only God can solve their problems and improve whatever bad conditions they may see themselves in today towards a better future. This is confirmed by the words of Toyin Falola that “Nigerians turn to religion to deal with the problems of suffering, sickness, death and insecurity. They try to forestall these problems or seek solutions to life’s challenges in their faith and religious rituals. Religious ideas and worldviews in Nigeria are inherited as part of the socialization process” (Falola 2001:29).

For example, in Muslim fundamentalist's belief, there are two different worlds, the world of Islam and the world of war, and Islam engages itself with war against the other world (Juergensmeyer 2003:81-82). With this kind of ideology, it will be very difficult for a Muslim extremist society to be without conflicts. On the other hand, many Nigerians in the Christian community may also adopt the Christian theological idea of just war which states that "the Church can embrace a just revolution" (Juergensmeyer 2003:24). Such Nigerian Christians for example can easily follow Reinhold Niebuhr's theory of a just war. Niebuhr showed the relevance of the just war theory to social struggles in the twentieth century by relating the idea to what he regarded as the Christian requirement to fulfil social injustice. Viewing the world through the lens of what he called "realism," Niebuhr concluded that moral persuasion is not sufficient to fight social injustices, especially when they are buttressed by corporate and state power. Therefore, it is at times essential to abandon nonviolence in favour of a more forceful solution (Niebuhr 2003:25-26).

Meanwhile, following the fundamentalist Muslim ideology of the two worlds and the Christian ideology of just war theory, we can see that in the Nigerian context both ideologies can easily influence the behaviours and world views of many Nigerians today.

Many Nigerians identify themselves by their different ethnic background. This has been one of the major problems caused by their colonial masters (the British), who divided the nation based on different ethnic regions, cultures and languages (Falola 2001:21-28; Campbell 2011:2). Today, the politics of regionalism affect Nigerians negatively ranging from the Nigerian politics, different places of learning, environments and relation of Nigerians to their fellow citizens from other regions. For example, in the Nigerian political arena, most citizens of Nigeria would like to see the president to be a member of his or her own ethnic group or region in order to get some favours such as social amenities, development, jobs and so on. The same negative impact is also reflected in the higher places of learning, where a student will find it very difficult to study his or her dream course at his or her choice of university if he or she comes from another region

than the region where such universities are situated. Also today, many Nigerians always have these divisions in mind in whatever activities they are embarking on, ranging from politics to education in so far as it connects them with people from other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Religion as a source of legitimacy shows itself in the Nigerian present situation in relation to *Boko Haram* which is an Islamic extreme group that has been terrorising the northern parts of Nigeria by bombing and killings which most of the time have been targeted on the Christian churches and families, trying to make it to be a religious conflict where as one of their major purposes has been to seek justice from the Nigerian government for some of their members who lost their lives during one of the attacks that were made when the Nigerian soldiers went on a rampage to their camp in Maiduguri, killing their former commander Ibn Saleh Ibrahim, the founding leader Mohammed Yusuf and some of their members in the northern part of Nigeria, July 2009 (BBC News, July 2009).

Recently, the group told BBC news that they will not rest unless the Nigerian government changes the living conditions of most of the northerners. *Boko Haram* regards these conditions as inhuman.

On various occasions, the group has referred to itself as the Nigerian Taliban. It seeks to overthrow the government and replace it with a regime based on Islamic law. For them, Shari'a law is not enough and they want a pure Islamic state. *Boko Haram* has accused the Nigerian government of corruption, bad governance and irresponsibility (CNN News, September 2012).

This shows how religion associated with formal institutions play a big role in the Nigerian domestic politics by supporting or opposing the regimes. Based on this understanding, the Nigerian politics are connected with religion, in the sense that each

religious group (Muslims and Christians) tries to see their own person as a leader of the country and this is what has been going on in Nigeria from the past and up to the present day. Since the Nigerian Muslims believe that they are born to rule, they always try to interrupt the leaderships of non-Muslims in the country and this is one of the major causes of the Nigerian conflicts today. It is obvious that the problem in Nigeria is a political one although both parties are using religion to justify their actions. I contend that Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life and this is played out more in the north, perhaps because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than it is in the south. Therefore, in my view, the Nigerian conflict is not primarily a religious conflict, but in a real sense it is a matter of political regionalism. I will back up my argument with the words of Toyin Falola that “Islam and Christianity are the two principal religions in Nigeria. The missionaries and leaders of both Islam and Christianity compete for converts and attempt to insert religion into politics in ways that favour them. Since the 1980’s, their competition has resulted in major conflicts in which places of worship have been burnt and hundreds of people have lost their lives” (Falola 2001:6-7). Also Kubai and Adebo observed that “violent confrontations often occur when a group feels oppressed by another or tries to resist political or economic domination. In some cases such efforts of resistance can easily acquire religious overtones, especially if either of the group has a large number of adherents of Islam or Christianity” (Kubai and Adebo 2008:96). This is exactly what has happened in the Nigerian case.

Furthermore, Falola writes “the Nigerian first Republic was defined by the politics of regionalism. The north was dominated by the Hausa/Fulani, the west by the Yoruba and the East by the Igbo. The three regions were bitter rivals and they all wanted to control the federal government. They could not agree on how to divide the national revenues, how to distribute federal cabinet positions or how to even conduct a head count” (Falola 2001:21). Based on the above statements, one can see that the Nigerian conflict has been there for many years in the power struggle which is primarily a regional and political

issue in reality although each side implicates religion in order to fight their case in such a way that they will be favoured. This means that both sides are using religion to justify their actions. Therefore the Nigerian conflict is not a religious conflict. Rather, Nigerians are using religion as a tool of conflict because religion permeates all aspects of their lives.

The Foundation Coalition understands conflict “as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs or goals” (The Foundation Coalition, 2012). In the Nigerian conflict, the above statement describes exactly the needs and beliefs of both conflicting parties in Nigeria today. This is because both parties desire that candidates from their respective regions occupy the major government positions which will favour them in one way or another. This is affirmed by the words of Chinua Achebe “that the Nigerian government sanctioned environment of hate and resentment created by self-serving politicians which resulted in government supervised persecutions, terminations and dismissals of Nigerian citizens based on their ethnicity” (Achebe 2012:77-78).

Furthermore, the needs of both conflicting parties in Nigeria may be described with the words of Kalu Kelechi “that conflict is a process of interaction between two or more parties that seek to thwart, injure or destroy their opponent because they perceive they have incompatible goals” (Kalu 2003:19). As the northern Nigerians want to destroy the southerners, in the same way the southern Nigerians want to destroy the northerners due to their unfriendly desires. For example, following all the conflicts that we have witnessed in Nigeria in the recent years, both northerners and southerners lost their lives and properties because the target of each side was to destroy the opposing side as much as they could.

Intra- national conflicts have been described as conflicts within a nation which involve different groups within the nation. This can be inter-ethnic and inter-religious competition for resources as manifested in the revenue sharing in Nigeria (Muslim-

Christian Dialogue Forum, 2007). Presently the case of Nigeria in her conflicts involves three major actors, namely the northerners, the southerners and *Boko Haram*. While the north and the south of Nigeria engage with the politics of regionalism which associates itself with religion as mentioned above, *Boko Haram* fights against corruption, bad governance and irresponsibility in Nigeria, and thus seeks a pure Islamic state as they explained to the CNN News (CNN News, September 2012). This shows that the Nigerian conflict is an intra- national conflict.

Scott Appleby describes conflict resolution, “as the removing as much as possible of the inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation, advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict”. This is relevant to the Nigerian situation (Appleby 1997:212). The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria started their work of mediating and negotiating the conflicting communities in Nigeria in 1995. The imam Ashafa and pastor Wuye who were the co-founders of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum utilized their inter-faith mediation centre to set up a better way of diffusing potentially violent situations in Nigeria than the security forces. Both employed a multi-track approach to address issues of inter-communal violence.

They deprogrammed both conflicting communities by making them aware of what the other side was thinking (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:7-13). In different workshops the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum conducted in Nigeria, they educated both groups by exposing the stereotype attitudes and ideologies that filled the minds of both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria against the other so that the attendants realised that they held these stereotypes due to lack of knowledge of what their opponents thought about them.

Conflict management, as Coward and Smith write, “involves enforcement and peacekeeping operations but religious actors are underutilized in these roles to the detriment of peace processes” (Coward and Smith 2004:9). This underscores the situation in Nigeria because the Nigerian government neglects the role of religious actors as peacekeepers. Rather the Nigerian government prefers to make use of a law and order

approach which involves the military, police and other governmental forces in the country anytime there is a conflict in Nigeria.

My argument here is that, these law enforcement agencies most of the time commit more crimes when they are being utilized by the government in a conflict rather than managing the conflict at hand. This is the case in many African countries where the military and police forces take laws into their own hands by involving themselves in human rights' violations on the pretence of doing their job to manage conflict. Nigeria is one of the leading countries in this kind of human rights' violations. For example, instead of managing the conflict at hand the government forces end up intimidating the masses by imprisonment, holding captives, beating, gun fires and tear gas. The law and order approach was exactly what the Federal Government of Nigeria utilized in the present Nigerian conflict, but all their efforts proved abortive before the imam Shafa and pastor Wuye shared a view that civil society organizations such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre can do a better job of defusing potentially violent situations in Nigeria than the security forces.

Poor progress towards economic development is one of the major factors contributing to the conflict in Nigeria as I mentioned above. Despite the oil boom and other mineral resources in Nigeria that generate billions of dollars annually for the country, the Nigerian government cannot boast of any development in the country. The rate of the Nigerian currency is highly devaluated against the dollar and euro. The infrastructures and social amenities are nowhere to be found. Maintenance at the airports and seaports in the country is seriously deteriorating, yet the country is pumping out thousands of barrels of oil on a daily basis which they sell to the United States of America and other countries. With the money the Republic is generating from the oil alone, Nigerian economy should be experiencing a higher growth of economic development than what it does today.

Identity politics is also contributing to the conflicts in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Identity politics was one of the things the Republic inherited from the British. This is confirmed by the words of Jega Attahiru that “identities have historically been significant in the Nigerian political process under colonial rule as well as in the post-colonial dispensation. Under colonialism, administrative exigencies warranted the nurturing and exacerbation of an “us” versus “them” syndrome. Such as Muslim versus Christian, northerner versus southerner, Hausa/Fulani versus Yoruba versus Igbo and so on. Religious, regional ethnic differences were given prominence in conceiving and implementing social, educational and economic development policies and projects under the indirect system of colonial administration favoured by the British” (Jega 2000:11-23). Thus the impact of colonialism set the manipulation of identity consciousness in order to effectively divide and rule, as well as in the politics of decolonization and in the arena of competitive politics in the post-colonial era.

Afrique en Lutte writes that “ethnicity and religion are some of the major forms of identity politics to which large academic literatures attach in Nigeria. They are also the most critical identities in the country” (Afriques en Lutte, 2013).

The introduction of *shar'ia* is another factor contributing to the conflicts in Nigeria. This is because the application of the *shar'ia* law favours the Muslim men to the detriment of their women. For instance on the issue of two people caught committing adultery, the man would go free whereas the woman would be punished by stoning her to death. Based on this kind of judgement, one can say that there is injustice in the application of the *shar'ia* law in the Muslim communities in Nigeria. Also the amputation carried out on people who have committed one offence or another is detrimental to the offenders because they will be left doing nothing only to end up on the street as beggars throughout their life time. Sometimes this punishment involves even little children and may render them useless through the rest of their life, degrading their dignity as human beings. The concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government is also one of the root causes of conflicts in Nigeria. The Republic is always boasting of her

democratic rule but in practice it is full of authoritative rule. Democratic states such as Norway, Denmark, and United States of America, seeks the opinions of the masses on certain issues before they come up with final decisions on laws that affect the majority of the population. In the Nigerian case, the reverse is the case because the masses are not allowed to voice their own opinions in decision making. The senate writes the laws and passes them without securing the opinion of the masses because for them, all the authority in the Republic belongs to them and therefore people must follow whatever laws they have passed. During the period of the military regime, no one questioned those in power and the same continues with the so-called democratic government. However the famous Fela Kuti always used his music to fight the Nigerian government by unveiling most of the crimes committed by the government when he was still alive, such as the assassination of Delegiwa during the government of Yar' Adua and Olusegun Obasanjo and the killing of his mother during the military regime.

An election campaign is usually the period of debates and rallies in order to convince the voters in the country to make a right choice when voting for any group with a better plan to rule the country; it has the needs of the masses at the centre of their agenda such as in Botswana, Namibia, and most of the European countries. But in the Nigerian case, violence characterizes the campaigns. Each party sees the opponent as a rival and enemy which most of the time results in assassination and violence by action and words. This is confirmed by the words of Kubai and Adebo: "Nigerian political campaigns prior to the election when leaders and their supporters engage in debates and discredit each other in the process, in order to win a community's vote into a political office. In such cases the supporters of discredited politicians might engage in violent conflicts as they try to defend their candidate, and this is always reflected in the majority-minority divide" (Kubai and Adebo 2008:106).

Another factor contributing to conflicts in Nigeria is the criminality of the Nigerian politics and the rampant corruption of officials at all levels. In Nigeria today, national

institutions are few and weak. The national university system has never recovered from the days of military dictatorship. Private universities try to fill up the lacuna but usually only benefit the privileged and a few lucky scholarship students. The integrity of a universal national youth service, supposedly the capstone of tertiary education in Nigeria, has been undermined by exemptions for those with the right connections. Most of the brilliant students from poor families in some of the higher institutions of learning find it difficult to graduate because they don't have funds to lobby among their respective lecturers to award them the marks they have merited.

The national postal service still exists but Nigerians have increasingly turned to private services such as DHL, UPS and FedEx because of poor funding and management of the Republic's postal services. The civil service, the police and the military, intended to be truly national entities, have been underfunded for a long time and promotions which should be based on merits have been repeatedly compromised. This is one of the reasons why most of the Nigerian police and the military forces are busy on the highways, often focusing on collecting money from the motorists instead of security checks for people's safety.

Road and transport in most parts of Nigeria are chaotic and unbearable because of bad road and transport systems. This is so because those in charge of such areas are using the funds for themselves and to lobby higher officials who are supposed to supervise their jobs and bring them to judgement.

Government offices are to serve the needs of people but the Nigerian government ignores its service in favour of their families and loved ones. This is confirmed by the words of John Campbell: "the founding fathers of Nigeria such as Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ahmadu Bello were heroes but mostly to their fellow ethnic groups rather than the nation as a whole" (Campbell 2011:139). The words of Chinua Achebe show the same: "Nigerian public servants helped themselves freely to the nation's wealth. Elections were blatantly rigged. The subsequent national census was outrageously stage

managed; judges and magistrates were manipulated by the politicians in power. The politicians themselves were pawns of foreign business interests” (Achebe 2012:51).

Economic deprivation and social inequalities also contribute to conflicts in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The joy of every good government is to make available the economy of the state to its citizens such as social amenities, good drinking water, free and quality education, employment, housing, hospitals, poverty eradication, security and fights against high rate of social inequality and so on.

In the Nigerian case economic deprivations of the citizens by the government is on the high. In many states of Nigeria, there is no access to clean water, housing, medical treatment and quality care. For example in the oil producing states, such as Delta and Port Harcourt, the villagers live in the slumps and ghetto houses without bathroom and toilets. Most of them utilize the rivers to sustain themselves and their families even though the rivers have been polluted by the oil companies in those areas. Farmers are also affected because oil pollution in their farmlands affects the growth of the crops, hence leaving most of the families in hunger and poverty. This is confirmed by the words of John Campbell that “access to medical treatment and quality of care is bad in Nigeria. Emergency care does not exist in many parts of the country. Shortages of pharmaceutical and medical supplies are endemic and the Nigerian health system according to the United Nations statistics as of 2010 ranked 187 out of 191 nations” (Campbell 211:13). This also underscores the words of Porter Elisabeth et al: “the underlying factor to most of these crises is poverty, both absolute and relative. Many people in the Niger Delta lack the basic necessities for a decent living and there is a high level of youth unemployment. Highly visible alongside this abject poverty is the opulent lifestyle of the oil company workers and the developments of infrastructure in various other parts of the country, all accomplished from the oil wealth derived from their Niger Delta region” (Porter et al 2005:50). It is obvious that the major factor fuelling the conflicts in the Niger Delta concerns the nature of the Nigerian state and how far it has been unable to meet the socio-economic rights of the people of the region.

Inequality in Nigeria is also very huge, the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. Many people from the poor families are losing their loved ones on a daily basis because they cannot afford to pay for private hospitals. Pregnant women often die in pregnancy and at child birth because they cannot afford to pay for a better hospital. Many students from the poor families drop out of school due to lack of funds. All these losses could have been protected if the Nigerian government had utilized her oil money to take proper care of her citizens. This is confirmed by John Campbell “that inequality between the rich and poor in Nigeria has increased significantly because of uneven access to oil wealth, exacerbated by a decline in agricultural productivity in the countryside. Poor rural families are sending their children to urban areas in increasing numbers for longer periods to relieve the pressure of high birth rates and scarce food. Yet, the decay of the city’s industrial base has at the same time exacerbated urban unemployment and made it much more difficult to absorb rural poor” (Campbell 2011: 14).

One of the major factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria is the high rate of human rights violation. Human rights are concerned with the protection of individuals and groups against violations of their guaranteed rights and through the promotion of these rights (Buergetal et al 2002:1). Also human rights are claims which each person has, simply because of his or her humanness. These claims have been enumerated in international declarations and agreements. Those are justified claims a human individual makes upon the human collective among which he or she lives, that is his or her society (Bucar and Barnett 2005:3-50). Almost all the countries in the world have human rights in their constitutions for the protection of the rights of their citizens. Nigeria is one of them but in practice in Nigeria today, the amount of human rights violations is quite alarming.

For example many Nigerians have lost their lives, loved ones, property and other things such as jobs, due to conflicts in the country over the past years. Also the terrorist attacks

by the Nigerian Taliban “*Boko Haram*” are quite disturbing and put the security of Nigerian citizens at risk. The Nigerian government violates the liberty and security rights of many Nigerian citizens which were proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 3 “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1976, article 9 “the States Parties to the present covenant recognise the right of everyone to social security including social insurance” (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976).

The problem of inequality in Nigeria is fast increasing whereby the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. For example, in Nigeria today, the gap between the rich and the poor is quite high and this affects most of the poor Nigerians as regards an equal protection by law. The rich are manipulating and intimidating most of the poor families by taken their farm lands and other things such as traditional title illegally since the poor are not able to face them in a court of law. Even when the poor make an effort to fight for their rights by taking their case either to their respective communities or to the government court, they will often loose the case because most of the rich families can easily bribe the officials who handle the case. The Nigerian law protects the rights of the rich to the detriment of the poor. Such actions violate the rights to equal protection of the Nigerian citizens which was proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 7 “all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 26 “all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour,

sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976).

The Nigerian police and other government forces are intimidating, arresting and detaining many innocent people without any trial. For instance in a situation where two people are having problems because of some valuables each of them desires to get. Most of the time the one with more connections within the government will lobby and pay the forces to arrest his or her opponent, sometimes without even a warrant of arrest, and such people will remain in prison for a long period of time without any trial. Sometimes some of these innocent people die in the jails and prisons from the injuries they got during the time of their arrest. Such actions violate the right for protection against arbitrary arrest and detention which was proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 9 “no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

On the freedom of opinion and expression, Nigerian citizens are not given the chances to contribute anything that affects them in the country. The Nigerian government and its officials dominate everything. They introduce the new laws and amend the old ones in the way they want them to be. The Nigerian press is guided by the government regarding the type of things they write in their news-papers, and any article attacking the Nigerian government or any of its high officials may lead to the closure of such companies. The Nigerian public has to follow the law whether they like it or not. Such actions that restricts the Nigerian citizens from giving their own opinions violate their rights of freedom of opinion, expression and the press which were proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 19 “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Also the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights 1976, article 19 numbers 1 and

2 “everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice” (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976).

Included in the human rights laws mentioned above are rights to adequate levels of food, clothing and housing, adequate levels of health care and social services, special protection for children and women, rights to education and protection against torture and cruel inhuman punishment. All these human right laws are violated by the Nigerian government on a daily basis. The violation of all these human rights by the Nigerian government is one of the root causes of conflicts in Nigeria.

Deeply ingrained biases and stereotypes that shape people’s attitudes in Nigeria are also one of the major factors contributing to conflicts. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, have different biases and stereotypes against and of one another, and the same negative attitude applies to other minority ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbos are viewed as money lovers and greedy; the Hausas/Fulanis are viewed as people with empty brains; and the Yorubas are regarded as party lovers with no plans for the future. These and many other negative attitudes fill the minds of many Nigerians against the other ethnic groups. This is confirmed by the words of Douglas Anthony: “sometimes the Igbo, like the Jews are called bloodcurdling grabbers; sometimes they are referred to as adventurous and hardworking; the Northern rhetoric branded Igbo’s as arrogant, clannish and materialistic” (Douglas 2000:120). In the same way the Hausa/Fulani have a negative view of the Igbos, and the Igbos and Yorubas do the same to one another. All the different ethnic groups in Nigeria should know that “when one is treated like an enemy...the temptation to respond like enemy is considerable” (Juergensmeyer 2003:242).

As regards the effects of conflict, people that live in a conflicting community are mostly afraid for their lives and in order to be safe they seek security by identifying themselves with their respective groups such as, religion, ethnic group, region, political parties and any other movement or group they can feel protected by. This has been the situation in Nigeria for many years. The majority of Nigerians join different groups such as religion ethnic groups, where they can find protection whenever there is conflict. This is confirmed by Kubai and Adebo quoting one presidential aspirant in Nigeria before election that: “it is only by voting a Muslim president that the religion of Islam could be protected. I am sure that we can get a Muslim or good Muslims that will rule us. You must vote for somebody who will protect your religion and dignity...this urges you to enlighten all Muslims on this wherever they are in Nigeria” (Kubai and Adebo 2008:106). A statement like this would probably be the same for other groups.

National, ethnic and personal identities are composed of many elements such as history, buildings, places and politics. Religion is often one of the key elements, intertwined with all the others. Every religion is also part of a human, national and ethnic culture and context. They are linked in such ways that it is impossible to separate anything which possibly could be of a pure religious nature. Therefore, a religious identity is always part of a larger identity. Also culture and context are not only linked to sentiment. Identities are usually linked to historical narratives which are continuously memorized, reproduced and often celebrated in the lives of nations, people and individuals. They often recount origins, which may include what an outside might consider to be mythological elements. Whether or not they are factually historic, they are events of a constitutional nature in the history of people.

The issues I have mentioned above are root factors contributing to conflicts in the Federal Republic of Nigeria such as poor progress towards economic development, identity politics, the concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government, criminality of the Nigerian politics, rampant corruption of officials at all levels, economic deprivation and social inequalities, high rate of human rights violations and deeply

ingrained biases and stereotypes that shape people's attitudes in Nigeria. All these root causes have often been neglected by those who have tried to mediate the conflicts in Nigeria, such as the Federal Government of Nigeria with their law and order approach by utilizing the Nigerian security forces to maintain peace which often failed; or the Kaduna state government that used the official-track one approach. This approach is a rudimentary arbitration and mediation methods, combined with an intensive research and consultation with local partners, such as the Kaduna Peace Committee, an organization with extensive knowledge of the conflict dynamics and issues in Kaduna state (People Building Peace II, 2012). This government sponsored dialogue has changed the conflict dynamics but did not contribute towards resolving it; and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum with its multi-track approach to address the issues of inter-communal violence by deprogramming people to make them aware of what the other side is thinking. Also the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum made use of the consultative approach in contrast to the approach of the federal government of Nigeria. The reason, however, why the Nigerian conflict continues and seems insurmountable is because those involved in mediating the conflict have been busy with religious issues (which are only one of the contributing factors) and thereby have ignored to address some of the other factors that I have mentioned above as contributing to conflict in Nigeria and which I have called the "root causes" of conflict. Therefore, in so far as these root causes are continued to be neglected in Nigeria, the conflict situation will remain insurmountable.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS AND VISUAL DOCUMENTS

I have conducted focused interviews with Wuye James and Ashafa Muhammad, who were the founding fathers of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria. I also interviewed Auta Samson who is the secretary of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, which is an inter-faith conflict resolution and peace-building foundation that has worked tirelessly to restore peace in Nigeria during the time of conflicts.

In my interview with Mohammed Ashafa he said that “we have problems of conflict in Nigeria due to so many factors, this can be attributed to the problems associated with governments’ lack of political will to run a transparent, accountable system and lack of involvement of the general public in planning, execution and monitoring of programs and projects. There is also lack of education in so many instances, where you see that children born from the less privileged in the society, lack funding resources to fend for the young ones who at times are used as mercenaries or tools for selfish political, religious and other agendas. We also have the understanding that religious fanatics due to value issues that cannot be compromised seem to be on the front burner” (Ashafa, 2012).

The failure of the Nigerian government to run a practical democratic state after elections leaves so many Nigerians full of frustration. That is the reason why any little misunderstanding among people and groups is being utilized to showcase their anger by violence of all kinds. An example of this is the living conditions of the Niger Delta and *Ogoni* regions where the lands are being used for oil extraction but the size of poverty in those areas is high. That was the reason why the Niger Delta youths were kidnapping the oil company workers and demanded ransom from the oil companies to take care of their basic needs. Also in Lagos, villagers have vandalized the oil pipes between 2000 and 2005 in their respective areas trying to tap the oil by themselves in order to fend for their families but such actions ended up in mass killing of the villagers and loss of houses and

crops in the farms due to a fire outbreak during the illegal deals at the oil pipes. These losses would have been prevented if the citizens in those areas had been assisted in their economic and social needs by the Nigerian government. On the one hand, it is also true that lack of education also contributes to the Nigerian conflicts whereby the uneducated youths have been used by different groups as mercenaries to achieve their goal. But some of the Nigerians without education did so in order to protect their family. This is because there is no free education in Nigeria at all a level and some of the students from very poor families will decide to drop out of school so that their parents may use the money for food, housing and clothing rather than attending school while their family members are dying of hunger at home. Some will even argue that there are already so many graduates in the country without jobs and since there is no guarantee for them to get jobs after their studies, it is better for them to quit studies in time and use their time for something else.

On the other hand, there are thousands of graduates in Nigeria without jobs and who cannot fend for their younger ones and families. Therefore, any opportunity they get in order to show their anger will be through violence. Jobless individuals and groups can easily be manipulated in Nigeria by getting paid to engage themselves in violence in the country. All this is coupled with the different religious ideologies, especially among those who cannot compromise or accommodate any change to their religion, such as religious fundamentalists who believe in their ancient traditions and regard any change as a threat to their religion. An example of this is the *Boko Haram* group that is calling for a pure Islamic state in Nigeria and rejects all the Western ideologies, including education and issues of human rights such as equality and freedom. This also applies to the Christian fundamentalists in Nigeria who oppose any move to eradicate the patriarchal rule in the family and other issues such as abortion, same sex marriages, and rights of children, accommodation and respect for other religions.

Also the lack of involvement of the general public in planning and monitoring of programs and projects in the country contributes to the conflicts. A practical example of this was my personal experience, an incident that took place in my home town, *Uga* a few years back when one of the government senators got the contract to construct one of the major roads in my home town (*Uga* junction to *Obizi* River) as one of the government funded projects for that year. The aim of awarding this contract was to help the *Uga* people to create a better road that would link the *Uga* junction expressway to *Nkwo* market, and then proceed to *Obizi* River which is the major river that produces the main spring drinking water to the entire *Uga* town and *Aguata* local government. Also this road links to some other important areas such as schools, churches, homes, and farm lands, but all the efforts to have access to this road was shattered by the senator when he channelled the road work direct to his own father's compound and end everything there, instead of continuing the work to end up at *Obizi* River. Such action kept the entire *Uga* people speechless because this would have been the only benefit the entire town would have gained for voting for him during the period of their election. But this would have been a different story if the general public had been involved by monitoring of programs and projects so that the senator would have been reported to the Nigerian government for mismanaging and channelling the contract which was given to him for the benefit of the people to his own family alone. The senator did not only disobey the Nigerian government by his action but he also tarnished his own image, the image of his family and his entire generation. This is so because such action has been recorded in every mind in *Uga* town; the *Obizi* River is very important in the history of *Uga* and the entire *Uga* people.

Ashafa also mentioned that religious fanatics due to value issues that cannot be compromised seem to be in the front line. This is confirmed by the words of Archbishop Kaigama who said that "he wanted to dispel the impression that Christians and Muslims in Nigeria were at war. People say the Christians and Muslims are fighting each other but it is not the case, Christians are not at war with Muslims. The problem is a tiny

group, a fanatical group by the name *Boko Haram*. They are the ones who have started a cycle of attacks destruction and killing in Nigeria” (Kaigama 2012). Also Archbishop Ndagoso stressed “that there is not a religious conflict in Nigeria. Christians and Muslims are not at war. Nigeria is at war with religious fanatics and criminals who are killing innocent Nigerians regardless of their religion” (Ndagoso 2012). This is true because it describes the present situation in Nigeria with some religious fanatics. For example, in February 2013 the Islamist extremists kidnapped four foreign workers in Nigeria in retaliation to the French intervention to the conflict in Mali. They did so to show their solidarity with their Muslim brotherhood in Mali. One may ask what is the reason why anytime there is a problem in any of the Muslim countries; Nigerians also share in this. This is so because of the different ways people interpret and understand certain issues among them, especially when it has to do with religion. Of course when you ask any of them who have been involved in such violence, the answer will be that they want to show their solidarity with the Muslim brotherhood. Meanwhile they can easily show their solidarity to their Brotherhood in Mali without any violence such as Christians do whenever there is war and disasters in other countries which affect their fellow Christians. Sometimes they can arrange for relief such as shelter, food and drinks, and disaster managements. Or even organise a peaceful demonstration condemning the French intervention in Mali.

Of the impact of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in the Nigerian conflict, Wuye James note “that the centre is using their strategy by replicating themselves in the various groups, they train and equip them with their spirituality to explore ways of community in addressing sincere and genuine relationship and understanding to achieve their goal of sustaining just peace” (Wuye, 2012). The above statement unveils itself in one of their documentary movies (‘From vengeance and killing to healing and friendship’) where people within the different conflicting communities show their support and solidarity with the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in sustaining peace in the conflict

communities by denouncing all sorts of violence and encourage their fellow community members to do the same.

Despite of all these efforts which were shown in one of their videos, one can still question the acceptance of each conflicting group to the other because not every member of those conflicting communities would accept to make peace with the other groups.

This is because some of them will still be feeling threatened in one way or the other from their rivals. Still others will be ready to question the authenticity of such accommodations by doubting that such peace may not last for a long period of time. It is also obvious that some of the people in the conflicting communities are just following the crowd to see where it is going to lead them, but still have their own private animosities in their hearts. In a way, one may also question the reality of such videos because people can be easily bought off to appear in such scenes to achieve the goal of those involves in mediating the conflict at hand. Even if what they have recorded in their videos are true, one can still say that the result would have not be the same if such videos has been recorded by any other group such as Human Rights Watch, or even CNN because they would want to cover everything they have seen and witnessed both the positive and the negative sides, which the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria would not want to be seen in their movies because such scenes will easily expose some of their weaknesses in their conflict mediation.

The movie also show that Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum with the support of the various state leaders in the northern parts of Nigeria, organised a cultural event where the different conflicting communities share their cultures with other groups and learn more about their cultural differences and common views. Such activities will make the conflicting communities rethink their erroneous perceptions and stereotypes against others because they would realise that all the bad things they do think of their rivals are the opposite. This is the reason why Wuye and Ashafa write “the perceptions we have of our faiths-behaviour and reactions to issues have had room for misconception and misinterpretations in our inter-religious relations between us as Muslims and Christians.

These misconceptions, resulting from erroneous perceptions, have changed our relationship from happiness to unhappiness and from joy to sadness. Instead of unity in diversity we witness discord, instead of peaceful co-existence we witness disharmony, and instead of tranquillity we witness conflict, violence and tribulations. Instead of building a community devoid of dichotomy of all sorts, we have participated in fanning the embers of discord and religious apartheid. Many nations and empires have participated, consciously or unconsciously in their own destruction as a result of the erroneous perceptions they have for one another” (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:7). One can see that erroneous perceptions, assumptions, stereotypes and suspicions a person have against other groups, neighbours, and friends can easily deceive him or her into knowing the reality of others he or she is dealing with. Therefore, in so far as we insist on passing judgement on others by the verdict of our erroneous perceptions and by refusing them the opportunity to explain themselves to us (who and what they are), we are creating a room for conflict in our inter-personal, inter-community and inter-religious relationships.

The events of such cultural gatherings must not have the same venue all the time because not every group that travels from far places to attend those events every year would be happy about the venues of such events since they have to travel all the time to attend the cultural events for the unity of the country. Some may even start to question why can't the same event be taking place in their own state or nearby areas, or why should they be going to the same venue for such events. This kind of question may cause them to withdraw themselves to attend the gatherings. Therefore, I think that by rotating the venues of such events annually according to the thirty-six states in Nigeria would solve such a problem because every group will get the chance of hosting the same event when it gets to their own turn, just like the venues for the African Cup of Nation or World Cup Soccer tournaments are being changed all the time. Such rotational plan of the events can easily stop any group from withdrawing themselves and wave off any negative thinking against the venues of the cultural events for the unity of the conflicting communities and the country at large.

It is the erroneous perceptions both Christians and Muslims have of each other that made Wuye and Ashafa outline the thirty-six erroneous perceptions of both sides as follows:

1. The prophet Muhammad copied his Holy Qur'an from the Holy Bible.
2. The prophet Muhammad is worshipped instead of God by Muslims and hence their Religion is known as Mohammedanism.
3. The prophet Muhammad was formerly a Catholic and he broke away from Catholicism to establish Islam.
4. The prophet Muhammad fought various wars to establish his religion.
5. The prophet Muhammad claimed that he could not save himself on the day of judgement.
6. Islam is spread by the sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other, through a violent Jihad.
7. Allah is a demonic spirit that casts spells upon one sixth of the population of the human race.
8. The Islamic Jihad simply means holy war against Christians.
9. Islamic shari'ah law means men stoning adulterers to death and cutting off the hands of thieves.
10. Islamic shari'ah law is to be enforced by Muslims on Christians and other none Muslims, so that Christians will fight against its implementation.
11. Islam denies women freedom of movement and association.
12. Islam approves and encourages divorce between couples.
13. Arabs from the East are using their petrol dollars to check Christian evangelisation and to enhance Islamisation of Christian nations.
14. Islam as a religion is anti-Christ.
15. The prophet of Islam, Muhammad was inspired by a demonic spirit and not by the arch-angel Gabriel.
16. The prophet Muhammad married more women and approved of polygamy for Muslims to encourage the exploitation of women.
17. Islam sanctions women's seclusion unconditionally and denies women the right

of contributing their quota to the socio-economic development of society.

18. Islam decreed child marriage without seeking for the consent of the girl to be betrothed.
19. Allah, the Muslim name of God, was one of the 360 idols in Mecca before the advent of Islam.
20. Muslims worship the black stone *Ka'aba* during their pilgrimage to Mecca.
21. Any Muslim with a turban on his head and a full grown beard is a terrorist.
22. Any Muslim woman who dresses in a full lowing gown called the hijab is an extremist, illiterate and uncivilized.
23. Any Muslim who is refusing to separate the spiritual from the secular enters paradise.
24. Any Muslim who kills a none Muslim, especially a Christian would enter paradise.
25. Muslims are commanded to enforce Islamic religion on any none Muslim.
26. Muslims do not believe in the prophet-hood of Jesus Christ and His mission.
27. Muslims are the most intolerant religious group in the world.
28. Muslims have a religion and a prophet but are without a saviour.
29. Muslims are forbidden from reading or knowing anything about the teachings of Jesus Christ.
30. Muslims believe both the Old and New Testament of the Bible.
31. Muslims succeed in their material endeavours because it is the power of the devil that they are using.
32. Muslims are united globally with strong ties of brotherhood.
33. Muslims are trouble makers, are people who take pleasure in shedding the blood of their fellow human beings who do not belong to their faith.
34. Muslims hate Christians and anything that comes from the West.
35. Muslims love power and hate being dominated by or being under the control of the Christian leaders.
36. Muslims are hypocrites.

These erroneous perceptions many Christians have about Muslims made Wuye James write “that these are some of the ways in which the majority of the Christians globally perceive Muslims. Most are very erroneous, as my personal contact with the Imam (Ashafa) during our various stages of dialogue has revealed. Indeed, he has developed a different perception as a result of giving the Imam and his colleagues the time to explain and educate him on various issues. This has encouraged him immensely in pursuing effective communication as a guard against the mistaken beliefs that he had as a result of what he has heard, seen and conceived in his mind about Islam and the Muslims” (Wuye 1999:8-9). On the other hand also Muslims hold erroneous perceptions about Christians:

1. Jesus Christ is worshiped instead of God, hence the name of their religion is Christianity.
2. Jesus is believe to have been fathered by Almighty God, hence they are calling Him the only begotten son of God.
3. Jesus Christ died for their sins, which simply implies that the Christians are free to commit any sin and transgression.
4. The true teachings of Jesus Christ have been changed by Christian clergies.
5. Jesus Christ did not preach or establish the doctrine of Christianity as practiced today but St. Paul did.
6. Jesus Christ prophet-hood and mission are firmly acknowledged by the Muslims, as well as all other Israelite prophets but the Christians totally disbelieve in the prophet-hood and mission of Muhammad.
7. Jesus Christ’ message is not universal, but strictly to his fellow Jews.
8. Jesus Christ never taught the present day New Testament since he only came into existence most later, neither was He used the name Jesus in His days on earth.
9. Mary the mother of Jesus Christ is worshipped as the mother of God by Christians; they pray to God through Mary as an intercessor.
10. Many of the Christian clergy know of the prophet Muhammad and his mission but refuse to acknowledge him; they also prevent their fellows from seeing the true picture of Islam.

11. The church elders and clergies teach their followers to hate Islam and Muslims.
12. Christian clergies use demonic power in the disguise of the Holy Ghost in performing miracles during their evangelization crusades.
13. Christians worship their priests as lords and patrons and make them infallible and incontestable.
14. Christian missionaries have been using western education, vocational training centres, orphanage homes and other humanitarian centres that they established in Muslim nations to spread the Gospel among Muslims.
15. Christian missionaries are highly ingenious and made use of all forms of deceit in achieving their objectives to spread the Gospel among Muslims.
16. The majority of the prophets of the Israel never practiced monogamy, as the modern Christians emphasizes but polygamy.
17. The trinity concept of Christians is actually the worship of three gods.
18. Christians are given permission in the New Testament to eat pork and any other food that came their way, without worrying about its spiritual implications.
19. Christians' refusal to wash their hands, face and feet before praying to God shows that they reject the concept of worship as practiced by the Israelite prophets, including Jesus.
20. Christianity is a tool of western world for psychological dominance, in order to protect their commercial interest.
21. Christianity encouraged the colonialist to commit atrocities on the various Muslim nations they conquered.
22. Christianity and colonialism are two sides of the same coin.
23. Modern day Christianity teaches nothing about morality and how best women could dress modesty in public; it sanctions homosexuality and lesbianism.
24. Christians are taught not to listen to a Muslim when he reaches to them; neither should they receive a copy of the Holy Qur'an or any booklets containing the message of Islam from him.
25. Modern day Christians are disbeliever's (*kafir*) for following St. Paul instead of

Christ.

26. Today's Christians are not the actual Christians that the Qur'an told us to recognise as the true followers of Jesus Christ.
27. Modern day Christians, especially anywhere in which they are in the majority, are the most intolerant of people towards Muslims. They have been seizing mosques and convert them to churches.
28. Modern day Christians fear Muslims as much as they fear death.
29. Western and European Christians never made any progress scientifically in various technological fields until the state was separated from the dictates of Christianity.
30. Many Christian scientists were murdered by the popes or other Christian clergies for exposing scientific knowledge beneficial to humanity today.
31. Modern day Christians are the most unfortunate religious community. They deserve to be pitied and reconciled back to Almighty God through correct teaching as projected by Jesus Christ.
32. The Christian Bible encourages racial segregation and nationalism.
33. The Christian Bible has suffered addition, omission, contradiction and interpolation.
34. The Christian Bible sanctions oppression, cannibalism and forced conversion of Muslims and others to Christianity, as practiced during the crusaders for 500 years, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, under the leadership of various popes and Christian clergies, kings and queens crusades were carried out with devastating effects.
35. There are some lost books in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, not inserted into what became the canonical text of the Christian scriptures today.
36. The prophecy about the advent of the prophet Muhammad and his mission could still be found within the cover of the present day Bible, but the Christian clergies hide this from their adherents.

Based on the above negative perceptions Ashafa Mohammad writes "that the above are some of the ways in which the majority of Muslims globally perceive Christians and Christianity. But during the various stages of these dialogues, once he gave the pastor (Wuye) and his colleagues the time to explain and educate him on various issues, he

realized that most of these perceptions are very erroneous” (Ashafa 1999:10-12). Therefore, both Wuye James and Ashafa Mohammad believes that before there can be total sanity in the Nigerian society, these wrong perceptions that have given room to deep rooted stereotypes in the Nigerian ethno-religious society must be changed.

Samson Auta also mentioned that “the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum is presently working on more sensitization efforts, that include facilitating and advocacy to aggrieved communities and meeting with both faiths and different communities to keep up with the message of widening the promotion of culture of tolerance and imbibe the spirit of oneness to ensure that both conflicting communities live peacefully again with one another” (Auta, 2012). An example of such efforts was the five days workshop which was principally informal and interactive organised by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Kaduna State where their major target was the youths from different conflicting communities and cultures. Its objective was to find ways of jointly solving problems. These structures have reduced the frequency of the small, sometimes violent encounters that had often occurred during the weekly market days in Kaduna state and other parts of the country. As facilitators they get the knowledge of the relevant conflicting communities and listen to what is being said which include the undertones and background noises in order to foresee which issues are relevant for an actual peace process.

Also the Inter-faith dialogue Forum seeks the assistance of one of the None Governmental Organisations - Coalition for peace in Africa, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, as regards the need for practical solutions to the problems of direct victims of violence such as the widows, orphans and traumatised in the conflicting communities, with their capacity building programmes in the area of trauma counselling and stress management (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:121). Such assistance would help the direct victims individually or as a group to deal with the shocks and depression, anger, memory loss and fear which they have acquired during the conflict. Also the direct victims will overcome the ideas of committing suicide, going for revenge and other bad things such as

mass shooting, after they have gone through trauma counselling and other processes. Such activities will also help the direct victims to regain their normal health and continue with their daily jobs and with other activities they are involved in.

Wuye James predicted that the future of Nigeria and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum will live to see the light of the day as peace will prevail over violence and darkness, although both Nigeria and Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum are still faced with the challenges of insurgence. Wuye felt that this will give them strength to do more and create massive support and awareness and to have a pool of peace advocates who will sustain nascent democracy in Nigeria.

One can challenge the above statement with regard to the future of Nigeria in view of such movements as the movement for bringing into being the sovereign state of *Biafra* (MASSOB). This was the movement that caused the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970 when the entire eastern Nigerians (the *Igbos*) declared themselves a free sovereign and independent state with the name and title of the “Republic of *Biafra*”. Their argument according to Chinua Achebe was that “beginning with the January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966 coup *d’etat*, through the counter coup which was staged mainly by Northern Nigerian army officers who murdered 185 Igbo officers and the massacre of thirty thousand Igbos and easterners in pogroms that started in May 1966 and occurred over four months. The events of those months left millions of other future *Biafrans* feeling terrified. As they fled home to eastern Nigeria to escape all manner of atrocities that were being inflicted upon the Igbos in different parts of Nigeria and they saw themselves as victims. When they noticed that the federal government of Nigeria did not respond to their call to end the pogroms, they concluded that a government that failed to safeguard the lives of its citizens has no claim to their allegiance and must be ready to accept that the victims deserve the right to seek for their safety in other ways including secession” (Achebe 2012:98). This is confirmed by the words of John Campbell that “family, ethnic and religious identities are trumping a sense of national allegiance in large part of Nigeria because the state no longer addresses the basic concerns and needs of the people. The

renewed, probably sentimental interest in *Biafra*, with the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of *Biafra* (MASSOB) flying that flag is but one sign of malaise about the future of the state” (Campbell 2011:138). In my own view, although it is true that the Igbos are still flying the flag of *Biafra*, the Nigerian government can resolve those issues by addressing the basic concerns and needs of the people which are the major issues that make the Igbos feel marginalised. An example is Goodluck Jonathan who took office as president of Nigeria with the main objective to fight corruption and improve basic human needs such as electricity and good roads which are the some of the major areas the past governments ignored for so many years. Currently, *Biafra* flags are no where to be found because of improvements in the Nigerian government.

Furthermore, Chinua Achebe foresees the Nigerian future with a continuous debate for decades in small forums, in schools, offices, on the radio on television, newspapers and on the streets until Nigeria gets things right. Achebe notes “that Nigerian solution will come in stages. First Nigeria has to nurture and strengthen its democracy and institutions and strive for the freest and fairest elections which will place the true candidates of the people in office. Second under the rubric of a democracy, a free press can thrive and a strong justice system can flourish. Third, a new patriotic consciousness has to be developed, not one based simply on the well worn notion of the unity of Nigeria or faith in Nigeria which often was touted by our corrupt leaders, but one based on an awareness of the responsibility of leaders to the led, on the sacredness of their anointment to lead and who works for the interest of the country and its citizens, which disseminated by civil society, schools and intellectuals. It is from this kind of environment that a leader humbled by the trust placed upon him by the people, will emerge, willing to use the power given to him for the good of the people” (Achebe 2012:252-253).

On the other hand, the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum seems to focus all their efforts only in the northern parts of Nigeria, may be because they think that most of the violence

in the country comes from the north but forgetting that the easterners also have their own issues, especially as regards ethnic rivalry and marginalization, where as some areas in the east such as *Ogoni* community, located in Port Harcourt and *Warri* both in Niger Delta have developed deep rooted animosity against the Nigerian government due to marginalization and their socio-economic condition. The people of *Ogoni* which is a small minority group in the Niger Delta, has been seeking justice for the trial and hanging of environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other members of their community in the past years because Saro-Wiwa and his group had a very strong stance in the pursuit of the rights of *Ogoni* people and formed a Movement for the Survival of *Ogoni* People (MOSOP). The Abacha's regime accused Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues of killing four *Ogoni* chiefs who were on the opposing side of the Movement for the Survival of the *Ogoni* People. Though they denied the charges against them they were imprisoned for over a year before being found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. All of them were hanged on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 1995 by president Abacha's regime for what many believe was largely because of Saro-Wiwa's strong stance in pursuit of the rights of the *Ogoni* people. Their execution led to Nigeria being suspended from the Commonwealth Nations for more than three years (Premium Times, 2012). In a community like *Ogoni*, I know that it will take them quite a long time to forget their past stories and face the future without getting some compensation and apologies from the Nigerian government for the assassination of their leader Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others. Such an apology would help the *Ogoni* community not to feel isolated and marginalized but welcomed to the Nigerian society.

One may argue that since most of the Nigerians in the north are Muslims where as most of them in the south are Christians, a division of the country into two different states would solve the conflict. On the contrary I would say that dividing the country into two will not solve the problem and may not be easy to do because many easterners have established their business in the northern parts of Nigeria. Even many have properties which they may not want to give up because of separation. Some *Igbos* who migrated to

the north and have all their families there will find it difficult to move back to the east because their children have grown up with the northern cultures and language. Therefore moving back will create problems to them especially to their children as regards language barriers, adaptation to the environment and so on. The same applies to some of the northerners who have lived in the southern region most of their life. The idea to divide the country into two different countries will create more problems because most of the major Nigeria's resources are located in the south, such as the oil which is their main source of revenue. Therefore the northerners will not want the southerners to go because they will be left with nothing and will cause more problems similar to the war between south and north of Sudan. Also other ethnic nationalities such as Calabar and Niger Delta may want to be independent because their culture and language are quite different from that of the *Igbos*. I have been told by my parents the stories of the past Nigerian civil war which lasted for three years from 1967 to 1970 and its effects on Nigerians, I don't think that any of the young generation would support the separation of the country which might cause wars in the future. They would rather opt for one Nigeria for the interest of the country and its citizens. Samson Auta mentioned in my interview with him that division would not be in the interest of Nigeria due to the fact that in the north we have mixtures of both Christians and Muslims, mixed marriages, and those that have become indigenous due to their long stay in one part of the country. Considering the above, it may not be possible to divide Nigeria into two different countries.

#### 4.1 EVALUATION

The different conflicts in Nigeria have affected its progress and development. Some approaches have been used to resolve the Nigerian conflicts such as the law and order approach which was used by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the official track one approach by the Kaduna state government, and the multi-track and consultative approaches used by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum. Despite all these four

approaches the conflicts in Nigeria appear to be insurmountable. The question remains, how can the conflict situation in Nigeria be resolved?

The conflict situation in Nigeria can be resolved by the application of the following six approaches:

1. The economic approach.
2. The social approach.
3. The multi-track approach.
4. The consultative approach.
5. Official track one approach.
6. Law and order approach.

After a critical study of the Nigerian conflict and its causes, I have ended up with two approaches - economic and social approaches which have been neglected in the previous efforts to resolve the Nigerian conflicts.

By the economic approach, I mean that the Nigerian government has to improve the economic condition of the country by making use of the oil revenue and other mineral resources to boost its economy and development to a higher standard. This will include areas such as agriculture, mining, infrastructures, education, public health and so on.

As regards the social approach, the Nigerian government has to address the social issues that affect its citizens as I have mentioned in chapter three as the factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria, the “root causes of conflicts” such as:

- Ethnic and religious differences.
- Unmerited official appointments of federal posts.
- Ethnic tensions.
- Identity politics.
- The adoption of *shar'ia* law into twelve northern states of Nigeria.
- Concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government.
- Aggressive political campaigns.
- Criminality of the Nigerian politics and corruption of officials.

- Economic deprivation.
- Financial and social inequalities.
- Human rights violations.
- Deeply ingrained biases among people.
- And the issue of control, independence and resistance of the indigenous communities.

The last approach which is law and order by the Nigerian government should be implemented by protecting the human rights and the interests of the citizens. Therefore, the Nigerian conflict situation is to be resolved by the application of the six approaches I have mentioned above.

#### 4.2 CONCLUSION

Religion expresses itself in different ways: first as a source of people's world views, second as a source of identity, third as a source of legitimacy and fourth religion is associated with formal institutions. My argument has showed that Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life and this is played out more in the north, perhaps because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than is the case in the south. Also the Nigerian conflict is an intra national conflict since it is a conflict within a nation which involves different groups such as inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and groups competing for resources.

The study has emphasized that conflict resolution and peace-building will remove the inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict. Conflict resolution and peace-building was seen as the efforts of people working at a distance from actual sites of deadly conflict, such as legal advocates of religious human rights, scholars conducting research that is important to cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, theologians and ethicists within the religious communities who are probing and strengthening their traditions of nonviolence. When the process of conflict transformation is successful, it

results in ceasefires and peace accords designed to contain the conflict in anticipation of essential elements of peace-building, such as structural reform. This means that the efforts to build institutions and foster civic leadership which will address the root causes of the conflict and develop long-term practices and institutions that are conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in the society.

I have also shown that religious conflict transformation has three dimensions, namely

(1) Conflict management which means to prevent conflict from becoming violent and the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflict can reduce the odds of non-productive spread. It also involves the acquisition of skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for management of conflict in our communities. (2) Conflict resolution entails the effort to fight prejudice and ethno-religious hatred through dialogue and education. The most direct and decisive involvement can be reached when religious actors provide good offices and serve effectively as mediators. (3) And post-conflict peace-building which means the efforts of religious actors assuming the key role of leadership in social reconstruction after a deadly conflict in a community or nation because they have been involved in the attempt to end the violence from the beginning, as advocates of the poor and defenceless, as social critics, humanitarian relief agency or prophetic voices.

Furthermore, this study has described three major ways by which the religious actors have pursued peace – (1) Crisis mobilization mode which is where religious participation in conflict resolution has been spontaneous and largely unexpected such as serving as mediators and agents of conflict as a result of their historic role and institutional presence in a conflict society and their active involvement in the social dynamics of political change. (2) The saturation mode offers a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy for ending violence and achieving and sustaining reconciliation. This strategy focuses more on the social dynamics of relationship building in a conflict setting, acknowledging that

the process can never occur apart from analysis and reform of the structures that divide people. (3) The interventionist mode is where the external religious and cultural actors intervened in a conflict situation, usually at the invitation of one or more parties to the conflict in order to initiate and help to sustain a peace-building process, such as *Sant'Egidio* who became engaged in various international dialogues with the aim of preventing or reducing tension between conflicting groups and seeking to mediate between them as they did in some countries in Africa such as Algeria, Burundi, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. Also, the efforts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria from 1995 to this date belong to this mode. Peace-building depends on the contributions of leaderships at three major levels, first, the top level which includes the key political and military leaders in the conflict. Second, the middle range level which are the top level national officials such as Patriarchs, Bishops, Chief Rabbis and Ayatollahs. The third is the grassroots level which represents the masses, the base of the society who often is forced to live by a survival mentality in the conflict zones.

The most disturbing condition Nigeria finds herself in today is the intra national conflict which traces itself back to the time after her independence in 1960. These conflicts include the *Maitasine* conflict, the *Kafanchan* conflict, the *Bauchi* conflict, the Muslim Brotherhood conflict, the *Jos* crisis, the *Tafawa Belewa* crisis, the *Basayi* crisis and the *Maiduguri* conflict. It is essential to note that the conflicts in Nigeria which have lasted for some years mostly seem to be targeted on Christian churches, mosques, government and international organisation offices and industries, high institutions of learning and public squares in Nigeria.

Conflicts in Nigeria have been attributed to religion by several authors as I have mentioned in chapter one. In chapter three, the above statement was challenged by my argument showing other factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria which I call the “root causes of conflict”, such as ethnic and religious differences, non-merit official

appointments for the government posts, poor progress toward economic development, identity politics, introduction of the *shar'ia* law in the northern states of Nigeria, concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government, unfriendly political campaigns prior to the election, criminality of the Nigerian politics and the rampant corruption of officials at all levels, economic deprivation and social inequalities, high rate of human rights violations, stereotype attitudes that shape people's minds and the issue of control, independence and resistance of the indigenous communities in the country.

Any country or community that involves itself in a conflict always faces the effects of conflicts, such as poor progress of economic growth and development, long term animosity among the conflicting groups, perception of enmity, deep-rooted fear, destruction of properties and environment, loss of lives, displacement of the citizens and identity politics such as clan, ethnicity, religion, regional affiliation, groups fighting for recognition and power such as *Boko Haram* and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). Sometimes a well functioning state can become a failed state in the sense that such a state is unable to perform its duties on several levels such as security, funding and basic needs of its citizens.

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum utilises their five major objectives in conflict resolution in Nigeria such as establishing relationships that have been damaged due to recurrence violence, to minimize reoccurrence of violence among various groups in the Nigeria communities, initiate programs and projects that require and encourage the involvement of both conflicting communities such as dialogues, cultural events and workshops, to enhance inter-religious relationships and cooperation within the state and to support and build the capacity of local partners who are involved in peace-keeping. The above objectives have helped them to reach one of their most significant achievements by drafting the Kaduna Peace Declaration which is an articulation of a common vision to put in place effective machinery appropriate for building and sustaining long term peaceful coexistence between the conflicting communities. Despite

of all their efforts to maintain peace among the conflicting communities, the recent reoccurrences of conflict show their weakness in conflict resolution and peace-building. This study has compared the conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria with the works of *Sant' Egidio* in Mozambique and the *Dhammayietra* Walk of Cambodia; this shows that while the Nigerian inter-faith forum was based only on conflict resolution, the *Dhammayietra* of Cambodia combined social and conflict resolution while *Sant'Egidio* of Mozambique combined its conflict resolution with social and humanitarian work which made them excel more than the others.

Religion has been visible in both negative and positive ways. Negatively it causes wars, sadness, pain, hatred, division, discrimination and destruction. On the positive side, religion maintains peace and order through work on conflict resolution and peace-building by the religious actors in conflicting nations, countries and communities. Also religious individuals and faith-based organisations from different religious traditions have been actively involved in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict resolution between warring communities in the developing world such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, *Saint' Egidio* in Mozambique, the *Dhmmayietra* walk of Cambodia and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria.

Furthermore, religion through its leaders needs to be able to recognise, respect and appreciate the religious faith of followers of another religion. They would always bear witness to what they believe is the truth of their own religion, but they should be willing also to listen to the witness of others. Some will believe that through the witness of others they may discern the voice of God. Others may think that they only hear heresy or a false religion, but they listen because they respect the believers of other religions. So either way, by being willing to listen, they establish faith as a common ground. Religious leaders should be able to rise above, have a perspective beyond their own faith and of their religion in such a way that they understand how it is intertwined with the identity of their people, tribe, nation or the state they serve. By so doing they will discover that the religion of other people and even their own religion can be intertwined with culture,

nationality or ethnicity in other ways than what they themselves are used to. Thereby they also discover and open connections to other believers and other religious attachments (Bakkevig 2012). By learning from encounters with others, religious leaders will hopefully refrain from claiming to have superior access to God or the mind of God more than their counterparts in other religion.

The Holy Scriptures are central to believers, but religious leaders have a guiding role in interpreting them. They need to remember and also to remind the believers that even if they can find arguments for war, conflict and no room for those of other faiths, they should also note that the same Scriptures teach respect, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures means making choices. Therefore, religion through their leaders need to clarify what principles and what clues are needed to read Holy Scriptures in support of peace and justice. Religious leaders can make conflicts escalate by stressing religious elements of conflicts such as partial and exclusive ownership to places, words symbols, narratives and history. Particularly in instances where different religions have different narratives linked to the same place, it is important to remember that one party cannot demand that others believe their narrative. But they can demand respect for their particular narrative. What seems to be competing narratives can best be understood as mutually enriching narratives. Therefore, instead of delegitimizing others' attachment to that what they consider a holy place, it is possible to seek for a common vision to issues, places or symbols.

Religion through its leaders has a special responsibility for identifying religiously charged elements of a conflict. They also have to provide theological reasoning as to why and how these elements are charged, and how they possibly can be solved. Theology is about the relationship of the divine and the earthly, and therefore also about how the divine can help us solve earthly problems in respect of the shared beliefs that all humans are created by the same God and hold God's image.

Despite the obstacles the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum may face in the future, I predict a more successful future in their work of mediating the conflicts in Nigeria and

beyond. The same success goes to Nigeria as a country, but the Republic has a very long task ahead as regards its politics, religion, ethnic and social issues.

Finally, I have shown in this thesis that religion has both negative and positive effects. Negatively sometimes religion causes conflicts and also serves as a means of political mobilization. Positively it serves as a step towards peace through the critical work of its actors. Religious individuals and faith based organisation from different religious traditions have demonstrated their involvement to end conflicts and foster post-conflict resolutions between two disputant communities, just as the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum did in Nigeria.

In the case of Nigeria, my argument shows that the conflict in Nigeria is not a religious conflict between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south, but it is a political conflict although both parties are using religion to justify their actions. Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life and this is played out more in the north, perhaps because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than it is in the south. Therefore the Nigerian conflict is not primarily a religious conflict, but in a real sense it is a matter of political regionalism. I have demonstrated in this thesis that the reason why the Nigerian conflict continues and seems insurmountable is because those involved in mediating the conflict have been busy with religious issues which are only one of the contributing factors, and thereby have ignored to address some of the other factors contributing toward conflict in Nigeria, which I have called the “root causes” of conflict. The conflict situation in Nigeria can be resolved both by the application of the four approaches, multi-track approach, consultative approach, official track one approach and law and order approach which was used both by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Kaduna state government. The above four approaches combined with the social approach and economic approach will address the neglected areas in the previous efforts to resolve the conflict in Nigeria.

In conclusion, we have seen from the Nigerian case that despite some limitations for the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in its conflict resolution work, that when an inter-faith dialogue is well organised, it can encourage the warring communities to work together towards conflict resolution and peace-building.

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**CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING: THE IMPACT OF  
MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM (MCDF) IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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**Master in Religion, Society and Global Issues**

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## DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to my beloved parent, Lolo Madeline Udunehu Dimokpala and Late Nze Charles Okpala Dimokpala, Late Miss Christiana Dimokpala and all in Dimokpala's family.

Finally, I also dedicate this project to all those who works tirelessly to restore peace in Nigeria.

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May, 2013

Dimokpala Christopher Chukwudi

## STATEMENT

I declare that *Conflict resolution and peace-building: the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or assessment at any other university, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

## COPYRIGHT

I, Dimokpala Christopher Chukwudi, hereby cede to the MF Norwegian School of Theology Oslo the entire copyright that may in the future subsist in any research report or thesis submitted by me to the University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MRSGL, in the Department of Religion, Society and Global Issues.

.....

Dimokpala Christopher Chukwudi

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The issue of conflict has become one of the regular headlines in the daily news of the world media today. Many countries in the world have suffered from one conflict or another, ranging from religious, civil, political, cultural, regional and ethnic violent such as in Nigeria, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Liberia, Cambodia and so on. The most disturbing part of these acts of conflicts around the globe is that most of them have traced their roots to religion. Even some perpetrators of these acts of conflicts most of the time justify their actions with religion, thereby making religion an object of conflict.

Prevalent violent conflict on the African continent has been addressed by numerous scholars, advancing various reasons to explain the continuous conflicts on the continent. The scholars (such as Jackson 2000, 2002; Okoth and Ogot 2000; Adedeji 1999; Khadiagala 2006; and Taiser and Mathews 1999) agree in their description of Africa as the least developed continent economically, yet the most conflict prone politically. What has been the main focus of these scholars is the shift in Africa's conflicts, from conflicts between states to conflicts within states, internal conflicts, civil wars, intra-state conflicts or new wars (Kaldor 1999:33-118; 2006:72-94; 2012:71-118).

In the post-independent period, statehood in Africa has been characterized by internal wars. Every region has experienced armed conflict at some time since the early 1960's (Busumtwi 1999:259). Writing in 2002, Jackson observed how in the last twenty years, internal conflict has occurred in half of Africa's countries. For example in the mid 2001 there were serious internal conflicts in Algeria,, Chad, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea, Liberia, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Angola. Many other African states face instability, high levels of domestic political violence or rebel movements such as in Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, Kenya,

Ghana, and Nigeria (Jackson 2002). This trend of events continues to this date and Africa has arguably had the most significant share of these conflicts (Souare 200:369).

Conflict starts within the boundaries of a single state but fighting spills over into the neighbouring states; conflicts are protracted over many years, involve multiple actors, ranges from government armed forces, militias, warlords, to criminal gangs presenting a multitude of challenges and demanding different responses from the International communities. Africa's conflicts have ranged from ideological conflicts, governance, to racial conflicts, identity conflicts, religious and environmental conflicts. One should also note the employment of extreme means of pursuing conflict goals, such as extreme forms of violence. Violence is deliberately targeted at civilians, and at entire groups rather than individuals, and it presents a complete blurring of the lines between war, organised crime and large scale human rights violations (Kaldor 1999:2).

Furthermore, internal conflicts in Africa have led to various outcomes, for example some have resulted in total state collapse as in Somalia or semi state collapse as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and others have led to secession as in Eritrea. Also, there have been civil wars where regimes have changed as in Liberia, warlord cases have been seen in Sierra Leone, and others have led to temporary ceasefires as in Angola and Chad (Jackson 2002). Important to note however is the continuous conflicts in Nigeria which have been going on for some years now. Most of them have been targeted on Christian churches, mosques, government and international organisation offices, and even high institutions and public squares in the country.

Religion today, instead of serving as a source of healing sickness, hunger and poverty and stimulating tranquillity and peaceful co-existence among human beings, is used to cause sadness. It is bringing pain instead of relief, hatred instead of love, division instead of unity, sadness instead of joy, discrimination and destruction instead of accommodation and development (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:4). Meanwhile, in the real sense, religious

people should be involved in conflict resolution and peace-building rather than causing conflicts.

On the other hand, religion has also been seen as an object of peace by involving itself in maintaining peace and order through works on conflict resolution and peace-building by religious actors in warring nations such as Sri Lanka, Tibet, Bosnia, South Africa, Mozambique, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Uganda, Sudan, and Nigeria.

Religious individuals and faith-based organisations from a variety of religious traditions were actively involved in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict reconciliation between warring parties in the developing world (Haynes 2007:89). Examples include: mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford foundation in the Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970; the Catholic organisation Sant' Egidio played a key role in ending the civil war in Mozambique in 1992; the work of the World Council of Churches and the All African Conference of Churches in mediating a cessation to the Sudan conflict in 1972; efforts made by John Paul Lederach who is a professor of international peace-building at the university of Notre Dame in Nicaragua in the 1980's; and the recent works of the imam, Muhammad Ashafa and the Christian pastor, James Wuye mediating the conflicting communities in Nigeria from 1995 to this date.

### 1.1 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Many scholars like Haynes 2007, Korieh 2005, Ashafa and Wuye 1999 have understood the conflicts that have been going on in Nigeria to be religious conflicts between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South.

Firstly, I want to argue in my research that, the Nigerian conflicts are more than religious conflicts. Rather, they involve political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic aspects, and problem of regionalism in the country which implicates itself with religion most of the time to fight their cases. Meaning that, the three major regions in Nigeria (North, West, and East) are rivals with one another because each region wants to control the Nigerian federal government posts. Therefore, other regions with minority positions in the federal government seats, automatically becomes rivals to the leading region, and this is what I called the problem of regionalism. The above statement conforms to the words of Toyin Falola that “the first Republic was defined by the politics of regionalism. The North was dominated by the Hausa's/Fulani's, the West by the Yoruba's, and the East by the Igbo's. The three regions were bitter rivals and they all wanted to control the federal government” (Falola 2001:21).

Secondly, I shall present the impacts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria, which is an interfaith religious organisation working to create dialogue and peace-building in the Nigerian conflict.

The final aim of this study is to make available relevant research knowledge on some of the issues that have been neglected during conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria which are some of the major causes of conflicts in Nigeria and to urge the Nigerian Government and other institutions that would be involved in resolving the conflicts in Nigeria to deal with these areas in the pursuit of a better future of our country Nigeria.

## 1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The Nigerian conflict has been continuous and seems insurmountable, why? It is because most of the main causes of the conflicts such as politics, culture, ethnic and regional problems have been neglected as contributing factors to the Nigerian conflict. Instead the

reason has been attributed to religious conflict between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South.

I want to demonstrate that without dealing with all these neglected areas (by the previous authors) as major causes of conflicts in Nigeria, the conflict situation in Nigeria will continue as it is and may even get worst.

I have decided to choose this topic and Nigeria in particular for this thesis because, first, as a little boy I always enjoyed watching documentary movies on the television especially when it had something to do with wars and conflicts. My special interest in such movies became stronger as I advanced in age. One evening as a teenager, I enjoyed with some of my teenage friends a documentary movie about the South African apartheid regime and most of the massacres that took place during that period. After the movie we all went out and started sharing our experiences and what we were going to do to protect ourselves and families if we had been in South Africa during that period, such as learning how to shoot a gun and other ways to fight back for protection. But as teenagers we did not know exactly what it means to be in South Africa under the apartheid period.

One night, I went to my father and narrated the documentary to him and asked him what he would do if such an incident would happen in Nigeria, and his reply to me was that he would find a way to make peace. Then I asked him how and my father replied that he would show me how to make peace in few days time. After four days, I was called by my father to accompany him to a meeting and I accepted his invitation and went with him. But on our way I was wondering in my mind what kind of meeting am I going to with my father in a neighbouring village. But when we got to the place, it was just a village square full of people sitting while some of them were standing in a circle. One of them came to welcome my father and me and gave us a seat and my father told me to sit next to him so that I would be following what was going on. Later I noticed from what was going on in the meeting that two different families in that village were involved in a conflict because each was claiming the ownership of a piece of land. By the end of the day after several

hours of contributions, discussions and arguments from different people during that meeting including my father, the problem was resolved by sharing the land among the two conflicting families. On our way back home my father told me that what I have just witnessed was one of the ways to make peace among conflicting families or groups and that incident made me gain more interest in peace making.

Second, it was the desire I had in peace making that made me work for eight years (1994 - 2002) as a voluntary social worker under Okigwe diocese which is one of the Catholic dioceses in Nigeria; that gave me the opportunity and time to be involved in settling conflicts in different communities, groups and families; since then I developed an ardent desire to be involved in conflict resolution and peace-building. I chose Nigeria as my case study because I am a Nigerian and Nigeria at the moment is faced with serious conflicts. This project will serve as my personal contribution to the solution to Nigerian conflicts.

### 1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problem of the research is that the Nigerian conflicts are due to some other major factors such as cultural, social, ethnic, regional, political and economic issues which complicate itself with religion rather than religious conflict between Muslims in the North and Christians in the South as Wuye and Ashafa, 1999 and other authors have mentioned in their studies. This means that the division of Nigeria into three major regions by the British was based on their cultural, ethnic and religious differences. For example the Northerners are mainly Muslims where as the Easterners are mainly Christians. Each of these regions has their own religion and cultures. Based on this kind of division, many Nigerians always view any conflict between each region as a religious conflict, thereby implicating religion in the conflicts. The religious ideas and worldviews in Nigeria are inherited as part of the socialization process. In view of this, that Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life

which is played out more in the north because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than it is in the south.

#### 1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Many authors have written about the conflict in Nigeria, (such as Wuye and Ashafa 1999:16) and concluding that, it is a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. Researches have given some solutions to solve the conflict in Nigeria, for example the multi-track and consultative approach which was applied by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and Law and order approach by the Federal Government of Nigeria as in People Building Peace 11 (People Building Peace II, 2012). I believe those solutions have been applied by the Nigerian government and other conflict resolution organisations in Nigeria such as Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and the United States Institute of Peace which is one of the international organisations that works with conflict resolution and peace-building and has contributed immensely to the Nigerian conflict resolution and peace-building.

My questions are:

1. Is the Nigerian conflict really a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians? Why do we have conflicts in Nigeria and why is the conflict continuous and insurmountable?
2. What efforts does the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum make to bring peace in Nigeria?
3. What hope does the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and Nigeria have for the future?

#### 1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Attempts at conflict resolution and peace-building have been going on in many continents such as Europe, Asia and Africa. Religious individuals, inter-faith organisations and

international organisations have contributed immensely, working in all the countries that were faced with one conflict or another.

I shall however not deal with all the conflicts and conflict resolution in all parts of the world. I shall limit my study by dealing with conflict resolution and peace-building in general and use Nigeria as my case study, with the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum.

I shall not be going to Nigeria for my data collection. Therefore, all my data collection will be done from here in Norway. My reason for this decision is that the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum group which I planned to meet in Nigeria for the interviews, advised me not to come due to their tight programme that makes them travel most of the time. They accepted, however, to respond to my interviews by email.

## 1.6 SOURCES OF MATERIAL

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature written on conflict resolution and peace-building, however it has not been so easy to find authentic materials associated with Nigeria as a case study and in particular the impact of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum related to its conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria.

I have however been able to fulfil the goals of this study through written literature, documents and media sources. Some of the written sources are the following;

- i. Achebe, Chinua 2012. *There was a country: a personal history of Biafra.*
- ii. Wuye, James and Ashafa, Muhammad 1999. *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to conflict.*
- iii. Appleby, Scott 1997. *The ambivalence of the sacred: religion, violence and reconciliation.*
- iv. Coward, Harold and Smith, Gordon S 2004. *Religion and peace-building.*
- v. Haynes, Jeffrey 2007. *Religion and development: conflict or cooperation?*

vi. Eynikel, Erik and Angeliki, Ziaka 2011. Religion and conflict: essays on the origins of religious conflicts and resolution approaches.

vii. Kaldor, Mary 2012. New and old wars: organized violence in a global era.

### 1.7 SOURCES OF DATA

Some visual documents such as movies from the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum will be utilized for this study. Finally, a focused interview will be conducted online with Wuye James and Ashafa Muhammad, who were the founding fathers of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, which is an inter-faith conflict resolution and peace-building foundation that has worked tirelessly to restore peace in Nigeria during the time of conflicts. I shall also conduct a focused interview with Samson Auta who also works with the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria. This method of data entails the use of either web or online communications such as email, as a platform for collecting data from individuals (Bryman 2008:632).

### 1.8 METHODOLOGY

The methodology I shall use for this study is a qualitative research strategy, which can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than the quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman 2008:22). It will take the form of literature and empirical method analysis.

The chapter one of this thesis will be the style and methodology I shall use for the research.

In chapter two, I shall analyze Jonathan Fox, Jeffery Haynes and Huntington's definitions of religion, the theories on conflict resolution and peace-building in general and will make Nigeria the centre point of the discussion.

Chapter three shall be the exposition and discussion of the impacts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria with particular reference to inter-faith mediation and peace-building.

Chapter four shall be an analysis of the visual documents and focused interviews of the two founders, Wuye James and Ashafa Muhammad, which includes also Samson Auta, one of the workers of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria.

As a Nigerian, I have the advantage of possessing first hand information; in addition I have also observed some of the conflicts that took place in the eastern part of Nigeria. In order to make my materials more credible, authentic and meaningful, I shall use documents from official and private sources. I shall, however not treat these documents as firm evidence of what they report or as simply reflecting reality; rather I shall give my own analysis based on the knowledge and experience I have to the situation at hand. Chapters three and four shall be the major parts of my discussion because the answers to my research questions shall be provided in these two chapters.

#### 1.9 THE RESEARCH OUTLINE

In order to do a good qualitative academic research on my topic, I have decided to divide the chapters as follows;

Chapter one shall give the general introduction, aim of the research, the motivation of the study, the research problem and questions, limitations of the study, sources of material and data, methodology and the research outline.

In chapter two, I shall deal with religion and peace-building which includes the definition of religion, conflict, conflict resolution and peace-building, dimensions and modes of

religious conflict transformation. This chapter shall end with the analysis and discussion of some of its sub-headings.

Nigeria and conflict mediation shall start chapter three, followed by a brief history of Nigeria, recent historical examples of conflict in Nigeria, followed by the factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria, the effects of conflicts, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and their strengths and weaknesses, the role of religion in conflict and peace-building, comparison of the Nigerian conflict resolution with *Sant' Egidio* in Mozambique and the *Dhammayietra* Walk of Cambodia, the future of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and Nigeria in general. I shall end up this chapter with my own discussion of some of the above headings.

Finally, chapter four shall be my analysis of the interviews and visual documents, followed by evaluation and conclusion of the research and references.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 RELIGION AND PEACE-BUILDING

From the religious crusades, inquisitions and holy wars of the past to the jihads and so called religious conflicts of the present day; religion has a long history of implication in violence and war. The predictions that religion would become privatized, removed from the public sphere have proven false. From the 1970s and 1980s, religion manifested itself repeatedly in the public sphere, often to the surprise of onlookers. The *Shi'ite* led revolution in Iran was the most prominent example of the religious resurgence of political Islam. Sunni based movements have also swept across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

David Little and Scott Appleby notes “that Africa was not left behind in this shift because Sudan and Afghanistan joined the ranks of Islamist governed nations, while powerful Islamist parties fomented revolution or threatened political stability in Algeria, Pakistan, Egypt and Nigeria”(Little and Appleby 2004:1).

These expressions of religion in the public sphere tend to put religion as a source of conflict among many educators, students, journalists, policy makers and public officials. Others have, however, looked beyond the headlines to appreciate the multiple constructive dimensions of religion in its publicness. Some of these observers as Little and Appleby writes “even recognised that the genius of religiously inspired social welfare and peacemaking activism is rooted in the same zeal for holiness, powering the holy wars and religio-political crusades” (Little and Appleby 2004:2).

### 2.1 WHAT IS RELIGION?

The Oxford English dictionary traces religion from its Latin root “*religio*” meaning obligation and reverence. It defines religion as the belief in and worship of God or gods, a particular system of faith and worship, a pursuit that is very important to someone (Soanes and Hawker 2005:867).

Deneulin and Bano, following the idea of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, define religion as “a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men/women by formulating conceptions of a general order to existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Deneulin and Bano 2009:58).

Jeffrey Haynes sees religion as a system of beliefs and practices, often but not necessarily related to an ultimate being, beings or to the supernatural. For him, religion involves that which is sacred in a society, including beliefs and practices which are widely regarded as inviolate (Haynes 2007:14).

Furseth and Repstad define religion as a set of beliefs which postulate and seek to regulate the distinction between an empirical reality and a related significant supra empirical segment of reality, the language and symbols which are used in relation to this distinction and the activities and institutions which are concerned with its regulation (Furseth and Repstad 2006:17-18).

Furthermore, they use Emile Durkheim's idea of religion as a basis and view religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say things that are set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them (Furseth and Repstad 2006:18-19).

Steve Bruce sees religion as “beliefs, actions and institutions that assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of judgement and action” (Bruce 2003:10).

Scott Appleby defines religion as “a human response to a reality perceived as sacred” (Appleby 1997:8). For him, religion embraces a creed, a cult, a code of conduct and a confessional community. A creed defines the standard of beliefs and values concerning the ultimate origin, meaning, and purpose of life. It develops from myths, symbol-laden

narratives of sacred encounters and finds official expression in doctrines and dogmas. Cult encompasses the prayers, devotions, spiritual disciplines and patterns of communal worship that give richly suggestive ritual expression to the creed. A code of conduct defines the explicit moral norms that govern the behaviour of those who belong to the confessional community. Therefore, religion constitutes an integral culture, capable of forming personal and social identity and influencing subsequent experience and behaviour in a profound way (Appleby 2000:8-9). This is exactly the case in Nigeria, where religions have been used by some Nigerians to form social identity. For example the Islamic extremist group *Boko Haram* in the northern part of Nigeria whose activities have been a disturbing issue to the Nigerian communities in general.

Huntington claims that in the modern world, religion is central, perhaps the central force that motivates and mobilizes people (Huntington 1996:27). According to Marty, religion focuses on our ultimate concern, builds community, appeals to myth and symbol, is enforced through rites and ceremonies and demands certain behaviour from its adherents (Marty 2000:11-14).

Jonathan Fox defined religion into four different ways;

First, religion is one of the sources of people's world views. It influences people's behaviours and those people in turn influence the behaviour of others. These world views are a powerful way in which religion intersects with individual and societal behaviour.

Second, religion is a source of identity. In addition to influencing people's beliefs, it also influences who they are. It gives them the feeling of affinity to other members of religion. This may cause them to feel responsible for their co-religionists wherever they may live.

Third, religion is a source of legitimacy. It can legitimize or delegitimize actions, including the foreign policies of states and the behaviour of other international actors.

Religion intersects with international relations; this explains the reason why many policy makers use religious terms and images to justify their actions.

Fourth, religion is associated with formal institutions. In some cases these institutions are themselves international actors, as is the case with the Catholic Church. In other cases these institutions play a role in domestic politics supporting regimes, opposing them and lobbying them (Fox et al 2004:176-177).

Based on these different ideas of religion from the above authors, I define religion as the different activities and ways people express their respect for and communication with the transcendental in their everyday lives.

## 2.2 WHAT IS A CONFLICT?

Etymologically the word conflict comes from the Latin word “*confligere*” which means to strike together. Conflict is a situation that involves at least two actors. These actors should somehow interact directly or indirectly in order to be engaged in a conflict. Therefore, conflict is a relation among actors (Eynikel and Ziaka 2011:234-236).

In more general terms, conflict is a type of disagreement among two or more actors related to a particular situation. It is a hostile positioning of the actors that could evolve into some kind of aggressive behaviour.

The Foundation Coalition defined conflict “as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals” (The Foundation Coalition, 2012). Conflict within teams is inevitable; however, the results of conflict are not predetermined. Conflict might escalate and lead to non-productive results, or conflict can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products.

Kalu Kelechi, says that “conflict is a process of interaction between two or more parties that seek to thwart, injure or destroy their opponent because they perceive they have incompatible goals or interests” (Kalu 2003:19).

According to Goodhand and Hulme, “conflict is a struggle, between individuals or collectives, or even values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are to assert their values over those of others” (Goodhand and Hulme 1999:14).

Ross Stanger defines conflict as “a situation by which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one of the other but not by both”(Stanger 2011:234-236). For example, two different states dispute a territory that both perceives as an entitlement but only a single can possess just like Israel and Palestine conflict over the West Bank territory. A conflict emerges in the framework of a perceived threat. It becomes manifest when actors respond based on their perception of the threat with a degree of aggressive conduct.

### 2.1.1 TYPES OF CONFLICT

There are many types of conflicts but I shall limit my study to the following five major ones according to the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum handbook;

- i. Interpersonal Conflict: This is a type of conflict that occurs within a person. For example, the use of time, choice of partner, moral questions, goals and aspirations.
- ii. Intra personal Conflict: Conflicts between two or more individuals over an issue.
- iii. Intra group Conflict: These are conflicts between groups such as clubs, class versus class, and family versus family.
- iv. Intra national Conflicts: Conflicts within a nation which involves different groups within the nation. This can be interethnic, inter-religious, competition for resources as manifested in the revenue sharing in Nigeria.

v. International Conflicts: These are conflicts between nations and could be for ideological reasons, territorial claims and political competition (Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, 2007).

### 2.3 THE MEANING OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING

Scott Appleby views conflict resolution as the removing as much as possible of the inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation, advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict (Appleby 1997:212). For him, when these processes are successful it results in structural reform. This means the efforts to address the roots of the conflict and to develop long term practices and institutions that are conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in society.

Coward and Smith used the term religious peace-building to describe a range of activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social and political institutions characterised by an ethos of tolerance and nonviolence (Coward and Smith 2004:5). It is the efforts of people working at a distance from actual sites of deadly conflict, such as legal advocates of religious human rights, scholars conducting research that is essential to cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, theologians and ethicists within the religious communities who are probing and strengthening their traditions of nonviolence. This means the replacement of violent with nonviolent means of settling disputes, which occurs through overlapping processes of conflict management and conflict resolution (Coward and Smith 2004:5).

According to John Paul Lederach “peace-building is a process that is made up of a multiplicity of interdependent roles, functions, and activities, with the goal to create and sustain transformation and the movement toward restructured relationships” (Lederach 1997:71). For him, peace-building implies both a “descriptive” and a “prescriptive”

understanding of change. Descriptively, peace-building refers to the various dynamics that characterise conflicts. These dynamics may include the patterns, relationships, communication, issues and perceptions that impact or arise from conflicts exacerbated by interfaith differences. Prescriptively, peace-building emphasizes a comprehensive or holistic approach to dealing with conflict. Considerations must also be given to addressing the underlying causes of violence and the goals and motivations of those interested in getting involved in the conflict (Lederach 2002:56).

Peace-building includes a wide range of activities that contribute towards the transformation of society into a just and harmonious order and the development of an infrastructure capable of maintaining this arrangement. This process begins with pre-war conflict prevention and ends with post-war reconstruction. In all the stages of conflict, interested actors, both institutions and individuals can perform a variety of constructive functions. These intervention roles include observer, educator, advocate and intermediary (Steele 2002:73).

The observer's role is to be a vigilant presence that can report or sometimes prevent violence and other forms of injustice. The educator's role is to raise the population's awareness regarding injustices and misconceptions, nourish positive values, promote healing and train people in conflict intervention skills. The advocate's role is to actively promote, through nonviolent forms of pressure such as lobbying, demonstration and public statements, a particular outcome to the conflict, a specific process for resolving the conflict, or the interests of one party to the conflict. The intermediary's role is to act as a go between, facilitating communication through message carrying or face to face encounter, in order to build better relationships or resolve specific disputes.

#### 2.4 DIMENSIONS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The religious conflict transformation has the following three major dimensions; conflict management, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building.

#### 2.4.1 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management entails the prevention of the conflict from becoming violent or expanding to other arenas (Coward and Smith 2004:6). It includes the enforcement of existing treaties and peace accords. When the process of conflict transformation is successful, it results in ceasefires and peace accords designed to contain the conflict in anticipation of an important element of peace-building, namely structural reform.

Structural reform means the efforts to build institutions and foster civic leadership that will address the root causes of the conflict and develop long-term practices and institutions that are conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in the society (Coward and Smith 2004:6).

Appleby points out that the development of effective measures to prevent or contain deadly conflict begins with the articulation of the problems generating the conflict and it requires the mobilization of social forces desirous of addressing those problems (Appleby 2000:213).

Catherine Morris, writing of Cambodia, underscores the capacity of the *sangha* (Buddhist fellowship) to anticipate and prevent violent conflict within Khmer society (Morris 2004:6). Religious figures have been exceptionally active in this arena as social critics. An example of such effort was the annual Buddhist peace marches across Cambodia. Also Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma denounced the military extremism of the Burmese government as well as the complicity of their fellow Buddhists in supporting or failing to resist political leaders who ignored the basic needs of their people and allowed corporations to spoil the natural environment. She then called for the restoration of the basic civil liberties (Appleby 1997:213-214).

Conflict management also involves enforcement and peacekeeping operations. Coward and Smith write “religious actors are underutilized in these roles, to the detriment of peace processes and several authors in this volume lament the missed opportunities of

this kind” (Coward and Smith 2004:9). For example in Northern Ireland, most experts agree that the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 would not be effective on the structural-political level until and unless grassroots and cross-community peace practitioners are involved. A significant percentage of the latter are religiously motivated to build new local Catholic-Protestant institutions and networks and to strengthen the ones put in place since the troubles began in the 1960s.

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflict can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. It involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for management of conflict in our environment (The Foundation Coalition, 2012).

#### 2.4.2 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This is a systematic effort to combat prejudice and ethno-religious hatred through dialogue and education. For example, in Northern Ireland, para-church organizations such as Corrymeela provided peace and expertise for conversation among politicians as well as ordinary citizens from the Protestant and Catholic communities, and behind the scenes mediators prepared the way for meetings between leaders of the opposing militias. Also in India, the Gandhi Peace Foundation from its headquarters in Delhi and in thirty-three field centres across India, conducted research and training programs in nonviolent conflict resolution (Appleby 1997:217).

According to Scott, the most direct and decisive involvement in conflict resolution came when religious actors provided good offices and served effectively as mediators (Appleby 1997:217). For example, the Catholic Church was deeply involved in this area in the beginning of 1968 in Bolivia, helping to resolve every major clash between the miners and the national government and the many impasses that were produced by the elections for the presidency.

### 2.4.3 POSTCONFLICT PEACE-BUILDING

Appleby emphasizes that religious actors contribute to the processes of structural reform that is necessary for the restoration of conflict and human rights abuses. For him, nations recovering from oppressive regimes and civil wars, as in South Africa and Nicaragua, called on religious leaders to help determine and implement appropriate instruments of transitional justice (Appleby 1997:220).

For him, religious actors were prepared to assume leadership of key dimensions of social reconstruction after a deadly conflict because they had been intimately involved in the attempt to end the violence from the beginning whether as social critic, prophetic voice, humanitarian relief agency, or advocate for the poor and defenceless (Appleby 1997:220). For example in the 1960's and 1970's when the military seized power in most Latin American countries, leaving only Colombia and Venezuela with democratic polities, the Catholic Church which was the dominant religious body on the continent, stepped up its public denunciations of the abuses of power. The bishops of Brazil, Chile and Argentina issued pastoral letters condemning state sponsored murder, torture, and the denial of fair trial; the letters traced the root causes of systematic human rights violations to the lack of basic social, political and economic rights for the poor and dispossessed, and to an ideology of national security that subjugated individual rights to the expediency of the state.

### 2.5 MODES OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

There are different manners by which the religious actors have pursued peace but we are going to deal with the three major ones namely, crisis mobilization mode, the saturation mode and the external intervention mode of conflict transformation (Appleby 1997:230-243).

### 2.5.1 THE CRISIS MOBILIZATION MODE

Crisis mobilization mode of religious conflict transformation is where religious participation in conflict resolution has been spontaneous and largely unexpected, and where existing religious institutions have adapted to the exigencies of the moment (Appleby 1997:230).

Appleby notes that this is the most stunning example of religion serving as an agent of conflict transformation. It is stunning because unplanned and unexpected churches, mosques or other indigenous religious bodies found themselves as mediators and agents of conflict solution as a result of their historic role and institutional presence in a conflicted society and their active involvement in the social dynamics of political change. For example, in South Africa's struggle against apartheid and in the nonviolent revolutions that led to the fall of communism in the Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 (Appleby 1997:230).

In these cases, mainstream religious institutions were largely unprepared to play the role of conflict transformer. Yet charismatic leadership emerged, ethicists' retrieved and modified traditional arguments defining morality in times of warfare and theologians applied innovative concepts like South Africa's *ubuntu*.

Crises afforded midlevel leaders and grassroots peace activists a fresh hearing, and religion's institutional resources, such as mass media, financial and social service networks, were turned towards conflict transformation.

### 2.5.2 THE SATURATION MODE

As in the crisis mobilization mode, religio-cultural conflict transformation in the saturation mode begins as a spontaneous, diffuse and unstructured series of reactions to the threat or onset of deadly conflict. This is the reason why Appleby postulates that "indigenous religious institutions diversify, creating offices, inter-religious or inter-communal dialogues and programs of education and formation for peace; para-religious

and other community structures find a niche and personal vocations and professional commitments form around the notion that conflict transformation is a full-time, long-term enterprise” (Appleby 1997:237).

For example, Northern Ireland was saturated with religious and cultural practitioners of conflict transformation because the peace advocates operated at several levels of religion and society and persisted through decades of continuous activity, which made them part of the institutional and social landscape.

Furthermore, the Northern Ireland experience suggests that, conflict transformation in the saturation mode stands the best chance of evolving into actual religious peace-building. Also continuity was maintained both through organisations like Corrymeela, which grew over the years to become permanent fixtures, and through a series of specific programs, reconciliation groups and short-term initiatives that had a cumulative impact over time. External religious actors such as the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church United States of America and the United States Catholic Conference contributed to the work of the peace-building community which achieved a viable balance of autonomy and interdependence in its relation to such actors (Appleby 1997:237).

Emerging gradually from within the peaceable heart of conflicted societies, the saturation mode offers a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy for ending violence and achieving and sustaining reconciliation. The strategy focuses on the social dynamics of relationship building in a conflict setting, acknowledging that the process can never occur apart from analysis and reform of the structures that divide people (Appleby 1997:238).

### 2.5.3 THE INTERVENTIONIST MODE

The interventionist mode is the most promising approach to religious peace-building today and the one to which external actors might contribute productively in the future (Appleby 1997:239). This is where the external religious and cultural actors intervene in conflict situations, usually at the invitation of one or more parties to the conflict, in order to initiate and help to sustain a peace-building process.

The external actors work in collaboration with religious parties and institutions on the ground, either their coreligionist or believers from other traditions, with the goal to develop a saturation mode, in which local religious actors assume leadership positions and responsibility for sustaining the momentum (Appleby 1997:239).

In this mode, mediation has been the most common form of intervention. The external religious mediators have played the critical role in getting talks off the ground or in overcoming an impasse. For example, conflict resolution efforts of *Sant' Egidio* in Mozambique, Algeria, Uganda and Kosovo; and Mennonite consultation in the negotiations between the Sandinista government and the Miskito Indians on the east coast of Nicaragua in 1988. Also the United Nations and its various agencies, secular and humanitarian NGO's, local secular actors and interested states have often taken the leading parts (Appleby 1997:239). For example the United Nations peace-keeping to avoid wars in Democratic Republic of Congo, south and north Sudan, Somalia and so on. Also in March 2003, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria and the United States Institute of Peace jointly promoted a five day dialogue workshop in Kaduna which is one of the most conflict-ridden states in Nigeria.

In mediation, external religious actors dealt almost exclusively with top-level officials and rarely enjoyed the opportunity to discuss implementation and establish relationships with midlevel and grassroots leaders on the ground. For example, the *Sant' Egidio*, Mennonite and other religiously based teams attempted to overcome these restrictions, through the continuation of long-term presence in the conflict communities and working

with national and local religious communities to train indigenous peace builders (Appleby 1997:239 – 240).

According to John Paul Lederach, peace-building depends on the contributions of leaderships at three major levels, namely; the top level, the middle range and the grassroots levels (Lederach 1997:38).

Firstly, the top level includes the key political and military leaders in the conflict. Few in number, they are somewhat removed, in social location and sensibility, from their constituencies. Highly visible, they are more likely to be influenced than other actors by media pressure and personal career ambition, especially as the latter is affected by the prosecution and outcome of the conflict. The public's perception that these are the players with real power and influence raises the stakes for them, and the inflexibility for fear of being perceived as losing ground to a stronger opponent can be the result. At the post-conflict level in which structural transformation ought to take place, these leaders often are concerned with consolidating their power and preserving stability by whatever means possible; they allow real structural reform, if at all, with these considerations primarily in mind.

Secondly, the middle range level which are the top level national officials such as Patriarchs, Bishops, Chief Rabbis and Ayatollahs. Lederach explains that at this level one finds persons who function in a leadership capacity within a setting of prolonged conflict but whose position is not directly beholden to or defined by the authority or structures of the formal government or the major opposition movements. The midrange leaders have contacts with officials at the pinnacle of the social pyramid but are not bound by the political calculations that govern every move and decisions made at the highest level. Similarly, they are aware of the context and experience of people living at the grassroots level, but yet they are not encountered by the survival demands facing many at this level. Their position is not based on political or military power, nor are such leaders essentially seeking to capture power of that sort. Rather, their status and

influence in the setting derives from ongoing relationships such as professional, institutional, formal and other matters of friendships and acquaintances; they may for example belong to a professional association or have built a network of relationships that cut across the identity divisions within society (Lederach 1997:41-42).

Thirdly, the grassroots represent the masses, the base of the society which often is forced to live by a survival mentality in conflict zones. The leadership at the grassroots level, whether NGO based, religious or social, operates in a reactive mode on a day to day basis. For Lederach the midrange leaders are best positioned to lead long-term peace-building efforts. This is because, they have greater flexibility of movement and are more numerous than top level leaders. Also they are connected to a wide range of individuals in the conflict settings through their networks and professional associations. Within the religious community the midlevel leaders are the highly respected monks, priests, ministers, rabbis and others who serve as heads of the regional religious bodies such as dioceses' representatives to ecumenical, inter-religious, or civic bodies, or as pastors of prominent local congregations (Lederach 1997: 42-43).

Having dealt with the theoretical part of chapter two which covers the meaning of religion, conflict, dimensions of religious conflict transformation and its modes, I shall now analyse and discuss some of the above subheadings and make Nigeria the centre point of my discussion in the following chapter.

## 2.6 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Jeffrey Haynes sees religion as “that which is sacred in a society, including beliefs and practices which are widely regarded as inviolate” (Haynes 2007:14). Reflecting on the above definition, one can see that it exactly points to what is going on in the contemporary world of religion. In the world today, there are so many different kinds of religions such as Christianity, Islam, Atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on. In the

same way, the believers of these different religions take their respective religious beliefs and practices to be sacred and inviolable. This is one of the reasons why we are experiencing the global rise of religious violence whereby people from different religious traditions commit crimes in the name of defending their faith. For example within Christianity, Rev. Michael Bray of the United States of America is one of the notorious Christian activists who have been involved in several abortion clinic bombings in the United States. He strongly justified his actions by thinking that he did it to defend others. After he bombed the abortion clinic in Dover he said, “The only abortion chamber in Dover was gutted by fire and put out of the business of butchering babies” (Juergensmeyer 2003:20). Also Meir Kahane, who believed in the Jewish religion, claimed that the creation of a Palestinian government on the West Bank poses a danger to Israel as a nation, to the Jews and to Judaism as a religion. He claimed that he did not hate the Arabs, he respected them and he felt that they should not live in disgrace in an occupied land, for that reason they should leave. For him, the main problem is that they were not Jews but live in a place that was designated by God for the Jewish people (Juergensmeyer 2003:56).

In conflict resolution and peace-building, the presence of a facilitator is very important. As Trond Bakkevig notes “the knowledge of and curiosity about the relevant religions are necessary qualifications of a good facilitator” (Bakkevig, 2011). Knowledge is necessary in order to possibly foresee which issues are relevant for and can be brought up in relation to an actual peace process. Curiosity is important because it demonstrates the personal involvement and engagement of the facilitator. The role of the facilitator should start with deep respect for partners and their faith. A facilitator will be respected in her or his identity, but will be expected to rise above his or her own religious adherence. The same holds true for a facilitator’s political viewpoints. What is most important, is that a facilitator must be able to value and respect positions and concerns at each side. Such actions must supersede any religious conviction, personal or political opinion a facilitator might have.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 NIGERIA AND CONFLICT MEDIATION

The conflict situation in Nigeria is usually traced to the time of Uthman Dan Fodio (1757-1809), when he launched a jihad against the Hausa communities in the north with the intension of establishing an Islamic state. Jeffrey Haynes writes “since the 1960s, religion has been prominent in Nigerian civil conflict where missionaries and religious partisans see themselves in a zero sum game to win souls, sometimes entering into deadly conflict” (Haynes 2007:94). The most disturbing condition Nigeria finds herself in today is the intra national conflict which traces itself back to the time after her independent in 1960.

Despite its political struggle, mediation has been one of the major ways to console the conflicting communities in Nigeria. For example, the mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford foundation in the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970; and the recent efforts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum from 1995 to this date.

### 3.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF NIGERIA

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa with over a hundred million inhabitants. The country is divided into thirty-six states. The capital is the inland city of Abuja although Lagos retains its preeminent position as the leading port and centre of finance and commerce. She is often called the giant of Africa because of the vastness of its land, the diversity of its people and languages, its huge population and its oil and other mineral resources (The National Geographic, 2012). Nigeria is located in the West Africa with its two major rivers: River Niger and River Benue which have their meeting point in

Lokoja. The terrain ranges from the oil rich Niger Delta in the south to a belt of rain forests inland and to high savannah covered plateaus in the north.

The Republic of Nigeria has about 250 ethnic groups but the most widely used languages are Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Fulani, although English remains the official language. Islam and Christianity are the two main religions in the country, with African traditional religion as a minority. While the northern Nigeria is mostly Islamic and dominated by the Hausas, the southern Nigeria is more westernized and urbanized than the north with Yorubas in the southwest and the Igbos in the southeast. It is estimated that about half of the Yorubas are Christians and half Muslim, though many maintain the traditional beliefs. The Igbos in the southeast tends to be Christians and many are Roman Catholic.

Nigeria is an agglomeration of hundreds of indigenous nations conquered by the British in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1914, the Protectorates of southern and northern Nigeria were amalgamated to form modern Nigeria (Falola 2001:1-53). The country got her independence in 1960 from the British and became a republic in 1963. From 1967 to 1970, the Igbos fought to separate themselves from Nigeria and form a state called Biafra, but after the civil war they were re-integrated into Nigeria (Achebe 2012:91-228). Since then, an enduring democracy has eluded the country as military regimes have been the most pervasive phenomenon. It was only in May 1999 that the democratic government replaced the military, with the hope of a new beginning after decades of political and economic crisis (Falola 2001:1-53). Nigeria is rich with different mineral resources but oil mainly from the Niger Delta fields is the leading revenue earner. Despite of all its problems, Nigeria's economy remains the third largest in Africa, following that of South Africa and Egypt. The election of the current president Goodluck Ebere Jonathan marked the most recent democratic election the Republic has ever had.

### 3.2 RECENT HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Kubai and Adebo in their book “Striving in faith: Christians and Muslims in Africa” gave detailed examples of conflicts that have rocked Nigeria in the last two decades as the following;

In 1980 there was the *Maitasine* conflict between Muslims and Christians which began in *Kano* and spread to *Maiduguri* and *Jimeta*. The immediate cause of the conflict is traced to the claims of a local Muslim leader to have received a special revelation, which rendered all other practicing Muslim infidels. He introduced the ritual practice of sucking male blood. At first Christians were exempted from the ritual, but later on at the height of these untoward activities Christian males were also included. The intention was to purify the local practices. While this was happening in *Maitasine*, Muslims were rather stigmatized in the area by this practice. However, the government intervened by destroying their main base in *Kano* and since 1985 the *Maitasine* group has not emerged anywhere else. But it is important to know that their struggle was directed against their fellow Muslims (Kubai and Adebo 2008:99).

The conflict that erupted in *Kafanchan* was a result of preaching by a Muslim convert to Christianity. The Christian students’ fellowship of Federal College of Education in *Kafanchan* invited this convert for a week long annual campus crusade. His sermon dwelt on the wonderful ways in which Jesus worked in his life. He said to have extolled the virtues of Jesus Christ to the detriment of Muhammad. This led Muslim students to rush in and one of them seized the microphone from the preacher on the pulpit and accused him of speaking ill of Prophet Muhammad. The crisis escalated in Kaduna and spread to the *Kaduna* Radio Broadcast Corporation, then to *Funtua*, *Zaria*, *Kastina*, *Kano* and other parts of the northern Nigeria. The government intervened to restore law and order only after a great deal of damage had been done.

Another conflict erupted in *Bauchi* in 1991 over one *Naira suya* (roasted piece of meat with some spices). A young man in the cause of hawking grilled meat stumbled onto a

group of Hausa and Fulani who had gathered under a greenwood tree. One Fulani took a bite of his *suya* with distaste and called the hawker an infidel who was selling pork instead of beef. After a brief exchange of words, a motley crowd gathered around them. Religious fanatics hijacked the situation and embarked on a killing spree.

Events outside Nigeria have also been known to trigger communal conflicts as can be illustrated with the case of an anti-Western Shiite cleric who campaigned in Nigeria against the allied forces at the height of the war against Iraq. He had earlier instructed a local Muslim leader from his home base in *Zaria* to lead a march of the faithful on the Daily Times office in *Kastina*. The instruction was carried out with military precision. The faithful burnt the Daily Times offices and copies of Fun Times. The real cause of this is still unknown but there was speculation that the papers were burnt either for covering the crisis, which perhaps the *Shiite* cleric did not like, or for inaccurate reporting. The Nigerian government brought the situation under control when the President gave instructions that “the conflict should stop or else sympathizers should make themselves available to go and fight in Iraq and a plane would be available to fly volunteers to Iraq” (Kubai and Adobe 2008:100-101). The Nigerian sympathizers were motivated by the idea of universal Muslim brotherhood, and as members of the *Shia* movement the demonstration was carried out to show their solidarity with Iraq. The Muslims who attacked the newspaper office maintained that any aggression against a fellow Muslim at the hands of an opponent is considered to be an attack on the Muslim community as a whole. The information disseminated by the newspaper was seen as an exposure of weakness of Islam. As it were, there was no direct link between the war in Iraq and the media office that was damaged. It was a way of expressing their solidarity with a Muslim country which was under attack from the West.

The *Jos* crisis which enveloped the entire city on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001 was partly caused by the appointment of one Alhaji of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic origin as the coordinator of the national poverty eradication program in an area where his ethnic group

was in minority. Although other ethnic groups strongly resented this appointment, there was nothing they could do to change the situation. With these grievances still simmering, some religious zealots triggered off a wave of riots. On that day, they closed a popular street on which there was a mosque, blocking all motorists. Trouble started when a woman who drove through the street suddenly encountered a barricade which she felt was illegally mounted in a state capital. The woman was bent on her way because in her opinion nobody had the right to block a public road. In the midst of this conflict she was assaulted and she retreated.

A few minutes later, the woman came back with a group of young men who engaged the worshippers in a brawl and within a short period of time, the violence had engulfed the entire town which turned into a war zone.

The *Tafawa Belewa* crisis that occurred in April 1991 is seen from three different perspectives: political, ethnic and religious. From the political perspective, it is claimed that the *Sayawa* were agitating for freedom from the Fulani overlords who constitute the ruling class even though they are said to be immigrants into the area. In this case sustained domination and resistance are the underlying causes of frequent crises between the *Fulani* and *Sayawa* who belong to different ethnic groups (Kubai and Adebo 2008:101-102). The *Fulani* in this area believe that they are the rulers while the indigenous people feel that they have been deprived of their right to leadership.

From the religious perspective – the *Basayi* are predominantly Christian and the Fulani are Muslims - the religious dimension of the crisis was manifested in the attacks of *Sayawa* Christians on *Basayi* Muslims. Christian/Muslim relations in this area were cordial until the emerging local elite began to challenge Fulani/Hausa supremacy. The state government comes into this religio-political arena in an attempt to stop the violence but this further complicates the situation because people who are considered to be immigrants and whose dominance must be challenged wield control in the government and occupy other positions of authority. We can therefore say that this is a clear case of

the combination of ethno-political and religious factors in fomenting conflict in Nigeria society.

Another perspective of the *Tafawa Balewa* conflict was said to have been rooted in the traditional hostility, but escalated when some Christian *Basayi* attempted to slaughter pigs in the Muslim section of the town's only abattoir. Admittedly the practice was abhorrent to the Muslims and thus it provided an opportunity for the aggrieved to vent their frustration.

The caricatures of Muhammad published by the Danish newspaper elicited different reactions from Muslims in different parts of the world and Nigeria was not an exemption. In *Kano* state, a peaceful demonstration to condemn the cartoon publication was held on 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 2006 and in several other states the governors and law enforcement agents took precaution to ensure that demonstrations on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006 were peaceful and they addressed the demonstrators. In some other places the demonstrations triggered a wave of violence that left many people dead and much destruction of property.

In *Maiduguri*, violence escalated after a lecture on the personality of Prophet Muhammad which was delivered on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2006 by the *Borno* Muslim forum, an umbrella body of for Muslim organisation in *Borno* state. The event which was meant to last for about three hours started peacefully had entered the last stage of prayers for the unity of the country after condemning the cartoons which were considered to be blasphemous.

While the meeting was still in progress, there was a commotion when a thief was caught there and handed over to the police, causing panic in the crowd which scattered in various directions. In the ensuing chaos some people seized the opportunity to vent their anger at the blasphemous cartoons by burning churches and looting shops of Igbo traders, killing some in the process. Here the assumption was that "the Danes who had published the offensive cartoons are Christians and by extension, all Christians were responsible for the

blasphemy and therefore they should bear the consequences” (Kubai and Adebo 2008:103).

The wave of the crisis in *Maiduguri* spread to other parts of northern states. The tension was aggravated when Igbo saw the corpses of their loved ones being brought home on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006. Also the Hausa communities in the affected areas such as *Enugu*, *Abia*, *Anambra* and *Delta* states became victims of the aggression. Many Hausa Muslims were killed and mosques were destroyed and burnt down.

### 3.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA.

History has shown that the Federal Republic of Nigeria has gone through several kinds of conflicts since after her independence from the British to this date. Many different factors escalated the conflicts in Nigeria but these are the major ones:

- i. Ethnic and religious differences have been a source of tension throughout Nigeria’s turbulent post-independence history, which has been marked by decades of military rule.
  
- ii. The official appointments of federal posts have often been made on the basis of patronage as opposed to merit which has favoured northerners who have been quite dominant in the Nigerian military. This unmerited appointment also causes conflicts in Nigeria.
  
- iii. Another factor that has contributed to Nigerian ethnic tensions has been the country’s poor progress toward economic development (People Building Peace II, 2012).
  
- iv. Identity politics is also one of the contributing factors to Nigerian conflict.
  
- v. The introduction of *shar’ia* law into twelve northern states of Nigeria in 1999 serves as one of the major factors that escalate conflict in Nigeria (United States Institute of Peace, 2012).

vi. The Nigerian government's concentration of too much power at the centre contributes to her conflicts (Falola 2001:21).

vii. One of the major factors of conflict in Nigeria includes the political campaigns prior to the election when leaders and their supporters engage in debates and discredit each other in the process in order to win a community's vote into a political office. In such cases the supporters of discredited politicians might engage in violent conflicts as they try to defend their candidate. This is always reflected in the majority-minority divide (Kubai and Adebo 2008).

viii. The criminality of the Nigerian politics and the rampant corruption of officials at all levels have been one of the major causes of conflicts in the Republic (Campbell 2011:138).

ix. One of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria according to Chinua Achebe is the economic deprivation, exacerbated financial and social inequalities in the Nigerian population which fuel her political instability (Achebe 2012:250).

x. The high rate of human rights violations is also one of the major contributing factors to conflict in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

xi. Kubai and Adebo observe that there are deeply ingrained biases that shape people's attitudes in Nigeria, which leaves no room for openness, since people dogmatically stick to their own interpretation of ideas and events (Kuabi and Adebo 2008:103).

xii. The issue of control, independence and resistance of the indigenous communities is also one of the factors that contribute to conflict in Nigeria.

### 3.4 WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS?

John Paul Lederach identified three different effects of conflict in a deeply divided society:

Firstly, cohesion and identity in a contemporary conflict tend to form within increasingly narrower lines than those that encompass national citizenship. In a conflicting society, people seek security by identifying with something close to their experience and over which they have control. In today's settings that unit of identity may be clan, ethnicity, religion, geographic or regional affiliation, or a mixture of these.

Secondly, one of the complexities found in many conflicting societies is the multiplicity of groups and collectivities vying for recognition and power, often in the form of armed movements.

Thirdly, conflicts create a long-term nature of the conflicting groups' animosity, perception of enmity, and deep-rooted fear. This is coupled with the immediacy of having the enemy living virtually next door as in many areas of Bosnia, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Rwanda and Colombia (Lederach 1997:12-14).

A well functioning state can become a failed state because of conflict in that state as Chinua Achebe writes: "A failed state is one that is unable to perform its duties on several levels. When violence cascades into all-out internal war, when standards of living is massively deteriorated, when the infrastructure of ordinary life decays, and when the greed of rulers overwhelms their responsibilities to better their people and their surroundings" (Achebe 2012:250).

Another effect conflict can cause among a conflicting communities is a possibility of unnecessary competition such as religious competition, power and so on. Among other effects are destruction of property and environment, loss of lives, displacement of the citizens and migrants in the affected areas. An example of this was an incident I witnessed in 2006 conflict in the city of *Onitsha*, *Anambra* state which is one of the

major commercial cities in Nigeria, when the Igbos went on a mass killing of the Hausas in that city after they saw a truck loaded with the dead bodies of the Igbos who lost their lives during the riots in the northern part of Nigeria.

### 3.5 THE MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM (MCDF)

In Nigeria, the religious competition between Muslim and Christian communities has led to several conflicts. First, from the 1980's when many Christians believed that the Muslims in the north of the country were enjoying a major portion of both political power and economic resources. Second, tension was raised by the government's secret decision to join the 45 member Organization of the Islamic conference (OIC) in 1986; many Christians feared that the country's membership of OIC would jeopardize the Nigerian status as a secular state and reduce the status and position of Christians in the country.

Third, the suggestion by the Muslim members of the constituent assembly for Nigeria to have a *Shari'ah* law in her constitution, while Christians will not support such a move. Fourth, between 1987 and 1993 there have been anti-Christian riots in parts of northern Nigeria in which over 3,000 people lost their lives. Fifth, in 1992 Christians *Kataf* fought the Muslims which claimed about 1,000 lives, the destruction of both Christian churches and Muslim mosques. Sixth, the anger and frustration among Muslims were turned to religious issues which made many ordinary Muslims turn into fundamentalists who looked at their Christian counterparts as their biggest enemy, while Christians, fearing what to them threatened to be a growing threat from Islam, replied with retaliation (Haynes 2007:94-96).

The Nigerian intra-national conflicts have claimed more than 10,000 lives in the 1990's and *Kaduna* is the most affected state. These intra-national conflicts in Nigeria led a Christian Pastor James Movel Wuye and a Muslim imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa to

founding the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum (MCDF) in 1995 which is an inter-faith mediation to foster Christian-Muslim dialogue in Nigeria (Haynes 2007:96).

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum developed the following five objectives to govern the organisation in its conflict resolutions in Nigeria:

- i. To re-establish relationships that has been damaged due to recurring violence over the last five years (1990 – 1995).
- ii. To minimize the reoccurrence of violence amongst various groups in the Nigerian communities.
- iii. To initiate programs and projects that require and encourage the involvement of Christians and Muslims, including dialogues, workshops, cultural events, and the establishment of a resource centre.
- iv. To enhance inter-religious relationships and cooperation within the state.
- v. To support and build the capacity of local partners who are involved in peacemaking (People Building Peace II, 2012).

### 3.6 THE STRENGTHS OF THE MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria has developed several strengths; but the following are the major ones:

According to People Building Peace II, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria organizes a range of activities to bring together religious leaders, policymakers, small business owners and traders, grassroots participants including women, youth and stakeholders.

The inclusion of women is essential because of the role women play in educating children at home. Engaging the youths is vital because it is the youths who are often the perpetrators of violence especially in Nigeria. The operators of business and traders have a vested interest in peace and stability in the community, which is the reason why they are viewed as valuable potential partners in the peace and reconciliation process (People Building Peace II, 2012). This is so because during conflict, the business operators and

traders always face losses such as profits, shops and valuables in their shops and even customers.

Some of the activities that take place include programs focusing on dialogue among the various constituencies; intensive problem solving workshops for women and youth groups; annual cultural events; capacity-building programs for local community leaders and members of civil society, and programs designed to address the trauma that citizens have suffered as a result of the violence.

One of the most significant achievements of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has been the drafting of the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration which is an articulation of a common vision to put in place effective machinery appropriate for building and sustaining long-term peaceful coexistence between the Christians and the Muslim communities. The document was carefully formulated so as to be broadly acceptable and realistic in its goals and the potential signers were encouraged to review it together with their constituents. In August 2002, some twenty senior religious leaders signed the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration and declared that each year the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August would be observed as Peace Day in *Kaduna* state.

Since the signing of the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration, grassroots efforts to maintain peace have continued but the challenges have remained as well. Any incident runs the risk of turning into a crisis. For example in November 2002, protests over a newspaper article connecting the prophet Mohammed to the Miss World beauty pageant caused much tension. The Interfaith Mediation Centre in union with the religious leaders drove around the affected neighbourhoods in a bus and arranged to appear on television to appeal for calm. The intervention made in the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration was an important factor in containing a volatile situation.

Religious leaders who have signed the declaration are also credited with helping to control violence and vote rigging during elections at both the state and federal levels. In

addition, they have on several occasions intervened in conflicts in the schools when minor arguments threatened to turn into major incidents.

Indeed some instigators are intent on using schools as a breeding ground for intra national conflicts. To stem this tide, the Interfaith Mediation Centre in collaboration with signers of the *Kaduna* Peace Declaration has embarked on a peace program to provide conflict resolution training to religious instructors and secondary school officials (People Building Peace II, 2012).

One other positive effort of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has been a successful initiative to bring together two warring communities of the *Plateau* state, the nomadic Fulani cattle rearers and the native *Beroms*. To settle long-standing disputes, the Interfaith Mediation Centre arranged talks and actively facilitated a mediation process. In 2003, the two parties made a start on engaging in a healing process and exploring pragmatic solutions to the conflict.

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum seeking for joint support from international peace-building such as the United States Institute of Peace plays a strong role in the Nigerian conflict resolution. This is because engaging a group that is neutral as a mediator in settling conflicts encourages the disputants to create some trust in them because of their neutrality, knowing that the invited mediators will not side with either of them, rather they opt for a peaceful ground for both parties. This confirms Appleby's idea of an outside-neutral mediator in a conflict resolution who is a third party and not connected in any way to the disputants; the mediator has no investment in the conflict except settlement and derives legitimacy from his or her rational legal professional role (Appleby 1997:219).

Involving the Nigerian inter-religious council which is locally based improves the strengths of the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum effort for peace-building in Nigeria.

This means that such combined efforts can foster mutual understanding among the religious traditions involved in the conflict.

### 3.7 WEAKNESSES OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE FORUM

As Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has the above major strengths, they also develop certain weaknesses.

First, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria is individualistic by nature. This means that both the Christian pastor and the Muslim imam singled themselves out and negotiated to call for peace rather than more violence based on their personal loss during the conflict. This kind of negotiation does not last for long because, not all the militias in their respective communities would support such a move. This confirms the words of Juergensmeyer that “a negotiated compromise with activists involved in a conflict is fraught with difficulties. It is a solution that does not always work. This is because a few activists may be appeased with such negotiation but others may be angered by what they regard as a sell-out of their principles” (Juergensmeyer 2003:240).

Second, the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum organised some workshops where the participants agreed on a seventeen point declaration containing various recommendations including:

- i. Both Christians and Muslims should love each other unconditionally as brothers and sisters.
- ii. Both communities should show good will to each other at all times.
- iii. It was essential to inform members of each religious community about the beliefs and tenets of the other faith.
- iv. It was necessary to cooperate with government in order to hand over to justice those people who continue to use religious violence contravention of the law (Haynes 2007:97).

Based on the above first two sentences in i and ii, I can say that the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum's declaration agreement with the participants was only paper based and not in practice. In addition it is also discriminative. This means that both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria are still rivals until this date. Examples include all the bombings and killings carried out in Nigeria by *Boko Haram*, from the last two years' bombing on the Nigeria 50<sup>th</sup> year independence anniversary, the United Nations' office in *Abuja*, to the killings and destruction of Christian churches and homes including the Muslim mosques and homes in most of the northern states of Nigeria such as *Kastina*, *Kano*, and *Maiduguri*. Christians do not want to see a Muslim as a leader in Nigeria because this is seen as a threat to Christianity and the same applies to Nigerian Muslims. Based on these incidents, can we say that Muslims and Christians in Nigeria love each other as brothers and sisters? Do they show any good will to each other? The answer to these questions is no. This illustrates one of the weaknesses of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum conflict resolution in Nigeria.

My third point is that, even if Muslims and Christians inform their respective members about the beliefs and tenets of the other faith, as stated in iii, I still see it as very difficult for their members to accommodate since each group has its conservatives who will not abide by such views. This means that the extremists in both religious groups will see it as a threat against their religion, thereby making them defend their respective faiths in a fundamentalist manner.

Fourth, to cooperate with the government, as mentioned in iv, is not a big deal but the major problem is that the size of corruption in the Nigerian government may not allow them to achieve their aim. As long as the Nigerian government systems remain so corrupt, any efforts to resolve conflict in collaboration with the Nigerian government will not be successful. You cannot bring any group or individuals who were involved in causing conflicts in the country to justice since they can easily bribe those officials who are in a position to bring them to book. Even some of the top officials in the government

are also sponsors of such groups as *Boko Haram* which makes it difficult to deal with them.

Fifth, Appleby writes “when the processes of conflict resolution and peace-building are successful, it results in structural reform” (Appleby 1997:212). Based on this statement, I can say that the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria lacks a structural reform. This means that they failed to address the root cause of the conflict in Nigeria which I call “socio-ethnic and politics of regionalism” that implicates itself with religion instead of religious conflict as the Inter-faith mediation in Nigeria called it. Rather, the conflicting communities in Nigeria are using religion as a tool of disturbance to fight their case in a way that favours them.

### 3.8 COMPARISON OF THE NIGERIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING WITH THAT OF SANT’ EGIDIO IN MOZAMBIQUE AND THE DHAMMAYIETRA WALK OF CAMBODIA

The Nigerian Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and *Sant’ Egidio* in Mozambique were both involved in dealing with conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Both the Inter-faith mediation in Nigeria, the *Dhmmayietra* in Cambodia and the *Sant’Egidio* in Mozambique believes that inter-religious dialogue is both something good in itself and a powerful resource for peace-building.

The Community of *Sant’Egidio* was born in Rome in 1968 at the initiative of a young man who was then less than twenty, Andrea Riccardi. He gathered a group of high-school students like himself to listen to and put the Gospel into practice. In that year of great hopes, of utopian visions and political ideologies, Riccardi and others believed that if they wanted to change the world, they must begin with the Gospel. Very quickly, the Gospel led them to the world of the poor. The small group immediately began to the

outskirts of Rome visiting the slums, and then crowded with many poor people and they began an afternoon school named “schools of peace” for children.

Since then the community has increased. It is now working in more than seventy-three countries in four continents such as Europe, America, and Africa. The number of community members is also constantly growing. There are about sixty-thousand members as well as many more that are permanently co-operating in the service to the poor people and in the various activities of *Sant’Egidio* without being part of the community in a strict sense. There is also a large service that the community performs (Sant’ Egidio, 2013). Appleby explains “that *Sant’Egidio* began its activities with charity, humanitarian action and development cooperation uppermost in its thinking, concerns moulded by spirituality and shared principles including prayer, communicating the gospel, solidarity with the poor and dialogue with other religions” ( Appleby 2006:10).

During the early 1980s *Sant’Egidio* became engaged in various international dialogues. The aim was to try to prevent or reduce tension between conflicting groups and to seek to mediate between them. One of the clearest success stories of *Sant’Egidio’s* peacemaking efforts occurred between 1989 and 1992 when the organisation was extremely influential in resolving the civil war that had ravaged Mozambique since the mid 1970s. Bouta et al writes “the effort took months but eventually *Sant’Egidio* not only contacted the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) leadership but also encouraged Mozambican government officials to agree to meet with them” (Bouta et al 2005:71-72). *Sant’Egidio* was successful in its efforts because both RENAMO and the Mozambican government perceived *Sant’Egidio* as an organisation characterised both by welcome neutrality and a compassionate outlook, with but one interest in Mozambique – to end the civil war and promote peace. *Sant’Egidio* was understood to have no political or economic agenda, throughout the negotiations this perception was bolstered as the organisation demonstrated a position of both even-handedness and neutrality.

According to Jeffrey Haynes, the *Dhammayietra* walks had their origin in the UN-monitored repatriation of Cambodians from border camps in Thailand in 1992. *Dhammayietra* walks whose central tenet was compassion and non-violence inspired people throughout Cambodia. Its message of the hope of peace to rebuild the war-torn country was in contrast to what had gone before by the rule of *Khmer Rouge* in Cambodia, representing an essential initiative drawing on core Buddhist norms and values. It was said to be an important contribution towards the revival of Buddhism in Cambodia after the *Khmer Rouge* and consequent political instability (Haynes 2007:98).

The concept of the *Dhammayietra* walks draws upon discourses and practices revealed in the context of a socially engaged Buddhism that has gained visibility not only in Cambodia and Thailand but also in other Asian countries where Buddhism is a significant religious tradition since the early 1980s. Haynes points to the fact “that socially engaged Buddhism in Cambodia is often linked to the return of Cambodian Buddhist exiles from Thailand and other regional countries” (Haynes 2007:98). This development required two simultaneous moves in order to maintain its usefulness. On the one hand, it is represented as an exemplary *Khmer* Buddhist response to Cambodia’s entrenched conflicts, as it forges its discursive identity within the local space of the nation. On the other hand, this local space is also mobile and this is where the *Dhammayietra* walks acquire both religious and peace-building significance. The leading figure behind the walks was a Cambodian called *Maha Ghosananda* who instructed the walkers to move step by step towards peace. The aim was symbolically to reverse what *Maha Ghosananda* identified as examples of dangerous mobility, including massive internal and external relocations and refugee flights of the *Khmer Rouge* era that affected millions of Cambodians as well as the still serious danger of treading on landmines in many parts of the country which turns the act of walking itself into mindful act. As Poethig writes, “it is this discursive move that loosens the *Dhammayietra*’s ties to the nation allowing it to slip across political and religious borders and ally itself with a broad and diverse

network of interfaith peace groups that are its transnational public forum” (Poethig 2002:28).

While the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria focused only on conflict resolution, the *Dhammayietra* of Cambodia was based on social and conflict resolution while *Sant’Egidio* of Mozambique combined its conflict resolution with social and humanitarian works. For example, during the Mozambican civil war, with the help of *Sant’Egidio*, the Mozambican churches were able to draw on an international religious network of social services and channel desperately needed assets into Mozambique, and thereby relieve some of the pressing economic needs of the country (Appleby 1997:160).

Unlike the *Dhammayietra* in Cambodia and *Sant’Egidio* in Mozambique which have been involved in conflict resolution for many years, the Nigerian Inter-faith mediation was the first of its kind.

According to Jeffrey Haynes “the Nigerian Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum was involved with Protestant, Muslim, religious and community leaders while *Sant’Egidio* in Mozambique involved a Roman Catholic NGO, where as *Dhammayietra* of Cambodia was the efforts of a Buddhist monk, *Maha Ghosananda* (Haynes 2007:99).

*Sant’Egidio* combined the gospel with its work of peace and reconciliation where as the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria utilised both the Bible and the Qur’an in the inter-faith dialogue. The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum is nationally based and *Dhammayietra* walk of Cambodia is trans-nationally based where as *Sant’Egidio* has tried to promote a culture of peace and reconciliation both at the international level and in local communities. While *Sant’Egidio* is committed to the world of welcoming the marginalized and immigrants in daily solidarity, *Dhammayietra* walks used compassion, non-violence and a message of hope of peace to rebuild the war-torn country. The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and *Sant’Egidio* believe that in any given situation, through dialogue with specific people, peace is possible.

### 3.9 THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN CONFLICT AND PEACE-BUILDING

Religion frequently plays a role through its leaders in transitional societies at the time in which distribution of power is unclear and stability is far from being established. As at the time of transition from the Roman Empire to the middle Ages, religious leaders today share some basic characteristics:

- i. Knowledge of language and culture
- ii. Access to firsthand information
- iii. Political expertise
- iv. Long-term vision.

Coward and Smith write “these characteristics can especially help to bridge the hermeneutical gap that is frequently the most serious obstacle to peace-builders” (Coward and Smith 2004:158).

Conflicts need to be seen and read properly, especially those that have major cultural, ethnic and religious dimensions. The external actors may find it difficult to have access to knowledge that is unique to the situation and that enables them to use their analytical framework properly. Religion through its leaders, because of their training and their role, can be better positioned in interpreting a conflict. Since they are closer to the scene of events, at ease with many actors, and familiar with the language and the issues at stake, religious leaders may offer important interpretative frameworks. According to Coward and Smith “this was certainly the case in Mozambique where Christians such as the Community of *Sant’Egidio* and Archbishop Jaime Goncalves played a significant role. Religious actors were consistently able to contribute to the peace process through their interpretation of events, issues and possibilities and to orient the debate towards a positive solution” (Coward and Smith 2004:158).

Religious leaders are uniquely positioned to foster non-violence conflict transformation through the building of constructive, collaborative relationships within and across ethnic and religious groups for the common good of the entire population of a country or region. In many conflict settings around the world, Appleby writes “the social location and cultural power of religious leaders make them potentially critical players in any effort to build a sustainable peace. The multigenerational local or regional communities they oversee are repositories of local knowledge and wisdom, custodians of culture, and privileged sites of moral, psychological and spiritual formation” (Appleby 2006:1).

According to Jeffery Haynes “religious individuals and faith-based organizations are actively involved in attempts to end conflict and to foster post-conflict reconciliation and peace-building between the warring parties” (Haynes 2007:89). Illustrations include, the mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford Foundation in the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970; the work of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches in mediating a cessation to the Sudan conflict in 1972; and the recent work of the imam of *Timbuktu* in mediating various West African conflicts.

Religion plays a special role through faith-based organizations in areas of religious conflict, but their peace-building programmes do not need to be confined to address only religious conflict. David Smock notes “these organizations’ peace-building agendas are diverse, ranging from high level mediation to training and peace-building through development at the grassroots. Peace can be often promoted most efficiently by introducing peace-building components into more traditional relief and development activities” (Smock 2001:1).

Religion through her leaders has a special responsibility of identifying religiously charged elements of a conflict. They also have to provide theological reasoning as to why and how these elements are charged and how they possibly can be solved. Also religious actors, as Appleby notes, “contributed to the processes of structural reform

necessary for the restoration of productive social relations and political stability after a period of conflict and human rights abuses” (Appleby 1997:220), for example nations recovering from oppressive regimes and civil wars such as South Africa, and Nicaragua called on religious leaders to help determine and implement appropriate instruments of transitional justice.

High profile inter-religious diplomacy also has made its mark in conflict transformation. For instance, appointing a delegation of prominent Jewish, Protestant and Catholic leaders to visit China was the appropriate choice for the delicate, politically charged mission envisioned by the U.S States Department to pressure the Chinese government against the maltreatment of different religious traditions in China by the Chinese government.

Religion through her transnational religious movements has contributed to peace-building, operated at different levels of society and performed distinctive functions such as providing neutral and secure space for talks, active mediation, advocacy, education or serving as a liaison to external governments or relief agencies. An example of this are the efforts of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists which trained Buddhist peace-makers in Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia, thereby overcoming barriers presented by the national and historical schools of Buddhism in the region. In their reconciliation work with prisoners, victims of violence and other aggrieved populations in Northern Ireland, Appleby writes “Mennonite peace-builders offered unique conceptual as well as practical contributions to their Ulster Protestant and Irish Catholic coreligionists” (Appleby 1997:224).

Religion also provides a neutral secure place where antagonists meet, at a physical and psychological distance from the conflict zone and in an atmosphere of civility and mutual respect to discuss their differences and discover what they hold in common. For example the effort of *Sant’Egidio* in playing a key role to end the civil war in Mozambique in 1992. *Sant’Egidio* encouraged Mozambican government officials and the rebels of the

Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) to meet and talk on neutral ground in Italy to resolve their differences. Jeffery Heynes notes “*Sant’Egidio* was successful in its efforts because both RENAMO and the Mozambican government perceived *Sant’Egidio* as an organisation characterised both by a welcome neutrality and a compassionate outlook, with but one interest in Mozambique to end the civil war and promote peace” (Haynes 2007:93).

### 3.10 THE FUTURE OF MUSLIM-CHRITAIN DIALOGUE FORUM AND NIGERIA IN GENERAL

After an overview of all the strengths and weaknesses of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria from 1995 to this date in mediating the conflicting communities, one can say that Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum has done a good job for the Republic of Nigeria in the area of mediation. They have some challenges facing them, such as political, social and religious problems but despite the obstacles they may face in the future I am envisaging a brighter future for the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in mediating the conflicting communities in Nigeria and beyond.

Nigeria is a very big country and blessed with some mineral resources such as oil, gas, and coal, but because of bad governance the Federal Republic of Nigeria has never seen peace since her independence from the British to this date. This has left so many Nigerians frustrated and angry which has led to ethnic division, political unrest and other problems in Nigeria. Despite this, I am predicting a better Nigeria in the future, but in order to achieve a better future, the Republic has a very long task ahead as regards political, religious, ethnic and social issues. Once the government has taken care of these issues, they would be able to regain the total trust they have lost from its citizens for the past years of economic turmoil and total unrest.

### 3.11 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the Nigerian case, conflict is an everyday phenomenon among Nigerians. For example, the introduction of the *Shari'a* law in *Kaduna* State of Nigeria has made the majority of the Christian communities rethink their future conditions and that of Christianity in Nigeria. Their major concern is that if the practice of *Shari'a* law is allowed fully in Nigeria, the country will become an Islamic state, which will limit the practice of Christianity in the future as it is in most of the Islamic countries today such as Egypt, Syria, and the Sudan. On the other hand, the fast growth of Christianity in Nigeria also worries the Islamic communities, especially in the northern part. This situation makes the Nigerian Muslims claim that Christianity may dominate the northern part of Nigeria. Therefore neither Muslims nor Christians in Nigeria would allow the domination by the other.

Furthermore in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity have been in religious competition, often resulting in conflict between the religious traditions. Evidence of this is found in the statements of Wuye and Ashafa 1999 that “Islam and Christianity from the beginning of this century to date have been in conflict, each struggling for superiority over the other. Islam had its glory days before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria when it controlled a significant percentage of what is today called Nigeria, while Christianity came with the explorers and the colonial rulers through to the first republic of modern Nigeria. From the middle of this century, specifically the late 1960's, there started arising conflicts between adherents of the two faiths” (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:1).

In the religious competitions among Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, conversion is another serious issue in both religions. Converting Christians to Islam or Muslims to Christianity poses a threat. In this way both religious traditions can go to any extreme to get a new member to their faith and will also do the same to stop any of their members to be converted to another religion. For example in Nigeria today, inter-religious marriages between a Christian and a Muslim is quite difficult because neither the bride nor the bride

groom would like to be converted to another religion. In some cases when a Christian man wants to marry a Muslim woman, the marriage is only possible if the Christian man accepts to leave his faith for Islam; and the same applies when a Muslim woman wants to enter into marriage with a Christian man. This means that both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria take their belief and practices to be superior to the other. They therefore avoid any marriage that will make them change their religion.

One may argue that in the contemporary world, the issue of religious plurality which allows inter-faith marriages could solve the problem. I believe in and accept the presence of religious plurality in Nigeria today such as inter-faith worship, meetings and conferences, but when it comes to delicate matters like marriage, those involved may believe in plurality of religion but cannot practice it because none of them want to loose their faith. Even among Christians, a Catholic family may not allow their son or daughter to get married to a person from the Anglican Church; neither may a Charismatic allow the same.

This confirms Scott Appleby's idea of religion as constituting an integral culture, capable of forming personal and social identity and influencing subsequent experience and behaviour in a profound way (Appleby 1997:9).

Huntington views religion as a central force that motivates and mobilizes people (Huntington 1996:27). Based on the above definition, I believe that this is the reason why Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Cape Town was able to mobilize his fellow South Africans for peace marches against the apartheid regime in South Africa and motivate them to opt for peace and reconciliation in the country with his idea of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. This is reflected in his book "No future without forgiveness" (Tutu 1999:1-294).

Negatively, in the Nigerian case, it was religion that motivated the imam Muhammad Ashafa to work to enthrone Islam in the Christian dominated Eastern Nigeria. It was also

religion that motivated the Pastor Wuye James to embark on his mission in *Kogi* state, which is an Evangelical campaign to convert the Igala people from Islam to Christianity, a middle belt tribe in *Kogi* State of Nigeria which is dominated by a Muslim population (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:117). Also it is religion that motivated the Islamist extremist “*Boko Haram*” (which means Western education is forbidden), to carry out several bombings in Nigeria.

On the positive side, it was religion that motivated the Christian pastor, James Movel Wuye and the Muslim imam, Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa to turn away from violence and militia and embrace non-violence, reconciliation and the advocacy of peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria (Haynes 2007:96). Religion also motivated the Sultan of Sokoto State in Nigeria, Alhaji Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar III and the Catholic Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Abuja to campaign against the activities of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria and to stress the need for peace between the adherents of two major religions in the country (Bosede, 2012).

Based on Jonathan Fox’ idea of religion as one of the sources of people’s world views and influences on people’s behaviours (Jonathan Fox 2004:176-177), I believe that the religious ideas and world views affect the ways millions of Nigerians explain their reality, understand how the country works, and relates to other members of the society and reacts to events and changes in Nigeria. For example many Nigerians seek solution to their problems such as illness, hardship, progress and prosperity from God rather than from the Nigerian government or their fellow human beings. They believe that only God can solve their problems and improve whatever bad conditions they may see themselves in today towards a better future. This is confirmed by the words of Toyin Falola that “Nigerians turn to religion to deal with the problems of suffering, sickness, death and insecurity. They try to forestall these problems or seek solutions to life’s challenges in their faith and religious rituals. Religious ideas and worldviews in Nigeria are inherited as part of the socialization process” (Falola 2001:29).

For example, in Muslim fundamentalist's belief, there are two different worlds, the world of Islam and the world of war, and Islam engages itself with war against the other world (Juergensmeyer 2003:81-82). With this kind of ideology, it will be very difficult for a Muslim extremist society to be without conflicts. On the other hand, many Nigerians in the Christian community may also adopt the Christian theological idea of just war which states that "the Church can embrace a just revolution" (Juergensmeyer 2003:24). Such Nigerian Christians for example can easily follow Reinhold Niebuhr's theory of a just war. Niebuhr showed the relevance of the just war theory to social struggles in the twentieth century by relating the idea to what he regarded as the Christian requirement to fulfil social injustice. Viewing the world through the lens of what he called "realism," Niebuhr concluded that moral persuasion is not sufficient to fight social injustices, especially when they are buttressed by corporate and state power. Therefore, it is at times essential to abandon nonviolence in favour of a more forceful solution (Niebuhr 2003:25-26).

Meanwhile, following the fundamentalist Muslim ideology of the two worlds and the Christian ideology of just war theory, we can see that in the Nigerian context both ideologies can easily influence the behaviours and world views of many Nigerians today.

Many Nigerians identify themselves by their different ethnic background. This has been one of the major problems caused by their colonial masters (the British), who divided the nation based on different ethnic regions, cultures and languages (Falola 2001:21-28; Campbell 2011:2). Today, the politics of regionalism affect Nigerians negatively ranging from the Nigerian politics, different places of learning, environments and relation of Nigerians to their fellow citizens from other regions. For example, in the Nigerian political arena, most citizens of Nigeria would like to see the president to be a member of his or her own ethnic group or region in order to get some favours such as social amenities, development, jobs and so on. The same negative impact is also reflected in the higher places of learning, where a student will find it very difficult to study his or her dream course at his or her choice of university if he or she comes from another region

than the region where such universities are situated. Also today, many Nigerians always have these divisions in mind in whatever activities they are embarking on, ranging from politics to education in so far as it connects them with people from other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Religion as a source of legitimacy shows itself in the Nigerian present situation in relation to *Boko Haram* which is an Islamic extreme group that has been terrorising the northern parts of Nigeria by bombing and killings which most of the time have been targeted on the Christian churches and families, trying to make it to be a religious conflict where as one of their major purposes has been to seek justice from the Nigerian government for some of their members who lost their lives during one of the attacks that were made when the Nigerian soldiers went on a rampage to their camp in Maiduguri, killing their former commander Ibn Saleh Ibrahim, the founding leader Mohammed Yusuf and some of their members in the northern part of Nigeria, July 2009 (BBC News, July 2009).

Recently, the group told BBC news that they will not rest unless the Nigerian government changes the living conditions of most of the northerners. *Boko Haram* regards these conditions as inhuman.

On various occasions, the group has referred to itself as the Nigerian Taliban. It seeks to overthrow the government and replace it with a regime based on Islamic law. For them, Shari'a law is not enough and they want a pure Islamic state. *Boko Haram* has accused the Nigerian government of corruption, bad governance and irresponsibility (CNN News, September 2012).

This shows how religion associated with formal institutions play a big role in the Nigerian domestic politics by supporting or opposing the regimes. Based on this understanding, the Nigerian politics are connected with religion, in the sense that each

religious group (Muslims and Christians) tries to see their own person as a leader of the country and this is what has been going on in Nigeria from the past and up to the present day. Since the Nigerian Muslims believe that they are born to rule, they always try to interrupt the leaderships of non-Muslims in the country and this is one of the major causes of the Nigerian conflicts today. It is obvious that the problem in Nigeria is a political one although both parties are using religion to justify their actions. I contend that Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life and this is played out more in the north, perhaps because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than it is in the south. Therefore, in my view, the Nigerian conflict is not primarily a religious conflict, but in a real sense it is a matter of political regionalism. I will back up my argument with the words of Toyin Falola that “Islam and Christianity are the two principal religions in Nigeria. The missionaries and leaders of both Islam and Christianity compete for converts and attempt to insert religion into politics in ways that favour them. Since the 1980’s, their competition has resulted in major conflicts in which places of worship have been burnt and hundreds of people have lost their lives” (Falola 2001:6-7). Also Kubai and Adebo observed that “violent confrontations often occur when a group feels oppressed by another or tries to resist political or economic domination. In some cases such efforts of resistance can easily acquire religious overtones, especially if either of the group has a large number of adherents of Islam or Christianity” (Kubai and Adebo 2008:96). This is exactly what has happened in the Nigerian case.

Furthermore, Falola writes “the Nigerian first Republic was defined by the politics of regionalism. The north was dominated by the Hausa/Fulani, the west by the Yoruba and the East by the Igbo. The three regions were bitter rivals and they all wanted to control the federal government. They could not agree on how to divide the national revenues, how to distribute federal cabinet positions or how to even conduct a head count” (Falola 2001:21). Based on the above statements, one can see that the Nigerian conflict has been there for many years in the power struggle which is primarily a regional and political

issue in reality although each side implicates religion in order to fight their case in such a way that they will be favoured. This means that both sides are using religion to justify their actions. Therefore the Nigerian conflict is not a religious conflict. Rather, Nigerians are using religion as a tool of conflict because religion permeates all aspects of their lives.

The Foundation Coalition understands conflict “as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs or goals” (The Foundation Coalition, 2012). In the Nigerian conflict, the above statement describes exactly the needs and beliefs of both conflicting parties in Nigeria today. This is because both parties desire that candidates from their respective regions occupy the major government positions which will favour them in one way or another. This is affirmed by the words of Chinua Achebe “that the Nigerian government sanctioned environment of hate and resentment created by self-serving politicians which resulted in government supervised persecutions, terminations and dismissals of Nigerian citizens based on their ethnicity” (Achebe 2012:77-78).

Furthermore, the needs of both conflicting parties in Nigeria may be described with the words of Kalu Kelechi “that conflict is a process of interaction between two or more parties that seek to thwart, injure or destroy their opponent because they perceive they have incompatible goals” (Kalu 2003:19). As the northern Nigerians want to destroy the southerners, in the same way the southern Nigerians want to destroy the northerners due to their unfriendly desires. For example, following all the conflicts that we have witnessed in Nigeria in the recent years, both northerners and southerners lost their lives and properties because the target of each side was to destroy the opposing side as much as they could.

Intra- national conflicts have been described as conflicts within a nation which involve different groups within the nation. This can be inter-ethnic and inter-religious competition for resources as manifested in the revenue sharing in Nigeria (Muslim-

Christian Dialogue Forum, 2007). Presently the case of Nigeria in her conflicts involves three major actors, namely the northerners, the southerners and *Boko Haram*. While the north and the south of Nigeria engage with the politics of regionalism which associates itself with religion as mentioned above, *Boko Haram* fights against corruption, bad governance and irresponsibility in Nigeria, and thus seeks a pure Islamic state as they explained to the CNN News (CNN News, September 2012). This shows that the Nigerian conflict is an intra- national conflict.

Scott Appleby describes conflict resolution, “as the removing as much as possible of the inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation, advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict”. This is relevant to the Nigerian situation (Appleby 1997:212). The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria started their work of mediating and negotiating the conflicting communities in Nigeria in 1995. The imam Ashafa and pastor Wuye who were the co-founders of Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum utilized their inter-faith mediation centre to set up a better way of diffusing potentially violent situations in Nigeria than the security forces. Both employed a multi-track approach to address issues of inter-communal violence.

They deprogrammed both conflicting communities by making them aware of what the other side was thinking (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:7-13). In different workshops the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum conducted in Nigeria, they educated both groups by exposing the stereotype attitudes and ideologies that filled the minds of both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria against the other so that the attendants realised that they held these stereotypes due to lack of knowledge of what their opponents thought about them.

Conflict management, as Coward and Smith write, “involves enforcement and peacekeeping operations but religious actors are underutilized in these roles to the detriment of peace processes” (Coward and Smith 2004:9). This underscores the situation in Nigeria because the Nigerian government neglects the role of religious actors as peacekeepers. Rather the Nigerian government prefers to make use of a law and order

approach which involves the military, police and other governmental forces in the country anytime there is a conflict in Nigeria.

My argument here is that, these law enforcement agencies most of the time commit more crimes when they are being utilized by the government in a conflict rather than managing the conflict at hand. This is the case in many African countries where the military and police forces take laws into their own hands by involving themselves in human rights' violations on the pretence of doing their job to manage conflict. Nigeria is one of the leading countries in this kind of human rights' violations. For example, instead of managing the conflict at hand the government forces end up intimidating the masses by imprisonment, holding captives, beating, gun fires and tear gas. The law and order approach was exactly what the Federal Government of Nigeria utilized in the present Nigerian conflict, but all their efforts proved abortive before the imam Shafa and pastor Wuye shared a view that civil society organizations such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre can do a better job of defusing potentially violent situations in Nigeria than the security forces.

Poor progress towards economic development is one of the major factors contributing to the conflict in Nigeria as I mentioned above. Despite the oil boom and other mineral resources in Nigeria that generate billions of dollars annually for the country, the Nigerian government cannot boast of any development in the country. The rate of the Nigerian currency is highly devaluated against the dollar and euro. The infrastructures and social amenities are nowhere to be found. Maintenance at the airports and seaports in the country is seriously deteriorating, yet the country is pumping out thousands of barrels of oil on a daily basis which they sell to the United States of America and other countries. With the money the Republic is generating from the oil alone, Nigerian economy should be experiencing a higher growth of economic development than what it does today.

Identity politics is also contributing to the conflicts in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Identity politics was one of the things the Republic inherited from the British. This is confirmed by the words of Jega Attahiru that “identities have historically been significant in the Nigerian political process under colonial rule as well as in the post-colonial dispensation. Under colonialism, administrative exigencies warranted the nurturing and exacerbation of an “us” versus “them” syndrome. Such as Muslim versus Christian, northerner versus southerner, Hausa/Fulani versus Yoruba versus Igbo and so on. Religious, regional ethnic differences were given prominence in conceiving and implementing social, educational and economic development policies and projects under the indirect system of colonial administration favoured by the British” (Jega 2000:11-23). Thus the impact of colonialism set the manipulation of identity consciousness in order to effectively divide and rule, as well as in the politics of decolonization and in the arena of competitive politics in the post-colonial era.

Afrique en Lutte writes that “ethnicity and religion are some of the major forms of identity politics to which large academic literatures attach in Nigeria. They are also the most critical identities in the country” (Afriques en Lutte, 2013).

The introduction of *shar'ia* is another factor contributing to the conflicts in Nigeria. This is because the application of the *shar'ia* law favours the Muslim men to the detriment of their women. For instance on the issue of two people caught committing adultery, the man would go free whereas the woman would be punished by stoning her to death. Based on this kind of judgement, one can say that there is injustice in the application of the *shar'ia* law in the Muslim communities in Nigeria. Also the amputation carried out on people who have committed one offence or another is detrimental to the offenders because they will be left doing nothing only to end up on the street as beggars throughout their life time. Sometimes this punishment involves even little children and may render them useless through the rest of their life, degrading their dignity as human beings. The concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government is also one of the root causes of conflicts in Nigeria. The Republic is always boasting of her

democratic rule but in practice it is full of authoritative rule. Democratic states such as Norway, Denmark, and United States of America, seeks the opinions of the masses on certain issues before they come up with final decisions on laws that affect the majority of the population. In the Nigerian case, the reverse is the case because the masses are not allowed to voice their own opinions in decision making. The senate writes the laws and passes them without securing the opinion of the masses because for them, all the authority in the Republic belongs to them and therefore people must follow whatever laws they have passed. During the period of the military regime, no one questioned those in power and the same continues with the so-called democratic government. However the famous Fela Kuti always used his music to fight the Nigerian government by unveiling most of the crimes committed by the government when he was still alive, such as the assassination of Delegiwa during the government of Yar' Adua and Olusegun Obasanjo and the killing of his mother during the military regime.

An election campaign is usually the period of debates and rallies in order to convince the voters in the country to make a right choice when voting for any group with a better plan to rule the country; it has the needs of the masses at the centre of their agenda such as in Botswana, Namibia, and most of the European countries. But in the Nigerian case, violence characterizes the campaigns. Each party sees the opponent as a rival and enemy which most of the time results in assassination and violence by action and words. This is confirmed by the words of Kubai and Adebo: "Nigerian political campaigns prior to the election when leaders and their supporters engage in debates and discredit each other in the process, in order to win a community's vote into a political office. In such cases the supporters of discredited politicians might engage in violent conflicts as they try to defend their candidate, and this is always reflected in the majority-minority divide" (Kubai and Adebo 2008:106).

Another factor contributing to conflicts in Nigeria is the criminality of the Nigerian politics and the rampant corruption of officials at all levels. In Nigeria today, national

institutions are few and weak. The national university system has never recovered from the days of military dictatorship. Private universities try to fill up the lacuna but usually only benefit the privileged and a few lucky scholarship students. The integrity of a universal national youth service, supposedly the capstone of tertiary education in Nigeria, has been undermined by exemptions for those with the right connections. Most of the brilliant students from poor families in some of the higher institutions of learning find it difficult to graduate because they don't have funds to lobby among their respective lecturers to award them the marks they have merited.

The national postal service still exists but Nigerians have increasingly turned to private services such as DHL, UPS and FedEx because of poor funding and management of the Republic's postal services. The civil service, the police and the military, intended to be truly national entities, have been underfunded for a long time and promotions which should be based on merits have been repeatedly compromised. This is one of the reasons why most of the Nigerian police and the military forces are busy on the highways, often focusing on collecting money from the motorists instead of security checks for people's safety.

Road and transport in most parts of Nigeria are chaotic and unbearable because of bad road and transport systems. This is so because those in charge of such areas are using the funds for themselves and to lobby higher officials who are supposed to supervise their jobs and bring them to judgement.

Government offices are to serve the needs of people but the Nigerian government ignores its service in favour of their families and loved ones. This is confirmed by the words of John Campbell: "the founding fathers of Nigeria such as Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Ahmadu Bello were heroes but mostly to their fellow ethnic groups rather than the nation as a whole" (Campbell 2011:139). The words of Chinua Achebe show the same: "Nigerian public servants helped themselves freely to the nation's wealth. Elections were blatantly rigged. The subsequent national census was outrageously stage

managed; judges and magistrates were manipulated by the politicians in power. The politicians themselves were pawns of foreign business interests” (Achebe 2012:51).

Economic deprivation and social inequalities also contribute to conflicts in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The joy of every good government is to make available the economy of the state to its citizens such as social amenities, good drinking water, free and quality education, employment, housing, hospitals, poverty eradication, security and fights against high rate of social inequality and so on.

In the Nigerian case economic deprivations of the citizens by the government is on the high. In many states of Nigeria, there is no access to clean water, housing, medical treatment and quality care. For example in the oil producing states, such as Delta and Port Harcourt, the villagers live in the slumps and ghetto houses without bathroom and toilets. Most of them utilize the rivers to sustain themselves and their families even though the rivers have been polluted by the oil companies in those areas. Farmers are also affected because oil pollution in their farmlands affects the growth of the crops, hence leaving most of the families in hunger and poverty. This is confirmed by the words of John Campbell that “access to medical treatment and quality of care is bad in Nigeria. Emergency care does not exist in many parts of the country. Shortages of pharmaceutical and medical supplies are endemic and the Nigerian health system according to the United Nations statistics as of 2010 ranked 187 out of 191 nations” (Campbell 211:13). This also underscores the words of Porter Elisabeth et al: “the underlying factor to most of these crises is poverty, both absolute and relative. Many people in the Niger Delta lack the basic necessities for a decent living and there is a high level of youth unemployment. Highly visible alongside this abject poverty is the opulent lifestyle of the oil company workers and the developments of infrastructure in various other parts of the country, all accomplished from the oil wealth derived from their Niger Delta region” (Porter et al 2005:50). It is obvious that the major factor fuelling the conflicts in the Niger Delta concerns the nature of the Nigerian state and how far it has been unable to meet the socio-economic rights of the people of the region.

Inequality in Nigeria is also very huge, the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. Many people from the poor families are losing their loved ones on a daily basis because they cannot afford to pay for private hospitals. Pregnant women often die in pregnancy and at child birth because they cannot afford to pay for a better hospital. Many students from the poor families drop out of school due to lack of funds. All these losses could have been protected if the Nigerian government had utilized her oil money to take proper care of her citizens. This is confirmed by John Campbell “that inequality between the rich and poor in Nigeria has increased significantly because of uneven access to oil wealth, exacerbated by a decline in agricultural productivity in the countryside. Poor rural families are sending their children to urban areas in increasing numbers for longer periods to relieve the pressure of high birth rates and scarce food. Yet, the decay of the city’s industrial base has at the same time exacerbated urban unemployment and made it much more difficult to absorb rural poor” (Campbell 2011: 14).

One of the major factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria is the high rate of human rights violation. Human rights are concerned with the protection of individuals and groups against violations of their guaranteed rights and through the promotion of these rights (Buergetal et al 2002:1). Also human rights are claims which each person has, simply because of his or her humanness. These claims have been enumerated in international declarations and agreements. Those are justified claims a human individual makes upon the human collective among which he or she lives, that is his or her society (Bucar and Barnett 2005:3-50). Almost all the countries in the world have human rights in their constitutions for the protection of the rights of their citizens. Nigeria is one of them but in practice in Nigeria today, the amount of human rights violations is quite alarming.

For example many Nigerians have lost their lives, loved ones, property and other things such as jobs, due to conflicts in the country over the past years. Also the terrorist attacks

by the Nigerian Taliban “*Boko Haram*” are quite disturbing and put the security of Nigerian citizens at risk. The Nigerian government violates the liberty and security rights of many Nigerian citizens which were proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 3 “everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1976, article 9 “the States Parties to the present covenant recognise the right of everyone to social security including social insurance” (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976).

The problem of inequality in Nigeria is fast increasing whereby the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer. For example, in Nigeria today, the gap between the rich and the poor is quite high and this affects most of the poor Nigerians as regards an equal protection by law. The rich are manipulating and intimidating most of the poor families by taken their farm lands and other things such as traditional title illegally since the poor are not able to face them in a court of law. Even when the poor make an effort to fight for their rights by taking their case either to their respective communities or to the government court, they will often loose the case because most of the rich families can easily bribe the officials who handle the case. The Nigerian law protects the rights of the rich to the detriment of the poor. Such actions violate the rights to equal protection of the Nigerian citizens which was proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 7 “all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 26 “all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour,

sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976).

The Nigerian police and other government forces are intimidating, arresting and detaining many innocent people without any trial. For instance in a situation where two people are having problems because of some valuables each of them desires to get. Most of the time the one with more connections within the government will lobby and pay the forces to arrest his or her opponent, sometimes without even a warrant of arrest, and such people will remain in prison for a long period of time without any trial. Sometimes some of these innocent people die in the jails and prisons from the injuries they got during the time of their arrest. Such actions violate the right for protection against arbitrary arrest and detention which was proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 9 “no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

On the freedom of opinion and expression, Nigerian citizens are not given the chances to contribute anything that affects them in the country. The Nigerian government and its officials dominate everything. They introduce the new laws and amend the old ones in the way they want them to be. The Nigerian press is guided by the government regarding the type of things they write in their news-papers, and any article attacking the Nigerian government or any of its high officials may lead to the closure of such companies. The Nigerian public has to follow the law whether they like it or not. Such actions that restricts the Nigerian citizens from giving their own opinions violate their rights of freedom of opinion, expression and the press which were proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 19 “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Also the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights 1976, article 19 numbers 1 and

2 “everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice” (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976).

Included in the human rights laws mentioned above are rights to adequate levels of food, clothing and housing, adequate levels of health care and social services, special protection for children and women, rights to education and protection against torture and cruel inhuman punishment. All these human right laws are violated by the Nigerian government on a daily basis. The violation of all these human rights by the Nigerian government is one of the root causes of conflicts in Nigeria.

Deeply ingrained biases and stereotypes that shape people’s attitudes in Nigeria are also one of the major factors contributing to conflicts. The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, have different biases and stereotypes against and of one another, and the same negative attitude applies to other minority ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbos are viewed as money lovers and greedy; the Hausas/Fulanis are viewed as people with empty brains; and the Yorubas are regarded as party lovers with no plans for the future. These and many other negative attitudes fill the minds of many Nigerians against the other ethnic groups. This is confirmed by the words of Douglas Anthony: “sometimes the Igbo, like the Jews are called bloodcurdling grabbers; sometimes they are referred to as adventurous and hardworking; the Northern rhetoric branded Igbo’s as arrogant, clannish and materialistic” (Douglas 2000:120). In the same way the Hausa/Fulani have a negative view of the Igbos, and the Igbos and Yorubas do the same to one another. All the different ethnic groups in Nigeria should know that “when one is treated like an enemy...the temptation to respond like enemy is considerable” (Juergensmeyer 2003:242).

As regards the effects of conflict, people that live in a conflicting community are mostly afraid for their lives and in order to be safe they seek security by identifying themselves with their respective groups such as, religion, ethnic group, region, political parties and any other movement or group they can feel protected by. This has been the situation in Nigeria for many years. The majority of Nigerians join different groups such as religion ethnic groups, where they can find protection whenever there is conflict. This is confirmed by Kubai and Adebo quoting one presidential aspirant in Nigeria before election that: “it is only by voting a Muslim president that the religion of Islam could be protected. I am sure that we can get a Muslim or good Muslims that will rule us. You must vote for somebody who will protect your religion and dignity...this urges you to enlighten all Muslims on this wherever they are in Nigeria” (Kubai and Adebo 2008:106). A statement like this would probably be the same for other groups.

National, ethnic and personal identities are composed of many elements such as history, buildings, places and politics. Religion is often one of the key elements, intertwined with all the others. Every religion is also part of a human, national and ethnic culture and context. They are linked in such ways that it is impossible to separate anything which possibly could be of a pure religious nature. Therefore, a religious identity is always part of a larger identity. Also culture and context are not only linked to sentiment. Identities are usually linked to historical narratives which are continuously memorized, reproduced and often celebrated in the lives of nations, people and individuals. They often recount origins, which may include what an outside might consider to be mythological elements. Whether or not they are factually historic, they are events of a constitutional nature in the history of people.

The issues I have mentioned above are root factors contributing to conflicts in the Federal Republic of Nigeria such as poor progress towards economic development, identity politics, the concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government, criminality of the Nigerian politics, rampant corruption of officials at all levels, economic deprivation and social inequalities, high rate of human rights violations and deeply

ingrained biases and stereotypes that shape people's attitudes in Nigeria. All these root causes have often been neglected by those who have tried to mediate the conflicts in Nigeria, such as the Federal Government of Nigeria with their law and order approach by utilizing the Nigerian security forces to maintain peace which often failed; or the Kaduna state government that used the official-track one approach. This approach is a rudimentary arbitration and mediation methods, combined with an intensive research and consultation with local partners, such as the Kaduna Peace Committee, an organization with extensive knowledge of the conflict dynamics and issues in Kaduna state (People Building Peace II, 2012). This government sponsored dialogue has changed the conflict dynamics but did not contribute towards resolving it; and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum with its multi-track approach to address the issues of inter-communal violence by deprogramming people to make them aware of what the other side is thinking. Also the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum made use of the consultative approach in contrast to the approach of the federal government of Nigeria. The reason, however, why the Nigerian conflict continues and seems insurmountable is because those involved in mediating the conflict have been busy with religious issues (which are only one of the contributing factors) and thereby have ignored to address some of the other factors that I have mentioned above as contributing to conflict in Nigeria and which I have called the "root causes" of conflict. Therefore, in so far as these root causes are continued to be neglected in Nigeria, the conflict situation will remain insurmountable.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS AND VISUAL DOCUMENTS

I have conducted focused interviews with Wuye James and Ashafa Muhammad, who were the founding fathers of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria. I also interviewed Auta Samson who is the secretary of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, which is an inter-faith conflict resolution and peace-building foundation that has worked tirelessly to restore peace in Nigeria during the time of conflicts.

In my interview with Mohammed Ashafa he said that “we have problems of conflict in Nigeria due to so many factors, this can be attributed to the problems associated with governments’ lack of political will to run a transparent, accountable system and lack of involvement of the general public in planning, execution and monitoring of programs and projects. There is also lack of education in so many instances, where you see that children born from the less privileged in the society, lack funding resources to fend for the young ones who at times are used as mercenaries or tools for selfish political, religious and other agendas. We also have the understanding that religious fanatics due to value issues that cannot be compromised seem to be on the front burner” (Ashafa, 2012).

The failure of the Nigerian government to run a practical democratic state after elections leaves so many Nigerians full of frustration. That is the reason why any little misunderstanding among people and groups is being utilized to showcase their anger by violence of all kinds. An example of this is the living conditions of the Niger Delta and *Ogoni* regions where the lands are being used for oil extraction but the size of poverty in those areas is high. That was the reason why the Niger Delta youths were kidnapping the oil company workers and demanded ransom from the oil companies to take care of their basic needs. Also in Lagos, villagers have vandalized the oil pipes between 2000 and 2005 in their respective areas trying to tap the oil by themselves in order to fend for their families but such actions ended up in mass killing of the villagers and loss of houses and

crops in the farms due to a fire outbreak during the illegal deals at the oil pipes. These losses would have been prevented if the citizens in those areas had been assisted in their economic and social needs by the Nigerian government. On the one hand, it is also true that lack of education also contributes to the Nigerian conflicts whereby the uneducated youths have been used by different groups as mercenaries to achieve their goal. But some of the Nigerians without education did so in order to protect their family. This is because there is no free education in Nigeria at all a level and some of the students from very poor families will decide to drop out of school so that their parents may use the money for food, housing and clothing rather than attending school while their family members are dying of hunger at home. Some will even argue that there are already so many graduates in the country without jobs and since there is no guarantee for them to get jobs after their studies, it is better for them to quit studies in time and use their time for something else.

On the other hand, there are thousands of graduates in Nigeria without jobs and who cannot fend for their younger ones and families. Therefore, any opportunity they get in order to show their anger will be through violence. Jobless individuals and groups can easily be manipulated in Nigeria by getting paid to engage themselves in violence in the country. All this is coupled with the different religious ideologies, especially among those who cannot compromise or accommodate any change to their religion, such as religious fundamentalists who believe in their ancient traditions and regard any change as a threat to their religion. An example of this is the *Boko Haram* group that is calling for a pure Islamic state in Nigeria and rejects all the Western ideologies, including education and issues of human rights such as equality and freedom. This also applies to the Christian fundamentalists in Nigeria who oppose any move to eradicate the patriarchal rule in the family and other issues such as abortion, same sex marriages, and rights of children, accommodation and respect for other religions.

Also the lack of involvement of the general public in planning and monitoring of programs and projects in the country contributes to the conflicts. A practical example of this was my personal experience, an incident that took place in my home town, *Uga* a few years back when one of the government senators got the contract to construct one of the major roads in my home town (*Uga* junction to *Obizi* River) as one of the government funded projects for that year. The aim of awarding this contract was to help the *Uga* people to create a better road that would link the *Uga* junction expressway to *Nkwo* market, and then proceed to *Obizi* River which is the major river that produces the main spring drinking water to the entire *Uga* town and *Aguata* local government. Also this road links to some other important areas such as schools, churches, homes, and farm lands, but all the efforts to have access to this road was shattered by the senator when he channelled the road work direct to his own father's compound and end everything there, instead of continuing the work to end up at *Obizi* River. Such action kept the entire *Uga* people speechless because this would have been the only benefit the entire town would have gained for voting for him during the period of their election. But this would have been a different story if the general public had been involved by monitoring of programs and projects so that the senator would have been reported to the Nigerian government for mismanaging and channelling the contract which was given to him for the benefit of the people to his own family alone. The senator did not only disobey the Nigerian government by his action but he also tarnished his own image, the image of his family and his entire generation. This is so because such action has been recorded in every mind in *Uga* town; the *Obizi* River is very important in the history of *Uga* and the entire *Uga* people.

Ashafa also mentioned that religious fanatics due to value issues that cannot be compromised seem to be in the front line. This is confirmed by the words of Archbishop Kaigama who said that "he wanted to dispel the impression that Christians and Muslims in Nigeria were at war. People say the Christians and Muslims are fighting each other but it is not the case, Christians are not at war with Muslims. The problem is a tiny

group, a fanatical group by the name *Boko Haram*. They are the ones who have started a cycle of attacks destruction and killing in Nigeria” (Kaigama 2012). Also Archbishop Ndagoso stressed “that there is not a religious conflict in Nigeria. Christians and Muslims are not at war. Nigeria is at war with religious fanatics and criminals who are killing innocent Nigerians regardless of their religion” (Ndagoso 2012). This is true because it describes the present situation in Nigeria with some religious fanatics. For example, in February 2013 the Islamist extremists kidnapped four foreign workers in Nigeria in retaliation to the French intervention to the conflict in Mali. They did so to show their solidarity with their Muslim brotherhood in Mali. One may ask what is the reason why anytime there is a problem in any of the Muslim countries; Nigerians also share in this. This is so because of the different ways people interpret and understand certain issues among them, especially when it has to do with religion. Of course when you ask any of them who have been involved in such violence, the answer will be that they want to show their solidarity with the Muslim brotherhood. Meanwhile they can easily show their solidarity to their Brotherhood in Mali without any violence such as Christians do whenever there is war and disasters in other countries which affect their fellow Christians. Sometimes they can arrange for relief such as shelter, food and drinks, and disaster managements. Or even organise a peaceful demonstration condemning the French intervention in Mali.

Of the impact of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in the Nigerian conflict, Wuye James note “that the centre is using their strategy by replicating themselves in the various groups, they train and equip them with their spirituality to explore ways of community in addressing sincere and genuine relationship and understanding to achieve their goal of sustaining just peace” (Wuye, 2012). The above statement unveils itself in one of their documentary movies (‘From vengeance and killing to healing and friendship’) where people within the different conflicting communities show their support and solidarity with the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in sustaining peace in the conflict

communities by denouncing all sorts of violence and encourage their fellow community members to do the same.

Despite of all these efforts which were shown in one of their videos, one can still question the acceptance of each conflicting group to the other because not every member of those conflicting communities would accept to make peace with the other groups.

This is because some of them will still be feeling threatened in one way or the other from their rivals. Still others will be ready to question the authenticity of such accommodations by doubting that such peace may not last for a long period of time. It is also obvious that some of the people in the conflicting communities are just following the crowd to see where it is going to lead them, but still have their own private animosities in their hearts. In a way, one may also question the reality of such videos because people can be easily bought off to appear in such scenes to achieve the goal of those involves in mediating the conflict at hand. Even if what they have recorded in their videos are true, one can still say that the result would have not be the same if such videos has been recorded by any other group such as Human Rights Watch, or even CNN because they would want to cover everything they have seen and witnessed both the positive and the negative sides, which the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria would not want to be seen in their movies because such scenes will easily expose some of their weaknesses in their conflict mediation.

The movie also show that Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum with the support of the various state leaders in the northern parts of Nigeria, organised a cultural event where the different conflicting communities share their cultures with other groups and learn more about their cultural differences and common views. Such activities will make the conflicting communities rethink their erroneous perceptions and stereotypes against others because they would realise that all the bad things they do think of their rivals are the opposite. This is the reason why Wuye and Ashafa write “the perceptions we have of our faiths-behaviour and reactions to issues have had room for misconception and misinterpretations in our inter-religious relations between us as Muslims and Christians.

These misconceptions, resulting from erroneous perceptions, have changed our relationship from happiness to unhappiness and from joy to sadness. Instead of unity in diversity we witness discord, instead of peaceful co-existence we witness disharmony, and instead of tranquillity we witness conflict, violence and tribulations. Instead of building a community devoid of dichotomy of all sorts, we have participated in fanning the embers of discord and religious apartheid. Many nations and empires have participated, consciously or unconsciously in their own destruction as a result of the erroneous perceptions they have for one another” (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:7). One can see that erroneous perceptions, assumptions, stereotypes and suspicions a person have against other groups, neighbours, and friends can easily deceive him or her into knowing the reality of others he or she is dealing with. Therefore, in so far as we insist on passing judgement on others by the verdict of our erroneous perceptions and by refusing them the opportunity to explain themselves to us (who and what they are), we are creating a room for conflict in our inter-personal, inter-community and inter-religious relationships.

The events of such cultural gatherings must not have the same venue all the time because not every group that travels from far places to attend those events every year would be happy about the venues of such events since they have to travel all the time to attend the cultural events for the unity of the country. Some may even start to question why can't the same event be taking place in their own state or nearby areas, or why should they be going to the same venue for such events. This kind of question may cause them to withdraw themselves to attend the gatherings. Therefore, I think that by rotating the venues of such events annually according to the thirty-six states in Nigeria would solve such a problem because every group will get the chance of hosting the same event when it gets to their own turn, just like the venues for the African Cup of Nation or World Cup Soccer tournaments are being changed all the time. Such rotational plan of the events can easily stop any group from withdrawing themselves and wave off any negative thinking against the venues of the cultural events for the unity of the conflicting communities and the country at large.

It is the erroneous perceptions both Christians and Muslims have of each other that made Wuye and Ashafa outline the thirty-six erroneous perceptions of both sides as follows:

1. The prophet Muhammad copied his Holy Qur'an from the Holy Bible.
2. The prophet Muhammad is worshipped instead of God by Muslims and hence their Religion is known as Mohammedanism.
3. The prophet Muhammad was formerly a Catholic and he broke away from Catholicism to establish Islam.
4. The prophet Muhammad fought various wars to establish his religion.
5. The prophet Muhammad claimed that he could not save himself on the day of judgement.
6. Islam is spread by the sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other, through a violent Jihad.
7. Allah is a demonic spirit that casts spells upon one sixth of the population of the human race.
8. The Islamic Jihad simply means holy war against Christians.
9. Islamic shari'ah law means men stoning adulterers to death and cutting off the hands of thieves.
10. Islamic shari'ah law is to be enforced by Muslims on Christians and other none Muslims, so that Christians will fight against its implementation.
11. Islam denies women freedom of movement and association.
12. Islam approves and encourages divorce between couples.
13. Arabs from the East are using their petrol dollars to check Christian evangelisation and to enhance Islamisation of Christian nations.
14. Islam as a religion is anti-Christ.
15. The prophet of Islam, Muhammad was inspired by a demonic spirit and not by the arch-angel Gabriel.
16. The prophet Muhammad married more women and approved of polygamy for Muslims to encourage the exploitation of women.
17. Islam sanctions women's seclusion unconditionally and denies women the right

of contributing their quota to the socio-economic development of society.

18. Islam decreed child marriage without seeking for the consent of the girl to be betrothed.
19. Allah, the Muslim name of God, was one of the 360 idols in Mecca before the advent of Islam.
20. Muslims worship the black stone *Ka'aba* during their pilgrimage to Mecca.
21. Any Muslim with a turban on his head and a full grown beard is a terrorist.
22. Any Muslim woman who dresses in a full lowering gown called the hijab is an extremist, illiterate and uncivilized.
23. Any Muslim who is refusing to separate the spiritual from the secular enters paradise.
24. Any Muslim who kills a none Muslim, especially a Christian would enter paradise.
25. Muslims are commanded to enforce Islamic religion on any none Muslim.
26. Muslims do not believe in the prophet-hood of Jesus Christ and His mission.
27. Muslims are the most intolerant religious group in the world.
28. Muslims have a religion and a prophet but are without a saviour.
29. Muslims are forbidden from reading or knowing anything about the teachings of Jesus Christ.
30. Muslims believe both the Old and New Testament of the Bible.
31. Muslims succeed in their material endeavours because it is the power of the devil that they are using.
32. Muslims are united globally with strong ties of brotherhood.
33. Muslims are trouble makers, are people who take pleasure in shedding the blood of their fellow human beings who do not belong to their faith.
34. Muslims hate Christians and anything that comes from the West.
35. Muslims love power and hate being dominated by or being under the control of the Christian leaders.
36. Muslims are hypocrites.

These erroneous perceptions many Christians have about Muslims made Wuye James write “that these are some of the ways in which the majority of the Christians globally perceive Muslims. Most are very erroneous, as my personal contact with the Imam (Ashafa) during our various stages of dialogue has revealed. Indeed, he has developed a different perception as a result of giving the Imam and his colleagues the time to explain and educate him on various issues. This has encouraged him immensely in pursuing effective communication as a guard against the mistaken beliefs that he had as a result of what he has heard, seen and conceived in his mind about Islam and the Muslims” (Wuye 1999:8-9). On the other hand also Muslims hold erroneous perceptions about Christians:

1. Jesus Christ is worshiped instead of God, hence the name of their religion is Christianity.
2. Jesus is believe to have been fathered by Almighty God, hence they are calling Him the only begotten son of God.
3. Jesus Christ died for their sins, which simply implies that the Christians are free to commit any sin and transgression.
4. The true teachings of Jesus Christ have been changed by Christian clergies.
5. Jesus Christ did not preach or establish the doctrine of Christianity as practiced today but St. Paul did.
6. Jesus Christ prophet-hood and mission are firmly acknowledged by the Muslims, as well as all other Israelite prophets but the Christians totally disbelieve in the prophet-hood and mission of Muhammad.
7. Jesus Christ’ message is not universal, but strictly to his fellow Jews.
8. Jesus Christ never taught the present day New Testament since he only came into existence most later, neither was He used the name Jesus in His days on earth.
9. Mary the mother of Jesus Christ is worshipped as the mother of God by Christians; they pray to God through Mary as an intercessor.
10. Many of the Christian clergy know of the prophet Muhammad and his mission but refuse to acknowledge him; they also prevent their fellows from seeing the true picture of Islam.

11. The church elders and clergies teach their followers to hate Islam and Muslims.
12. Christian clergies use demonic power in the disguise of the Holy Ghost in performing miracles during their evangelization crusades.
13. Christians worship their priests as lords and patrons and make them infallible and incontestable.
14. Christian missionaries have been using western education, vocational training centres, orphanage homes and other humanitarian centres that they established in Muslim nations to spread the Gospel among Muslims.
15. Christian missionaries are highly ingenious and made use of all forms of deceit in achieving their objectives to spread the Gospel among Muslims.
16. The majority of the prophets of the Israel never practiced monogamy, as the modern Christians emphasizes but polygamy.
17. The trinity concept of Christians is actually the worship of three gods.
18. Christians are given permission in the New Testament to eat pork and any other food that came their way, without worrying about its spiritual implications.
19. Christians' refusal to wash their hands, face and feet before praying to God shows that they reject the concept of worship as practiced by the Israelite prophets, including Jesus.
20. Christianity is a tool of western world for psychological dominance, in order to protect their commercial interest.
21. Christianity encouraged the colonialist to commit atrocities on the various Muslim nations they conquered.
22. Christianity and colonialism are two sides of the same coin.
23. Modern day Christianity teaches nothing about morality and how best women could dress modesty in public; it sanctions homosexuality and lesbianism.
24. Christians are taught not to listen to a Muslim when he reaches to them; neither should they receive a copy of the Holy Qur'an or any booklets containing the message of Islam from him.
25. Modern day Christians are disbeliever's (*kafir*) for following St. Paul instead of

Christ.

26. Today's Christians are not the actual Christians that the Qur'an told us to recognise as the true followers of Jesus Christ.
27. Modern day Christians, especially anywhere in which they are in the majority, are the most intolerant of people towards Muslims. They have been seizing mosques and convert them to churches.
28. Modern day Christians fear Muslims as much as they fear death.
29. Western and European Christians never made any progress scientifically in various technological fields until the state was separated from the dictates of Christianity.
30. Many Christian scientists were murdered by the popes or other Christian clergies for exposing scientific knowledge beneficial to humanity today.
31. Modern day Christians are the most unfortunate religious community. They deserve to be pitied and reconciled back to Almighty God through correct teaching as projected by Jesus Christ.
32. The Christian Bible encourages racial segregation and nationalism.
33. The Christian Bible has suffered addition, omission, contradiction and interpolation.
34. The Christian Bible sanctions oppression, cannibalism and forced conversion of Muslims and others to Christianity, as practiced during the crusaders for 500 years, between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, under the leadership of various popes and Christian clergies, kings and queens crusades were carried out with devastating effects.
35. There are some lost books in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, not inserted into what became the canonical text of the Christian scriptures today.
36. The prophecy about the advent of the prophet Muhammad and his mission could still be found within the cover of the present day Bible, but the Christian clergies hide this from their adherents.

Based on the above negative perceptions Ashafa Mohammad writes "that the above are some of the ways in which the majority of Muslims globally perceive Christians and Christianity. But during the various stages of these dialogues, once he gave the pastor (Wuye) and his colleagues the time to explain and educate him on various issues, he

realized that most of these perceptions are very erroneous” (Ashafa 1999:10-12). Therefore, both Wuye James and Ashafa Mohammad believes that before there can be total sanity in the Nigerian society, these wrong perceptions that have given room to deep rooted stereotypes in the Nigerian ethno-religious society must be changed.

Samson Auta also mentioned that “the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum is presently working on more sensitization efforts, that include facilitating and advocacy to aggrieved communities and meeting with both faiths and different communities to keep up with the message of widening the promotion of culture of tolerance and imbibe the spirit of oneness to ensure that both conflicting communities live peacefully again with one another” (Auta, 2012). An example of such efforts was the five days workshop which was principally informal and interactive organised by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Kaduna State where their major target was the youths from different conflicting communities and cultures. Its objective was to find ways of jointly solving problems. These structures have reduced the frequency of the small, sometimes violent encounters that had often occurred during the weekly market days in Kaduna state and other parts of the country. As facilitators they get the knowledge of the relevant conflicting communities and listen to what is being said which include the undertones and background noises in order to foresee which issues are relevant for an actual peace process.

Also the Inter-faith dialogue Forum seeks the assistance of one of the None Governmental Organisations - Coalition for peace in Africa, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, as regards the need for practical solutions to the problems of direct victims of violence such as the widows, orphans and traumatised in the conflicting communities, with their capacity building programmes in the area of trauma counselling and stress management (Wuye and Ashafa 1999:121). Such assistance would help the direct victims individually or as a group to deal with the shocks and depression, anger, memory loss and fear which they have acquired during the conflict. Also the direct victims will overcome the ideas of committing suicide, going for revenge and other bad things such as

mass shooting, after they have gone through trauma counselling and other processes. Such activities will also help the direct victims to regain their normal health and continue with their daily jobs and with other activities they are involved in.

Wuye James predicted that the future of Nigeria and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum will live to see the light of the day as peace will prevail over violence and darkness, although both Nigeria and Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum are still faced with the challenges of insurgence. Wuye felt that this will give them strength to do more and create massive support and awareness and to have a pool of peace advocates who will sustain nascent democracy in Nigeria.

One can challenge the above statement with regard to the future of Nigeria in view of such movements as the movement for bringing into being the sovereign state of *Biafra* (MASSOB). This was the movement that caused the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970 when the entire eastern Nigerians (the *Igbos*) declared themselves a free sovereign and independent state with the name and title of the “Republic of *Biafra*”. Their argument according to Chinua Achebe was that “beginning with the January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966 coup *d’etat*, through the counter coup which was staged mainly by Northern Nigerian army officers who murdered 185 Igbo officers and the massacre of thirty thousand Igbos and easterners in pogroms that started in May 1966 and occurred over four months. The events of those months left millions of other future *Biafrans* feeling terrified. As they fled home to eastern Nigeria to escape all manner of atrocities that were being inflicted upon the Igbos in different parts of Nigeria and they saw themselves as victims. When they noticed that the federal government of Nigeria did not respond to their call to end the pogroms, they concluded that a government that failed to safeguard the lives of its citizens has no claim to their allegiance and must be ready to accept that the victims deserve the right to seek for their safety in other ways including secession” (Achebe 2012:98). This is confirmed by the words of John Campbell that “family, ethnic and religious identities are trumping a sense of national allegiance in large part of Nigeria because the state no longer addresses the basic concerns and needs of the people. The

renewed, probably sentimental interest in *Biafra*, with the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of *Biafra* (MASSOB) flying that flag is but one sign of malaise about the future of the state” (Campbell 2011:138). In my own view, although it is true that the Igbos are still flying the flag of *Biafra*, the Nigerian government can resolve those issues by addressing the basic concerns and needs of the people which are the major issues that make the Igbos feel marginalised. An example is Goodluck Jonathan who took office as president of Nigeria with the main objective to fight corruption and improve basic human needs such as electricity and good roads which are the some of the major areas the past governments ignored for so many years. Currently, *Biafra* flags are no where to be found because of improvements in the Nigerian government.

Furthermore, Chinua Achebe foresees the Nigerian future with a continuous debate for decades in small forums, in schools, offices, on the radio on television, newspapers and on the streets until Nigeria gets things right. Achebe notes “that Nigerian solution will come in stages. First Nigeria has to nurture and strengthen its democracy and institutions and strive for the freest and fairest elections which will place the true candidates of the people in office. Second under the rubric of a democracy, a free press can thrive and a strong justice system can flourish. Third, a new patriotic consciousness has to be developed, not one based simply on the well worn notion of the unity of Nigeria or faith in Nigeria which often was touted by our corrupt leaders, but one based on an awareness of the responsibility of leaders to the led, on the sacredness of their anointment to lead and who works for the interest of the country and its citizens, which disseminated by civil society, schools and intellectuals. It is from this kind of environment that a leader humbled by the trust placed upon him by the people, will emerge, willing to use the power given to him for the good of the people” (Achebe 2012:252-253).

On the other hand, the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum seems to focus all their efforts only in the northern parts of Nigeria, may be because they think that most of the violence

in the country comes from the north but forgetting that the easterners also have their own issues, especially as regards ethnic rivalry and marginalization, where as some areas in the east such as *Ogoni* community, located in Port Harcourt and *Warri* both in Niger Delta have developed deep rooted animosity against the Nigerian government due to marginalization and their socio-economic condition. The people of *Ogoni* which is a small minority group in the Niger Delta, has been seeking justice for the trial and hanging of environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other members of their community in the past years because Saro-Wiwa and his group had a very strong stance in the pursuit of the rights of *Ogoni* people and formed a Movement for the Survival of *Ogoni* People (MOSOP). The Abacha's regime accused Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues of killing four *Ogoni* chiefs who were on the opposing side of the Movement for the Survival of the *Ogoni* People. Though they denied the charges against them they were imprisoned for over a year before being found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. All of them were hanged on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 1995 by president Abacha's regime for what many believe was largely because of Saro-Wiwa's strong stance in pursuit of the rights of the *Ogoni* people. Their execution led to Nigeria being suspended from the Commonwealth Nations for more than three years (Premium Times, 2012). In a community like *Ogoni*, I know that it will take them quite a long time to forget their past stories and face the future without getting some compensation and apologies from the Nigerian government for the assassination of their leader Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others. Such an apology would help the *Ogoni* community not to feel isolated and marginalized but welcomed to the Nigerian society.

One may argue that since most of the Nigerians in the north are Muslims where as most of them in the south are Christians, a division of the country into two different states would solve the conflict. On the contrary I would say that dividing the country into two will not solve the problem and may not be easy to do because many easterners have established their business in the northern parts of Nigeria. Even many have properties which they may not want to give up because of separation. Some *Igbos* who migrated to

the north and have all their families there will find it difficult to move back to the east because their children have grown up with the northern cultures and language. Therefore moving back will create problems to them especially to their children as regards language barriers, adaptation to the environment and so on. The same applies to some of the northerners who have lived in the southern region most of their life. The idea to divide the country into two different countries will create more problems because most of the major Nigeria's resources are located in the south, such as the oil which is their main source of revenue. Therefore the northerners will not want the southerners to go because they will be left with nothing and will cause more problems similar to the war between south and north of Sudan. Also other ethnic nationalities such as Calabar and Niger Delta may want to be independent because their culture and language are quite different from that of the *Igbos*. I have been told by my parents the stories of the past Nigerian civil war which lasted for three years from 1967 to 1970 and its effects on Nigerians, I don't think that any of the young generation would support the separation of the country which might cause wars in the future. They would rather opt for one Nigeria for the interest of the country and its citizens. Samson Auta mentioned in my interview with him that division would not be in the interest of Nigeria due to the fact that in the north we have mixtures of both Christians and Muslims, mixed marriages, and those that have become indigenous due to their long stay in one part of the country. Considering the above, it may not be possible to divide Nigeria into two different countries.

#### 4.1 EVALUATION

The different conflicts in Nigeria have affected its progress and development. Some approaches have been used to resolve the Nigerian conflicts such as the law and order approach which was used by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the official track one approach by the Kaduna state government, and the multi-track and consultative approaches used by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum. Despite all these four

approaches the conflicts in Nigeria appear to be insurmountable. The question remains, how can the conflict situation in Nigeria be resolved?

The conflict situation in Nigeria can be resolved by the application of the following six approaches:

1. The economic approach.
2. The social approach.
3. The multi-track approach.
4. The consultative approach.
5. Official track one approach.
6. Law and order approach.

After a critical study of the Nigerian conflict and its causes, I have ended up with two approaches - economic and social approaches which have been neglected in the previous efforts to resolve the Nigerian conflicts.

By the economic approach, I mean that the Nigerian government has to improve the economic condition of the country by making use of the oil revenue and other mineral resources to boost its economy and development to a higher standard. This will include areas such as agriculture, mining, infrastructures, education, public health and so on.

As regards the social approach, the Nigerian government has to address the social issues that affect its citizens as I have mentioned in chapter three as the factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria, the “root causes of conflicts” such as:

- Ethnic and religious differences.
- Unmerited official appointments of federal posts.
- Ethnic tensions.
- Identity politics.
- The adoption of *shar'ia* law into twelve northern states of Nigeria.
- Concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government.
- Aggressive political campaigns.
- Criminality of the Nigerian politics and corruption of officials.

- Economic deprivation.
- Financial and social inequalities.
- Human rights violations.
- Deeply ingrained biases among people.
- And the issue of control, independence and resistance of the indigenous communities.

The last approach which is law and order by the Nigerian government should be implemented by protecting the human rights and the interests of the citizens. Therefore, the Nigerian conflict situation is to be resolved by the application of the six approaches I have mentioned above.

#### 4.2 CONCLUSION

Religion expresses itself in different ways: first as a source of people's world views, second as a source of identity, third as a source of legitimacy and fourth religion is associated with formal institutions. My argument has showed that Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life and this is played out more in the north, perhaps because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than is the case in the south. Also the Nigerian conflict is an intra national conflict since it is a conflict within a nation which involves different groups such as inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and groups competing for resources.

The study has emphasized that conflict resolution and peace-building will remove the inequalities between the disputants by means of mediation, negotiation advocacy and testimony on behalf of one or more parties to a conflict. Conflict resolution and peace-building was seen as the efforts of people working at a distance from actual sites of deadly conflict, such as legal advocates of religious human rights, scholars conducting research that is important to cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, theologians and ethicists within the religious communities who are probing and strengthening their traditions of nonviolence. When the process of conflict transformation is successful, it

results in ceasefires and peace accords designed to contain the conflict in anticipation of essential elements of peace-building, such as structural reform. This means that the efforts to build institutions and foster civic leadership which will address the root causes of the conflict and develop long-term practices and institutions that are conducive to peaceful, nonviolent relations in the society.

I have also shown that religious conflict transformation has three dimensions, namely

(1) Conflict management which means to prevent conflict from becoming violent and the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflict can reduce the odds of non-productive spread. It also involves the acquisition of skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for management of conflict in our communities. (2) Conflict resolution entails the effort to fight prejudice and ethno-religious hatred through dialogue and education. The most direct and decisive involvement can be reached when religious actors provide good offices and serve effectively as mediators. (3) And post-conflict peace-building which means the efforts of religious actors assuming the key role of leadership in social reconstruction after a deadly conflict in a community or nation because they have been involved in the attempt to end the violence from the beginning, as advocates of the poor and defenceless, as social critics, humanitarian relief agency or prophetic voices.

Furthermore, this study has described three major ways by which the religious actors have pursued peace – (1) Crisis mobilization mode which is where religious participation in conflict resolution has been spontaneous and largely unexpected such as serving as mediators and agents of conflict as a result of their historic role and institutional presence in a conflict society and their active involvement in the social dynamics of political change. (2) The saturation mode offers a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy for ending violence and achieving and sustaining reconciliation. This strategy focuses more on the social dynamics of relationship building in a conflict setting, acknowledging that

the process can never occur apart from analysis and reform of the structures that divide people. (3) The interventionist mode is where the external religious and cultural actors intervened in a conflict situation, usually at the invitation of one or more parties to the conflict in order to initiate and help to sustain a peace-building process, such as *Sant'Egidio* who became engaged in various international dialogues with the aim of preventing or reducing tension between conflicting groups and seeking to mediate between them as they did in some countries in Africa such as Algeria, Burundi, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. Also, the efforts of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria from 1995 to this date belong to this mode. Peace-building depends on the contributions of leaderships at three major levels, first, the top level which includes the key political and military leaders in the conflict. Second, the middle range level which are the top level national officials such as Patriarchs, Bishops, Chief Rabbis and Ayatollahs. The third is the grassroots level which represents the masses, the base of the society who often is forced to live by a survival mentality in the conflict zones.

The most disturbing condition Nigeria finds herself in today is the intra national conflict which traces itself back to the time after her independence in 1960. These conflicts include the *Maitasine* conflict, the *Kafanchan* conflict, the *Bauchi* conflict, the Muslim Brotherhood conflict, the *Jos* crisis, the *Tafawa Belewa* crisis, the *Basayi* crisis and the *Maiduguri* conflict. It is essential to note that the conflicts in Nigeria which have lasted for some years mostly seem to be targeted on Christian churches, mosques, government and international organisation offices and industries, high institutions of learning and public squares in Nigeria.

Conflicts in Nigeria have been attributed to religion by several authors as I have mentioned in chapter one. In chapter three, the above statement was challenged by my argument showing other factors contributing to conflicts in Nigeria which I call the “root causes of conflict”, such as ethnic and religious differences, non-merit official

appointments for the government posts, poor progress toward economic development, identity politics, introduction of the *shar'ia* law in the northern states of Nigeria, concentration of too much power at the centre by the Nigerian government, unfriendly political campaigns prior to the election, criminality of the Nigerian politics and the rampant corruption of officials at all levels, economic deprivation and social inequalities, high rate of human rights violations, stereotype attitudes that shape people's minds and the issue of control, independence and resistance of the indigenous communities in the country.

Any country or community that involves itself in a conflict always faces the effects of conflicts, such as poor progress of economic growth and development, long term animosity among the conflicting groups, perception of enmity, deep-rooted fear, destruction of properties and environment, loss of lives, displacement of the citizens and identity politics such as clan, ethnicity, religion, regional affiliation, groups fighting for recognition and power such as *Boko Haram* and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). Sometimes a well functioning state can become a failed state in the sense that such a state is unable to perform its duties on several levels such as security, funding and basic needs of its citizens.

The Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum utilises their five major objectives in conflict resolution in Nigeria such as establishing relationships that have been damaged due to recurrence violence, to minimize reoccurrence of violence among various groups in the Nigeria communities, initiate programs and projects that require and encourage the involvement of both conflicting communities such as dialogues, cultural events and workshops, to enhance inter-religious relationships and cooperation within the state and to support and build the capacity of local partners who are involved in peace-keeping. The above objectives have helped them to reach one of their most significant achievements by drafting the Kaduna Peace Declaration which is an articulation of a common vision to put in place effective machinery appropriate for building and sustaining long term peaceful coexistence between the conflicting communities. Despite

of all their efforts to maintain peace among the conflicting communities, the recent reoccurrences of conflict show their weakness in conflict resolution and peace-building. This study has compared the conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria with the works of *Sant' Egidio* in Mozambique and the *Dhammayietra* Walk of Cambodia; this shows that while the Nigerian inter-faith forum was based only on conflict resolution, the *Dhammayietra* of Cambodia combined social and conflict resolution while *Sant'Egidio* of Mozambique combined its conflict resolution with social and humanitarian work which made them excel more than the others.

Religion has been visible in both negative and positive ways. Negatively it causes wars, sadness, pain, hatred, division, discrimination and destruction. On the positive side, religion maintains peace and order through work on conflict resolution and peace-building by the religious actors in conflicting nations, countries and communities. Also religious individuals and faith-based organisations from different religious traditions have been actively involved in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict resolution between warring communities in the developing world such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, *Saint' Egidio* in Mozambique, the *Dhmmayietra* walk of Cambodia and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in Nigeria.

Furthermore, religion through its leaders needs to be able to recognise, respect and appreciate the religious faith of followers of another religion. They would always bear witness to what they believe is the truth of their own religion, but they should be willing also to listen to the witness of others. Some will believe that through the witness of others they may discern the voice of God. Others may think that they only hear heresy or a false religion, but they listen because they respect the believers of other religions. So either way, by being willing to listen, they establish faith as a common ground. Religious leaders should be able to rise above, have a perspective beyond their own faith and of their religion in such a way that they understand how it is intertwined with the identity of their people, tribe, nation or the state they serve. By so doing they will discover that the religion of other people and even their own religion can be intertwined with culture,

nationality or ethnicity in other ways than what they themselves are used to. Thereby they also discover and open connections to other believers and other religious attachments (Bakkevig 2012). By learning from encounters with others, religious leaders will hopefully refrain from claiming to have superior access to God or the mind of God more than their counterparts in other religion.

The Holy Scriptures are central to believers, but religious leaders have a guiding role in interpreting them. They need to remember and also to remind the believers that even if they can find arguments for war, conflict and no room for those of other faiths, they should also note that the same Scriptures teach respect, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures means making choices. Therefore, religion through their leaders need to clarify what principles and what clues are needed to read Holy Scriptures in support of peace and justice. Religious leaders can make conflicts escalate by stressing religious elements of conflicts such as partial and exclusive ownership to places, words symbols, narratives and history. Particularly in instances where different religions have different narratives linked to the same place, it is important to remember that one party cannot demand that others believe their narrative. But they can demand respect for their particular narrative. What seems to be competing narratives can best be understood as mutually enriching narratives. Therefore, instead of delegitimizing others' attachment to that what they consider a holy place, it is possible to seek for a common vision to issues, places or symbols.

Religion through its leaders has a special responsibility for identifying religiously charged elements of a conflict. They also have to provide theological reasoning as to why and how these elements are charged, and how they possibly can be solved. Theology is about the relationship of the divine and the earthly, and therefore also about how the divine can help us solve earthly problems in respect of the shared beliefs that all humans are created by the same God and hold God's image.

Despite the obstacles the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum may face in the future, I predict a more successful future in their work of mediating the conflicts in Nigeria and

beyond. The same success goes to Nigeria as a country, but the Republic has a very long task ahead as regards its politics, religion, ethnic and social issues.

Finally, I have shown in this thesis that religion has both negative and positive effects. Negatively sometimes religion causes conflicts and also serves as a means of political mobilization. Positively it serves as a step towards peace through the critical work of its actors. Religious individuals and faith based organisation from different religious traditions have demonstrated their involvement to end conflicts and foster post-conflict resolutions between two disputant communities, just as the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum did in Nigeria.

In the case of Nigeria, my argument shows that the conflict in Nigeria is not a religious conflict between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south, but it is a political conflict although both parties are using religion to justify their actions. Nigerians are using religion as a tool for disturbance because religion permeates all aspects of life and this is played out more in the north, perhaps because it is considered to be a culture in a different way than it is in the south. Therefore the Nigerian conflict is not primarily a religious conflict, but in a real sense it is a matter of political regionalism. I have demonstrated in this thesis that the reason why the Nigerian conflict continues and seems insurmountable is because those involved in mediating the conflict have been busy with religious issues which are only one of the contributing factors, and thereby have ignored to address some of the other factors contributing toward conflict in Nigeria, which I have called the “root causes” of conflict. The conflict situation in Nigeria can be resolved both by the application of the four approaches, multi-track approach, consultative approach, official track one approach and law and order approach which was used both by the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Kaduna state government. The above four approaches combined with the social approach and economic approach will address the neglected areas in the previous efforts to resolve the conflict in Nigeria.

In conclusion, we have seen from the Nigerian case that despite some limitations for the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in its conflict resolution work, that when an inter-faith dialogue is well organised, it can encourage the warring communities to work together towards conflict resolution and peace-building.

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