

## **Peacebuilding Mechanisms and National Development in Nigeria: the Ikwerre Experience, 1800 – 2010**

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**ABSTRACT:** Peace is one of the highest values of human life. It is the absence of dissension, violence or war and emanates from just human relationships which enhances harmonious living and productivity. The paper in providing an insight into peacebuilding mechanisms among the Ikwerre argues that peacebuilding are provided through the family, ezi-nu-oro, lineage mgbu. age grade nde-ebiri, traditional ruler nye-nwe-eli, council of elders ogbakor-nde-ji-owhor, village council oha, Women group nderinya-eli, as well as the use of the gods and ancestors through oath-taking ori-okara-mini administered in serious cases to ascertain the truth, The study noted that blood covenant mkpekunene among communities and inter-communal marriages were exploited as panaceas for promoting peaceful co-existence. Primary and secondary sources of historical information were utilized. The study recommends the use of Ikwerre peacebuilding mechanisms to foster unity and ensure the sustainable development of the Nigerian State.

**KEYWORD:** Peacebuilding, Unity, Peaceful co-existence, Traditional ruler, Blood covenant.

### **Introduction**

Peacebuilding mechanisms in Ikwerre delivered by their ancestors emanated from the fact that human nature is not without disagreements and acrimonies. The negative effects of conflict such as loss of lives and property, high rate of crimes, increase in robbery, proliferation of fire arms, disruption of economic activities among others needs to be properly controlled through peace building mechanisms for peaceful co-existence in Ikwerre.

As a corollary, Bande (2003:91) cited in Omah (2012:62) has called for a proper understanding of the appropriate methods of handling conflicts. This is because when conflicts are not properly resolved, they may lead to escalation and violence which inturn, engender destructive consequence, and as such no sustainable development can take place. Therefore, conflicts, needs to be properly resolved to maintain stable and harmonious living which are prerequisite for national development and nation building.

Consequently, the ancestors of Ikwerre developed peace building methods which centres on the maintenance of social order and harmony. The peace building methods are through various non-violent methods such as; the family *ezi-nu-oru*, lineage *mgbu*, traditional ruler *nye-nwe-eli*, council of elders *ogbakor-nde-ji-owhor*, village council *oha*, women organizations *nderinya-eli*, Age grade and youth leaders as well as the use of the gods and ancestors.

Ikwerre is an ethnic group in Rivers State encompassing four local government areas namely Ikwerre, Emohua, Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt and always referred to themselves as *Iwhuroha* meaning “Proper or actual native”. They are bounded by other ethnic groups. The process of conflict resolution or peace building is usually initiated in what is called *Ortu-Ormuor Ome-ogbosummon*. At the end of a judgment, the panel strive to achieve the solidarity of the people by pronouncing soul healing verdict.

**Conceptual Clarification**

Peace building mechanisms are the various methods put in place by a particular group in orders to broker peace needed for peaceful co-existence and harmonious living. Peace is an essential ingredient for coherence and integration in the society.

Akpuru –Aja (2007:1) sees “Peace building as non-violent transformation of conflict” Thus, peace is a collaborative activity that precedes the interplay of functions by the rulers and the ruled. It is a continuous process of desire against lines of anarchy, tension, violence or war. Again, Akpuru-Aja (2007:6) categorized peace building into political, strategic and psychological perspectives. He observes that the “existence of stable structures in a society such as the Ikwerre enhances not only political order and stability but the much desired social harmony needed for existence”. Strategic perspective of peace plans ahead of time in order to develop and enforce security and defence policy capable of guaranteeing the rights of the citizens to life, liberty and property, while psychological perspective of peace building by confidence building measures in the post conflict situations. Parties are always yearning for mutual assurances of willingness to go by peaceful co-existence. The end to any conflict situation should be the provision of acceptable mechanism by the parties to guarantee safety feelings of living together and working together.

Ikejiani-Clark and Ani (2009:8) sees peace building as a “Value, a virtue and property necessary for the continuity and stability of society” A human society achieves peace when it succeeds in developing a society where the potentialities of its citizens are allowed full participation in the affairs of the area. Corroborating this view, Olugbenga (2012:368) sees “Peace building as an action which support political, economic, social, cultural and environmental structure aimed at strengthening and solidifying political settlements in order to redress the causes of a conflict” Peace building includes mechanism to identify and support structures which will lead to consolidate peace, advance a sense of confidence and well-being and support economic recovery, infrastructure and reconstruction.

Another vital term to our discourse is conflict resolution. Best (2006:94) sees “conflict resolution as a sense of finality where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcomes of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense”. Therefore a conflict is resolved, when the basic needs of parties have been met with necessary satisfiers allayed fears. While conflict management is the process of reducing the negative capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with the parties involved in the conflict. It is an admission that conflict is inevitable but could only be managed and reduced through peacebuilding mechanisms availed by the ancestors of the people.

**The Role of the Family, Lineage, Age Grade and Youth Leader in Peace Building**

In peace building process of Ikwerre, *Omeneli* law is believed to be handed down by the ancestors which is as old as the society. The law revolves around the people which though unwritten serves the needs of the people as it contains all the essential characteristics of law. Okene (1993:76) admits that it is unwritten and is not found in a “book law”, textbooks and no statement of claim on a piece of paper. The law was formed to render justice in conformity with the general principle of behaviour for peaceful co-existence.

In the judicial system of Ikwerre, there are no specialized courts that is responsible for judicial matters as they all regarded justice as a collective responsibility of kinship group *rumunda*. The judicial system is clearly summarized in the words of Nyekwerre (2022) thus;

Ikwerre ancestors handed the law *Omeneli* and the judicial system to the Ikwerre people. No one knows exactly when it began as it is as old as Ikwerre. It is however written in the heart of every man in Ikwerre... the laws which forms the judicial system was handed down from father to son

He posits that the administration of justice was democratic and organized. Any aggrieved person was allowed the opportunity of seeking redress from any of the traditional institutions such as the families, lineage, traditional rulers, elders, age grades council of elders, village council, youth leader, the gods and ancestors.

The basic socio-political unit of government was the household *oro* and a number of households make up the family *ezi-nu-oro* among the Ikwerre. The head of the family *nye-vu-oro* was usually the eldest male adult of the family. The family is instrumental to the facilitation of peace and ennoblement of harmony and has been useful in enhancing peace and sustainable development in Ikwerreland. Application of customary law is aimed at promoting social cohesion or equilibrium, unity, order, communal well-being and security.

The family always regulated the behavioural pattern of their children and always cautioned them on the need for good behaviour. Families guarded against their children association with evil and abominable acts. This is simply because whatever affects an individual also affects the entire family in almost equal gravity (Chinda, 2006:51)

Minor conflicts between members of the same family were reported to the family head by the complainant through the process of *ortu-omu* or *ome-ogbosummon*. The family head will therefore seek for appropriate day for the judgment. Such date will be announced to the whole adult members of the family. Amadi (2022) posits that the family head (the most senior elder) chairs the settlement panel with the other elders in the family. The members of the family listened and contributed to the judgment when the need arises.

However, in the various communities in Ikwerre, the families had always intervened in the settlement of disputes in order to foster peace within the communities. In Ogbakiri, Emohua, Ibaa Rumuekpe, Ogbogoro and Rumuolumeni, the warring youths from the different families were sued to make peace and allow trouble to rest. The failure by the youths to adhere to this advice by the elders resulted to conflicts with the associated violence that followed. The consequences of this include the loss of lives and property, relocation, disruption of economic activities and delay development

The lineage *mgbu* has the heads of the various families as constituting the leading elders. Most times, the disputes that could not be settled at the family level were referred to lineage group. In case of disagreement or conflict which occurred between two or more members of the same lineage, the lineage elders tried to broker reconciliation without taking sides with any of the parties. However, they were not barred from supporting any of the parties depending on the available evidence (Omereji 1993:99).

The age grade *ikwu ibe, ebiri* also settled minor disputes among its members and members from different age groups. Children born within one to three years range are grouped into an age grade. Andah (1988:129) observes that the age grade associations are one of the social groupings and perhaps the social-political

activities of many African societies. Amadi (2022) notes that the Ikwerre traditional system of government especially in the pre-colonial period had no trained police force or soldiers who could fight in times of war. It was the age grade that normally enforced the decision of the *nye-nwe-eli* and the elders of the communities. They as well executed labour and legal decisions of the village, construction of markets, roads, village halls and digging of village ponds.

They also assisted the villages to instill proper moral conduct in the youths by enacting laws on adultery, stealing, covetousness or taking part in any behaviour that may be socially and morally condemnable. If a member was caught in any of these acts, he was automatically expelled from the group. By this, they performed such function as moulding the character of their members so that they become responsible citizens. The presence of age grades helped in bringing sanity in traditional Ikwerre society as they organized themselves into vigilante groups to monitor the penetration or intrusion of enemies and the activities of thieves

The various age grades have helped in so many ways in curbing tensions in various communities in Ikwerre. Uchendu (2022) affirms that the *orchi aliri* age group of Ibaa in 2010 held several peace meetings with the conflicting parties with emphases on resolving conflicts in the community. Several youth associations within the confines of age groups have contributed immensely in the management and resolution of conflicts in Ikwerreland.

**The Role of the Traditional Rulers and Council of Elders**

The traditional ruler is the paramount ruler and the supreme head of a community known as *nye-nwe-eli* in Ikwerre. The *nye-nwe-eli* being regarded as the custodian of the land was usually the oldest descendant male of the founder of the village or clan. The *nye-nwe-eli* carryout its administrative function in consultation with the elders who are generally respected by the people by virtue of their considerable age, experience and wisdom as well as their ripe knowledge of norms, laws and customs of the land. As earlier stated, they held the symbol of spiritual leadership which signifies authority, standard behaviour and justice. Afigbo (1973:19) cited in Amadi (2010:104) posits that they serve as the link between the people and their ancestors or the gods while confirming the importance of the elders in traditional society when he visited the Aguleri and Umuleri in the Anambra East Local Government of Anambra State in August (1999), President Obasanjo cited in Nwolise (2005:165) has this to say;

... and what are we doing to really dampen this type of senseless killing, this type of senseless destruction of lives and property? You only need to go down there (Otuocha) and you will be shocked. I was shocked. In a small community like this ... Are they not brothers and sisters? ... A small community ... What has happened to our traditional way of life where elders intervene and help to resolve differences? are there no more elders in the community? ...”

Although, the *nye-nwe-eli* was crowned as the paramount ruler, he may not subjectively take decisions without consulting the elders of the community. The *nye-nwe-eli* in collaboration with the elders carried out executive, legislative and judicial duties. The *nye-nwe-eli* with his council also hears final appeal in all matters or disputes earlier decided by various other bodies in the community. They were duty bound to resolve conflicts and create peaceful atmosphere for enhanced development in Ikwerre.

They have helped in settling communal clashes in the various Ikwerre communities. For instance, in July 31 1995 at the palace of Chief Jackson Eleni Ekenta the Ikwerre Development Association (IDA) was informed about the several steps taken by the paramount ruler to settle the Okporowo Chieftaincy tussle which yielded no remarkable results. He therefore appealed to IDA to strongly be the conduit pipe that would carry the wave of peace in Okporowo while promising them a save and conducive environment needed for such university of

peace scheme. The IDA intervened in the conflict and finally resolved it by using the traditional method of juju administration.

**Women and Peace Building in Ikwerre**

Adult women *rumurinya* married and unmarried daughters and *ndewerenzi* married women as well as the various women social clubs in Ikwerre such as the Ogbotu Social Club, Achama Social Club and the Agwabunma Social Club constitute a powerful force to reckon with in Ikwerre and have helped to resolve disputes in their villages and communities by rallying enmasse from their various homes. In a case of private offence, they could intervene between both parties of the same descent group. Failure to accept their decision could lead to mass boycott of the man’s corpse when he dies.

But in a case of assassination or sorcery, they marched through the streets of the village or community wearing the back of black cloths, imprecating curses against the perpetrators as in the case of Rukpokwu community in 2008 when there arose assassinations of renowned and well meaning indigenes of the community. The women decided to put a halt by marching round the whole community wearing the back of black clothes and imprecating curses on any one who would act or in conniaviance with another person to carryout such inhuman crime.

Sometimes, they raised their wrappers and rolled their naked buttocks on the ground which the Ikwerre calls *osu-otula-eli*. This was considered very serious and was expected to be accompanied by sudden death of the suspects whose corpse was buried without formal funeral rites (Wobasi 1993:38). Also in Ibaa the *rumurinya* called a meeting of the conflicting parties charging them to change and embrace peace in the interest of their own good. They did not stop at this as they always warned the people especially the youths on the devastating consequences of allowing the disputes transform into violence. When there was no progress towards peaceful management of the conflict, the *rumurinya* decided that both parties would go for oath-taking as a strategy to stop futher plans for violence which gradually resulted to peaceful coexistence in Obelle Ibaa (Ezekwu 2022). *Rumurinya* had a good number of functions they performed in the village. They had the greatest part to play in the burial of a member of their village especially the bathing of the corpse.

However, the married women *ndewerenzi* occupy important position in village administration especially, taking cognizance of the fact that they formed the assembly of all the married women in the village. They are charged with moulding the character of the children in the community and are the bedrock of peace. They intercede for the betterment of the community and society at large. They settled disputes among themselves and referred serious cases to any other organs of administration. They performed community duties such as weeding the markets and collection of perinwkle shells to fill the pot holes.

Membership of the *nde-nweresi* was necessary and compulsory which meant that a woman became a member at marriage. A member could be punished or disciplined if she had committed any crime. Like every other institutions, the leader of *ele-nwerezzi* is called *nyerisi-ele-nwerezzi*. For one to qualify for this position, one must be the most elderly in order of marriage. They were highly respected in Ikwerreland. The quality of any community depends on the way the women decide to nurture the incoming generation through the development of human capital in their children.

The role of women in the development of the society beginning from the smallest unit which is the family cannot be over emphasized. It included all spheres of life such as social, economic, political and educational. No wonder an Ikwerre proverb which says *nwor-rinya buru-oma*. Women are a rallying point in Ikwerre; the strong pillar upon which everyone leans. A good example was the steps taken by the women in Obelle and Rumuekpe towards peace process.



The women felt that it was time for them to go back to their various communities because of the hard bite inflicted on them by hunger and poverty. The women in Obelle Ibaa were courageous enough to confront the Iceland Cult Group for peace talk which gradually fostered peace in the community. In Elele the women also intervened by identifying a conflict signal which would have plagued the village into violence. The problem was the death of a young man whose body was butchered and laid along Obelle road in 2012 (Uchendu 2022). Their fairness on the issue led to the resolution of the conflict.

The role of women in training their children positively will help in curbing the rate of conflict in Ikwerreland. Instilling the culture of peace building on their children as well as telling their children the danger in destructive life styles will be reckoned as panacea for ending violence in Ikwerre. This will help to breed a new generation of peaceful children in peaceful atmosphere needed for development of the Ikwerre.

**The Role of the gods and Ancestors in the Judicial Process of Ikwerre**

Paramount and commons to all Ikwerre deities is the protective and judicial functions. The shrines are the highest court of justice in Ikwerreland. It serves as the last court of appeal. When a person is dissatisfied with the family, lineage, council of elders, chief, women groups and so on, he could by way of appeal summon the opponent to the shrine. Although, there are instances were` the litigants went straight to the shrine for a fresh case. When cases are brought before the deities, the priests and elders use their discretion to settle the minor offences. But where the case may be too complicated for humans to handle, the god decides by himself most especially in such cases as land disputes, witchcraft, incest, stealing and adultery.

A party to the dispute is asked to swear and stake his life on the veracity of his statement and the time limit is usually one year and if `he survives he wins. The decision from these oracles and shrines are seen as decisions of the deities and their priest. Therefore the people regarded the shrines as the final resort. The priest and his worshippers presided over a case and justice was mainly determined by oath taking. Sometimes, when an individual who swear to an oath is at the point of death he may confess his perjury and he would be released from the oath through sacrifices. The deities in Ikwerre include *miniachara* of Elelenwo, *mini-achamba* of Rumuokwurusi, *womini-renwu* of Rumukalabor, *okemini* of Rumuolumeni, *mini-odah* of Rumuagholu, *onusi* of Ubimini, *ogoro* of Okporowo, *nnekwe* of Oduoha, *Miniohia* of Rumueme, *oyichi* of Egbeda. The Ikwerre people also patronized the *amadioha* shrine of Ozuzu in Etche and other shrines in Ahoada, Omoku, Ogoni and some parts of Igboland (Amadi and Wotogbe-Weneka 1993:107-109).

The shrines fulfil the satisfaction of the people and function to keep the society in peace. The fact is attested to if we consider the fact that Ikwerre people still pay allegiance to Ikwerre deities even in those modern times. It then implies that the deities are fulfilling, some said functions to the people. Litigants including Ikwerre elites and some regular church goers still throng the shrines seeking justice. This is because they believe that justice can be delivered impartially in the shrine through oath taking. Even though, Christianity, Islamic religion and other secular religions have influenced the Ikwerre judicial system, some Ikwerre people are still summoned to these oracles within and outside Ikwerreland to this day because they believed they would find justice in the traditional judicial system.

According to Enyinda (2022) in such cases as land dispute, stealing, witchcraft and poisoning, the shrine remains the only alternative. In this regard, the complainant summon the respondent with a summon fee of which exact amount must be paid by the opponent. The verdict or judgment was usually anchored on swearing an oath to validate your claims. The priest of the oracle would ask if you would take the oath from the shrine or the complainant should bring the oath from any other shrine. There must be a special compensation to any one who swears to an oath by his fellow litigant.

Nyekwere (2022) posits that in oath taking, it is mandatory that a man or a woman taking an oath must shave his head and all the pubic hair. He must be naked before taking the oath as a way of checking if he was

protected by charms and amulets. The oath-taking must be performed very early in the morning. From that day the oath is taken the person must not shave any part of his or her body until the stipulated date. A man or woman under oath is restricted in performing some social obligations such as; attending meetings, parties or festivals. This is to avoid being poisoned. If he was a polygynist, he must choose a particular wife that would cook for him for the period under oath. When a man is under oath, he is expected to be careful so that he wouldn't eat and drink with his opponent, otherwise, the oracle would presume that he has settled without his consent which may be very disastrous to the person because the oracle can strike him dead or make him sick. The person under oath may have to refrain from moving about any how because whatever happened to him would be attributed to the actions of the oracle.

After the expiration of a given period of oath taking of six to twelve months according to Nkakini (2022) it means that the oracle has pronounced him innocent and he becomes the winner. After this, the man who made him swear the oath will be asked to sponsor the ceremony associated with the shaving of the innocent person's hair and beards as well as the full payment of compensation already settled. Nyekwere (2015) explained that it is celebrated as the *Okaramini or agbarago manam ma* ceremony.

However, the one who survives specially celebrates with the members of his family and friends as pounded yam with *Okazi* soup cooked with dried bush meat and palmwine *manya-ngwo* was usually set for entertainment of guests. Many dance groups were hired to entertain his friends and well wishers such as *eregbu* dance, *egelege* drummers, women dance groups and others. The shrines fulfil the purpose of maintaining a stabilized society. The fact that the Ikwerre people still pay allegiance to these deities even in this modern time is a testimony that the deities are fulfilling the function of helping to deliver a peaceful society.

In contrary to the gains of oath taken, there have been several instances of the failure of Ikwerre peacebuilding mechanisms. People have been deprived of their inheritance because someone swore to an oath claiming a property and through dubious means survived it. This is a major setback to Ikwerre peacebuilding mechanisms.

### Law and Taboos in Ikwerre

Ikwerre law is enshrined in *Omendi* which is believed to be handed down by the ancestors. Offences were mainly of two kinds which include; offences against the community regarded as abominable offence *nso eli* and private wrongs *Nmejor* and disagreements against individuals such as assaults, debt, adultery, stealing and fighting. Punishment and judgments for such offences were also included in the customary law. For instance, in such abominable offences like murder, the accused was supposed to hang himself. Nyekwere (2022) notes that the elders constantly warned the young men to control their anger and avoid the use of weapons due to the death penalty attached to murder.

In the offence of incest and defecation in the village shrine that housed the gods of the land *eli*, the accused in agreement with the priest of the land must employ the services of a diviner who specified the items needed for a sacrifice. While those who committed incest will be striped naked and will be compelled to march a live goat to death as required by the tradition *Omeneli* of the Ikwerre people. The sacrifices were seen as a way of cleansing the abomination already committed in order to appease the gods of the land. This action directed by the gods served as a warning to the people and contributed to peacebuilding in Ikwerre.

### The Methods of Adducing Evidence and Finding of Facts in Ikwerreland

The fact that Ikwerre judicial process is not written does not in any way attenuate the need for evidence in proof of the alleged facts and their witnesses. What evidence is adduced and witness called is completely at the discretion of the parties. However, the judges may, if from all the whole evidence before them, deem it fit

in the interest of justice call on an eye witness or a person with direct knowledge to clarify any issue (Okene 1993:94).

The complainant is however required to substantiate important allegations with definite proofs by calling witnesses who would testify to the truth of such statement. Sometimes during the process of judgment, the complainant or the defendant could stake his or her claims by instituting *mbawu* a bet on whether or not the other party could do the same. This method enables the judges' source for the real truth in the matter. Any party found guilty or fallen short of claims over the bet will forfeit what was staked for. If for any reason the other party refuses to also bet on the *mbawu* then the party was declared guilty. The complainant is then cross-examined by the other party and by any member of the family or village who may want any matter clarified. Irrelevant questions are decisively rejected by the presiding elders.

The witnesses are also examined in the same manner. The same method was applicable to the respondent. Cross-examination is a means of weighing evidence in the Ikwerre Judicial process. Its sense of usage is replete in cross-checking and corroborating facts and evidences through adequate questioning. Olaoba (2000) opines that through cross-examination, some hidden evidence that can unravel the true status of the case can be discovered. It is a way to test, inspect and examine what the other party is really saying. In Ikwerre, cross-examination is one of the approaches used to determine the real truth and show case testimonies. During the cross-examination stage, the elders or the judges will listen and watch the parties closely and will as well take note of very sincere questions and that will guide them on how best to handle the case.

The judges in Ikwerre lived up to their expectation of being impartial and interpreted the customs and norms creditably to suit issues of conflict in order to broker peace in the community. The essence is to present satisfactory decision to the parties in conflict in admiration to the popular will of the populace. Although cases of corruption on the part of the judges cannot be completely ruled out as there are evidence of bad judgments by some judges in Ikwerre.

In cases where evidence is lacking or conflicting, oaths like the family *rukani* ancestral spirit or *mkpara-nde-okobadu* elders walking sticks are used both as guaranties of veracity and also as a means of settlement. As a result relations of the conflicting parties always reminded them of the need to maintain the truth and avoid false hood. They also prevail on them to accept the public decision, as stubbornness or refusal to comply may lower the prestige of the immediate family. Onu (2009:90) admits that oath taking constituted the central element in the traditional process of resolving conflicts in Africa.

Nyekwere (2022) opines that after the statements and the cross-examination of the parties which must be restricted to the issue on ground, a verdict drink *manya-owa-ikpe* was paid by the parties. All the elders and the selected members from the floor would converge in another undisclosed place for consultation. Consultations are never done without reminding the people on the need to maintain peace and order until they returned to give the verdict. Elechi Amadi (1993) cited in Chinda (2006:61) sums it as follows;

A man seeking justice in Ikwerre could so inform the elder by paying one or two manilas as a summon fee the other person would also be informed and would be summoned on the appointed day by the *nye-nwe-eli* and the litigants would be summoned on the appointed day and the litigants would be asked to deposit an amount exactly equal ... the council of elders would be called to state their cases starting with the complainant... whosoever lost the case also lost the summon fee and drinks.

The Arbitrary method has produced great levels of trust, confidence and mutual understanding in Ikwerre society. The acceptability of the decision of the judges in Ikwerreland has helped in maintaining stability and has resulted at increasing the level of development in Ikwerre.



**Verdict Pronouncement in Ikwerre**

At the end of the hearing of the case, the next thing that follows is the declaration of the verdict, where guilt or liability is clear from the evidence at hand then the judgment (verdict) would be delivered instantly by the elders represented by a spokesman *nyeowaikepe or nyegbubi-oka* chosen at the venue of consultation. He must be a witty knowledgeable and tactful person. Normally at the conclusion of the case according to Okene (1993:93) the presiding elder, usually the eldest man or the family head select from among the audience some people who are considered unbiased to go for the verdict consideration. This process in Ikwerreland is called *izuzu*. Usually feuding families or communities are not appointed. A person appointed may decline to go if he considers that his interest would conflict with that of any of the parties.

At *izuzu* the most senior of those appointed may be elected unanimously to preside over the deliberation. However, the Ikwerre traditional judicial process does not stop at mere apportioning of blame between the parties or the disputants but strives to achieve the solidarity of the people by pronouncing soul healing verdict. The spokesman does not just pronounce who is wrong or right or what punishment is due. He would first of all emphasize on the need for reconciliation and forgiveness of each other. He also emphasized on the need to live together in paternal, filial and brotherly love. These admonitions acted as soothes and healed the wound of the party that lost out in the judgment, thereby fostering peace and development within the community. Albert (2011) argues that the rising tide of conflict and violence among African societies is an indictment on the failure of the imported model of conflict resolution. While insisting on Africans to revert to the patronage of African models in resolving conflict and controlling violence. The African methods will bring to bear a peaceful and serene environment for harmonious living.

**Blood Covenant and Inter-Communal Marriages**

Blood covenant and inter-communal marriages were sources of conflict prevention. Some villages and communities entered into blood covenant on the understanding that both communities would co-exist peacefully without blood shedding which the Ikwerre calls *Mkpekunen*. This was binding as the older members always reminded the youths on the need of not harming each other. Inter-communal marriage has over the years, cemented relationship between families and groups for peaceful co-existence even among the Ikwerre.

**Peacebuilding and National Development**

The implication of peacebuilding to National development however, stems from the fact that a society plagued with crises cannot thrive effectively or develop in every human endeavours. Conflict remains a very big set back to national development and nation building due to its resultant effects such as; loss of lives and property, disruption of economic activities, high rate of crimes, fall in oil production, insecurity, loss of effective community leadership and delay development.

Due to these negative consequences, Bande (2003:91) cited in Omah (2012: 162) called for a proper understanding of the appropriate methods of handling conflicts. This is because when conflicts are not properly resolved, they may lead to escalation as such no sustainable development can take place. Therefore, the Ikwerre peacebuilding mechanisms delivered by their ancestors properly stipulated the methods of peacefully resolving conflicts for peaceful co-existence and national development. When the society is peaceful, economic activities and security which are prerequisite for nation building and development will be entrenched in the society, and the people will be happy indeed. A peaceful society will generate healthy living which promotes nation building and national development as people go about their normal business with huge success.

**Conclusion**

Ikwerre through their ancestors developed sustainable peace building mechanisms through the family, lineage, traditional ruler, council of elders, age grades, women groups and the use of the gods. The process is usually initiated by the complainant through a summoning fee *iwai-ortu-ormuor iwai-ome-ogboon* the day of judgment, the respondent or defendant will pay an amount exactly equal to the summon fee. The parties will pay a drink for *ogbama obiri* opening of hall, then payment of *manya-okayi-oka* drink for the presentation of case. Thereafter, *manya-okayi-oka* drink for the presentation of case. Thereafter, *manya-owa-ikpe* drink for verdict pronouncement was paid. The spoke men will always emphasize on the need for reconciliation and forgiveness of each other and the need to live together in paternal, filial and brotherly love.

**Recommendation**

The study recommends the use of Ikwerre peacebuilding mechanisms in Nigeria as it teaches the principle of live and let live and not “winner takes all”. These principles will promote harmony and peaceful co-existence within the society.

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