

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN THE RESOLUTION OF COMMUNAL CLASHES IN CROSS RIVER CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

Conflict management strategies seem effective in the resolution of communal clashes. Hence, the study investigated the conflict management strategies in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were used to guide the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was about 568,522 adult residents in the six local government areas in the Senatorial District. A sample of 400 (203 males and 197 female) adult residents was drawn for the study using multistage sampling procedure. An instrument titled: Conflict Management Strategies' Questionnaire (CMSQ), developed by the researchers, containing 21 items was used for data collection for the study. The CMSQ was face-validated by three experts. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 was established for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha estimate, before the final administration on the respondents. Data collected were analyzed on SPSS version 21 using mean and standard deviations to answer the research questions, while t-test analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 set as the level of significance. The findings of the study showed that: negotiation as a conflict management strategy appears not to be adequately used in the resolution of communal clashes; mediation as a conflict management strategy seems to be applied in the resolution of communal clashes; and that diplomacy as a conflict management strategy seems not to be adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation, mediation and diplomacy as conflict management strategies in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. Hence, it was recommended that negotiation as a conflict management strategy should be adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes, with the intermediary effort of the various security agencies; and that the various tiers of government and other concerned stakeholders should encourage the application of diplomacy as a management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes.

Keywords: Communal Clashes, Conflict, Conflict management strategies,

Introduction

Communal clashes between communities especially over land, water and other natural resources with economic value have continued to be on the increase

in Nigeria over the years. In Cross River Central of Cross River State of Nigeria for instance, communal clashes have been common between Boje and Nsadop, Boje and Iso-Bendeghe, Bendeghe and

Akparabong, Ugep and Mkpani, Ugep and Adim, Nko and Oyeadama, Apiapum and Ofatura, Mbube and Irrruan, Idomi and Abini (Ogar, 2011). The reoccurrence of these communal clashes has become annual phenomena and a very great concern.

The recent clashes between Nko and Oyeadama, Boje and Nsadop, Ugep and Mkpani among others led to wanton destruction of farms, valuable property, and loss of many lives. As noted by Okoi (2012), such clashes usually induce fear, insecurity, distrust and economic setbacks due to huge expenditure involved in setting up refugee camp or rehabilitation centres, providing food, clothing, medicines, mattresses and building materials among others, for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In addition, such clashes according to Ogar (2011) pose serious threats to peace, security, governance and development in the area and the state as a whole. Thus, this has not only called for the attention of the Cross River State boundary commission and the Nigerian government, but also the need to apply relevant conflict management strategies for the resolution of most of the communal clashes.

Conflict can be viewed as the manifestation of hostile attitude and actions due to opposing interests between individuals, groups or communities. It is a situation in which two or more groups or communities struggle for the same positions and resources such as land, water among others (Wallenstein, 2009). In most cases, inter and intra communal conflicts or clashes results in serious violence that could only be regulated through conflict management.

Conflict management is the process of limiting serious disagreement or escalation of disagreement between two or more parties that triggers destructive emotions (Rahim, 2011). Conflict management also implies the systematic process of reducing or preventing the destructive tendencies of opposing interests between groups or communities by applying

strategies that will contribute to conflict resolution Okoi (2011).

Conflict resolution involves the application of suitable conflict management strategies that facilitates the peaceful ending of conflicts between individuals, groups or communities. Some of the conflict management strategies include negotiation, mediation and diplomacy (Olayinka, Taiwo, Akinrosoye, Ewuola & Adeagbo, 2015). Also, Ikejiani-Clark (2009) mentioned good governance, negotiation, mediation, facilitation, adjudication and non-binding arbitration as conflict management strategies. But this paper is interested in the application of negotiation, mediation and diplomacy strategies in the resolution of communal clashes.

Negotiation as a conflict management strategy is a process whereby aggrieved parties involved in conflict or communal clash seek to settle or resolve their conflict (Ikejiani-Clark, 2009). It is an approach that tries to meet the needs of parties involved in conflicts, with a general concern of maintaining stable, positive social relationships and harmony (Forsyth, 2009). In other words, this strategy suggests a dialogue between aggrieved opposing parties with the intention of reaching an understanding, resolving points of difference and gaining collective advantage from the outcome of the dialogue. The essence of negotiation is to satisfy the various interests of parties involved in a conflict for peaceful resolution. This may involve a communication process govern by pre-established procedures between representatives of parties or communities involved in a conflict or clash (Abosede, Okon & Effiong, 2014). However, a study by Abosede, Okon and Effiong (2014) negotiation is rarely employed in the resolution of communal clashes in different parts of Nigeria, even when the application of negotiation in conflict resolution seems effective in the resolution of conflicts. This is because

when the groups involved in a clash are optionally satisfied, conflict may likely not ensue.

Similarly, the mediation strategy could also be applied in the resolution of communal clashes. Mediation is a process in which an impartial third party helps disputant communities or parties to resolve their conflicting interests, misunderstanding or differences (Rahim, 2011). It is a situation where a third party helps disputant communities to reach an agreement that fosters the settlement of their misunderstanding. In essence, the mediator(s) acts as a neutral third party and facilitates peaceful resolution of clashes between groups or communities rather than enforcing the process. Rahim (2011) reported that mediation appears to be one of the most commonly used and effective conflict resolution strategies. This could be due to the fact that mediators uncover cultural biases within opposing communities to enhance the mediation process and resolution of their differences.

Diplomacy could also be used in the resolution of communal clashes. According to Whetten and Cameron (2007), diplomacy in conflict resolution refers to any art and practice of conducting conciliation where the diplomats intercede with communicates or groups or parties involved in a dispute. However, Olayinka, Taiwo, Akinrosoye, Ewuola and Adeagbo (2015) observe that third party intervention which ensures that disputant communities meet and discuss face to face with strategic intermediary efforts which diplomatically persuades the clashing communities to work towards peaceful resolution of contending issues. Hence, this study suspects that the application of these conflict management strategies could lead to the resolution of most communal clashes with similar views by both males and females. The question then is: whether application of strategies conflict management: negotiation, mediation, and diplomacy could actually

lead to the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the conflict management strategies in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specially, the study aims to determine:

- i. the mean response of respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State;
- ii. the mean response of respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State;
- iii. the mean response of respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State;

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the mean response of respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?
- ii. What is the mean response of respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?
- iii. What is the mean response of respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁: There is no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

HO₁: There is no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

HO₁: There is no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to determine the people's response on application of conflict management strategies in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The population of the study is about 568,522 adult residents in the six local government areas in Cross River Central Senatorial District. Their characteristics vary in terms of gender among others. A sample of 400 (203 males and 197 female) adult residents was drawn for the study using multistage sampling procedure. This sample size was determined statically using Yamene's formula for rationalizing a sample size from a large population. An instrument titled: Conflict Management Strategies' Questionnaire (CMSQ), developed by the researchers, containing 21 items was used for data

collection for the study. The questionnaire had two sections. Sections A and B. Section "A" elicited personal information of the respondents such as gender. On the other hand, Section "B" was divided into three clusters: I, II and III in line with the three specific purposes of the study. Cluster I sought information on application of negotiation strategy in the resolution of communal clashes, cluster II elicited information on application of mediation strategy in the resolution of communal clashes, while cluster III elicited responses on application of diplomacy strategy in the resolution of communal clashes. The questionnaire was modeled on a modified four (4) point rating scale with response options of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Three experts: one in measurement and evaluation, one in sociology department and one in the department of continuing education and development studies, all in University of Calabar, face-validated the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the researcher's trial-tested the questionnaire on 30 respondents in Cross River North Senatorial District of Cross River State where similar clashes do occur; this was done in order to measure the internal consistency of the items using Cronbach Alpha estimate. Reliability coefficients of 0.79, 0.82 and 0.77 were obtained for clusters A to C respectively, and the overall reliability of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument, which indicated that the instrument was reliable. The researchers later used direct delivery method in the administration and retrieval of the questionnaire from the 400 respondents that constituted the sample. The return rate of the questionnaire was 94.32 percent as only three hundred and seventy-seven (377) copies were correctly completed and returned. Data collected were analyzed on SPSS version 21 using mean and

standard deviations to answer the research questions. The criterion mean was 2.50. This implies that mean responses of 2.50 and above showed that the respondents agreed, while mean responses below 2.50 showed that the respondents disagreed. Also, t-test analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 set as the level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviations of the responses of respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes N=377

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
1	Opposing communities usually engage in a dialogue to peacefully resolve land disputes in order to maintain stable peace between them.	2.51	.57	A
2	Communities often bargain to ensure a positive social relationship between them	2.45	.53	D
3	Disputant communities usually come together to assert their important interests while giving up on less important ones.	1.97	.66	D
4	Communities usually create a platform on which there can reassess their aggrieved positions to ensure harmony.	2.34	.71	D
5	Opposing communities usually try to reach an understanding in order to resolve their point of differences.	2.53	.54	A
6	Clashing communities often try to gain collective advantage from the outcome of a dialogue.	2.37	.57	D
7	Disputing communities usually try to satisfy the various interests of each other for peaceful resolution.	2.32	.53	D
Grand Mean		2.47	.61	D

Keys: N = Number of respondents, \bar{X} = mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Dec. = Decision, A= Agreed, D= Disagreed.

Table 1 shows the mean responses of respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The result indicates that the means obtained for items 1 and 5 were 2.51 and 2.53 with standard deviations of .57 and .54 respectively. Since the means were greater than the 2.50 criterion, it implies that the respondents agreed to the items.

The results of the data analysis were presented in tables based on the sequence of the research questions and the null hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question One: What is the mean response of respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Whereas, the means obtained for items 2-4, 6 and 7 were 2.45, 1.97, 2.34, 2.37 and 2.32 with standard deviations of .53, .66, .71, .57 and .53 respectively, which showed that the respondents disagreed to the items. This is because the means are less than 2.50. Moreover, a grand mean of 2.47 with a standard deviation of .61 was also obtained. Since the grand mean was also less than 2.50 which implies disagreement, this therefore means that negotiation as

a conflict management strategy appears not to be adequately used in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Research Question Two: What is the mean response of respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviations of the responses of respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes N=377

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
8	Committee instituted by traditional leaders as third party is always there to make sure that a compromise is reached between clashing communities.	2.37	.46	D
9	Panels constituted by the government are often there to mediate a mutual deliberation towards resolution of clashes between communities.	3.15	.64	A
10	Local government officials often contribute towards easing tension resulting from friction between communities to achieve peace.	2.62	.55	A
11	Different stakeholders of the state usually contribute to trust building between disputant communities in order ensure long run peaceful coexistence.	3.22	.62	A
12	There are several instituted authorities that often ensure close monitoring and control of conflicts to make sure that peaceful agreements are reached between clashing communities.	2.81	.54	A
13	An impartial third party often helps disputant communities to settle their misunderstanding(s).	2.77	.57	A
14	Intervention by security operatives often fosters settlement between clashing communities and defines their future behaviour.	3.18	.53	A
Grand Mean		3.11	.56	A

Table 2 indicates the mean responses of respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The result shows that the mean response obtained for item 8 was 2.37 with a standard deviation of .46. Since the mean was greater than 2.50 set as criterion, it means that the respondents disagreed to the item. But, the means obtained for

items 9-14 were 3.15, 2.62, 3.22, 2.81, 2.77 and 3.18, with standard deviations of .64, .55, .62, .54, .57 and .53 respectively, which showed that the respondents agreed to the items. This is because the means are greater than 2.50. Also, a grand mean of 3.11 with a standard deviation of .56 was also obtained. Since the grand mean was also greater than 2.50 benchmark which also shows the level of agreement, this means that mediation as a conflict management strategy

seems to be applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Research Question Three: What is the mean response of respondents on the application of

diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviations of the responses of respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes N=377

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Dec.
15	Disputing communities usually come together to take decisions based on careful consideration and analysis of their differences.	2.33	.52	D
16	Opposing communities usually try to reinforce mutual trust and respect for one another.	1.95	.41	D
17	Disputant communities most times subtly provide a base for effective future collaboration.	1.89	.67	D
18	Opposing communities are often committed to finding a mutually acceptable solution to end the clashes between them.	2.07	.81	D
19	Instituted authorities often communicate subtly with clashing communities to foster peace between them.	3.03	.70	A
20	Intermediary efforts often ensure that disputant communities meet and discuss face to face for peaceful resolution of their differences.	2.51	.73	A
21	Several stakeholders often persuade clashing communities to work towards peaceful resolution of contending issues.	2.54	.59	A
Grand Mean		2.46	.45	D

Table 3 shows the mean responses of respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The result indicates that the means obtained for items 15-18 were 2.33, 1.95, 1.89 and 2.07 with standard deviations of .52, .41, .67 and .81 respectively. Since the means for the items were less than the 2.50 criterion, it implies that the respondents disagreed to the items. But, for items 19-21, the means obtained were 3.03, 2.51 and 2.54 with standard deviations of .74, .70 and .59 respectively, showed that the respondents agreed to the items. This is because the means are greater than 2.50. However, a

grand mean of 2.46 with a standard deviation of .45 was also obtained. Since the grand mean was less than 2.50, which imply agreement, this means that diplomacy as a conflict management strategy seems not to be adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

HO₁: There is no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

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Table 4: t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig	Dec
Males	193	2.08	0.43	375	1.33	0.27	NS
Females	184	2.06	0.36				

$\alpha = 0.05$ (Level of significance)

Table 4 shows that a grand t-value of 1.33 with an associated probability value of 0.27 was obtained with respect to the difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. Since the associated probability value of 0.27 was greater than 0.05 set as the level of significance for testing the hypothesis, it was considered not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis was upheld. Inference drawn was that, there is no significant difference in the mean

responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

HO₂: There is no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Table 5: t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig	Dec
Males	193	1.95	0.73	375	2.01	0.17	NS
Females	184	2.21	0.68				

$\alpha = 0.05$ (Level of significance)

Table 5 revealed that a grand t-value of 2.01 with associated probability value of 0.17 was obtained with regards to difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. Since the associated probability value of 0.17 was greater than 0.05 set as the level of significance for testing the hypothesis, it was found not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The conclusion drawn was that, there is no significant difference in

the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

HO₃: There is no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Table 6: t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig	Dec
Males	193	2.33	1.01	375	1.08	0.21	NS
Females	184	2.42	0.98				

$\alpha = 0.05$ (Level of significance)

Table 6 revealed that a grand t-value of 1.08 with associated probability value of 0.21 was obtained with respect to the difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. Since the associated probability value of 0.21 was greater than 0.05 set as the level of significance for testing the hypothesis, it was considered not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The conclusion drawn was that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that negotiation as a conflict management strategy appears not to be adequately used in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. This finding is in line with the report of Abosede, Okon and Effiong (2014) that negotiation is rarely employed in the resolution of communal clashes in different parts of Nigeria, even when the application of negotiation in seems very effective in the resolution of conflicts. This is due to

the fact that when the communities involved in clashes are optionally satisfied, conflict may likely not ensue. In essence, a dialogue between aggrieved opposing communities can help them reach an understanding in order to resolve their points of difference or misunderstanding, satisfying their various interests, and maintain stable and positive social relationship between them.

The findings of the study further revealed that mediation as a conflict management strategy seems to be applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. This finding is consistent with that of Rahim (2011), who stressed that mediation appears to be one of the most commonly used and effective conflict resolution strategies. The reason for this could be Panels constituted by the various tiers of government often mediate between disputant communities in order ensure a long run peaceful resolution and coexistence between the communities. Moreover, different stakeholders of the state usually contribute to trust building between disputant communities in order ensure peaceful coexistence. Beside this, intervention by security operatives most of the time also fosters settlement between clashing communities and defines their future behavior and coexistence.

Also, the findings of the study showed that diplomacy as a conflict management strategy seems not to be

adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. Meanwhile, Olayinka, Taiwo, Akinrosoye, Ewuola and Adeagbo (2015) observe that third party intervention which ensures that disputant communities meet and discuss face to face with strategic intermediary efforts helps to diplomatically persuade the clashing communities to work towards peaceful resolution of contending issues. The reason for this is because disputing communities usually fail to come together in order to take decisions based on careful consideration and analysis of their differences. They fail to reinforce mutual trust and respect for one another. Furthermore, most times, disputant communities fail to subtly provide the basis for effective future collaboration, and are often not committed to finding a mutually acceptable solution to end the clashes between them. Finally, the test of hypothesis 1 on table 4 revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of negotiation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. This means that both males and female respondents were of the view that negotiation as a conflict management strategy appears not to be adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes. Also, the test of hypothesis 2 on table 5 revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of mediation as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. In essence, both males and female respondents agreed that mediation as a conflict management strategy seems to be applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. The test of hypothesis 3

on table 6 also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents on the application of diplomacy as a conflict management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State. This implies that both males and female respondents perceived that diplomacy as a conflict management strategy seems not to be adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Conclusion

The resolution of communal clashes is dependent on the application of several conflict management strategies that facilitates the peaceful ending of conflicts between individuals, groups or communities. Some of the conflict management strategies that may enhance the resolution of communal clashes include negotiation, mediation and diplomacy. The findings therefore suggest adequate application of negotiation, mediation and diplomacy in the resolution of communal clashes. Hence, the researchers strongly posit that if the recommendations of this study are implemented, communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District of Cross River State will become minimal or brought to an end.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it therefore recommended that;

1. Negotiation as a conflict management strategy should be adequately applied in the resolution of communal clashes, with the intermediary effort of the various security agencies.
2. Committee instituted by traditional leaders as third party should always make sure that a compromise is reached between clashing communities for long run peaceful coexistence.

3. The various tiers of government and other concerned stakeholders should encourage the application of diplomacy as a management strategy in the resolution of communal clashes.

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