**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE:**

**BEST PRACTICES

Paper Presentation at the Hybrid National Workshop on Legal Research and Legal Writing for Legal Research Assistants and Registrars

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1. **Background**

Workplaces are composed of employees from different backgrounds, priorities, perceptions, views and understanding which predisposes it to conflicts. These conflicts manifest in form of insults, non-cooperation, malicious obedience, bullying and anger, with the attendant retrogressive consequences on the individual and organization’s productivity. Since employees are the productivity assets of every organization, workplace conflicts should be avoided to enhance competitive work environment for high productivity. It has been established that most labour conflicts in Nigeria that had imposed monumental losses on various sectors of the economy with resultant negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP), can be traced to misunderstandings in the workplace. The need to take precautionary measures in advance to prevent workplace conflicts and the appending anti productivity factors such as tension and depression, by mainstreaming peacebuilding in the work place to eradicate or minimize the attendant colossal damages and economic depression cannot be over emphasized.

Conflict Management in the workplace is also intended to reorientate the workforce to such extent that they would rather become useful personalities for peacebuilding in their workplace and communities. This is most required virtue in Nigeria today considering the loss of productivity and the fact the country is fast losing large spaces to militancy, extremism.\, banditry and terrorism.

1. **Justification**

Apart from the colossal drawbacks and impacts that conflicts have had over the work sector, the country has suffered greatly as a result of workplace conflicts as most of the labour conflicts that have set Nigeria backwards can be traced to work places. Research works have also revealed that workplace conflicts are largely due to unwholesome work and unethical practices that have made most of our work environments toxic. The high stake workers hold in the society justifies the request for organization of CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: BEST PRACTICES to enable experts share with them the usual and best practices for conflict management, resolution and peacebuilding in this sector.

1. **Objectives:**
2. To build the culture of peace and peaceful relationship among workers;
3. Enhance institutional productivity through harmonious work environment;
4. Build the capacity of workers to identify conflict indicators and prevent them from happening;
5. Build and strengthen conflict resolution capacity of workers;
6. To enable the work environment produce serving and retired technocrats who will act as peacebuilding agents in their communities and beyond;
7. Mainstream peace into workplaces, to set the stage for increase productivity, reduce redudancy, high GDP in line with the Federal Government’s National Development Plan (NDP);
8. **Contents**
9. Understanding peace in the workplace;
10. Causes of Conflict in the workplace;
11. Management of Workplace conflict;
12. Culture of peace in the work environment;
13. Strategic Communication in the workplace;
14. Conclusion;
15. **Understanding peace in the workplace;**

Keeping peace at workplace has become more important and more complicated than ever before. This is because of the ever-changing socio-cultural and economic factors in the 21st century world we live. Since conflict is inevitable, it is difficult if not impossible for one to avoid having differences, grudges or disputes with colleagues, as work brings together people of different background, temperament, character and behaviour, and this often causes friction, resentment and stress. Already, experts have started contemplating that the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the workplace would be far-reaching.

People spend hours at work every day or work under unsupportive conditions, but often, the work causes stress, exhaustion and unhappiness. Sometimes, the boss is too demanding, colleagues might be rude, there might be too much stress due to too much work, the working conditions might not be comfortable, the job might be boring, there could be competition or envy between the workers, the customers might be too demanding or criticizing, they might feel there are utilized and underpaid. These are some of the reasons, why most people feel stress at work or are unhappy about it.

The concept of *workplace conflict management* has been in practised in the advanced world but is still relatively new to Nigeria, where administrative staff of an organization are not really sent on training for skills and competencies in dispute resolution or management, and so are not competent to manage them when it arises. Conflict issues in workplace are most times left for disciplinary committee to resolve, and unfortunately, most of its outcomes or resolutions do not favour defendants.

Therefore, in this training, you will learn more about the meaning of the concepts: peace, conflict, workplace peacedesk, conflict prevention, resolution, management and peacebuilding. Also participants will learn workplace values, traditions, cultures and approaches related to conflict-handling, peacebuilding and related field such as dealing with diversity, handling trauma and grief in the context and culture of a workplace.

1. ***Understanding Peace and Conflict***
	1. **Peace:**

In simple words, peace is a time without any fights or wars. In a larger sense, peace (or peacefulness) can mean a state of harmony, quiet or calm that is not disturbed by anything at all, like a still pond with no ripples. Many people and organizations want peace.

Peace does not mean the total absence of any conflict. It means the absence of *violence* in all its forms and the unfolding of conflict in a constructive way. Peace therefore exists where people are interacting non-violently and are managing their conflict positively—with respectful attention to the legitimate needs and interests of all concerned.

In a workplace context, peace can be referred to as many ways as possible. For instance, peace can be described as an harmony in personal and inter-[personal relations; an undisturbed state of mind; absence of mental conflict; serenity; and, freedom from quarrels and disagreement. In a peaceful environment, all good things are possible, whereas in the absence of peace, one cannot achieve anything of a positive nature, either as individuals, as a community, or even at a national or international level.

* 1. **Conflict:**

Conflict is sometimes caused by miscommunication, but more often it is about other issues, like values or beliefs. A common definition of conflict comes from Lewis Coser, a sociologist, who defines social conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources” (Coser, 1956, p.8). This definition highlights possible causes of conflict (values, beliefs, power, scarce status or resources). Another definition of conflict (Mitchell, 1981, p.17) refers to “any situation in which two or more social entities or ‘parties’ ... perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals.” This definition emphasises the existence of incompatible or contradictory goals and the element of perception that leads to conflict.

Conflict is a natural and necessary part of our lives, whether at home with our families, at work with colleagues, or in negotiation with governments, conflict pervades our relationships.

## **8. Causes of Conflict at Work**

The reasons behind conflicts are rarely black and white, and it’s unlikely that just one person is to blame. But figuring out the cause is essential so you can determine how to address the problem positively and prevent it from happening again. Common causes of conflict at workplace include:

* **Differences in personality** – people come from different backgrounds or cultures and have their own beliefs and values. A lack of understanding or acceptance of these differences is an easy source of contention, and drives a wedge between people who may otherwise work very well together.
* **Differences in styles of working** – when people expect others to work the same way as them and don’t respect the fact that everyone works differently, it creates frustration and hinders the completion of projects and tasks.
* **Miscommunication or misunderstandings** – it’s easy for conflicts to become deep-seated when a misunderstanding remains unsolved for a prolonged period of time, and ongoing miscommunication muddles the progress of projects.
* **Availability of resources** – employees might not feel confident asking for resources without being told that they can, making them frustrated at superiors. People who don’t need as much support as others may feel annoyed at people they think are ‘holding them back’.
* **Level of support** – people struggle to complete their job role if they aren’t given technical support. Following highly stressful situations – such as a confrontation – they will feel worse if they are not able to receive emotional or moral support, and will feel like the workplace doesn’t care about their wellbeing. This creates animosity.
* **Poor customer service** – staff need to know how to deal with queries and complaints in a way that leaves customers feeling satisfied. Otherwise, people won’t return and could harm the business’ reputation through word-of-mouth.
* **Poorly-organised workplace**– the workplace design makes a huge difference to people’s behaviour and comfort, but people are more likely to target frustration at a person than the space itself.
* **Poor management** – this has a tremendous amount of influence on how contented and able a person feels in their role. Without a strong leader, people lack direction, goals and motivation, which can lead to dissatisfaction and bitterness towards management.
* **Discrimination, harassment, etc.** – treating others unkindly due to their beliefs, disabilities, and other qualities is illegal and no workplace should tolerate it. It is debilitating for the person being subjected to the abuse, and can lead to serious ongoing conflicts that are difficult and expensive to resolve and reflect badly on your business.
* **Contract of employment** – if people are left in the dark about their role or don’t feel like they are being valued or accommodated. They may feel angry at management and potentially colleagues who are well-accommodated.

**9. Workplace Conflict**

Is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between people working together for same goal. Conflict can take many forms in organizations:

1. There is the inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected;
2. There are disputes over how certain benefits should be divided;
3. how the work should be done;
4. and how long and hard people should work;
5. there are jurisdictional disagreements among individuals, departments;
6. and between trade unions and management;
7. there are also subtler forms of conflict involving; rivalries, jealousies, personality clashes;
8. role definitions;
9. struggles for power and favour;
10. there is also conflict within individuals – between competing needs and demands – to which individuals respond in different.

10. **Types of Workplace Conflicts**

Conflicts in the workplace or organisations can manifest in different forms. Some of these forms are identified as follows:

1. **Personal Conflict**

A personal conflict involves a conflict between two people, most often from a mutual dislike or personality clash. According to Boston University FSAO, "Causes for workplace conflict can be personality or style differences and personal problems such as substance abuse, childcare issues, and family problems. Organizational factors such as leadership, management, budget, and disagreement about core values, poor communication, different values, differing interests, scarce resources, personality clashes, and poor performance also exemplify personal conflict.

1. **Intragroup conflict**

Conflict arises in groups because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. People who value independence tend to resist the need for interdependence and, to some extent, conformity within a group. People who seek power therefore struggle with others for position or status within the group. Rewards and recognition are often perceived as insufficient and improperly distributed, and members are inclined to compete with each other for these prizes.

In western culture, winning is more acceptable than losing, and competition is more prevalent than cooperation, all of which tends to intensify **intragroup conflict**. Group meetings are often conducted in a win-lose climate — that is, individual or subgroup interaction is conducted for the purpose of determining a winner and a loser rather than for achieving mutual problem solving.

1. **Intergroup conflict**

Intergroup conflict occurs in four general forms.

a. Horizontal strain involves competition between functions, for example, sales versus production, research and development versus engineering, purchasing versus legal, line versus staff, and so on. Another example can be seen in the policy of a sales department and production over inventory.

b. Vertical strain involves competition between hierarchical levels, for example, union versus management, foremen versus middle management, shop workers versus foremen. A struggle between a group of employees versus management.

In addition, each group tends to distort both its own views and those of the competing group. What is perceived as "good" in one's own position is emphasized, what is "bad" is ignored; the position of the other group is assessed as uniformly "bad," with little "good" to be acknowledged or accepted. Thus, the judgment and objectivity of both groups are impaired. When such groups meet to "discuss" their differences, constructive, rational behavior is severely inhibited. Each side phrases its questions and answers in a way that strengthens its own position and disparages the other's. Hostility between the two groups increases; mutual understandings are buried in negative stereotypes.

**vi. Inter-organizational conflict**

Inter-organizational relationships, such as buyer-supplier relationships, joint ventures, or strategic alliances, often involve conflicts. Conflicts between organizations differ from interpersonal conflicts on several dimensions. Among the distinguishing features of inter- organizational conflicts are decision-making parties with specific incentives and motivations as well as the presence of a governance structure to prevent and manage conflicts.

**v. Passive Aggressive Behaviour**

Passive aggressive behavior is a common response from workers and managers which is particularly noxious to team unity and productivity. In workers, it can lead to sabotage of projects and the creation of a hostile environment. In managers, it can end up stifling a team's creativity. Paula De Angelis says "It would actually make perfect sense that those promoted to leadership positions might often be those who on the surface appear to be agreeable, diplomatic and supportive, yet who are actually dishonest, backstabbing saboteurs behind the scenes."

**iv. Office Romance**

Office romances can be a cause of workplace conflict. In a survey, 96% of human resource professionals and 80% of executives said workplace romances are dangerous because they can lead to conflict within the organization. Public displays of affection can make co- workers uncomfortable and accusations of favoritism may occur, especially if it is a supervisor-subordinate relationship. If the relationship goes awry, one party may seek to exact revenge on the other.

**11. Reasons for Workplace Conflicts**

Psychologist Art Bell (2002) and Brett Hart (2009) suggests eight reasons for conflict in the workplace:

* Conflicting needs,
* conflicting styles,
* conflicting perceptions,
* conflicting goals,
* conflicting pressures,
* conflicting roles,
* different personal values and
* unpredictable policies.

**12. Consequences of Unresolved Workplace Conflicts**

Unresolved conflict in the workplace has been linked to miscommunication resulting from confusion or refusal to cooperate, quality problems, missed deadlines or delays, increased stress among employees, reduced creative collaboration and team problem solving, disruption to work flow, knowledge sabotage, decreased customer satisfaction, distrust, split camps, and gossip.

The win-lose conflict in groups may have some of the following negative effects:

* Divert time and energy from the main issues
* Delay decisions
* Create deadlocks
* Drive unaggressive committee members to the side lines
* Interfere with listening
* Obstruct exploration of more alternatives
* Decrease or destroy sensitivity
* Cause members to drop out or resign from committees
* Arouse anger that disrupts a meeting
* Interfere with empathy
* Incline underdogs to sabotage
* Provoke personal abuse
* Cause defensiveness

**13. Conflict is not always Destructive**

When it is destructive, however, managers need to understand and do something about it. The right tools and skills of dealing with the conflict should be programmed. Such a process should include a planned action response on the part of the manager or the organization, rather than relying on a simple reaction or a change that occurs without specific action by management.

1. **Stress**

 Interpersonal conflict among people at work has been shown to be one of the most frequently noted stressors for employees. Conflict has been noted to be an indicator of the broader concept of workplace harassment. It relates to other stressors that might co-occur, such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and workload. It also relates to strains such as anxiety, depression, physical symptoms, and low levels of job satisfaction.

1. **Positive outcomes**

 Group conflict does not always lead to negative consequences. The presence of a dissenting member or subgroup often results in more penetration of the group's problem and more creative solutions. This is because disagreement forces the members to think harder in an attempt to cope with what may be valid objections to general group opinion. But the group must know how to deal with differences that may arise.

 True interdependence among members leads automatically to conflict resolution in the group. Interdependence recognizes that differences will exist and that they can be helpful. Hence, members learn to accept ideas from dissenters (which does not imply agreeing with them), they learn to listen and to value openness, and they learn to share a mutual problem- solving attitude to ensure the exploration of all facets of a problem facing the group.

 Intergroup conflict between groups is a sometimes necessary, sometimes destructive, event that occurs at all levels and across all functions in organizations. Intergroup conflict may help generate creative tensions leading to more effective contributions to the organization's goals, such as competition between sales districts for the highest sales. Intergroup conflict is destructive when it alienates groups that should be working together, when it results in win-lose competition, and when it leads to compromises that represent less-than-optimum outcomes.

**14. Resolution of Workplace Conflicts**

 Rizzo, and Caroll suggested that improving organizational practices could help resolve conflicts, including establishing superordinate goals, reducing vagueness, minimizing authority- and domain-related disputes, improving policies, procedures and rules, re- apportioning existing resources or adding new, altering communications, movement of personnel, and changing reward systems.

1. **Counselling** - when personal conflict leads to frustration and loss of efficiency, counselling may prove to be a helpful antidote. Although few organizations can afford the luxury of having professional counsellors on the staff, given some training, managers may be able to perform this function. Nondirective counselling, or "listening with understanding", is little more than being a good listener — something every manager should be. Sometimes the simple process of being able to vent one's feelings — that is, to express them to a concerned and understanding listener, is enough to relieve frustration and make it possible for the frustrated individual to advance to a problem-solving frame of mind, better able to cope with a personal difficulty that is affecting their work adversely. The nondirective approach is one effective way for managers to deal with frustrated subordinates and co-workers. There are other more direct and more diagnostic ways that might be used in appropriate circumstances. The great strength of the nondirective approach (nondirective counselling is based on the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers), however, lies in its simplicity, its effectiveness, and the fact that it deliberately avoids the manager-counsellor's diagnosing and interpreting emotional problems, which would call for special psychological training. No one has ever been harmed by being listened to sympathetically and understandingly. On the contrary, this approach has helped many people to cope with problems that were interfering with their effectiveness on the job.
2. **Conflict Avoidance** - non-attention or creating a total or partial separation of the combatants allowing limited interaction
3. **Smoothing** - stressing the achievement of harmony between disputants.
4. **Dominance or power intervention** - the imposition of a solution by management at a higher level than the level of the conflict.
5. **Compromise** - seeking a resolution satisfying at least part of each party's position.
6. **Confrontation** - a thorough and frank discussion of the sources and types of conflict and achieving a resolution that is in the best interest of the group, but that may be at the expense of one or all of the conflicting parties.
7. **Change:** Management is presumed to be guided by a vision of the future. The manager reflects in their decision-making activities the values of the organization as they have developed through time, from the original founder-owner to the present top-management personnel. In navigating a path between the values of the organization and its objectives and goals, management has expectations concerning the organization's effectiveness and efficiency and frequently initiates changes within the organization. On other occasions, changes in the external environment — market demand, technology, or the political, social, or economic environment — require making appropriate changes in the activities of the organization. The organization faces these demands for change through the men and women who make up its membership, since organizational change ultimately depends on the willingness of employees and others to change their attitudes, behavior, their degree of knowledge and skill, or a combination of these.

 A trained conflict resolver can begin with an economical intervention, such as getting group members to clarify and reaffirm shared goals. If necessary, they move through a systematic series of interventions, such as testing the members' ability and willingness to compromise; resorting to confrontation, enforced counselling, and/or termination as last resorts.

**15. Roles Played in Conflict Situations in the Workplace**

From the pre-negotiation stage to the negotiation and post-negotiation stages, people involved in the intervention process play a number of roles. Party-Directed Mediation (PDM) is a mediation approach particularly suited for disputes between colleagues or peers. According to USAID, this works in a variety of ways, including):

* **Explorer:** Carries messages between parties and reassures them about the room for negotiation and notes areas of common ground.
* **Convener:** Initiates the resolution process by encouraging parties to take part and working to remove obstacles which impede peacemaking activities.
* **Analyst:** Conducts political, social or economic analysis of the conflict to assist other interveners in determining causes of conflict and courses of action.
* **Designer:** Helps parties and interveners in creating a resolution process which will appropriately and effectively address the conflict issues.
* **Communicator:** Serves as the communication interface between parties involved in the process and those outside the process, such as the media, general public or international community.
* **Decoupler:** Finds ways for external parties who have become involved in the conflict to disengage while saving face and attempts to engage other external actors who can play less biased roles in endorsing the process or encouraging parties to participate.
* **Unifier:** Helps with intraparty negotiations to repair divisions and assists them in creating a common understanding of the conflict and their goals and objectives.
* **Enskiller:** Empowers parties with the skills required to negotiate, communicate interests, analyze scenarios and research aspects of the conflict.Educator: Provides expert opinion or technical information to parties about aspects of the conflict issues.
* **Envisioner:** Helps parties think about the conflict and possible solutions in new ways by using creative option-generating processes or bringing in relevant data.
* **Evaluator:** Helps parties assess possible solutions and their impact on the resolution of the conflict.
* **Guarantor**: Ensures that parties do not incur unacceptable costs either through involvement in the process or if the process breaks down.
* **Legitimizer:** Encourages parties to accept the process by granting their moral, political or financial approval.
* **Facilitator:** Assists parties in communicating to one another by creating a safe process for discussions, framing or reframing the issues and parties' understanding of the conflict and fostering a forum for effective listening and problem solving.
* **Enhancer:** Brings in resources to expand the options for settlement or reward participation in the process.
* **Enforcer:** Monitors agreements and codes of conduct so that momentum for the process can be sustained.
* **Reconciler:** Prepares parties for long-term relationship-building activities which are designed to reduce patterns of negative behaviors, destructive stereotyping and miscommunication.

 This extensive list of roles shows the complexity of starting and maintaining peace processes. The range of skills, knowledge, resources and aptitudes required to be effective in these roles is unlikely to be found in one person or intervening body. Whether by design or happenstance, when a number of actors are engaged in different aspects of intervention work, there are certain challenges which emerge. For those involved in conflict resolution efforts, there are three central concerns regarding the roles of other actors. One is to ensure that the necessary roles related to each type of activity (e.g., convener, envisioner, or facilitator) are being filled. The second is to ensure that the roles that a specific actor plays do not have conflicting principles and objectives. The third is to ensure that role players work cooperatively to achieve common goals.

***17. Management in the Workplace - Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Resolution***

**a. Peacebuilding**: Peacebuilding refers to the long-term projects of building peaceful, stable communities and societies. This requires building on a firm foundation of justice and reconciliation. How we build on that foundation is very important. The process needs to strengthen and restore relationships and transform unjust institutions and systems. The focus on relationships and the process of how we achieve justice and build peace is unique to peacebuilding. In development work this requires looking at the specific ways to improve food production or build new houses, peacebuilding emphasizes building right relationships with partners and programme recipients as an integral part of establishing lasting peace in violence-prone areas. Understanding peacebuilding in this way allows us to take a new lens to development projects and programming (Lederach, 1997, 2001).

**b. Conflict Prevention:** It is a broad term that refers to a variety of activities and strategies within the field of peacebuilding that are deployed to pre-empt and subsequently neutralise potential triggers to widespread violent conflict. Conflict prevention activities and strategies are undertaken over the short term to reduce tensions and prevent the outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict.

**c. Conflict Resolution:** It is a broad term which refers to the many ways disputes are resolved. Conflict resolution is a progression from an order based on coercion to one based on voluntarism. It creates a relationship not characterized by hierarchy but one marked by equality, participation, respect, mutual enrichment and growth. The term also refers to addressing the causes of conflict and seeking to build new and lasting relationships between hostile groups. Conflict resolution terms such as negotiation, mediation, facilitation and arbitration are essential to workplace peacedesk in the promotion of peace and harmonious relationships.

**d. Conflict Management**: It is the process by which disputes are resolved, where negative results are minimized and positive results are prioritized. That is, conflict management is a set of activities undertaken to prevent the intensification or spread of existing violent conflict. In a workplace, it is able to minimize interpersonal issues, enhance workers satisfaction and produce better work outcomes.

***18. Other conflict management skills necessary in the work environment:***

**a. *Negotiation*-** refers to either competitive processes (positional negotiation) or cooperative efforts (interest- based negotiation). In *positional negotiation*, parties make offers and counter-offers, which they feel, will resolve the conflict. These exchanges of offers typically start to converge on a solution which both parties find acceptable. Success at positional negotiation is based on a party's ability to bluff the other party about its positions of strength and weakness in order to gain an outcome which is in their favour. Interest-based negotiation is designed for parties who have a need to create or maintain healthy relationships. In this type of process, parties discuss the issues which face them and express the interests, values and needs that they bring to the table. Instead of focusing on competitive measures and winning the negotiation, parties collaborate by looking to create solutions which maximize the meeting of their interests, values and needs.

**b. *Mediation***- refers to a process through which a third party provides procedural assistance to help individuals or groups in conflict to resolve their differences. Mediation processes vary throughout the world in form and underlying philosophy. In many Western countries, the mediator is usually an independent, impartial person who has no decision-making authority. In other societies, it may be more important that the mediator is known and trusted by the parties rather than being seen as impartial. Mediation is a voluntary process and its success is linked to the vesting of decision-making authority in the parties involved in the dispute. The mediator structures the process in a way which creates a safe environment for parties to discuss the conflict and find solutions which will meet their interests.

**c. *Facilitation-*** is an assisted process which is similar to mediation in its objectives; however, facilitated processes typically do not adhere to a tightly defined procedure. In this type of proceeding, the facilitator works with parties to increase the effectiveness of their communication and problem-solving abilities. The facilitator may be either a third party or a person within one of the groups who is able to provide procedural assistance and to refrain from entering into the substance of the discussion.

**d. *Arbitration*-** is a form of dispute resolution where a third party makes the decision on the outcome of dispute. Typically, the parties appoint the arbitrator to render this decision. The arbitrator's decision is either binding or non-binding on the parties depending on the arrangement made prior to entering the arbitration process. Non-binding arbitration is frequently used to assist parties who are deadlocked on a certain issue. While there is no obligation for parties to accept the outcome, the weight of the arbitrator's decision may provide the impetus for parties to reconsider their settlement options.

**19. Conflict Analysis and Workplace Conflict Management:**

What is Conflict Analysis? One of the key competences that officers managing conflict in the workplace must possess is conflict analysis. This is part of the processes of understanding peace and conflict. Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict. The study helps in gaining a deeper understanding of the origin and nature of a conflict, by uncovering the core issues at the root of it, the different parties involved, its main actors, and the power they have or do not have to influence what is happening.

Conflict analysis is the process of looking critically at a particular conflict to understand the causes, context, participants, stakeholders and other aspects of the conflict. Too often, people attempt to intervene in a conflict before understanding it, with less than positive results. A thorough conflict analysis provides a basis for determining interventions that will have increased possibilities of success.

The following questions and dilemmas are ones that are useful to consider in a conflict analysis process:

1. Who are the parties relevant to the conflict situation?
2. What are the positions of each party in the conflict?
3. What are the needs and interests of each party? (In other words, *what lies beyond the spoken word?)*
4. What are the relative power, status and resources of each part in the conflict?
5. What are the processes they are using to pursue their interest in conflict with other?
6. Within what framework, structure or system is the conflict taking place?
7. How are decisions made and conflict resolved/transformed in the situation?
8. What external factors impact the conflict?
9. What outcome does each party expect?
10. What are the possible changes as the result of the resolution/transformation of the conflict at following levels:
11. Personal
12. Relational
13. Structural/systems
14. Culture/traditions
15. Spiritual.

**Exercise:**

A good way to understanding conflict management in the workplace is to ask participants:

1. What is their own ideas on peace and conflict?

2. Name 5 impacts of conflict in the workplace?

**Best Practices**

Apart from the usual strategies that are readily deployed for management of conflicts in the workplace, there best practices that are being introduced across the world. Like every other social situation, this also does have straight line formular or strategy but is largely dependent on the situation at hand and the environment.

**Best Practices for Effective Conflict Management**Conflicts include differences of opinion and perceptions at all levels of interaction including supervision, shared work and living spaces, teaching and learning. When conflicts affect the ability to work productively, learn effectively, or live in a comfortable environment, they need to be addressed. The following are some best practices that can contribute to effective conflict management. As with most conflict management skills, these practices are common sense but can be challenging to put into practice:

**Effective Conflict Management thinking**

1. Past: We cannot change the past.

2. Present: We can act to help make the situation better now and in the future through shared agreements.

3. Future: We can use conflict constructively as a source of different ideas and perspectives.

4. Conversations to Resolve Conflict:

**i. As an individual:**

1. Communicate with respect. For assistance with an effective conversation, ask a supervisor, HR representative, or other UI resources for support.
2. Seek to learn and understand the other point(s) of view.
3. Address perceptions and assumptions.
4. Listen to understand the interests of the other party, and not just their position on the matter in dispute.
5. Focus on the issue, not the person.
6. Find ways to move past your differences; agree where you can find common ground and agree to disagree if necessary.
7. Address conflict early to prevent it from escalating.
8. Discuss the issue directly with the person(s) involved.
9. Focus on the present and future, and be willing to put the past behind you.

**ii. As a colleague or co-worker:**
a. Encourage parties in conflict to address each other early and directly.

1. Encourage the parties to focus on common interests and work to resolve their differences in order to move forward.
2. Direct colleagues and co-workers who are in conflict to UI resources. Taking sides will not help resolve the conflict.
3. Do not be drawn into conflicts in which you are not a party.
4. Do not escalate the conflict by giving it undue attention.
5. Treat both parties in conflict with respect.

**iii. As a supervisor dealing with colleague or co-worker conflict:**

* 1. Practice the individual conflict management skills listed above, and encourage others in conflict to do so as well.
	2. Manage the environment to support conflict resolution.
	3. Be aware of the effects of power differences on conflict management.
	4. Be alert to worries about retaliation.
	5. Use UI resources to assist in facilitating conflict management so that it does not interfere with productivity or the well-being of the unit or department.
	6. The Conflict Description Template may be useful for supervisors in understanding a conflict situation and discussing it with others.
	7. In any conflict, issues of confidentiality should be considered.

**v. Pre-conversation, During the Conversation, Post-conversation**

**1.** These guidelines are designed to help individuals prepare for conversations to resolve conflict.

**Pre-conversation: Prepare**

b. Choose to discuss the problem directly, one on one.
c. Act sooner rather than later.  Problems not acted on tend to fester, take up energy needed for work and family, and may affect personal well-being.
d. Decide what you would like to achieve in this conversation, e.g. clarification, behavior change, mending of the relationship, etc.
e. Invite the other person to participate in a conversation.
f. Plan the logistics of a meeting, including when, where, who should participate, etc.
**During the conversation:** Act
Seek assistance from UI resources if you need it.
Make known your goals for the conversation.
Discuss confidentiality.
Use Respectful Communication so that each person will continue to participate and not leave, go silent, raise their voice or be defensive.
Listen intently for the other’s perspective. Active Listening skills are especially useful in conflict conversations.
Be aware of and try to understand your own and the other person’s feelings.
Discuss perceptions and assumptions.
Address the past as necessary.
Focus on the problem, not the person.  Address the problem instead of being defensive.
Look for areas of agreement--your common ground—and build on those.
Agree on what you both can do in the future and leave the rest.
**Post-conversation: Implement and Move Forward**a. Act with integrity to maintain your shared agreements.

b. Recognize that change is difficult and sometimes we make mistakes as we change.

c. Notice positive behaviors.

d. Let go of past hard feelings and look for ways to work together productively, e.g. use common personal greetings, say thanks when appropriate, acknowledge and show appreciation for changed behavior, repeat common ideas and goals, etc.  If you are having difficulty, visit Recovery from Conflict for further ideas to help you now and in the future.

In addition, culture of peace and deployment of conflict early warning early response system (CEWERS) to enable staff identify impending conflict so they can nib them in the bud before they happen are also part of best practices in work place conflict management practices in contemporary time.

**20 Culture of Peace in the Workplace**

The protracted conflicts in Nigeria has become a major cause of worry for the people, government and international community. The disturbing trend of violence, intolerance, hatred and ethnic cum religious sentiments in citizens have prompted innovative ideas and solutions in order to building lasting peace in our communities. A very subtle, innovative and preventive ways to ensure peaceful coexistence in communities and especially our workspaces, has suggested building the culture of peace as a good option for short-middle and long term vehicle for national reconciliation, dialogue, understanding, stability and unity. Culture of Peace in the workplace is an idea that seeks to transform how workers relate between and among themselves through horizontal or vertical interactions. The culture of peace is therefore defined as *“a culture that promotes peaceable diversity” that includes lifestyles, patterns of belief, values, behavior, and accompanying institutional arrangements that promote mutual caring and well-being as well as an equality that includes appreciation of difference, stewardship, and equitable sharing of the resources*.

Creating the culture of peace is a task that requires transforming not only the institutional structures and manifestations of violence or anarchy, but also its deep cultural roots, the culture of violence and strife, into a culture of peace and non-violence. It is intended change the toxic nature of our work environment to a peaceful and friendly one through attitude transformation. Some of them are done through reformation and amendment of unwholesome guidelines and regulations. Culture of peace offers mutual security for humankind in all its diversity through a profound sense of species identity as well as kinship with the living earth. (Elise Boulding). A culture of peace is therefore an integral approach to preventing violence and while it substitute anarchy for stability and violence for peace, through promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality of women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament.”
The culture of peace seeks to instil attitudes that promotes solidarity, democracy, integrity, moderation and stability in the workplace and the community as a whole. It encourage dialogue over strife, negotiation, arbitration and mediation in the face of an imminent crisis.
Elise Boulding (Founding figure of Peace and Conflict Studies). ***Significance of culture of peace as conflict Prevention strategy in the workplace***

* 1. **Opportunities of creating culture of peace in the workplace**

It has been established that many labour conflicts that have cost the country monumental loss in resources and negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can be traced to workplace conflicts. Building the culture of peace in the work places will have a direct impact in our workplace and by extention to communities. This is an imperative to consider as conflicts such as strike and other forms of industrial actions has affected the country’s economy.

Conflict Management Training provides a platform for integration of peace and culture of peace into the workplaces. It creates opportunity for propagation of peace ideals in the workplace in order to infuse the work systems with those virtues and attributes that generates understanding and tolerance for peaceful coexistence. The main objectives are to ensure and enhance harmonious competitive work environment where workers are motivated to increase productivity and healthy progression.

Arguably, the workplace parades an army of capable peace advocates who have the potential to increase the culture of peace, if properly harnessed in Nigeria. It should be recalled that the workplaces also happen to be the ground for socialization for most people that exits in our societies as community leaders, elder Statesmen, traditional rulers, youth organizations as well as well as in foreign missions.

* 1. **Aims of culture of peace in the workplace**

**The UN Declaration on a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence contains more detail than needed and was politicized in the process of its adoption.**

The culture of peace has been defined in a number of different UN resolutions, and I prefer the following definition which combines the approaches taken by two important UN resolutions: the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted in 1999; and the 1998 UN resolution on the culture of peace:

“A culture of peace is an integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts, and an alternative to the culture of war and violence based on education for peace, the promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament.”
The final eight points:

1. Fostering culture of peace through education for peace;
2. the promotion of sustainable economic and social development;
3. promoting respect for human rights;
4. promoting equality between women and men;
5. promoting democratic participation;
6. promoting tolerance among people and institutions;
7. promoting the free flow of information and disarmament"

**Workplaces** would be more peaceful if the above ideals are promoted to enable it crystalize into the work systems of institutions.
The phrase "alternative to the culture of war and violence" comes from the initial paragraph of the 1998 UN resolution on the culture of peace which reads in full:
Recalling the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and recalling also that the creation of the United Nations system itself, based upon universally shared values and goals, has been a major act towards transformation from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence,

**21. Strategic Communication in Work Place**

The most important skill for acting constructively in workplace situations is
effective communication. A prerequisite to good communication is to
understand how communication functions. Therefore any skill-building
training in conflict management should include a basic introduction to
communication.

Good communication is the route to understanding and reaching an
agreement. It is both an expression of respect and a means of creating it.
Good communication can also prevent unnecessary conflict or prevent an
existing conflict from escalating. Once communication is improved both the
objective and subjective dimensions of a conflict are easier to deal with. The
attitudes and skills of good communication are therefore vital for all who
wish to act constructively in relation to conflict, whether as parties or as
mediators."

1. **Some of the objectives of strategic communication is as outlined below:**

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

* Understand how effective communication works.
* Appreciate the importance of effective communication for conflict
management in workplace.
* Understand and apply third party communication skills.
* Practice active listening.
1. **What is Communication?**

The roots of the word communication point to action that is undertaken with
the goal of sharing information, or making something common to all those
involved in the exchange of information. In other words, we could say that the
goal of communication is to understand and to be understood. This might
sound like a simple task - how difficult can it be to engage in a process of
exchanging information? In reality, communication is very complex.

Communication can be verbal and non-verbal, and it is influenced by a wide
range of factors including age, gender, race, socio-economic status,
education level, and physical constraints."

Offering understanding to another person is a potent form of empowerment.
We need not agree with others to empower them in this way; we need only to
make it clear through our eyes, body posture and tone of voice that we want
to see the world from their perspective. Our interactions with others must
come from a point of deep, non-judgmental interest. The key is to grasp the
why behind what is being said or done in order to gain insight into the deeper
interests and needs of the person with whom we are communicating. From
the moment that people feel you are truly seeking to understand, they begin
dealing with problems and other people more constructively. Good listening
skills are used throughout any process designed to constructively resolve
conflict. Good listening is, perhaps, the most significant skill a mediator or
facilitator brings to assist parties in conflict."

1. **The Transactional Model of Communication**

Communication takes a variety of forms - speaking or verbal, non-verbal or
body signals, listening, and interpreting messages. The *Transactional Model
of Communication* is useful because it integrates these various forms and
additional external factors that affect communication.

This particular model assumes that communication is a transaction or an
interaction between two individuals, Communicator A and Communicator B.
Both people send information and receive information simultaneously.
Sending information takes the form of non-verbal messages (e.g. nodding
your head or raising your eyebrows) and speaking.

The individual receiving information listens and interprets the verbal and non-
verbal messages. Both individuals take cues from the sender or listener
regarding the other person's level of interest. This is called feedback - a
response to a message.

The Transactional Model is useful because it takes into account internal and
external factors that influence the quality of communication. The following
factors are identified as important:

Time: Interactions change over time, especially as people get to know one
another. When people know each other well, the way they interact and what
they talk about changes.

"Field of experience": Individuals interpret messages according to their own
experiences, moods, and cultural framework. These elements (experiences,
moods, culture and background) make up a person's field of experience. The
more the fields of experience of two (or more) communicators overlap the less
the misunderstanding in their communication.

Noise: Noise refers to whatever disrupts or interferes with communication.
This may be actual noise, like music or blaring horns, or things inside the
communicator that hinder or distort the message. The listener might be
preoccupied and thinking about what he or she needs to get done that day or
what to make for dinner, while the speaker might be distracted by a
commotion on the street or use complicated terminology or jargon and thus
not communicate to the listener. This interrupts concentration and is part of
the noise that disrupts effective communication.

Contexts: The context is the situation in which the communication takes
place. This includes shared contexts like culture as well as personal contexts
like family or religion.

Fields of experience and context change over time. We accumulate
knowledge and experience every day, and this affects the way we
communicate and how we interact with others. For example, if yesterday you
had a negative encounter with a police officer, this encounter will colour your
next interaction with a police officer, and possibly others in uniform.

1. **Third Party Communication Skills"**

In communicating effectively, many conflict resolvers and communication
experts emphasize the importance of particular communication skills. These
skills are particularly useful for individuals intervening in conflict, like
mediators. These third party communication skills include: reframing,
restating, and active listening.

Reframing: Reframing involves giving an alternative interpretation of issues or behaviour.

In conflict, parties often engage in communication patterns that escalate a
conflict, like trading accusations, or not listening to the other side. By
reframing, the mediator validates speaker's experience but opens the door for
alternative interpretations of the content.

Changing the frame makes room for different perceptions and
interpretations of issues and behaviour. For example, a mediator might
reframe an action like "forming coalitions against me" to "she must really feel
powerless if she finds it necessary to gather the support of others." Reframing

might involve moving a speaker from more general to specific comments,
might identify underlying feelings, might neutralise attacks or identify areas

of common interests.

Restating: This is similar to reframing, except it involves restating what one
party says in language that is less accusatory. The person restating does not
add anything to the statement, but simply paraphrases the speaker. For
example, one party might claim "she is lazy. She never helps me with the
difficult tasks of running an organisation." A mediator might rephrase this
statement in the mediation: "Running an organisation is difficult and takes a
lot of work." A follow-up question that reframes the content might be
whether the speaker feels overwhelmed with the amount of work involved in
running an organisation. When restating, the third party should check with
the speaker to make sure the paraphrase is accurate.

Active listening: Using active listening demonstrates to the speaker that you,
as a listener, are really hearing what the speaker is saying. You communicate
this by reflecting the feelings of the listener (responding "you feel very
strongly about this" to a comment about

"I've had enough -I want him out of the organization"), restating the content
of the speaker's comments, asking open-ended questions, and generally
communicating empathy with the speaker. Empathy communicates that the
listener really understands the speaker's point of view. When overused, active
listening can be irritating, and it is difficult to do in cross-cultural situations
where perceptions and interpretations of content and underlying emotions in
conversation are culturally influenced.

1. **Effective and Strategic Communication**

Communication is most effective when people are able to exchange
information accurately about facts and feelings. Active listening - that is
using body language, listening, asking questions and summarizing facts and
feelings, and expressing empathy encourages effective communication. In
order to be a skilled active listener, one must be available for and committed
to effective communication - someone who is able to reduce internal and
external distractions, avoid making assumptions, and refrain from making
unnecessary remarks or giving unasked for advice." It is also necessary to use
the appropriate medium of communication in order to facilitate effective

communication.

1. **Barriers to Effective Communication**

Poor communication occurs when people are not able to accurately
understand the facts and/or feelings being shared with them. Poor
communication is often what lies beneath misunderstandings which then
become unnecessary conflicts. There are many possible reasons why people
are unable to communicate effectively, and many factors can "block" our
ability to be effective communicators. Some of the more common
communication blocks include poor body language, poor listening, using
"you" statements and "loaded" words, and an unwillingness or inability to
acknowledge differing perspectives.

1. **Listening Skills**

Effective listening is fundamental to good communication and, therefore,
good facilitation. Effective listening is "active" listening. This means that the
third party (mediator) should not only listen well to what is being said but also
be sensitive towards the tone and gestures that others use to express
themselves. It also requires the third party (mediator) to always ensure that
what is being said is understood correctly by all and that all parties are
confident that they are being heard.

As Peace Desk officer and peacemakers, it is important that we know how to be active
listeners. In conflict situations, it is our job to ask clarifying questions,
summarize facts and feelings, and make sure that the speaker feels that
he/she has been given a chance to be heard. Conflicts can often b~ resolved
through active listening because throughout the process of listening to each
other and truly hearing each other one or both of the parties realize that the
conflict is simply the result of a misunderstanding. In cases where there is a
true disagreement and a clash of needs, values, or resources, people who
have been given an opportunity to have their perspective heard are more
likely to be committed to achieving a win-win solution and are better
equipped to eventually reach one because they are also able to understand
and empathize with the other party.

**Why it is so important to develop the skill of active listening**

* In mediation you might be in a situation where you can't take notes, but
there is much information to retain.
* The speaker feels that they are getting your complete attention. It is
important for them to know that you have heard what they have sa id.
* It gives the speaker feedback on what they said, and how it came across.
* It creates an environment where the speaker is given confidence to say
things, and not be judged.
* It helps build a firmer, and more trusting relationship for the future. Some
people don't often have the opportunity to be with a good listener (for
example, some leaders can't trust people due to competing agendas/self-
interest/having information used against them at a later date).
* It helps avoid misunderstandings, so you can work more effectively with
others.

Some important elements in active listening

* Listen for the content of what is being said. What are the main points or
ideas?
* What is the context of the conversation (noise, distractions, other
elements of the external environment)? Would it help to change the
context?
* Listen for feelings and emotions and respond to those (acknowledge
those that you recognize). What fears and concerns is the speaker
expressing?
* Encourage the speaker to explain in some detail.
* Don't keep interrupting and talking (you can't listen while you are talking),
but ask questions at appropriate times (this will show you are listening).
* At appropriate times, restate or paraphrase what you think you've heard.

Be patient with the speaker, move into their domain - don't expect them
to move into yours.

* Use language that they understand.
* Don't fiddle with objects.
* Try not to let prejudices and stereotypes influence your listening.

While you are listening, try not to keep thinking of what your response is
likely to be."

Communication and Conflict"

Communication can be positively manipulated to avert conflict or resolve an
existing conflict by acquiring and practicing the right communication skills.
Through this process, we can identify a conflict at an early stage and nip it in
the bud, or more easily get to the root of the issues behind a conflict and
resolve it very quickly.

Communication plays a vital role, either positively or negatively, in conflict,
depending on how it is managed. In most cases, conflicts break out and
escalate partly due to ineffective communication (e.g. misinterpretation of a
message or lack of communication and understanding). Conversely, effective
communication facilitates the resolution of conflicts (e.g. when issues are
better understood and facts overshadow rumours and guesswork).

Use of effective communication in workplace conflict management:

* Necessary tool for unravelling the root causes of a conflict and
arriving at a solution.
* Helps third parties obtain relevant information to facilitate the
resolution of conflict.
* Facilitates the mediator's understanding of parties in conflict and
enables him/her to suggest ways the conflict could be resolved.
* Helps parties to more accurately decode messages, understand why
particular things have happened, clarify issues and jointly move to
find a solution to a problem between them.
* Facilitates the detection of a problem that can be addressed at an
early stage to prevent conflict.
* Can be used, to build relationship, promotes dialogue, non-violence
and cooperation.
1. **Session Methodology**
* Start the session with a brainstorming on communication: What is it?

How does it work? What is effective communication? What are the
challenges for effective communication?

* Discuss - either in the plenary or in smaller groups - the role of
communication in managing conflicts. The following questions can guide
the discussion:

Why is communication so important in conflict resolution and in the
mediation process?

 ~ What are some of the different ways **that** we communicate with
each other?

 ~ Who do you consider to be a good listener? What kinds of
behaviours do they exhibit that make them good listeners?

~ What are some of the common "blocks" to effective communication?
~ Think about yourself. What most commonly blocks your own ability
to listen to others?

 ~ Can you recognize any patterns in your own listening skills? What do
you tend to do, or not to do, that either helps you communicate or
inhibits your ability to do so effectively?

 ~ Why is it so important that mediators become good active listeners
and understand the dynamics of effective communication?

~ Through mini-lecture, highlight important aspects of communication in
 work place conflict management, particularly focusing on third party
communication skills.

~ You may distribute copies of handouts 1 and 2 for details on active
listening and reframing.

 ~ If time allows, you can carry out one or more of the exercises below to
illustrate a number of points.

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