

**Effective Management of Conflicts in the
African Context: Exploring Collaboration,
Harmony and Ubuntu**

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Effective Management of Conflicts in the African Context: Exploring Collaboration, Harmony and Ubuntu

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Abstract

This paper critically discusses the need for effective conflict management in Africa. The paper argues that Africa is highly susceptible to conflicts which undermine peace, security, and development in the continent. In addition, the paper notes that Africa has an opportunity to harness collaboration, harmony and ubuntu for effective conflict management. The paper argues that collaboration, harmony and ubuntu have been part and parcel of conflict management in Africa since time immemorial and can be utilised for effective conflict management in the continent. It proposes ideas towards fostering collaboration, harmony and Ubuntu for effective conflict management in Africa.

1.0 Introduction

A Conflict refers to a situation where two or more parties, however defined or structured, perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals¹. According to this definition, any conflict consists of three essential parties: incompatibility of goals, attitudes and behaviour². Conflict has also been described as a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs, and other preferences and desires³. According to the United Nations, a conflict arises when two or more groups believe their interests are incompatible⁴. The term conflict has also been conceptualised

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¹ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2015

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ United Nations., 'Land and Conflict' Available at https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/GN_Land%20and%20Conflict.pdf (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

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as a clash between individuals arising out of a difference in thought process, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements and even sometimes perceptions⁵. It usually entails some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to the others⁶. It has been noted that conflicts can occur in various levels including intrapersonal (within an individual), interpersonal (between individuals), intragroup (within a group), intergroup (involving two or more groups), and intraorganizational (within organizations)⁷.

Conflicts have been identified as a common phenomenon in human relationships and interactions⁸. They are an inevitable part of living because they are related to situations of scarce resources, division of functions, power relations and role-differentiation⁹. According to the United Nations, conflict is not in itself a negative phenomenon¹⁰. For example, non-violent conflict can be an essential component of social change and development, and is a necessary component of human interaction¹¹. It has been noted that non-violent resolution of conflict is possible when individuals and groups have trust in their governing structures, society and institutions to manage incompatible interests¹².

⁵ Khan. A., 'Understanding Conflict' Available at <https://mgcub.ac.in/pdf/material/20200407005750d5d6d7633c.pdf> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

⁶ What is Conflict?., Available at <https://mariancrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CONFLICT-AND-PEACE.pdf> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

⁷ Conflict Managemnt., Available at https://healthnet.org.np/downloads/manual/Conflict_management.pdf (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

⁸ Muigua. K., 'Reframing Conflict Management in the East African Community: Moving from Alternative to 'Appropriate' Dispute Resolution.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wpcontent/uploads/2023/06/Reframing-Conflict-Management-in-the-EastAfrican-CommunityMoving-from-Alternative-to-Appropriate-Dispute-Resolution> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

⁹ Bercovitch. J., 'Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations: A Framework for Analysis.' Available at <https://ocd.lcwu.edu.pk/cfiles/International%20Relations/EC/IR-403/Conflict.ConflictManagementinOrganizations.pdf> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

¹⁰ United Nations., 'Land and Conflict' Op Cit

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

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Non-violent conflicts are therefore necessary in human interactions and their resolution is key in defining and strengthening human relationships¹³.

However, in some circumstances, conflicts can be an undesirable occurrence and can affect peace, sustainability and development in any given society¹⁴. Conflicts become problematic when societal mechanisms and institutions for managing and resolving them break down, giving way to violence¹⁵. Societies that are characterized by weak institutions, fragile political systems and divisive social relations can be drawn into endless cycles of conflict and violence threatening peace and development¹⁶. For instance, armed conflicts that occur in various parts of the world including in Africa place heavy burdens on the social development of countries, by decreasing revenues, increasing defense expenditure, and diverting funds away from social and development initiatives¹⁷. They also cause human suffering in terms of loss of lives, displacement of populations and increased levels of poverty¹⁸. It has been noted that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have an intrinsic relationship to peace and stability¹⁹. Effective management of conflicts is therefore necessary to spur peace, stability, and development.

¹³ Ackerman. P., & Kruegler. C., 'Summary of "The Principles of Strategic Nonviolent Conflict' Available at <https://www.beyondintractability.org/artsum/ackerman-principles> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

¹⁴ Muigua. K., 'Reframing Conflict Management in the East African Community: Moving from Alternative to 'Appropriate' Dispute Resolution.' Op Cit

¹⁵ United Nations., 'Land and Conflict' Op Cit

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa., 'Socioeconomic Impact of Conflict in Africa' Available at

<https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/50100#:~:text=It%20places%20onerous%20burdens%20on,from%20social%20and%20development%20initiatives> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

¹⁸ Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency., 'Conflict Prevention: Opportunities and Challenges in Implementing Key Policy Commitments and Priorities' Available at https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2020/12/01125316/s209461_thematicoverview_conflict_prevention_webb_final.pdf (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

¹⁹ United Nations., 'No Peace, No Sustainable Development: A Vicious Cycle that We Can Break' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/no-peace-no-sustainable-development-vicious-cycle-we-can-break> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

This paper critically discusses the need for effective conflict management in Africa. The paper argues that Africa is highly susceptible to conflicts which undermine peace, security, and development in the continent. In addition, the paper notes that Africa has an opportunity to harness collaboration, harmony and ubuntu for effective conflict management. The paper argues that collaboration, harmony and ubuntu have been part and parcel of conflict management in Africa since time immemorial and can be utilised for effective conflict management in the continent. It proposes ideas towards fostering collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* for effective conflict management in Africa.

2.0 The Need for Effective Conflict Management in Africa

Effective management of conflicts is a key priority for Africa. The continent has been highly susceptible to intra and inter- state wars and conflicts for many years²⁰. It has been pointed out that Africa comes second in the number of armed conflicts per region with more than 35 non-international armed conflicts taking place in various African countries including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan²¹. Several armed groups fighting against government forces and/or against each other are involved in these conflicts²². Frequent conflicts are being experienced across the African continent, which are fueled by various factors, including but not limited to natural resources, fight for political control, poverty, negative ethnicity, religion, environmental causes, and external influence, among others²³.

²⁰ Olaosebikan. A., 'Conflicts in Africa: Meaning, Causes, Impact and Solution.' *African Research Review*., Volume 4, No. 4 (2010)

²¹ Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law., 'Today's Armed Conflicts' Available at <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

²² Ibid

²³ Muigua. K., 'Towards Effective Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in Kenya.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Towards-Peacebuilding-and-Conflict-Management-in-Kenya.docx-Kariuiki-Muigua-MAY-2021x.pdf> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

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A majority of the conflicts in Africa have been political in nature resulting in civil wars, military coups, and genocide as was in the case of Rwanda²⁴. In addition, natural resource-based conflicts have been a common occurrence in Africa for many decades²⁵. It has been observed that the abundance of natural resources has motivated and fueled armed conflicts in Africa threatening peace, security, and stability²⁶. Despite being a blessing for the continent, natural resources have also provided a parallel political economy for fueling wars and conflicts in Africa²⁷. This is evidenced by the illegal exploitation of diamonds during the civil war in Sierra Leone and the use of the profits from illicit diamond sales to procure small arms and light weapons and thus sustain armed conflict during Liberia's civil war²⁸. Africa therefore continues to experience the 'resource curse' which refers to the paradox that countries endowed with natural resources tend to be embroiled in conflicts and have incidences of poverty²⁹. Many African countries that are rich in natural resources including oil, gas, and minerals have been caught up in vicious cycles of conflicts undermining the potential of these resources to spur development³⁰.

Climate change is also a major cause of conflicts in Africa³¹. It has been noted that the environmental impacts of climate change, especially the depletion of natural resources

²⁴ Africa Center for Strategic Studies., 'African Conflicts Displace Over 40 Million People.' Available at <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-conflicts-displace-over-40-million-people/> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

²⁵ Muigua. K., Wamukoya. D., & Kariuki. F., 'Natural Resources and Environmental Justice in Kenya.' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2015

²⁶ Mwanika. PAN., 'Natural Resource Conflict: Management Processes and Strategies in Africa' Available at <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/136685/PAPER216.pdf> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Henri. A., 'Natural Resources Curse: A Reality in Africa.' *Resources Policy*, Volume 63, 2019

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ International Institute for Sustainable Development., 'Climate change and conflict: Lessons from Community Conservancies in Northern Kenya' Available at https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/climate_change_conflict_kenya.pdf (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

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creates conditions that increase the risk of violent conflict globally³². The adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation extend far beyond the environmental realm and increasingly shape human activity by causing and worsening conflicts at the global, regional, national, and even local levels³³. For example, rising temperatures, more severe and frequent extreme weather events, and erratic rainfall patterns cause or exacerbate volatile food prices, insecure livelihoods, and large-scale displacement therefore posing the risk of conflicts³⁴. Further, the adverse environmental impacts of climate change create conditions which increase the risk of violent conflicts including water scarcity, crop failure, food insecurity, migration, and displacement of populations³⁵. It has been observed that the effects of climate change including prolonged droughts are fueling land use conflicts and displacing populations thus causing and worsening conflicts in the continent³⁶. It has been noted that climate shocks such as droughts can magnify local tensions or conflict, particularly harming those who earn an income through agriculture³⁷. Further, droughts and floods also accelerate environmental degradation, which in turn intensifies disputes over land and water³⁸. Addressing climate change and its impacts is thus a key conflict prevention and management strategy in Africa.

Conflicts are therefore prevalent in Africa. These conflicts have been attributed to various factors including poverty, human rights violations, bad governance and corruption,

³² Ibid

³³ United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs., 'The Implications of Climate Change for Mediation and Peace Processes' Available at <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/DPPAPracticeNote-TheImplicationsofClimateChangeforMediationandPeaceProcesses.pdf> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Froese. R., & Janpeter. S, 'The Nexus of Climate Change, Land Use, and Conflicts' (2019)

³⁶ International Crisis Group., 'Absorbing Climate Shocks and Easing Conflict in Kenya's Rift Valley' Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/east-and-southern-africa/kenya/b189-absorbing-climate-shocks-and-easing-conflict-kenyas-rift> (Accessed on 27/01/2025)

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

ethnic marginalization and small arms proliferation³⁹. Natural resource-based conflicts are also being witnessed all over Africa⁴⁰. Climate change is also a major source of conflicts in Africa compounding existing risk factors such as scarcity of natural resources and rise in geo-political tensions over sharing of such resources⁴¹. The prevalence of conflicts in Africa is an undesirable phenomenon. According to the United Nations, conflicts and wars have been a major hindrance in the achievement of Sustainable Development in Africa⁴². Conflicts have adverse impacts on every aspect and corner of the African family, community and nation-state, with economic, cultural, political, social, and environmental costs⁴³. As a result, it is imperative to foster effective management of conflicts in the Africa for peace and development.

3.0 The Role of Collaboration, Harmony and Ubuntu in Conflict Management in Africa

The concept of conflict management seeks to resolve disagreements or conflicts with positive outcomes that satisfy all individuals involved or is beneficial to a whole group⁴⁴. It involves processes and techniques adopted towards stopping or preventing overt conflicts and aiding the parties involved to reach a durable and peaceful solution to their differences⁴⁵. Conflict management therefore involves handling all stages of a conflict as well as the mechanisms used in the management of conflicts⁴⁶. Conflict management has been described as an ongoing process by which conflicts are identified and handled, fairly

³⁹ Annan. N., 'Violent Conflicts and Civil Strife in West Africa: Causes, Challenges and Prospects' *International Journal of Security & Development.*, Volume 3, Issue 1, (2014)

⁴⁰ Mwanika. PAN., 'Natural Resource Conflict: Management Processes and Strategies in Africa' Op Cit

⁴¹ International Institute for Sustainable Development., 'Climate change and conflict: Lessons from Community Conservancies in Northern Kenya' Op Cit

⁴² United Nations., 'Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa.' Available at https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/docs/2109875_osaa_sg_report_web_new.pdf (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁴³ Uwazie. E., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Peace-building in Africa.' Available at <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/resources/pdfs/978-1-4438-5707-9-sample.pdf> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁴⁴ Ronquillo. Y., Ellis. V., & Toney-Butler. T., 'Conflict Management' Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470432/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁴⁵ Leeds. C.A., 'Managing Conflicts across Cultures: Challenges to Practitioners.' *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Volume 2, No. 2, 1997

⁴⁶ Ibid

and efficiently⁴⁷. The goal of conflict management is to minimise the potential negative impact that can arise from disagreements and encourage agreement and positive outcomes⁴⁸. It has been noted that various approaches and techniques can be adopted towards managing conflicts ranging from the most informal negotiations between the parties themselves through increasing formality and more directive interventions from external sources to a full court hearing with strict rules of procedure⁴⁹.

There is a range of conflict management mechanisms available to parties in conflict. For instance, the *Charter of the United Nations*⁵⁰ outlines various conflict management mechanisms that parties to a conflict or dispute may resort to. The Charter stipulates that *'parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice'* (Emphasis added)⁵¹.

Collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* have been identified as core tenets towards effective management of conflicts in the African context⁵². The idea of collaboration in conflict management aims to resolve the root causes of a disagreement and develop a mutually acceptable solution that benefits all parties involved⁵³. Under this approach, all parties involved in a conflict are brought together and work towards resolving the underlying conflict through active listening and respectful communication⁵⁴. Collaboration

⁴⁷ Institute of Directors., 'Conflict Management' Available at <https://www.iod.com/resources/business-advice/conflict-management/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

⁵⁰ United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI

⁵¹ Ibid, article 33 (1)

⁵² Akinola. A., & Uzodike. U., 'Ubuntu and the Quest for Conflict Resolution in Africa' *Journal of Black Studies.*, Volume 49, No. 2., (2018) pp 91-113

⁵³ Collaborating Conflict Resolution Style: Everything You Need to Know., Available at <https://conflict-resolution-training.com/blog/collaborative-conflict-resolution-style/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁵⁴ Ronquillo. Y., Ellis. V., & Toney-Butler. T., 'Conflict Management' Op Cit

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encourages parties in conflict to work through disagreements through empathy, and listening towards mutually beneficial solutions⁵⁵. It has been identified as powerful approach to conflict management built on cooperation, open communication, and finding win-win outcomes⁵⁶. Collaboration aims to preserve relationships, build trust among parties, and foster long-term positive change⁵⁷. Collaboration therefore fosters cooperation in conflict management⁵⁸. Through this, parties in conflict are able to reach a solution that satisfies everyone therefore strengthening relationships in the process⁵⁹. It leads to more lasting outcomes therefore minimising the likelihood of conflicts reemerging in future⁶⁰.

Harmony is a human value that involves compatibility and accord in feelings, actions, relationships, opinions, and interests⁶¹. Harmony has been described as a state of balance, peace, and coherence within individuals⁶². It has been noted that harmony is vital for successful cooperation, survival, longevity, and prosperity for humanity⁶³. Achieving harmony is fundamental in effective management of conflicts⁶⁴. It has been observed that by fostering open communication, empathy, and understanding, conflicts can be resolved

⁵⁵ Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering The Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Available at <https://www.officernr.com/blog/collaborating-conflict-style/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Collaborating Conflict Resolution Style: Everything You Need to Know., Op Cit

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Chen. S. X., 'Harmony' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256649929_Harmony#:~:text=Harmony%20is%20usually%20identified%20as,and%20even%20opposing%20one%20another. (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁶² Hegde. S. B., 'Universal Human Values: Understanding Harmony and Ethical Human Conduct' Available at <https://www.jcethbl.edu.in/UNIVERSAL%20HUMAN%20VALUES%20II.pdf> (Accessed 28/01/2025)

⁶³ United Nations., 'The Philosophy of True Harmony in Global Citizenship' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/philosophy-true-harmony-global-citizenship> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁶⁴ The Art of Harmonious Coexistence: Conflict Management., Available at <https://hrme.org/the-art-of-harmonious-coexistence-conflict-management/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

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in a harmonious and productive manner⁶⁵. Effective conflict management is vital in building positive relationship and fostering harmony⁶⁶.

Ubuntu has been described as an African philosophy that places emphasis on 'being self through others'⁶⁷. It is a form of humanism which can be expressed in the phrases 'I am because of who we all are'⁶⁸. *Ubuntu* also referred to as *Utu* in some parts of Africa especially in East Africa is an African philosophy geared towards upholding values for the greater good of the all community including sympathy, compassion, benevolence, solidarity, hospitality, generosity, sharing, openness, affirming, being available, kindness, caring, harmony, interdependence, obedience, collectivity and consensus⁶⁹. *Ubuntu* emphasizes the interconnectedness of all humanity⁷⁰. The concept of *Ubuntu* stresses the importance of community and the interdependence of people⁷¹. It has been noted that *Ubuntu* rejects the Western emphasis on individualism but rather stresses collaboration and teamwork⁷². It stresses the fact that we are all connected, and that one can only grow and progress through the growth and progression of others⁷³.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Mugumbate, J., & Nyanguru, A., 'Exploring African Philosophy: The Value of Ubuntu in Social Work.' Available at <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4272&context=sspapers&httpsredir=1&referer#::~:txt=Ubuntu%20can%20best%20be%20described,ngumuntu%20ngabantu%20in%20Zulu%20language>. (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Omodan, B., 'Ubuntu Politics of Process: An Alternative Conflict Management Culture in Universities' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364033950_Ubuntu_Politics_of_Process_An_Alternative_Conflict_Management_Culture_in_Universities (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Embodying the African Spirit of Ubuntu at Work., Available at <https://ebsedu.org/blog/embodying-the-african-spirit-of-ubuntu-at-work/#::~:~:text=The%20book%20describes%20how%20leaders,partisanship%2C%20progeny%2C%20and%20production>. (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁷³ Ibid

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Collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* have been utilised in conflict management in Africa since time immemorial⁷⁴. The process of conflict management is largely influenced by culture⁷⁵. Difference in cultural aspects such as belief systems, attitudes, religious practices, social stratification, language and economic practices mean that conflicts could potentially take different forms in each culture⁷⁶. As a result, culture has been identified as an essential component of conflicts and the conflict management process⁷⁷. For instance, all conflicts entail interpersonal interactions that occur in the context of cultures⁷⁸. In addition, culture shapes not only the possibilities for conflict resolution or transformation, but also the naming, interpretation, enactment and course of conflicts⁷⁹. Therefore whether a conflict exists at all and the mechanisms adopted towards managing such conflicts are issues that are largely determined by culture⁸⁰. Therefore culture is an essential part of conflict and conflict management.

It has been noted that African societies have since time immemorial ascribed to values aimed at promoting social cohesion⁸¹. These values include peaceful coexistence, harmony, truth, honesty, unity, cooperation, forgiveness and respect⁸². They are embedded in the culture and customs of the African people. These values are the foundation of African societies and cultures and are inextricably bound together in order

⁷⁴ Akinola. A., & Uzodike. U., 'Ubuntu and the Quest for Conflict Resolution in Africa' Op Cit

⁷⁵ Kaushal. R., & Kwantes. C., 'The Role of Culture and Personality in Choice of Conflict Management Strategy.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30 (2006) 579–603

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ LeBaron. M., 'Culture and Conflict.' Available at

https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁷⁸ Weiss, A., 'Power and Difference: An Extended Model for the Conflict Potentials in the Negotiation of Intercultural Conflicts'. 2000, Berlin: Berghof Institute. Available at <http://www.berghof-center.org/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁷⁹ LeBaron. M., 'Transforming Cultural Conflict in an Age of Complexity' Available at <https://researchers.allard.ubc.ca/ws/portalfiles/portal/39713135/Transforming%20Cultural%20Conflict%20in%20an%20Age%20of%20Complexity.pdf> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Awoniyi. S., 'African Cultural Values: The Past, Present and Future' *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Volume 17, No.1, 2015

⁸² Ibid

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to foster social harmony and cohesion⁸³. They influence every aspect of African societies including conflict management. Conflicts in Africa are viewed as a threat to peaceful existence and harmony. As a result, there is emphasis on amicable management of conflicts in order to preserve the social fabric which tied such communities together⁸⁴.

Conflict management in Africa is anchored in the values of collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu*⁸⁵. It has been noted that the process of conflict management in African societies is well-entrenched in the traditions, customs, norms and taboos of the people⁸⁶. Conflict management is based on the principles of equity and justice, which are well entrenched in African customs and traditions⁸⁷. In order to preserve harmony, African communities have therefore developed and embraced conflict management strategies that are aimed towards effectively dealing with conflicts⁸⁸. These mechanisms give prominence to communal needs over individual needs⁸⁹. It has been observed that conflict management in African societies is premised on the values that are held sacrosanct including peace, harmony, truth, honesty, unity, cooperation, forgiveness, reconciliation, and respect⁹⁰. The philosophy of *Ubuntu/Utu* is essential in fostering social harmony and has been effectively incorporated in conflict management strategies⁹¹.

Collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* are thus part and parcel of conflict management in Africa. These values fit well within the notion of justice in Africa and are aimed at creating

⁸³ Idang. G., 'African Cultures and Values.' Available at https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1561-40182015000200006 (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁸⁴ Adeyinka. A., & Lateef. B., 'Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society' *An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia Vol. 8 (2).

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ademowo. A., 'Conflict Management in Traditional African Society.' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281749510_Conflict_management_in_Traditional_African_Society (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Adeyinka. A., & Lateef. B., 'Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society' Op Cit

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Awoniyi. S., 'African Cultural Values: The Past, Present and Future' Op Cit

⁹¹ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

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consensus, facilitating reconciliation, fostering peace and cohesion and giving prominence to communal needs over individual needs⁹². Therefore by adopting and internalising the principles of collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu*, it is possible to create healthy relationships based on the recognition that within the web of humanity everyone is linked to everyone else⁹³. These values are ideal in fostering cooperation, forgiveness, and reconciliation for effective conflict management and peacebuilding in Africa⁹⁴. They emphasise restorative justice (harmony in the community), rather than punitive justice⁹⁵. Collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* are rooted in reconciliation, sharing, compassion, civility, responsibility, trust, and reconciliation, and cooperation⁹⁶. They are therefore anchored in the culture and customs of the people of Africa and can be utilised for effective conflict management in Africa.

It has been noted that many postcolonial African states have experienced and continue to experience violent conflicts, prompting the quest for viable approaches to conflict resolution and peace-building⁹⁷. The desire by certain individuals and groups to control power and resources at the expense of others lies at the heart of the frequent civil wars, armed insurrections, terrorism, ethnic conflict, genocide, xenophobia, and intracommunity and domestic conflict prevalent in Africa⁹⁸. The role of collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* in conflict management in Africa has been heavily undermined at

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Murithi. T., 'African Approaches to Building Peace and Social Solidarity' Available at <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/african-approaches-to-building-peace-and-social-solidarity/> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Van Norren. D., 'African Ubuntu and Sustainable Development Goals: seeking human mutual relations and service in development' Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2022.2109458#abstract> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Akinola. A., & Uzodike. U., 'Ubuntu and the Quest for Conflict Resolution in Africa' Op Cit

⁹⁸ Ibid

the expense of formal justice systems and their emphasis on Western notions of justice⁹⁹. It is therefore necessary to reinvigorate collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* for effective conflict management in Africa.

4.0 Conclusion

Africa is highly susceptible to conflicts and wars. The continent has witnessed intra and inter-state wars and conflicts for many years¹⁰⁰. These conflicts and wars are often caused or worsened by a number of factors including poverty, human rights violations, bad governance and corruption, ethnic marginalization and small arms proliferation¹⁰¹. Natural resources and environmental factors including climate change are also fueling conflicts in Africa¹⁰². These conflicts undermine peace, stability and development in Africa¹⁰³. Effective management of conflicts is therefore necessary in order to spur Sustainable Development in Africa.

Collaboration, harmony, and *Ubuntu* are key tenets that can enhance effective management of conflicts in the African context. These values are well-entrenched in the traditions, customs, norms and taboos of the African people¹⁰⁴. They are part and parcel of the African culture and fit well within the concept of conflict management in Africa and its core values including consensus, facilitating reconciliation, fostering peace and cohesion and giving prominence to communal needs over individual needs¹⁰⁵. It is therefore necessary to foster collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* for effective conflict

⁹⁹ Ogbaharya. D., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of Customary Systems of Conflict Resolution (CSCR).' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228182138_Alternative_Dispute_Resolution_ADR_in_Sub-Saharan_Africa_The_Role_of_Customary_Systems_of_Conflict_Resolution_CSCR (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

¹⁰⁰ Olaosebikan. A., 'Conflicts in Africa: Meaning, Causes, Impact and Solution.' Op Cit

¹⁰¹ Annan. N., 'Violent Conflicts and Civil Strife in West Africa: Causes, Challenges and Prospects' Op Cit

¹⁰² International Institute for Sustainable Development., 'Climate change and conflict: Lessons from Community Conservancies in Northern Kenya' Op Cit

¹⁰³ United Nations., 'Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa.' Op Cit

¹⁰⁴ Ademowo. A., 'Conflict Management in Traditional African Society.' Op Cit

¹⁰⁵ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

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management in Africa. These values can be effectively harnessed by fostering compassion, understanding, reconciliation, forgiveness, and respect towards each other¹⁰⁶. By embracing collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu*, it is possible to prevent conflicts while also ensuring that conflicts are managed effectively in manner that promotes reconciliation and fosters social cohesion¹⁰⁷. Through collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu*, it is possible to build a more just and equitable society for all¹⁰⁸. These values including *Ubuntu* promote peaceful coexistence, tolerance and cooperation serving as a moral compass in interpersonal relationships and community engagements¹⁰⁹. Fostering collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* is therefore vital for peaceful co-existence in Africa.

Further, it is imperative to embrace effective conflict management strategies including the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes such as mediation and negotiation. It has been noted that conflict resolution in the traditional African societies involves the use of mechanisms such as mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration and negotiation¹¹⁰. These techniques fit comfortably within traditional concepts of African justice, particularly its core value of reconciliation¹¹¹. These processes especially negotiation and mediation provide opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, cooperation towards mutually satisfactory and long-lasting outcomes¹¹². They are

¹⁰⁶ Ubuntu Philosophy and Nelson Mandela: A Connection., Available at <https://medium.com/@ubuntusoul/ubuntu-philosophy-and-nelson-mandela-a-connection-3483acb57a17#:~:text=In%20his%20autobiography%2C%20Long%20Walk,we%20share%20a%20common%20humanity.%E2%80%9D> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ What is the Spirit of Ubuntu? A Journey Into African Philosophy., Available at <https://www.communication-generation.com/what-is-the-spirit-of-ubuntu-a-journey-into-african-philosophy/#:~:text=Introduction-%E2%80%9CUbuntu%E2%80%9D%20is%20not%20just%20a%20word%3B%20it's%20a%20deeply,interconnectedness%20of%20all%20human%20beings.> (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

¹¹⁰ Adeyinka. A., & Lateef. B., 'Methods of Conflict Resolution in African Traditional Society.' Op Cit

¹¹¹ Uwazie. E., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution in Africa: Preventing Conflict and Enhancing Stability.' *Africa Security Brief*, No. 16 of 2011

¹¹² Saaida. M., 'Peace Studies: Conflict Resolution and Mediation Strategies' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372289839_Peace_Studies_Conflict_Resolution_and_Mediation_Strategies (Accessed on 28/01/2025)

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therefore suitable in fostering effective management of conflicts through collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu*¹¹³.

Africa has an opportunity to foster effective management of conflicts for peace and prosperity. It is therefore necessary to explore collaboration, harmony and *Ubuntu* for effective management of conflicts in the African context.

¹¹³ Uwazie. E., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution in Africa: Preventing Conflict and Enhancing Stability.' Op Cit

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