



## INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR ETHNO-RELIGIOUS MEDIATION

*"Fostering a culture of peace among ethnic and religious groups"*

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## MEDIATION ACADEMY

### Specialized Mediation Training The Mediation of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts

#### Mediation Project

#### Mediation Case Study (Case Developed by Langiwe J. Mwale, Winter 2018)

#### Proposed Case Study:

#### Post-Election Ethno-Political Conflict in Western Equatorial State, South Sudan

#### What Happened? Historical Background to the Conflict

After South Sudan became semi-autonomous from Sudan in 2005 when they signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, popularly known as the CPA, 2005, Nelly was appointed Governor of Western Equatoria State under the ruling SPLM party by the President of South Sudan based on her closeness to the first family. However, in 2010 South Sudan organized its first democratic elections, during which Jose who is also a brother to Nelly's step mother decided to contest for the position of Governorship under the same SPLM party. The party leadership under the directive of the President would not allow him to stand under the party ticket citing that the party preferred Nelly over him. Jose decided to stand as an independent candidate leveraging his relations with the community as an ex-seminarian in the dominant Catholic church. He garnered much support and won overwhelmingly much to the chagrin of Nelly and some SPLM party members. The President refused to inaugurate Jose labeling him as a rebel. On the other hand, Nelly mobilized youths and unleashed terror on the communities perceived to

have voted for her uncle.

The general community was torn apart, and violence broke out at the water points, in schools, and at any public gathering including the market place. Nelly's step-mother had to be removed from her marital home and sought refuge with a community elder after her house was torched. Although Jose had invited Nelly to a dialogue, Nelly would not listen, she continued sponsoring terror activities. The brewed and sustained hostilities, disagreements and disunity among grassroots community continued unabated. Contacts between supporters of the two leaders, family, politicians and friends in addition to exchange visits were organized and conducted, but none of these yielded positive results due to lack of neutral mediation. Although the two belonged to one tribe, they belonged to different tribal sub-clans which before the crisis were less significant. Those who were on Nelly's side continued to enjoy the support and protection by the powerful military personnel, while those loyal to the new Governor continued to be marginalized.

**Issues:** Ethno-political conflict escalated from inter-personal conflict fueled by group ethnic identities resulting into displacements, injury and loss of property; as well as injury and loss of lives and stagnation in development activities.

### **Each Other's Stories – How Each Person Understands the Situation and Why**

**Position:** Safety and Security

Nelly

- I was appointed by the President and no one else should be governor. The military and police are all on my side.
- I established SPLM political structures alone and no one can maintain those structures except me. I spent a lot of personal resources when doing so.

Jose

- I was democratically elected by the majority and no one can remove me except the people who voted for me and they can only do so through the ballot.
- I am the legitimate candidate not imposed.

**Interests:** Safety and Security

Nelly

- I wish to complete the development projects I started, and someone just comes from nowhere and disturbs the course of projects.
- I wish to go for another five years in office and see the development projects I started through.

Jose

- I wish to restore peace and reconcile the community. After all it is my democratic right and I have to exercise my political rights as a citizen. My sister, family and friends need to return to their homes from where they sought refuge. It is dehumanizing for an old woman to live under those conditions.

**Interests: Physiological Needs:**

Nelly

- To bring development to my community and complete the projects I started. I spent a lot of personal resources and I need to be paid back. I wish to recover my resources I spent on those community projects.

Jose

- To contribute towards the restoration of peace in my community; to give way to development and economic advancement and create jobs for our children.

**Needs: Self-Esteem**

Nelly

- I need to be honored and respected for building party structures. Men do not want to see women in positions of power. They only want themselves to control and have access to national resources. Moreover, before his sister got married to my dad, we were a happy family. When she came into our family, she made my dad to neglect my mother and my siblings. We suffered because of these people. My mother and my maternal uncles struggled to get me through education, until I became a governor and here he comes again. They are just bent on destroying us.

Jose:

- I should be honored and respected for being democratically elected by the majority. I get the power to rule and control this state from the electorate. The voters' choice should have been respected according to the constitution.

**Emotions: Feelings of Anger and Disappointment**

Nelly

- I am particularly angry about this ungrateful community for treating me with contempt just because I am a woman. I blame it on my father who brought this monster into our family.

Jose

- I am disappointed for lack of respect and lack of understanding of our constitutional rights.