

Tamale Ecclesiastical Province Pastoral Conference TEPPCON in collaboration with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) organized a seminar themed “Promoting Tolerance for Peaceful Elections in Northern Ghana” in four districts in the Northern Region namely: Nadowli, Nandom, Yendi and Sabobastrict. The District Chief Executives of the various districts expressed their profound gratitude to TEPPCON for organizing the workshop on peace promotion and promised their support to any individual or organization that will bring peace to their districts.

In an opening statement, Mr. Donald Amoah a resource person for TEPPCON said conflicts have existed in the Northern part of Ghana over the past centuries. These conflicts however were fought to take control of the territorial boundaries to exhibit superiority. Meanwhile, in the not too distant, conflict that occurred in Ghana in the 1980’s had various ethnic groups charging against each other.eg Vagla-Gonja, Konkomba-Dagomba etc. These conflicts further polarized the North and have since caused the backwardness and under-development of the region. In Northern Ghana the major cause of conflict is poverty and illiteracy and recently resource conflict like the taking over of land and water bodies by Fulanis with their cattle. State institutions must help to put things right and it is very important to know that no matter the interventions by institutions peace cannot prevail without the efforts of the individuals.

The workshop bothered on the following:

- Understanding conflict
- Five styles of handling conflicts
- Cause of conflict theories

According to Very Rev. Fr. Thaddeus conflict is a good thing and it is only through conflict that there can be transformation and growth in society. He defines conflict as opposition among people directed against one another. He said conflict is neutral, that is, it is neither positive nor negative. It becomes negative when there is a misunderstanding which turns into violence and positive conflict is when there is common understanding thus that makes both parties to move on and that is how society transforms.

He said when conflict escalates it turns to violence in different forms namely;

1. Physical violence
2. Psychological violence
3. Structural violence

Physical violence is when there is a physical assault whether mild or resulting in death. It is the most common form of violence in conflict situation.

Psychological violence is the type that is meted out to humans intentionally to cause pain. It could be done in the form of insults, threats, lies, intimidation.

Structural violence is caused by institutional structures embedded in society. It is an indirect form of violence because victims may not know they are being subjected to violence for example ignorance is a structural violence, discrimination and poverty.

He further mentioned and explained the five styles of handling conflict.

- Accommodating: People who accommodate are very interested in keeping relationships, ready to also ignore issues. People who accommodate are unassertive and very cooperative. They neglect their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others.
- Competing/Forcing: Relationships are not important to them. Always taking charge of everything for their interests alone. They are assertive and do not cooperate and they pursue their own concerns at other people's expense.
- Avoiding: They are people who do not pursue their own interest but they would not also cooperate. Therefore they keep postponing issues. People who avoid conflict are generally unassertive and uncooperative. They do not immediately pursue their own concerns or that of the other person, but rather they postpone discussion until a better time.
- Collaborating/Cooperating: They learn from each other's insight and creatively coming up with solutions that address the concerns of both. They look for long lasting solution. They assert their own views while also listening to other views and welcome differences.
- Compromising: These are people who are interested in looking for partial solution. They are moderately assertive and moderately cooperative. They try to find fast, mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts that partially satisfy both parties.

Conflict analysis may be defined as a practical process of examining and understanding of conflict from a variety of perspectives. Understanding the conflict forms the basis on which strategies can be developed on and how to handle it, thus

- Every conflict has a cause and can only be identified by doing an analysis.
- Root causes of a conflict are the intangible issues that fuel the conflict like culture, religion, trust, relationship etc.
- Core causes are the tangible issues that the parties involved will always state like unequal distribution of resources, land ownership, power struggle etc.
- Effects of every conflict are the consequences which come in the forms of health conditions, loss of lives and property, poverty, kidnapping etc.