

Restructuring Community-Led Coalitions in the Global South: The Emergence of UPCA in Nigeria

Oka Obono¹

Abstract

The concept of “restructuring” usually refers to political, institutional and corporate transformations on the global and national scene. It is seldom applied to social change management and development engineering in local settings. Through culpable political neglect and academic complicity, the discourse of restructuring often excludes community-led innovations from its agenda, creating hollow democracies that disenfranchise many groups (mainly women and youth) from participation in central political processes. This paper examines the emergence of the Ugep People’s Consultative Assembly (UPCA) in Nigeria, as a case study of community-led coalitions for restructuring local governance in the Global South. It describes synergies built between the legitimacy of traditional institutions and progressive modern forces to promote community participation in collective decision-making at local, national and global levels. These synergies reduce the exclusion of disadvantaged groups in Ugep, which is sustained by a hegemonic kyriarchy in the town. The high levels of Inclusivity promoted by UPCA are preferred alternatives to entrenched inequality, and the confinement of marginalised peoples to the global periphery of the periphery, which UPCA overcomes. UPCA’s philosophy advances a vision of restructured borderless communities; builds equity into cross-national dialogues; and promotes North-South and South-South cultural cooperation and economic exchanges.

Keywords: *Kyriarchy, Periphery, Restructuring, UPCA.*

Background

The concept of “restructuring” is typically applied to the reconfiguration of systems, structures, or institutions to enhance responsiveness, functionality, and efficiency. Yet, this discourse rarely addresses local communities, where people live and sustain their livelihoods. The tendency is for political neglect and academic oversight to exclude community-led innovations, effectively limiting citizens’ participation in decisions affecting them. The term (“restructuring”) first appeared in the *American Journal of Psychology* (1932), associated with Gestalt psychology and cognitive problem-solving. Karl Duncker’s *Psychology of Productive Thinking* (1935) summarized its early usage, although it remained narrowly applied until the 1970s, when it began to cross disciplinary boundaries.

¹ Professor of Sociology and Ethnodemography; Chair, Demography and Population Studies Unit, Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Honorary Professor, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone; President, Ugep People’s Consultative Assembly (UPCA). +234 803 346 7863; om.obono@ui.edu.ng; okaobono@gmail.com.

Restructuring gained widespread attention when, as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1985-1991, Mikhail Gorbachev used “*perestroika*” (“restructuring” in Russian) in a 1986 speech to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party. Although he had referenced the concept earlier to underscore the need for attitudinal change (Brown, 2023; McNair, 1991), this marked its formal adoption as a state policy to address decades of economic decline, political rigidity, and social stagnation, a period known as the Era of Stagnation (1964–1985) in Soviet history. Perestroika contributed to the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), collapse of the Eastern Bloc, and the end of the post-World War II bipolar world order (Kotkin, 2008). Despite the extensive scholarship that followed from this, however, the process of restructuring at the local community level has received limited attention. Communities are generally studied as sites where externally imposed reforms take effect, rather than as agents of change. Urban studies demonstrate that administrative boundaries may intensify exclusion or enable elite capture, but the focus remains on top-down interventions (Goodhand *et al.*, 2021; Obono, 2015; Obono, 2008; Braide, Obono & Bassey, 1990).

Emerging forms of community autonomy, often achieved through partnerships, are framed as reactive adaptations rather than proactive transformations. Scholarship on community-based organisations (McWilson & Sun, 2025; Kanai & Schindler, 2019) and institutional restructuring (Gonzalez-Benson, 2022; Trudeau & Veronis, 2009) often assumes that communities lack the capacity to build innovative organisations themselves. Consequently, local-level restructuring as an autonomous, transformative process remains underexplored. It is this gap that was addressed by the emergence of the Ugep People’s Consultative Assembly (UPCA) at an all-inclusive community meeting held on 11 July 2024, in Ugep, Yakurr Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria (Fig. 1).

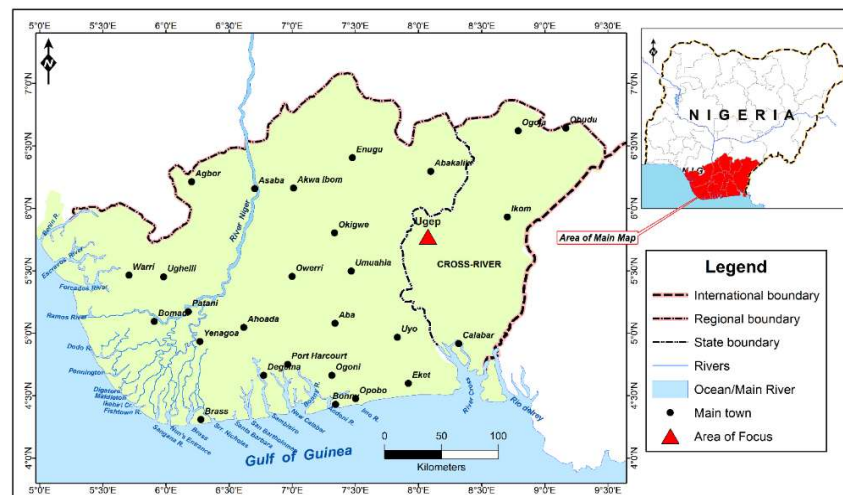


Fig. 1: Map of Southern Nigeria showing Position of Ugep in Cross River State

The body emerged as the community’s unique response to the polycrisis of poor governance and misrepresentation; controversies over state creation; disagreements over matriclan autonomy, egalitarianism, and queries over the legitimacy of certain cultural injunctions, which led to court action; youth unemployment; persistent gender discrimination; a rising crime profile; and an internal

drift toward anarchy, which rocked peace in the community for more than a decade. The issues were intertwined and persistent. They could not be addressed outside their mutual reinforcements.

In coining the term “polycrisis”, Morin and Kerne (1993) had in fact explained that, in conditions like this, the “systemic entanglement” of economic, social, cultural, ecological, political, and historical factors makes the separation of particular crises into distinct categories difficult, if not misleading or futile. Their simultaneity points to independent origination in self-similar, mutually inclusive and reinforcing causes. In this vein, the polycrisis in Ugep, which served as backdrop to UPCA’s emergence, was expressed through the perceived inadequacies of the traditional socio-political order.

As observed elsewhere (Obono, 2004), this primordial order (*q.v.* Ekeh, 1975) was built around a cliquy oligarchy of male elders and priests, who formed a power structure that maintained social stability and order. Thus, “Yakurr theocracy is organized around the activities and personae of *B’ina* and the moral order is entrenched in deep political relations promoted by these priests as its culture bearers” (Obono, 2001: 15). In the process, however, the clique also sustained stasis and promoted culturally retrogressive tendencies, leading to demands for a restructured arrangement. These demands paradoxically deepened the crisis rather than directly resolve it. There were calls within the local traditional leadership for the establishment of a so-called “apex” body, an institutionalised ombudsman led by the town’s clan heads, to provide oversight to the theocratic council. The calls strained relations considerably between the Umor Otutu Palace, which is the residence of the reigning monarch, the Obol Lapon, and other stakeholders in the town’s governance. UPCA was an outcome of *détente* and rapprochement as the community sought pathways to reconciliation and progress.

The ruling body depicted in Fig 2 below, though not the contemporary council, fully represents the kyriarchal setup that enforced conformity, discouraged autonomy, and restricted participation, despite the presence of modern educational, health, government, trade, and other infrastructure. The traditional authorities dominate the affairs of the town. As observed,

Among the double unilineal Yakurr (also Yakö) of southeastern Nigeria, the role of Matriclan Priests (*B’ina*) is unique because it unifies the sacred and profane worlds of the people.... The primary function of these is to perpetuate matrilineal fertility through the organisation of religion at communal and clan levels, but this function also entails wide-ranging political power (Obono, 2001: 15).

This power is shared between the corporate patrilineages and dispersed matriclans within the double unilineal ideology that is the hallmark of Yakurr society. But the scope of authority is limited for the representatives of the patriclans, who have jurisdiction only over their members. In other words, the nature of the political authority of the matriclan priests “inheres in the very structures of double unilineal descent, which is classic among the Yakurr in that while the patriclan is a corporate, localized, co-residential entity, the matrilineal membership is dispersed” (p. 15).

These conditions have survived change in some respects and, in others, given in to it. Migrant inflows contribute to reordering of the cultural focus of Ugep society, together with indigenous contributions

to infrastructural, economic, educational, and social development. While a pronatalist worldview was for long identified with perceptions of infertility as aberrational, the pace of human development, youth migration, rapid social mobility, household desedentarization, female education rates, female labour force participation, female-headed households, and related social forces, are transforming attitudes fundamental ways. Ugep may therefore be seen as a systemic mosaic, where traditional tendencies coexist and compete with modern aspirations.



Fig. 2: The Nexus of Kyriarchy: Traditional Council of Matriclan Priests (B'Ina)

The hegemony of this group had long been perceived as a structural impediment to progress. Consequently, on 11 July 2024, the community requested that matriclan priests focus on their ritual and spiritual duties, leaving modern governance—which requires technical knowledge and skills—to competent contemporary actors. By this time, the town's gerontocracy was facing growing pressure from assertive youth. The spectre of anarchy loomed, reformist energy surged, and anomie was not far from the community.

These dynamics plunged Ugep's kyriarchy into crisis. Its two foundational pillars—gerontocracy and patriarchy—functioned as the operational core of the *ancien régime*, but the kyriarchy, which had excluded women, youth, and emergent entrepreneurs from central decision-making, now faced the erosion of its ethos. The tension between continuity and change, building since the end of the Civil War in 1970, became unavoidable. Yakurr communities experienced internecine conflicts shaped by changing ethnodemographic characteristics (Obono, 1999) and disrupted further by military dictatorships, civil unrest, and protracted national economic mismanagement in the late 20th century.

Unable to withstand the combined pressures of internally and externally induced crises, this hegemonic complex—conceptualized here as the Indigeneity-Gerontocracy-Patriarchy-Theocracy

(IGPT) Complex—proved unsustainable, culminating in the establishment of UPCA in 2024. To be clear, therefore, the systemic stressors that manifested as the complex of cultural, political, economic and social problems required a systemic solution, which was UPCA. By creating synergies and cooperation between the traditional system of governance, and more modern and youthful social forces, UPCA represented the end of exclusion in Ugep society and represents a case study of restructured governance at local levels. In this way, the emergence of UPCA constitutes an inflection point in the discourse of community-level restructuring in the Global South.

This lays out the argument for this perspective by examining the concept of kyriarchy as an organising theoretical framework in the next section, followed by a description of the conceptual framework by which the arguments are organised. In subsequent sections, we examine the limits of the discourse of restructuring and why we considered it to have overlooked restructuring at community levels. In the concluding part, we describe the mission, strengths, challenges, and prospects of UPVCA as a case study that is worth adopting as an example of community-level restructuring in the Global South.

Conceptualizing Kyriarchy in Ugep

The dimensions of Ugep’s traditional sociopolitical system can be understood through what is termed the Indigeneity-Gerontocracy-Patriarchy-Theocracy (IGPT) Complex (Fig. 3). This conceptualisation draws on formulations by feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (b. 1938), who coined the term “kyriarchy” in her book *But She Said*. Fiorenza (1992).

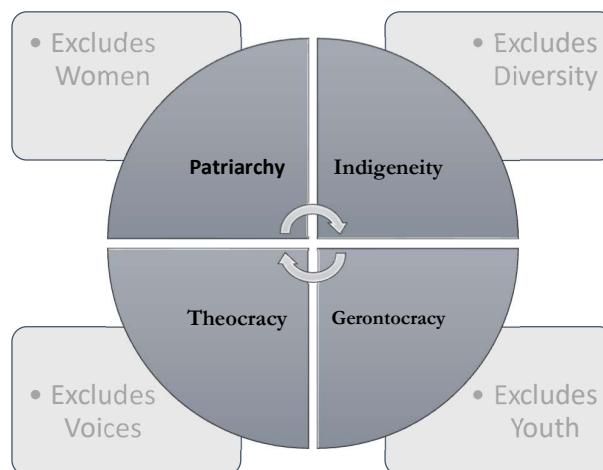


Fig. 3: The IGPT Complex

Fiorenza described kyriarchy as comprising intersecting systems of superordination and subordination, marginalization, and suppression, which overlap and reinforce one another. I find that her kyriarchal construct is compatible with interdisciplinarity, fractal epistemologies, methodological triangulation, multivariate analysis, and the understanding of polycrisis in the Global South.

Earlier frameworks, such as Du Bois' "double consciousness" (1903), Jones' "triple exploitation" (1949), Beal's "double jeopardy" (1969), Firestone's "double oppression" (1970), Holst-Petersen and Rutherford's "double colonisation" (1986), King's "multiple jeopardy" and "multiple consciousness" (1988), and "intersectionality" (Combahee River Collective, 1983; Crenshaw, 1989), on which Fiorenza drew, entered mainstream social science discourse as advances in technology compressed time, space, events, and circumstances, making physical and epistemic isolation increasingly tenuous.

The primary limitation of the preceding "double-isms" and "triple-isms", however, was their denumerability and finite scope. Encapsulated within Western positivist frameworks, they lacked universal appeal. Except for Crenshaw's intersectionality, they did not fully or satisfactorily address forms of oppression such as ableism, ageism, antisemitism, apartheid, casteism, classism, colonialism, ethnicity, neo-colonialism, racism, religious discrimination, and systemic inequities across cultural contexts. By contrast, kyriarchy is more holistic, fractal, and sensitive to multicultural power dynamics. While patriarchy, for instance, denoted male supremacist domination, kyriarchy describes broader hegemonic tendencies. Respecified here as the IGPT Complex, this concept facilitates a dialectical understanding of UPCA's emergence as a mechanism for restructuring not only kyriarchy in Ugep, but in the Global South. What is often viewed as patriarchal ignores the embeddedness of multiple systems of oppression with the construct. A cursory look at Figure 2 (above) would, for example, portray the presence of patriarchy, but it would overlook the active presence of indigeneity, theology and gerontocracy, as sectors of power dynamics, which only a kyriarchal framework could reveal.

The Global and National Contexts of Restructuring

In Nigeria, restructuring discourse largely focuses on redefining federalism, national power dynamics, and resource allocation. Its main thrusts include: economic restructuring, which focuses on diversifying the economy, reducing dependence on oil, and promoting private sector growth; political restructuring, which deals with reforming federal structures, implementing rotation principles in office distribution, devolving power to states, and enhancing regional autonomy; and social restructuring, which addresses inequalities, promoting inclusivity, and improving welfare. Historically, Nigeria's administrative restructuring began with the Lagos Colony Administration (1886), continued with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates (1914), and progressed through regional divisions (1939) and post-independence restructuring (1963–1966). Modern restructuring intensified with the creation of 12 states in 1966 under General Yakubu Gowon, followed by the relocation of the national capital from Lagos to Abuja in 1976, and the IMF-inspired Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) under Ibrahim Babangida in 1986.

With the return to democracy in 1999, efforts emphasised political restructuring, particularly the devolution of powers to states. Chronologies of restructuring, such as Tope Fasua's *A Short History of Restructuring in Nigeria* (2018), largely deal with state creation, revenue sharing, and administrative styles, leaving community-level experiences unexamined. The third tier of government, the Local Government Area (LGA), has not resolved this gap; it remains distant from communities, replicating the hierarchies and dominance found at the state and federal levels. Structural adjustment and other reforms thus consolidate multilayered control, affecting local communities as their final base.

By such policy measures, the deep-seated asymmetries of global relations are transferred to local communities. Drawing from Immanuel Wallerstein's Centre-Periphery Model of World Systems Theory and Raúl Prebisch's Dependency, global structuralism manifests in local contexts, reproducing inequalities at the community level. From elite dominance and intergenerational deterioration in trade terms to the degenerative structuralism that characterizes centre-periphery relations, mechanisms that generate marginalisation globally are mirrored locally. In essence, the periphery begets periphery. Communities such as Ugep in the Global South experience inequalities produced by the same global structures that disadvantage their countries as a whole.

Colonialism had entrenched structural contradictions in Nigeria. Citizens contributed to the primordial public while the system extracted resources from the civic public without moral constraint. This contradiction continues to shape prebendalism and the political culture of corruption (Smith, 2007; Joseph, 1999; Ekeh, 1975). By tracing dysfunction to the collapse of functional federalism following the 1966 military coup, however, contemporary restructuring debates in Nigeria tend to frame restructuring either as a "journey to dysfunction" or a restoration of the 1960 federal arrangement (El-Rufai, 2017; Osuntokun, 2017). These discussions often neglect the local community context.

Most remedies are silent on grassroots empowerment. While macroeconomic analyses offer critical national-level insights, they ignore community participation and the potential for community-led restructuring. Even as fiscal distortions disproportionately affect local communities, attention remains focused on federal-state allocation disputes, leaving community-centered solutions unaddressed. Proposals for political and economic restructuring often advocate devolving powers to states while restricting federal responsibilities to defence, foreign policy, and macroeconomic coordination, bypassing community governance entirely. In this way, scholarly efforts linking restructuring to economic competitiveness, educational reform, and regional development (Odumakin, 2017) still fail to identify mechanisms for local organization, capacity building, or community-driven economic transformation. The debates remain confined to the elite level, with oppositional perspectives portraying restructuring as unpatriotic or secessionist (Yakasai, 2016; Unongo, 2017). This elite-centric discourse extends to semantic maneuvering, where political actors substitute terms such as "true federalism" or "devolution of power" for restructuring—a contest conducted entirely above the community level (Yaqub, 2016). Even arguments for constitutional decentralization and regionally driven development (Nwodo, 2017; Nwosu, 2016) neglect grassroots participation.

Accordingly, many scholars in Nigeria locate the primary obstacle to national development in a lack of elite political will, implying that reform must proceed top-down (Unya, 2018). This absence of political will risks delaying restructuring and exacerbating political, economic, and governance challenges by prolonging elite dominance, deepening regional inequalities, and impeding effective resource allocation (Okogba, 2018). Broader calls for political, economic, social, and psychological restructuring acknowledge the need for value reorientation but remain disconnected from concrete, community-based institutions capable of sustaining transformation (Bello, 2017). Technocratic proposals that delegate restructuring to non-partisan experts further entrench this approach, treating communities as problems to be solved rather than as agents of indigenous social engineering (Abubakar, 2017).

In general, restructuring is perceived as an elite responsibility, reinforcing the widely-held notion that it consists primarily of top-down interventions, centralisation, and governance reform, while innovative community participation is consistently absent. Yet sustainable restructuring cannot rely solely on macro-level reforms; bottom-up transformations are essential. Communities are rarely envisioned as architects of their own restructuring. They are instead treated as passive beneficiaries of externally designed reforms (Amazigo *et al.*, 2002). As a result, communities often feel marginalized in discussions of resource control, state creation, local governance, and economic empowerment, while remaining vulnerable to elite domination and divisions along ethnic, religious, political, and class lines. Against this background, the emergence of the Ugep People's Consultative Assembly (UPCA) offers an instructive case study of community-led organization in the Global South.

The Ugep People's Consultative Assembly

The Ugep People's Consultative Assembly (UPCA) is a coalition of associations—or a “body of bodies” (in the indigenous Lokurr language, *lekpala j'akpala*, i.e., “nest of nests”)—that leverages traditional institutions and modern competencies to foster community-led governance (Fig. 4). UPCA represents diverse interests and promotes unity, peace, and progress through voluntary membership, open to associations and individuals sharing these ideals. Community participation occurs through an Annual General Assembly and Town Hall Meeting, which is the cornerstone of UPCA's operational philosophy. The 2026 Town Hall Meeting was deferred owing to conflict with a neighbouring community, which directing all efforts toward restoring sustainable peace.

Since its inception on 11 July 2024, UPCA's organisational structure has evolved dynamically. The original 10 member-organisations had each elected a representative to the 10-person Executive Committee, with each assigned a portfolio by the Assembly. These founding associations ordinarily play a central role in communal decision-making, supported by the Traditional Rulers' Council (TRC), locally known as *B'ina* —the apex body comprising priests (*B'ina*) and presided over by the Obol Lupon of Ugep, himself a priest (*ina*), which confers full traditional legitimacy to UPCA. The TRC and Obol Lupon attended both the First and Second General Assemblies (July 2024 and August 2025, respectively), endorsing UPCA's role in local governance.



Fig. 4: UPCA Executive Committee, Counsellors and Trustees, with the *Obol Lupon*

The original 10 member organisations are listed below in alphabetical order.

1. B'ina Traditional Rulers' Council
2. Clan Heads' Council
3. Ekeledi/Obin Women's Group
4. Obol Lupon Advisory Council
5. National Youth Council of Nigeria (Ugep Branch)
6. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (Ugep Branch)
7. Ugep Development Council
8. Ugep Forum
9. Umor Otutu Sociocultural Organisation
10. Village Heads' Council

Age-grade societies were harmonized for inclusion on this list to fully reflect the ethos of inclusive participation. The Body of Counsellors complements the Executive Committee's local strengths, providing guidance and financial support drawn from extensive business, academic, governance, and industry experience outside Ugep. The Finance, Welfare, and Development (FWD) Council serves as a joint planning and action committee, enabling the Body of Counsellors and Executive Committee to coordinate and streamline UPCA policies. The organs of UPCA are the General Assembly (GA), Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, and Body of Counsellors.

As the sovereign body, the GA comprises enlisted associations, the Board of Trustees, the Body of Counsellors, the Executive Committee, and individual community members. It functions as the heart and head of UPCA, where every member has an equal voice. The GA proposes programmes, approves annual budgets and activities, and appoints association officers through democratic voting.

General Assembly decisions reflect the community's collective vision and aspirations. In ordinary sessions, the GA is properly constituted when at least two-thirds of founding members are present or represented. The Board of Trustees (BoT) oversees Executive policies on behalf of the GA and is composed of reputable individuals with a history of service to the Ugep people. The Obol Lupon of Ugep is a statutory member of the BoT. The Body of Counsellors is a key advisory board, offering strategic guidance and governance support to the Executive Committee. It draws on individuals who provide counsel for town-wide administration. The Executive Committee handles the everyday administration of UPCA. As *lekpala j'akpala*, UPCA embodies the structures of endogenous governance, adapted into a modern, inclusive framework.

The organisation actively articulates, coordinates, and promotes the social, economic, cultural, humanitarian, and spiritual development of the Ugep people. It safeguards cultural identity and values, fosters sustainable development, and upholds collective rights and well-being. Intractable conflicts are generally referred to UPCA for resolution, leveraging its ability to convene diverse opinions in a consultative forum. Each Executive Committee meeting serves as a microcosm of Ugep society, capturing the community's varied perspectives. This organic representation allows UPCA to respond effectively to community needs, build confidence, and restore calm. Its effectiveness stems from UPCA's inclusive character. Its broad representation and strategic approach allow it to mediate and advise on cultural, humanitarian, and developmental issues affecting Ugep and its environs. Its *modus operandi* transcends the exclusivist, age-based patriarchal structures that struggle to address the complexities of a rapidly evolving, heterogeneous community. Extending this model to the wider Yakurr region could reduce developmental volatility and mitigate conflict.

Conclusion

Conventional approaches to restructuring have largely emphasised macro-level transformations, neglecting processes initiated and experienced at the community level. Communities are frequently treated as sites for the implementation of restructuring rather than as active agents of change. The Ugep People's Consultative Assembly exemplifies how indigenous communities can restructure local governance from within, offering a model of grassroots governance for the Global South. Traditional approaches to restructuring have focused on macro-level transformations, often neglecting processes initiated and experienced at the community level. Communities are frequently treated as sites where restructuring is implemented, rather than as agents of change. The Ugep People's Consultative Assembly exemplifies how indigenous communities can restructure local governance from within, serving as a model of grassroots governance for the Global South.

The organisation's current strategic goals include: (1) community development and cultural preservation, through initiatives that strengthen social bonds and celebrate cultural heritage, extending transformations to other Yakurr communities to foster inclusive regional planning; (2) sustainable partnerships that represent common interests and collaborate with local and international partners to drive economic, educational, and infrastructural development; (3) knowledge exchange through the sharing of cultural and educational knowledge between Ugep (and the wider Yakurr people) and global institutions; (4) inclusive leadership through active participation of youth and women in decision-making; (5) peace and security, through the resolution of conflicts through by mediation that fosters a safe and just environment; (6) transparent governance that ensures accountable, inclusive administration of UPCA, promoting collective ownership and group participation; and (7) community engagement, through annual town halls, roundtables, conventions, lectures, seminars, and workshops addressing sociocultural, educational, security, and developmental interests.

Among protracted crises that previously defied conventional engagement or litigation, UPCA has successfully mediated a prolonged royal dispute between the Obol Lapon and Yanen B'Esukpa, a prominent matriclan in Ugep. This success largely stems from the synergies inherent in UPCA's framework, which were critical in resolving a dispute once considered intractable. UPCA has also been invited to mediate other longstanding issues, including town-gown industrial disputes and inter-communal disagreements over foundational ritual practices.

UPCA has emerged as a pioneering model for grassroots governance in the Global South by tackling previously intractable disputes and fostering inclusive local development. This success is attributed to UPCA's distinctive framework, which leverages synergies between voluntary and statutory associations, forming an inclusive microcosm of the Ugep community. UPCA's operational framework is designed to invigorate community engagement and facilitate conflict resolution through inclusive governance (by convening representatives from major community associations on its Executive Committee and Body of Counsellors, ensuring a diverse and participatory structure); autonomy and accountability (by reporting directly to the people of Ugep through the General Assembly, rather than to any single affiliated association, which helps maintain impartiality and public trust); and conflict mediation (by UPCA's emphasis on dialogue and collaboration, its successfully addressing royal conflicts, town-gown industrial disputes, and inter-communal disagreements over cultural rituals).

The synergy between the Body of Counsellors (primarily residents outside Ugep) and the Executive Committee (largely local residents) underscores the value of a Yakurr-wide assembly, enhancing cooperation with the broader region. Technology further strengthens this collaboration, embedding a culture of peace through shared experiences in the Global South. UPCA's methodology revitalises local governance by convening major voluntary and statutory associations in Ugep, each represented on the Executive Committee and the Body of Counsellors. This approach creates an inclusive microcosm of the community, facilitating effective conflict resolution and fostering a culture of peace. UPCA's methodology revitalises local governance by convening major voluntary and statutory associations in Ugep, each represented on the Executive Committee and the Body of Counsellors. This

creates an inclusive microcosm of the community, enabling effective conflict resolution and fostering a culture of peace.

Initial challenges arose from the novelty of the UPCA concept. These were addressed by clarifying to affiliated groups that UPCA is accountable not to any single association but directly to the people of Ugep through their General Assembly. Such teething issues were anticipated given the innovative nature of the organisation. Today, public confidence in UPCA is high, and this trust is expected to deepen as avenues for functional partnerships across associations expand. Its efforts have set the stage for broader initiatives, such as fostering functional partnerships across associating bodies, and extending this initiative to other Yakurr communities to advance regional planning.

The Ugep People's Consultative Assembly (UPCA) exemplifies how indigenous communities can restructure governance from within, acting as proactive change agents rather than passive recipients of macro-level policies. The combination of local residency in the Executive Committee and external expertise in the Body of Counsellors, enhanced by technology, positions UPCA as a scalable model for regional assemblies that engage with the wider world while embedding a culture of peace. In short, UPCA demonstrates that community-driven governance can be both inclusive and effective, mediate complex disputes, foster sustainable development, and serve as a blueprint for other indigenous and regional communities in the Global South.

References

- Abubakar, A. (2017, June 30). Excerpt of interview conducted by the *Nigerian Vanguard* entitled "Nigeria: What is restructuring."
- Amazigo, U. V., et al. (2002). Monitoring community-directed treatment programmes for sustainability: Lessons from the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control. *Annals of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology*, 96(Suppl. 1), S75-S92.
- Beal, F. M. (1969). *Double jeopardy: To be Black and female*. Radical Education Project.
- Bello, S. A. (2017). Restructuring Nigeria: A critical analysis. *THSDAY Live*, 11 June.
- Braide, E. I., O. M. Obono, & S. A. E. Bassey. (1990). Community participation in the control of onchocerciasis in Cross River State. *Acta Leidensia*, 59(1&2), 427-432.
- Brown, A. (2023). Mikhail Gorbachev and the politics of perestroika. *Russian History*, 49(2-4), pp.
- Combahee River Collective. (1983). The Combahee River Collective statement. In B. Smith (Ed.), *Home girls: A Black feminist anthology*. Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140, 139-167.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of Black folk*. A. C. McClurg & Co.
- Ekeh, P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: A theoretical statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17(1), 91-112.
- El-Rufai, N. A. (2017, August 21). What is restructuring and does Nigeria need it? The essence of the restructuring debate in Nigeria. Paper delivered at Chatham House, London.
- Fasua, T. (2018, July 15). A short history of restructuring in Nigeria. *LinkedIn*. [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)
- Fiorenza, E. S. (1992). *But she said: Feminist practices of biblical interpretation*. Beacon Press.
- Firestone, S. (1970). *The dialectic of sex: The case for feminist revolution*. William Morrow & Co.
- Gonzalez-Benson, O. G. (2022). Shadows of the shadow state: Grassroots, refugee-led organizations within a multi-scalar and contested resettlement institutional domain. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 40(8), 1745-1762.
- Holst Petersen, K., & Rutherford, A. (Eds.). (1986). *A double colonization: Colonial and post-colonial women's writing*. Dangaroo Press.
- Jones, C. (1949). An end to the neglect of the problems of the Negro woman! *Political Affairs*, 28(6), 51-67.
- Joseph, R. A. (1999). *Democracy and prebendal politics in Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.
- King, D. K. (1988). Multiple jeopardy, multiple consciousness: The context of a Black feminist ideology. *Signs*, 14(1), 42-47.
- Kotkin, S. (2008). *Armageddon averted: The Soviet collapse, 1970-2000* (Updated ed.). Oxford University Press.
- McNair, B. (1991). *Glasnost, perestroika, and the Soviet media*. Longman.
- McWilson, W. K., & Sun, Y. (2025). City regionalism in the Global South: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 115(1), 1-18.
- Morin, E., & Kern, A. B. (1993). *Terre-Patrie*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Nwodo, J. N. (2017, September 27). Restructuring Nigeria: Decentralization for national cohesion. Paper presented at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London.

- Nwosu, A. B. C. (2016). Why North is afraid of restructuring. *Daily Sun*, 15 September.
- Obono, O. (1999). The ethnodemography of Yakurr conflict: A case study of the Ugep-Idomi war of 1992. In O. Otite & I. O. Albert (Eds.), *Community conflicts in Nigeria: Management, resolution and transformation*. Spectrum Publications, pp. 60-81.
- _____. (2001). Matriclan priests and fertility among the Yakurr of Southeastern Nigeria. *African Population Studies*, 16(1), 15-42.
- _____. (2004). Cultural diversity and population policy in Nigeria. *Population and Development Review*, 29(1), 103-112.
- _____. (2008). Ideology and the global context of Nigeria's population policies. *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 50(2), 235-256.
- _____. (2015). The ambivalence of Nigeria's population policy. In C. Y. Bassey & U. I. Agbor (Eds.), *Public policy and politics in Nigeria: A critical discourse*. Concept Publications, pp. 662-687.
- Odumakin, Y. (2017, September 19). Ten reasons to restructure Nigeria. *Nigerian Vanguard*.
- Okogba, E. (2018, March 4). Why it is dangerous to delay Nigeria's restructuring till 2019 or beyond. *Vanguard News Online*.
- Osuntokun, A. (2017, June 30). Nigeria: What is restructuring? Interview with the *Nigerian Vanguard*.
- Smith, D. (2007). *A culture of corruption: Everyday deception and popular discontent in Nigeria*. Princeton University Press.
- Trudeau, D., & Veronis, L. (2009). Enacting state restructuring: NGOs as "translation mechanisms". *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(6), 1117-1134.
- Unongo, P. (2017, July 10). Nigerian leaders, 10 ideas about restructuring. Interview with *National Daily Trust*.
- Unya, I. U. (2018). Restructuring Nigeria: Issues, challenges and the way forward. *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, 10(2).
- Yakasai, T. (2016, September 25). North divide over Nigeria: Arewa leaders sing discordant tunes over restructuring. Interview with *Sunday Sun*.
- Yaqub, N. (2016, December 17-18). What is in restructuring in the era of change in Nigerian politics. Paper presented at the International Conference, Damman, Saudi Arabia.