

NPS Mediation Committee

Najude Pioneer School, May 2013

The NPS mediation committee has been called into existence as a reaction to the serious misunderstanding between a Najude villager and a NPS teacher and the problems that followed it during the summer of 2012. In order to prevent any such incident in the future, be it related to the school or not, the committee has written this document and hereby urges all the Unguwar Najude villagers and the NPS staff members to abide by the rules and regulations stated below.

Committee members

Chairman:	Isaac Samuel Musa (teacher)
Vice Chairman:	Iliya Isuhu (villager)
Secretary:	Maikasuwa Ezra (teacher)
Members:	Bitrus Zachariah (teacher)
	Lukman Magaji (teacher)
	Matthew Yohana (villager)
	Andrawus Ango (villager)
	Samaila Nomau (villager)

Committee Constitution

- 1) First and foremost, it is very crucial to state that by no means, this committee shall be used on a regular basis. In the case of minor issues, it is always preferable to solve the problem at hand by simply talking to each other face to face. This applies in the case of a problem between a villager and a teacher as a private person, but also in the case of a problem between a parent and a teacher in his/her function as a classroom teacher or as the headmaster or the principal. Also, if the problem is related directly to school affairs and affects other parents too, it shall be brought up and discussed during the official PTA meeting, as it has been done in the past. This means that the mediation committee shall not be consulted for day-to-day problems, but only in case of exceptional issues and serious misunderstandings.
- 2) Everybody knows that it is more honorable and preferable to solve problems person to person. But all of us are merely imperfect human beings, and if feelings are running high, we don't listen to reason. This is exactly the point where the committee comes in: Before resolving to violence or doing anything stupid, everybody shall remember to approach the committee.
- 3) The NPS mediation committee shall consist of teachers in the school and some representatives of the Najude village elders and the village youth.
- 4) It is a known fact that different mentalities can be the source of misunderstanding, leading to hurt feelings where no offence was intended. This way, without any bad intention from either side, a conflict can evolve, just as described in the story of the Tower of Babel. Cultural identity and the customs and conventions that go along with it are actually a form of language, and people who don't speak the same language naturally have difficulties communicating. So the underlying reason for many conflicts between the teachers/the school and the villagers/the community is, in fact, a problem of communication. This is the case in almost all human relationships and conflicts, between individuals, ethnic and religious groups and nations alike.
- 5) Many of the NPS teachers hail from the southern and eastern parts of Nigeria. The pupils and students greatly benefit from their sound education, their academic excellence and their experience, and the school wouldn't be what it is today were it not for these teachers. But because they didn't grow up in the north, they may not fully know the local culture and its specific customs and conventions. The villagers, on the other hand, who are mostly not educated and have not travelled a lot, may also often misunderstand certain things the teachers say or do. In this constellation, as showed above, it is easy for a conflict to emerge. In this case, the NPS mediation committee shall come in and mediate between the two parties. The committee chairman, the secretary and the other NPS teachers in the committee share

the same cultural background with the villagers. At the same time, they are fully educated and have been living together with people from all parts of Nigeria. So they speak both cultural languages and are therefore perfectly suited to mediate between a teacher and a villager or, more broadly, between the school and the community: They can explain matters to the villagers in a way they will understand, even if things are complicated. And they can make the teachers understand why the villagers react and behave the way they do. As a mediator during a conflict, the committee speaks to the community on behalf of the teacher/school, and at the same time it speaks to the school on behalf of the villager/community.

- 6) As a long term goal, this will lead to an increased understanding of each other by learning from each other and by learning the different cultural languages. In the long run, this will ensure peace and harmony between the teachers and the villagers, and it is our firm belief that this is what everybody wants, isn't it?
- 7) Metaphorically speaking, the committee has the function of a valve: If there is too much steam in the room, it can contain the situation by lowering the pressure, thereby preventing an explosion that will destroy everything. This really is the whole point of the committee: It shall serve as a security mechanism and as a neutral retreat where the opponents can meet in dignity and solve their problems without using violence.
- 8) We shall never forget that all of us have one aim and one aim only: To provide all the children of this region with an excellent education which will help them throughout their lives. This school is a very big investment in the future, since the whole community will benefit from it, and it doesn't influence the students only, but also their children and grandchildren and future generations to come after them. Sometimes, if there is an argument or a misunderstanding, it is easy to forget this. So we officially want to remind all of us (villagers, parents, teachers, other staff members), that no matter what the problem is, we all act in concert. We shall not judge each other too harshly, and we shall be forgiving. Nobody is perfect, nobody is above mistake, and nobody possesses all the wisdom, so the only thing human beings can do in order to be able to live together is to forgive each other, again and again and again. We shall forgive others, and we are allowed to expect others to forgive us.
- 9) If, however, an argument or misunderstanding is so grave that it can't be solved otherwise, we now have, with this committee, an instrument that allows us to solve problems peacefully. It also allows everybody to keep his/her dignity, and there is no need and no place for violence.
- 10) This, however, also implies that if a teacher or villager still decides to ignore this committee and to take things into his/her own hands by launching threats and using violence, there has to be an ultimate penalty for this kind of behaviour. Because if a person is too stupid to accept help, if a person is so blind they can't see the stretched out hand right in front of them, they are beyond hope. Since nobody shall complain about not knowing this in the future, let the following be stated officially and openly in this document: If a teacher will escalate a conflict without approaching the committee, he/she will be sacked immediately and will have to leave the teachers' house within a week's notice. In the case of a villager doing the same thing, all his/her children will be expelled from school with immediate effect, and no other child from his/her family shall ever be accepted in the school again. It is as simple as that, and everybody has been warned. To use violence, with all the assistance and all the support now in place, will be nothing more than madness. There is simply no room for this kind of behaviour, and therefore it shall be rooted out and gotten rid of without any further discussion.

Signed
The NPS Mediation Committee