



Plateau Peace Practitioners Network

CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF PEACE

Journal VOL. 1



National Anthem

*Nigeria, we hail thee,
Our own dear native land,
Though tribes and tongues may differ
In brotherhood we stand,
Nigerians all, are proud to serve
Our sovereign Motherland.*

*Our flag shall be a symbol
That truth and justice reign,
In peace or battle honour'd,
And this we count as gain,
To hand on to our children
A banner without stain.*

*O God of all creation,
Grant this our one request.
Help us to build a nation
Where no man is oppressed,
And so with peace and plenty
Nigeria may be blessed.*

PREFACE:

As we commemorate the International Day of Peace in 2024, it is with immense pride and deep reflection that the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) unveils our inaugural Peace Journal, aptly titled "Cultivating the Culture of Peace in the Plateau." This publication stands as a collective testament to the relentless efforts of our members, peace builders, scholars, and community leaders who have dedicated their lives to fostering peace and harmony across the Plateau State.

This journal emerges at a crucial juncture in our shared journey towards peace a journey that is far from linear, but one that continues to evolve in response to the complexities of our time. The Plateau, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse communities, has long been a microcosm of both harmony and discord.

While we celebrate our victories in fostering peace, we must also acknowledge the long-standing challenges that still persist: historical grievances, ethnic and religious tensions, political instability, and social economic inequalities that threaten the fabric of social cohesion.

In the pages that follow, you will find a wealth of insights, analytical perspectives, and practical strategies that reflect the multifaceted nature of peace building in Plateau State and beyond. Each contribution in this journal serves not merely as an academic exercise, but as a roadmap for action, a compendium of lived experiences, and a repository of ideas from those at the forefront of peace efforts. Through these articles, case studies, reflections, and narratives we aim to provide a holistic understanding of peace its fragility, its potential, and the tireless efforts required to sustain it.

This inaugural edition is also a call to action. We recognize that peace, as a dynamic and ever-evolving concept, demands continuous investment both intellectual and material.

To this end, we urge the Plateau State Government to prioritize the establishment of a Peace Trust Fund, in collaboration with the Open Government Partnership.

Such a fund would not only symbolize a commitment to sustainable peace but also provide the necessary resources to support communities affected by conflict, rebuild social structures, and enable long-term peace building initiatives.

Furthermore, this journal serves as a critical reminder that peace is not solely the responsibility of governments or international organizations. It is the duty of all stakeholders civil society, religious institutions, youth organizations, women's groups, and local communities to nurture and sustain it. Peace cannot be imposed from above; it must be cultivated from within, through inclusive dialogue, community engagement, and the recognition of our shared humanity.

As we celebrate the launch of this Peace Journal, we also remain mindful of the long road ahead. The work of peace building is never complete. It is a continuous process, one that requires vigilance, patience, and, above all, commitment. We hope that this journal will serve not only as an academic resource but also as an inspiration for future generations of peace practitioners who will carry forward the mantle of peace and justice in Plateau State.

In closing, this journal is both a symbol of our achievements and a beacon for the future. It encapsulates our unwavering belief in the power of collective action, resilience, and the enduring human spirit.

We are confident that the knowledge and experiences shared within these pages will contribute significantly to the ongoing efforts to cultivate a sustainable culture of peace in the Plateau and beyond.

Let this journal be a clarion call for continued collaboration, reflection, and action, reminding us all that peace, while fragile, is attainable through shared commitment and purpose. Together, we can create a Plateau where peace not only survives but thrives.

Nanmak D. Bali

President, Plateau Peace Practitioners Network



As we mark the International Day of Peace and launch the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network's journal, 'Cultivating a Culture of Peace', I am reminded of the profound responsibility that rests on our shoulders to build a Plateau where every citizen can live in harmony, free from fear and violence.

My administration is committed to fostering a culture of peace, tolerance, and understanding among our diverse communities. We recognize that peace is not just the absence of conflict, but a state of being that requires deliberate effort, dedication, and collective responsibility.

Through our Plateau Peace Building Agency, we have been working tirelessly to promote dialogue, mediation, and community engagement, ensuring that every voice is heard and every grievance is addressed.

We are also working tirelessly, to build trust between law enforcement and our communities, and have launched various economic empowerment programs to address the root causes of conflict.

Furthermore, we are committed to reviewing and revitalizing the Plateau State Security Trust Fund, through the Open Government Partnership OGP to ensure that it is effective in supporting our peacebuilding efforts and providing the necessary resources for our security agencies, state and non-state actors and general peacebuilding architecture to keep our citizens safe.

But we know that government alone cannot build peace. That is why we are proud to partner with the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network, who share our vision of a peaceful Plateau.

This journal is a testament to the power of collaboration and the unwavering commitment of peace practitioners in our state. I urge you all to continue to work together, to share your knowledge, expertise, and experiences, and to support one another in this noble endeavor.



Congratulatory Message

Let us strive to create a Plateau where every child can grow up in peace, every woman can live without fear, and every man can thrive in a safe and inclusive environment.

Together, we can build a Plateau that is a beacon of hope, a shining example of what can be achieved when we work towards a common goal of peace, justice, and prosperity for all.

Thank you.
H.E Barrister Caleb Mufwang
Governor of Plateau State

Collaboration in Cultivating A Culture of Peace The Traditional Institution



*"Your Excellencies, distinguished guests,
and fellow peacebuilders,*

As we gather to mark the International Day of Peace and launch the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network's journal, 'Cultivating a Culture of Peace', I am reminded of the critical role that traditional rulers play in building and sustaining peace in our communities.

As the Gbong Gwon Jos and head of the Plateau State Traditional Council, I am proud to say that our traditional institutions have always been at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts in our state. We have a

deep understanding of our communities, their values, and their conflicts.

Our role as traditional rulers is not only to resolve disputes and mediate conflicts but also to promote dialogue, tolerance, and understanding among our people. We work closely with our communities to identify the root causes of conflict and address them before they escalate.

In partnership with the Plateau State Government and other stakeholders, we have been working to promote peace and stability in our state. We have established traditional councils and peace committees at the local level, which have been instrumental in resolving conflicts and promoting community cohesion.

As we move forward, we must recognize the importance of collaboration and partnership in building peace. We must work together with government, civil society, and other stakeholders to create a Plateau that is at peace with itself and the rest of the world. Let us continue to promote dialogue, mediation, and community engagement. Let us work together to address the root causes of conflict and build a culture of peace that is sustainable and inclusive.

**His Eminence
The Gbong Gwon Jos
Da, Dr Buba Gyang**
*Chairman, Plateau State Traditional
Council*

CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF PEACE: A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY



As we mark the International Day of Peace in Plateau State, we are reminded of the importance of fostering a culture of peace and harmonious coexistence among our diverse communities. The Plateau Peace Building Agency (PPBA), in partnership with the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN), is committed to deepening the ideals of sustainable peace through community engagement, systematic dialogue, and mediation.

We recognize that building peace is a collective responsibility that requires the active participation of all stakeholders. As we work towards creating a united, stable, and all-inclusive Plateau, we must prioritize trust-building, grassroots participation, and multilevel advocacy.

Our approach is centered on empowering communities to take ownership of peacebuilding processes, and we are committed to ensuring that every individual and group feels a sense of

responsibility for the peace and stability of our dear state.

As we move forward, we will continue to prioritize sustainable peace through resilience-building programming, healing past wounds, and preventing future conflicts. We will strengthen inter-communal relationships, encourage grassroots participation in conflict resolution, and equip local leaders and community members with the necessary skills for non-violent conflict management.

Together, we can build a Plateau that is at peace with itself and the rest of the world. Let us work towards a future where every individual can thrive in a safe, inclusive, and peaceful environment.

Julie Gwangmwa Sanda

Director General, Plateau State Peace Building Agency

Foreword

As members of the Advisory Board of the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN), it is both an honor and a privilege to present this inaugural edition of the Peace Journal, titled "Cultivating the Culture of Peace in the Plateau." This journal marks a pivotal moment in our collective endeavours to foster peace, social cohesion, and sustainable development within Plateau State and beyond.

In the spirit of the 2024 International Day of Peace, this publication reflects the tireless efforts of peace builders, scholars, and community leaders who have dedicated their lives to this noble cause. The publication of this journal could not be more timely.

Plateau State, with its rich and diverse cultural landscape, has long been a beacon of both unity and division. For decades, the region has faced deep-seated challenges, including historical grievances, ethnic and religious tensions, and social-political instability.

While these challenges continue to cast a shadow over our efforts, they have also sharpened our resolve to build a culture of peace that transcends divisions and promotes mutual understanding. It is against this backdrop that this journal emerges, offering a wealth of academic insights, practical strategies, and real-world experiences in peace building.

At the heart of this journal lies the recognition that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but a dynamic, evolving process that must be continually nurtured.

Peace building, particularly in a complex and diverse region like Plateau State, requires sustained commitment, adaptability, and innovation.

Within these pages, you will find a comprehensive exploration of these themes ranging from community-led dialogue initiatives to interfaith cooperation, youth empowerment, economic development, and the role of women in peace building.

Each article, case study, and reflection serves as both an academic resource and a call to action for all those engaged in the pursuit of lasting peace. However, peace cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires the active participation of all sectors of

society government, civil society, religious leaders, women's groups, youth organizations, and local communities.

As such, we strongly urge the Plateau State Government to take proactive steps in establishing a Peace Trust Fund in partnership with the Open Government Partnership.

Such a fund would symbolize a profound commitment to long-term peace building and provide essential support for the communities most affected by conflict.

By investing in peace, we invest in the future of our region laying the groundwork for development, social justice, and reconciliation.

This journal also serves as a reminder that peace is fragile, and the journey towards it is far from linear.

There will be setbacks, challenges, and obstacles along the way. Yet, through resilience, collective action, and a shared sense of purpose, we believe that peace is not only possible but attainable.

The contributors to this journal embody this belief, and we hope that their work will inspire both reflection and action within the broader peace building community.

As members of the Advisory Board, we take great pride in presenting this groundbreaking journal.

It represents not just a milestone in the journey towards peace, but a beacon for future generations who will continue the vital work of cultivating peace in Plateau State.

This journal stands as a testament to the power of knowledge, collaboration, and a shared commitment to the greater good.

In conclusion, we hope that "Cultivating the Culture of Peace in the Plateau" will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike. It is our sincere belief that the ideas, strategies, and experiences shared within these pages will contribute meaningfully to the ongoing efforts to build a peaceful, prosperous, and harmonious Plateau.

Let this journal be a source of inspiration, a platform for dialogue, and a catalyst for action.

Together, we can shape a future where peace thrives, and the Plateau becomes a model of unity, resilience, and development.

The Advisory Council of the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Hajiya Amina Ahmed | 5. Elder Amb. Justina Ngwobia | 9. Mugu Zakka Bako | 13. Hajiya Lantana Abdullahi |
| 2. Dr. Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba | 6. Prince Charles Dickson PhD | 10. Gad Shamaki PhD | 14. Ajang Daniel |
| 3. Mrs. Helen Philemon Haggai | 7. Sali Muhammed | 11. Hajiya Fatima Suleiman | 15. Rev. Samuel Goro |
| 4. Godwin Okoko | 8. Barr. Clement Iornongu | 12. Dr. Imran Abdulrahman | 16. John Danboyi |



EDITORIAL

As we stand on the threshold of the 2024 International Day of Peace, it is with profound optimism and deep reflection that the Tattaunawa Roundtable Initiative (TRICentre) presents this inaugural edition of the Peace Journal, aptly titled "Cultivating the Culture of Peace in the Plateau."

On behalf of the Plateau State Peace Practitioners Network. This publication represents not merely a collection of scholarly articles, stories, and reflections, but a culmination of years of collective efforts by peacebuilders, scholars, and community leaders striving to create a more peaceful and harmonious Plateau State.

At TRICentre, we recognize the importance of cultivating peace as both an intellectual pursuit and a lived experience. In Plateau State, where ethnic diversity, historical grievances, and socio-political tensions frequently intersect, the need for sustained and inclusive peacebuilding efforts has never been more critical. Peace, as we understand it, is not the mere absence of conflict but an ongoing process that requires deep commitment, robust engagement, and continuous reflection.

It is within this context that this journal emerges, offering a comprehensive look at the multifaceted nature of peacebuilding on the Plateau.

This publication arrives at a pivotal moment. As Plateau State continues to grapple with longstanding challenges—ethnic and religious tensions, political instability, economic disparities, and youth unemployment—there remains a pressing need for innovative solutions and fresh perspectives on how to cultivate lasting peace.

While much has been achieved in recent years through grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and interfaith collaborations, the road to enduring peace is fraught with

complexity. This journal seeks to shine a light on those complexities while offering tangible pathways forward.

The articles, case studies, and reflections contained within these pages reflect the collective wisdom of practitioners, researchers, and community leaders who have long been at the forefront of peace efforts in Plateau State. These contributions are not bound by rigid academic structures but are offered in the spirit of open dialogue, inclusive discourse, and practical application.

As such, they aim to inspire both reflection and action, providing readers with a roadmap for addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering sustainable peace.

One of the central themes of this edition is the recognition that peace is not a static goal, but a dynamic process that evolves in response to changing circumstances. To sustain peace, we must be willing to invest continuously—both intellectually and materially. As such, we strongly advocate for the establishment of a Peace Trust Fund in collaboration with the Plateau State Government and the Open Government Partnership.

This fund would serve as a critical resource, providing much-needed support for communities affected by conflict, facilitating the rebuilding of social structures, and enabling long-term peacebuilding initiatives that prioritize inclusivity and justice.

The journal also underscores an essential truth: peace cannot be achieved through the actions of governments and international organizations alone. It requires the active participation of all sectors of society. Civil society, religious institutions, youth organizations, women's groups, and local communities must all play their part in nurturing and sustaining peace. True peace is built from the ground

up—it emerges from within, through inclusive dialogue, community engagement, and the recognition of our shared humanity.

The insights offered in this journal, therefore, serve as a call to action for all stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to this collective endeavor.

As we celebrate the launch of this journal, we are reminded that peacebuilding is a journey, not a destination. It is an ongoing process that demands perseverance, creativity, and, above all, unwavering commitment.

We at TRICentre hope that this journal will not only serve as an academic resource for scholars and practitioners but also as a source of inspiration for future generations of peacebuilders. The knowledge, experiences, and strategies shared within these pages are meant to be a beacon for all who seek to carry forward the mantle of peace and justice in Plateau State.

In conclusion, this inaugural edition of the Peace Journal stands as both a testament to our shared achievements and a guiding light for the future. It embodies our collective belief in the power of dialogue, resilience, and collaboration. We are confident that the voices and perspectives contained within these pages will contribute significantly to the ongoing efforts to cultivate a sustainable culture of peace in Plateau State and beyond.

It is our sincere hope that this journal will serve as a clarion call for continued reflection, collaboration, and action. Peace, though fragile, is within our reach. Together, through shared commitment and purpose, we can create a Plateau where peace not only survives but thrives.

The Tattaunawa Roundtable Initiative (TRICentre)

Cultivating A Culture Of Peace In Plateau State Through Interfaith Dialogue And Cooperation

by Rev. Dr. Gideon Para-Mallam



OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Need for Cultivating a Culture of Peace on the Plateau
3. The Nexus Between Religion and Sustainable Peace
4. Inter-faith Dialogue: Catalyst for Sustainable Peace
4. 1. The Role of Religious Leaders in Peacebuilding
5. Conclusion
6. Recommendations

1. INTRODUCTION

Plateau State is endowed with temperate climate, serene landscape, beautiful vegetation, rich and diverse cultures. This has made the slogan: “Home of Peace and Tourism” very apt. Unfortunately, the Home of

Peace has become a shadow of its former self as violent attacks became more common and widespread after the 2001 sectarian crisis that rocked the serene city of Jos. For over two decades now, Plateau State has witnessed a vicious cycle of violent attacks in her communities which have persisted despite different peace initiatives and interventions. The cycle of violence comes with dire socio-economic consequences- in addition to the loss of thousands of lives and properties worth millions, sustained violence has forced large-scale displacements and impoverished communities. According to Crisis Group Africa Report (2012), factors that have instigated violence over the years include

economic, political and identity issues which encompasses ethnicity and religion. These factors fan the flames of ethno-religious distrust and mutual suspicion ultimately leading to violence. The aftermath of violence has seen the capital of the state, a city once lauded for its cosmopolitan outlook, become balkanized along ethnic and religious lines. For example, areas such as Angwan Rogo and Congo Russia which used to inhabit both Muslims and Christians from different ethnicities now predominantly inhabit Muslims. Similarly, Apata and Busa Buji areas which once boasted of Christians and Muslims living side by side have now become predominantly Christian communities. The status quo

deepens the “us versus them” mentality, persists, widens the divide that already exists and raises barriers to peace. This reality points to the need for concerted effort to be made to bridge the gap that currently exists between the different groups and communities in Plateau State and usher in a season of peace. Since religion forms part of the identity of most Plateau people, it can be leveraged on to build sustainable peace through inter-faith dialogue and cooperation.

2. NEED FOR CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF PEACE ON THE PLATEAU

Nothing is more precious than peace. Peace is the most basic starting point for the advancement of humankind. Daisaku Ikeda. Sustainable peace is needed for sustainable development. When a society is developed, its citizens enjoy a decent standard of living and have access to opportunities to grow as individuals in every aspect of their lives. A developed Plateau State will improve the social welfare of its people by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, functional transportation infrastructure, medical care, security and industrial development among others to all parts of the state. However, none of this can be achieved without peace. Thus, despite its potential to prosper economically, Plateau State—with its vast arable land, abundant mineral resource and viable environment for tourism, has not been able to realise its full potential due to lack of sustainable peace.

The result is the prevalence of poverty and lack of development in many parts of the state. According to the State of States report produced by BudgIT, Plateau State the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) has declined from N21.45bn IGR in 2021 to N15.93bn in 2022. This is not a surprise as investment opportunities eludes any society that is prone to violence. Investors are not keen to make investment in an insecure environment because that means their investment has less chances of yielding dividends.

From the foregoing we see that the need for peace in Plateau State. A peaceful Plateau will not only ensure individuals live to their full capacity but paves way development as individuals and businesses come in for businesses and trade. Without a conducive environment for investments, the state is unable to generate sufficient resources needed for development. Thus, without peace, development will continue to elude the State.

3. THE NEXUS BETWEEN RELIGION, CONFLICT AND PEACE

According to a report on visualcapitalist.com, 84% of the world's population identifies with a religious group. The five major religions as recorded by Pew Research Center are; Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism. In Nigeria, Plateau State specifically, majority of the population practices either Christianity or Islam. A minority practices different forms of indigenous religion (African Traditional Religion, ATR). Religion is a major part

of a person's identity and it provides a sense of meaning in a person's life. It is a powerful tool which can be utilized to achieve noble ideals for humankind or as a weapon of mutual destruction.

RELIGION AND CONFLICT

When it is manipulated by selfish people makes weaponizes religion for destructive purposes. Nigeria has suffered and is still suffering the consequences of religious manipulation. Many religious leaders serve as willing tools in the hands of corrupt politicians to promote a rhetoric of hate and entrench enmity in their followers. Mutual distrust makes tensions easily combustible as deeply traumatized survivors who have not had the opportunity to air their grievances become more prejudiced. This is not surprising. No matter how good something is, when managed poorly, it can become toxic. William Frost (2005) posits that religion can facilitate war if the following factors are present.

1. A group defines itself as a holy or chosen people with special obligations and privileges, particularly involving a right to a land.
2. Political and/or spiritual leaders come from the upper class, share common interests, and see in the religious teachings and institutions a means of gaining or maintaining power.
3. Priests and people are willing to use the political realm to institutionalize and/or enforce correct worship, doctrine, and ethical practices. Such a perspective can justify rebellion against corrupt

leaders or suppression of schismatics or heretics.

4. Alternative value systems and institutions are weak or lacking.

5. The state fails to provide an opportunity in which minority and/or majority faith communities can obtain political and religious rights and in which there is minimal interaction among religious leaders.

6. People of different faiths live in close proximity but the teachings and practices of their religions seem incompatible.

7. A group sees its truth as universal and is intolerant of other perspectives either within or outside of its religious tradition.

It is a result of one or more of the above factors as posited by Frost (2005) that Plateau State has been plagued by ethno-religious crises.

RELIGION AND PEACE

Though religion can be the fault line between people in a society as discussed above, religion can also serve as bridge towards peace and development. Professor of Human Evolutionary Biology, Joseph Henrich has shown that people who believe in God are more likely to treat others fairly. Thus, religion can be utilised for social cohesion and harmony. This is because religion makes people aspire to live above their animalistic instincts which humans easily get tempted to become if left to carry out their whims and caprices. Religion is capable of promoting self-discipline if pursued truthfully. Most religions in the world encourage adherents to love their neighbours and be just. This positions religion to serve

as a vehicle for spiritual and social development in the society as it promotes commitment to lofty ideals.

This is possible because “religion is a means of regulating a pattern of the life of a group of people”. It is through religion that most Nigerians develop ethical behaviour. Religious institutions and leaders therefore have a key role to play in promoting sustainable peace in Plateau State and Nigeria at large.

Religious institutions and leaders can foster peace either by educating their members, serving as advocates or mediating in conflicts to promote understanding between different faith communities. Religious leaders can also help in building trust between different religious groups by coming together to build bridges based on shared struggles and shared hope. Additionally, clear teaching of religious injunction is very vital since religions typically have a set of doctrines which followers are obligated to accept without question. This means that portions of religious texts that are ambiguous and subject to various interpretation should be broken down in simple language for followers to understand. This is important because religious extremists often misappropriate ambiguous portions of religious text to defend their act of extremism as good and to influence vulnerable young people to become extremists too. Religious leaders need to emphasize the right interpretation and application of scripture and encourage

their followers to abide by them even as they lead by example.

Furthermore, religion can be a powerful tool for promoting peaceful co-existence because the teachings of different religions including Christianity and Islam emphasize the importance of cultivating inner peace which is the pre-requisite for an individual becoming tolerant. If religious teachers help individuals have inner peace, this can ultimately lead to a more peaceful and tolerant society. The need for this has been recognized by UNESCO whose constitution highlights the importance of constructing defenses of peace in the minds of individuals. This is why the Bible admonishes Christians to guard their hearts with all diligence. Through religion, we can celebrate a shared sense of values and unite for the pursuit of peace. Religion should serve as a bridge not a wall.

4. INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION: CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Inter-faith dialogue is an imperative in the search for sustainable peace on the Plateau. Ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common source of suspicion and mistrust between people leading to war. Once conflict becomes violent, each group becomes biased and holds an increasingly negative image of another group, eventually dehumanizing its members and excluding them from the realm of moral obligation (Deutsch 2006b; Konner 2006; Staub 1989). These processes can provide a justification for

violence (Staub 1989). When people feel that they have nothing in common with those of another group, they can easily be mobilized to carry out violence against that group. As Douglas P. Fry (2014) posits, “in times of conflict, the psychological states that accompany group identity can feed hostility and facilitate intergroup violence.”

This is why dialogue between people across divides is vital especially in a diversely multicultural and multireligious society as Plateau State. Differences in culture and religions can become sources of misunderstanding and misunderstanding if not handled properly can lead to conflict which can result in violence. Like Albert Einstein said, “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.” Dialogue has proven to be indispensable tool in transforming conflicts and promoting peace; it can take place between members of different ethnic groups, religious groups or even class. Because of its welcoming nature, religion captures a broader scope of any population. Thus, inter-faith dialogues often provide an avenue for those at the grassroots to be part of the peacebuilding process. When those at the grassroots who are directly affected by violence are brought together to engage in dialogue, a path of healing, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration of broken relationships will be uncovered as mutual trust is restored. For this reason, inter-faith dialogue leads to inter-religious cooperation which ultimately creates religious harmony- a prerequisite for a peaceful society. Inter-faith dialogue as a process of communication and

interaction between people of different faiths with the aim of building mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation has the potential to serve as a powerful catalyst for peace and break the cycle of violence in divided societies such as Plateau State where interreligious tensions can easily lead to significant violence. Because it goes beyond talking and encompasses a commitment to listening, learning, and engaging in constructive conversation, inter-faith serves as a bridge that connects individuals across religious divides and facilitates deeper understanding of shared values. When each group acknowledges the commonalities that exist among their faiths and their shared sufferings as a result of violence, communities can build trust and overcome misconceptions that often fuel conflicts. At the heart of inter-faith dialogue is the need to break down barriers between faith communities. Yet achieving inter-faith cooperation can be a complex and long-term process likely to face obstacles such as mistrust, fear and political manipulation. Thus, the importance of sustained efforts and long-term commitment to dialogue cannot be overemphasized.

4.1. ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Religious leaders wield great influence in Nigeria and Plateau State is not an exception. Most people defer to a religious leader as the voice of God. Globally, some of the greatest peace builders of the 20th century such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr. were religious leaders. They all advocated for nonviolence. Thus, the religious leaders in Plateau State can be

instrumental in creating a culture of peace in the state. They can do this by using their platform to advocate for non-violence. They can foster peace either by educating their members, serving as advocates for peaceful co-existence or serving as mediators between conflicting parties. Religious leaders can also help in building trust between different religious groups by coming together to build bridges based on shared struggles and shared hope. Additionally, clear teaching of religious injunction is very vital since religions typically have a set of doctrines which followers are obligated to accept without question. This means that portions of religious texts that are ambiguous and subject to various interpretation should be broken down in simple language for followers to understand. Religious extremists often misappropriate ambiguous portions of religious text to defend their act of extremism as gold and to influence vulnerable young people to become extremists too. Thus, religious leaders need to emphasize the right interpretation and application of scripture and teach obedience to the scripture by living out what the preach. When religious leaders take the lead to promote understanding between different faith communities, a culture of peace is entrenched in the society.

5. CONCLUSION

Religion is a global phenomenon that forms part of human identity. Using religion to create division and hate is a sure path to mutual-collective destruction as we are witnessing in Plateau State and Nigeria as a whole. To save Plateau State from further declining, creating sustainable peace must be a priority of the government and

all citizens. “Peace is not passive, arising from a simple lack of conflict. Peace is active, transformative.”- H.E. Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar (2021). It is imperative that everyone is carried along and encouraged to take ownership of the peace process.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT

1. There is need to go beyond conflict resolution to conflict transformation. The Plateau State Peace Building Agency which was created to create a culture of peace on the Plateau should be tasked with creating a program aimed at awakening the consciousness of Plateau citizens on their responsibility to peace.
2. The government must not be seen to be taking sides or treating perpetrators of violence with kid gloves. If the people cannot trust the government to deliver justice, reprisal attacks will continue.
3. Respect for Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) should be enforced. Use of discriminatory words that reinforces religious intolerance such as arne (infidel) and kafir (pagan) should be treated as hate speech and those culpable should be punished.
4. Government should seek long-term solutions to the tensions and grievances among communities and pursue meaningful dialogue about peaceful ways of resolving these tensions at all levels.

6.2. RECOMMENDATION FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS/INSTITUTIONS

1. Religious leaders should refrain from making statements that incite violence or

encourage hostility and prejudice towards other ethnic or religious communities.

2. In situations of potential tension, religious leaders should not be on the fence. They should explicitly and publicly call on members of their communities to refrain from resorting to violence.
3. Join hands with other religious leaders to create a safe and non-threatening space for open and frank discussions from a truth-telling perspective.
4. Interfaith dialogues, cultural exchanges, and collaborative projects can serve as catalysts for building trust and fostering a sense of shared humanity. This should form part of the mission of religious institutions and should be captured in yearly plans.

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ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP: A PATHWAY TO PEACE AND SOCIAL COHESION

By Rev. Samuel A. Goro



INTRODUCTION

In alignment with the United Nations' theme for the 2024 International Day of Peace, "Cultivating the Culture of Peace," this discourse explores the pivotal role of adaptive leadership in fostering peace, social cohesion, and resilience. This theme underscores the importance of cultural values that support the cessation of conflicts, promote peaceful coexistence among diverse groups, and facilitate community development and nation-building.

As we reflect on these values within the context of Plateau State, Nigeria, it is essential to examine how adaptive leadership can serve as a dynamic and forward-thinking approach, equipping leaders to navigate complex and uncertain environments while fostering resilience, innovation, and the capacity to lead through change.

Understanding Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is a conceptual framework that transcends traditional notions of leadership, which often emphasize position, title, privilege, and power. This conventional focus can be limiting, as it may inhibit the ability of individuals and communities to solve problems autonomously, thereby stifling creativity and innovation. Instead, adaptive leadership emphasizes the importance of resilience, the capacity to innovate, and the ability to guide through change.

In contemporary leadership discourse, there is growing recognition that the most effective leaders are those who can adapt to changing circumstances while remaining anchored in core principles.

Tony Elumelu, a renowned business leader and

philanthropist, echoes this sentiment in his work, *Leading by Example: A Journey of Business, Philanthropy, and Service*. Elumelu identifies five key aspects of adaptive leadership that are essential for success:

1. **Demanding Excellence:** Leaders must set high standards and strive for excellence in all endeavors.
2. **Unlocking Potential:** Effective leaders recognize and cultivate the latent talents within their teams, helping individuals realize abilities they may not have known they possessed.
3. **Leading by Example:** True leadership is demonstrated through actions that inspire others to follow.
4. **Impacting Others:** Leaders must be committed to making a positive difference in the lives of those they lead.
5. **Recognizing and Developing Talent:** Identifying

and nurturing talent within the team is crucial for collective success.

These principles align closely with the tenets of adaptive leadership, which requires leaders to be both visionary and pragmatic, capable of navigating the complexities of modern leadership landscapes.

The Leadership Landscape: Navigating Complexity

The contemporary leadership landscape is characterized by its multifaceted and ever-evolving nature. Leaders today operate within an intricate web of internal organizational dynamics and broader societal and global contexts.

Understanding and navigating this landscape requires a keen awareness of the challenges, opportunities, and complexities that influence leadership practices.

In this context, the assumption that leadership is synonymous with titles or positions is a misconception. True leadership is not conferred by status but is earned through the ability to influence, inspire, and set a positive example for others. It is

about fostering environments where human capital can thrive, driving collective progress toward shared goals.

Adapting to Change: A Necessity for Peace building

As we transition from an analog to a digital era, the pace of change has accelerated, bringing new challenges and opportunities. For those working to promote peace and social cohesion in Plateau State, this shift necessitates a re-evaluation of strategies and approaches. Conflict, by its nature, is dynamic, and our responses must evolve accordingly. Change is inevitable and must be embraced with a positive mindset.

Adapting to new circumstances does not mean abandoning core principles or compromising values; rather, it involves recognizing that the context has changed and that our approaches to problem-solving must be revised to remain effective. Adaptive leadership, in this sense, is not about relinquishing ideals but about innovatively applying them in ways that resonate with contemporary

realities. This approach is critical in peace building efforts, where the ability to respond to evolving challenges with flexibility and creativity is paramount.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of adaptive leadership offers a valuable framework for addressing the complex challenges of peace building and social cohesion in our increasingly dynamic world. By cultivating leadership that is resilient, innovative, and responsive to change, we can build stronger, more cohesive communities capable of withstanding the pressures of modernity.

As we celebrate the 2024 International Day of Peace, let us commit to fostering adaptive leadership within our communities, recognizing that true leadership is not about titles or positions but about the ability to inspire, influence, and guide others through change. Through this lens, we can cultivate a culture of peace that is resilient, inclusive, and sustainable.



Conflict, Gender and Peace building

By Gad Peter PhD



INTRODUCTION:

Historically, societies have traversed a tumultuous path marked by a series of violent conflicts, ranging from interstate wars to communal clashes.

In recent times, a disturbing surge in global violence has emerged, driven by a growing thirst for geopolitical power balance and exacerbated by transnational factors such as advancements in information and communications technology, population movements, and the impacts of climate change (World Bank & United Nations, 2018; Cilliers, 2018).

Since the 1960s, when many African nations gained their independence, the continent has grappled with a complex web of factors contributing to violent conflicts.

These factors, including weak governance, historical animosities, exclusionary politics, contested legitimacy, resource competition, external pressures, globalized conflicts,

and extremist ideologies, have continually shaped the trajectory of peace and stability in the region (Duoma, 2003; Gilpin, 2015).

Despite multiple endeavors aimed at fostering sustainable peace, instability remains a persistent and pressing challenge in various parts of Africa. This issue is particularly pronounced in the Great Lakes and Sahel region, where millions of lives have been tragically lost, and extensive property damage has occurred (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015).

Nigeria in Focus:

In Nigeria, violent conflicts continue to surge at varying levels, manifesting in ways relating to politics, economy, religion, ethnicity, ideology and extreme forms of behavior (Wika, 2014).

Examples of such violent conflicts include unknown gunmen and IPOB in South East, militancy in the South South

and abduction in the South West. Although violent conflicts cut across different parts of the country, in the last 16 years, the three geo-political zones of North-West, North East, and North-Central Nigeria have continued to experience more devastating cases than other parts of the country (Crisis Group, 2020). Different reasons have been canvassed for the upsurge in violent conflicts generally in Nigeria. These include social inequality, or the wide gap between the elite and the masses; unfulfilled political and economic promises; high unemployment rate, poverty, injustices, human rights abuses; and poor service provisions, among other reasons (Adeleke & Olaniyi, 2021).

All of these issues lead to frustration and make people aggressive, consequently bringing about the floating of insurgent's group, which many people are driven to join for self-assistance and sustenance. Violent conflicts in Nigeria have inflicted damages on the economy, politics, and peaceful co-existence among individuals and groups. Conflicts have also led to heavy depletion of human resources and /or displacement of persons, weakening of the state apparatus and increasing threats of secession (Sha, 2005).

Over the years, the violent conflicts escalated in nomenclature from issues of

identity and politics to other forms such as farmer-herder conflicts, the crisis of displacement and land grabbing. For instance, between 2001 and 2019, violence has killed more than 7,000 people in both the city and rural areas of Plateau State (Krause, 2019, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, ACLED, 2018).

More recently, the conflicts manifest in different forms including killings and burning of houses, destruction of crops on several hectares of farmland especially in agrarian communities raising fears of food insecurity in the nearest future.

This dimension of the crisis has grave humanitarian consequences as majority of the victims are rendered homeless and end up as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Gender and Impact of Violent Conflicts:

Violent Conflicts in whatever form have devastating impact on the society. Apart from the general breakdown of law and order, displacement of citizens, gross human rights violations and alteration of community structures (Best, 2008), however, it impacts men and women differently.

In other words, the way violent conflicts affect women is not

the same way it affects men. While conflict exposes men to a range of vulnerabilities, trauma, and physical injuries with resultant consequences, women and young girls have also been confronted with challenges such as forced displacements, forced adjustment, poor healthcare and other related complications, rape, physical assault, emotional and psychological abuse (Babayo & Sambo, 2021).

Similarly, as a result of high mortality of men during conflicts, widows are created. Violent conflict benefits few and tends to exacerbate the negative consequences of inequalities and marginalization.

The unequal position of women in society has posed a great threat to them. It has exposed them to vulnerable conditions in the society; they are victims of domestic and other violent conflict.

The Beijing Platform for Action also states that while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, political instability and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their social status and gender in society.

The patriarchal nature of society and the corresponding social roles being ascribed to women and girls makes them

more victims of violent conflict and also makes it very difficult for them to cope/adjust during and after violent conflict situations.

Impact on Women:

The question may be asked, why women? From a global standpoint, a report from International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) shows that at the end of 2018, out of the estimated 41 million people recorded as facing internal displacement worldwide as a result of violence or conflict, the largest number of that population constituted women and girls. Several scholars suggest that extended armed conflict may have a more disastrous effect on women than men even aggravating psychological distress caused by the continuous conflict (Usta, Farver, 2008).

This heightened tendency on women's well-being often relates to their already unequal and disproportionate placement in the societal structure which condition worsens in the context of the violent conflict (Rostami, 2003).

Plumper and Neumayer (2006) postulate "that most combatants in armed conflicts are men, so naturally, men are the major direct victims of military operations". However, armed conflicts have important indirect negative consequences on agriculture, infrastructure, public health provision, and social order.

These indirect consequences are often overlooked and underappreciated but they affect women-arguably more so than men. They argued that armed conflict impacted on female life expectancy relative to male. In peacetime, women typically live longer than men".



Hence, armed conflict tends to decrease the gap between female and male life expectancy.

Women suffer more severely from the damage to the health and other infrastructure and the wider economic damage as well as from displacement and dislocation during and after conflict. The situation is further compounded as most health facilities that take care of women's health issues are in short supply or completely out of place.

For instance, most primary health care facilities which are usually more patronized by women for prenatal and post-natal services are usually destroyed by the conflict, and thus, complicating the health and general conditions of women.

According to the UNICEF Report (2005), "girls in conflict torn-environment experience difficulties entering and staying in school due to widespread gender discrimination, with 60 percent not attending primary school and 88 percent failing to achieve secondary levels." During conflict situation, resources become very more limited thereby making parents to prioritize the education of boys over girls.

Often girls were expected to tend the house and prepare for eventual marriage rather than go to school. The absence of educational and employment opportunities has resulted in many young girls being driven into commercial sex work, early marriages, or continued poverty. This therefore goes further to suggest that, the experience of women and men in conflict differs.

Conclusion and

Recommendations:

It is, therefore, regrettable and unfortunate to note that despite the fact that women are usually the most affected in crisis situation, they are usually not actively involved as part of decision makers or as solution on issues that affect them directly. In most cases, the men who are perceived to be superior, take decision on behalf of women, leaving women to face the consequences.

This is not unconnected with the belief that women's place is in the kitchen and this belief starts from the family through primary socialization where the girl child is usually not given equal opportunities compared to her male folk in the area of education, occupation, inheritance and decision-making processes.

It is on this note, that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325, which recognizes that armed conflict impacts women differently from men. It demands protection of women and girls during armed conflict and post conflict situations.

The resolution recognizes women role as peace builders and agents of change and calls on UN and member states, civil society and the international community to ensure women's increased participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and all peace processes, reconstruction decisions and programs.

The resolution further stress that peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men and affirms the equal access and full participation of women in

power structures and in all efforts geared towards peace and security as essential. The resolution is rooted in the premise that women's inclusion, participation in the process, perspectives and contributions are crucial to the dialogue and will improve the chances of attaining viable and sustainable peace.

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Community Engagement and Social Cohesion: A Double Helix

By Lilian Pwoli

As the world grapples with issues stemming from the pluralistic nature of most societies as a result of differences like backgrounds, and experiences of groups and individuals, social scientists and development aid workers are continuously challenged with the responsibility of thinking a way out of the numerous problems posed by diversity in the human society.

Understandably, the beliefs and values of people are deeply rooted in their experiences and backgrounds, which have over time, shaped their thoughts and mindsets, it is also catalytic for the adoption and adaptation of certain cultures and traditions. Explicitly, diversity cannot be ruled out in any human society,

considering the different experiences that have contributed to moulding individuals.

The poor understanding of this reality has contributed to stereotyping and prejudice in human society, and these have become avenues through which strife and conflicts are developed.

The inevitability of conflicts in human society is a reality that leaves peace builders to seek alternatives for promoting peaceful and harmonious coexistence, particularly in multi-ethnic and multi-religious settings where diverse cultures and traditions inform the mindsets and ideologies of people.

How can social cohesion be built to reduce conflicts and

promote peaceful and harmonious coexistence?

Global best practices from shared learnings and experiences have shown how principles such as access to resources, equity, participation, human rights and diversity have been embraced in the development field as approaches to building social cohesion and narrowing the existing gaps caused by diversity, particularly in areas that have suffered protracted violent conflicts. Social cohesion is a broad concept with policy implications and is often highlighted as a societal good that improves human well-being, and health. Proponents of the theory of social cohesion developed it as a tool to address social inequalities such as



marginalisation and exclusion, and build trust and a sense of belonging to the members of a community.

In alignment, a great strategy adopted by development experts across the globe to drive social cohesion in human societies has been community engagement.

Although researchers have found a lack of a formal measurement of the concept due to the inconsistencies associated with the definition over time, it may become a complex term for users in different fields who may be studying the same concept and such studies might lead to personal interpretations (Clarke, et al, 2023).

However, it has remained widely used to understand social relations, human well-being and the understanding of diversity and peaceful coexistence.

The concept is also rich in literature directed at its socio-economic and sociocultural aspects, impacting the frequency of use.

According to literature, the word 'community' is broadly used to describe groups of people.

It may also be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of practice), or a community of affiliation or identity such as industry or sporting club (Department of Environment and Primary Industries).

Studies reveal that the concept of community engagement refers to an enhanced engagement of communities to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, decision-making, or implementation of development interventions.

Studies also suggest that strategies that are sensitive to the community context in which

they occur are recommended for adoption in this regard.

The concept of 'community engagement' is built on a framework of guiding principles, strategies, and approaches that consider the right of community members to be informed, consulted, involved and empowered.

It employs a range of tools and methodologies to ensure its effectiveness. It also places importance on fostering and enhancing trust as a critical element in long-term, sustainable engagement and successful governance (NIH, 2016).

To broaden the scope and shift focus from individual to collective, with the connected implications for inclusiveness, the term 'community' has been linked to 'engagement' to guarantee a consideration of existing diversity within any community.

Community engagement is therefore, enshrined in processes reflective of collaboration with and through groups of people interconnected by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those affected by the issues identified.

It is such a powerful agency that leads to the transformational growth of its members and often requires partnerships and coalitions that contribute to resource mobilisation to influence systems, impact relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for shaping policies, programs, and practices (CDC, cited in McCloskey et al, 2017).

Pragmatically, community engagement is a mix of both science and art.

Existing studies suggest that science comes from sociology,

public policy, political science, cultural anthropology, organisational development, psychology, social- psychology and other disciplines.

It also comes from concepts drawn from the literature on community participation, community development, constituency building, and community psychology.

On the other hand, Art comes from the skill, understanding, and sensitivity applied in adapting science, in ways that suit the context and the purposes of the specific engagement efforts (Clarke et al, 2023).

While adopting this strategy for intervention, it is crucial to understand that it is complex and labour-intensive. It also requires exclusive resources such as time, funding, and people with the required, skills.

In linking the concepts of community engagement and social cohesion it is important to underscore the former as a vehicle or medium that leads to achieving an objective, vision or goal, hence, social cohesion.

The importance of connecting community engagement and social cohesion in major developmental discourses of pluralistic societies, particularly those driven by extremist ideologies cannot be overstated.

This is critical for peace building processes and should be seen as two sides of a coin, or a double helix functioning parallel to produce desired outcomes.

Thus, be promoted and adopted by both state and non-state actors in the development aid sector, for effective and sustainable outcomes in development interventions.

McCloskey et al (2017) acknowledge that the concepts are both current public policy priorities, though not without gaps.

This shows how important these are for development experts. However, despite how invaluable these concepts have become, they are inadvertently characterised by certain difficulties in application. Hence, require intentionality in their use. Programme/Project managers need to be deliberate about planning. A great level of proactiveness is essential for people responsible for planning or designing development interventions. It is important to adopt or promote community engagement as a strategy for intervention while considering the representation of diversity and population needs and understanding how identified barriers could be addressed to encourage community cohesion, rather than increasing competition within and between communities. This is because experience has shown that community or traditional leaders do not necessarily represent the voices of disadvantaged or marginalised groups women or younger people. Therefore, the selection process of participants in any intervention should follow carefully developed selection criteria, bearing in mind the project goal and target. Other barriers that can affect the effectiveness of this approach and strategy, include poor communication strategy, language barrier especially in local communities and the use of English, lack of time or poor time management. All these can contribute to making it more difficult for communities to get fully involved or have their concerns factored into the implementation process. These barriers can be exacerbated by the discontinuity

and fragmentation of governance and political structures. Where new government stakeholders take over the leadership of relevant agencies important to the success of planned development interventions, advocacies will be required to bring them to speed with updated information about the progress of intervention and seek continuous support. This means additional resources will be needed to forestall such unforeseen circumstances from negatively impacting interventions. Such complexities pose problems as the shifting landscape of service delivery and governance is even more bewildering, making community engagement more problematic. For instance, in the context of Plateau State, where households are dispersed across local areas, and service points become inaccessible due to insecurity amidst the protracted violent conflicts leading to forceful displacements. The most appropriate strategies for engaging such communities should be carefully considered to ensure the intervention reaches the target population. Additionally, jobs and language skills may turn out difficult to manage. A population with farming as their major occupation may end up displaced and found in communities with no available farmlands to cultivate, making them adapt to trading as a means of coping to support livelihood concerns. This also requires community engagement structures at such levels as well. As invaluable as the approach of social cohesion is to development intervention, using the community engagement strategy, it is important for Programme managers to, carefully study the pros and

cons, and anticipated gaps planned for in the project design to enhance the effectiveness of the processes, for effective and sustainable outcomes.

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By Rev. Ahuche Peter Zaka PhD

ABSTRACT

Terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, etc. is becoming a norm in the Nigerian society today. The print and social media are daily awash with such news and hardly does a day pass without news of such. People no longer feel safe as they travel on our highways or go to sleep at night.

This is threatening the stability and continual existence of Nigeria as one indivisible nation. Religion which is supposed to be the way to relate with the Supreme Being and a uniting factor (since it is a belief in the Supreme Being) seems to be the very potent dividing force in this nation.

People kill or are killed in the name of religion and so many tend to lose faith in religion and so are advocating for the return to tradition religion, because just as Chinua Achebe said, “they came and destroyed that which binds us together: (paraphrased). The Implication of Insecurity on the People and Nation at large in all spheres of the Nigerian society cannot be over emphasized as evident in the educational sector, looming hunger, the socio-economic and

even on spiritual lives of the populace; leading to Lack of justice and equity, Poverty, etc. this paper which adopts survey method seeks to suggest ways to address this menace

BACKGROUND

Terrorism and Insecurity – banditry, kidnappings, etc. have become a norm in the Nigerian society today. From the menace of Maitatsine to Boko Haram, to Killer herders, etc. People no longer feel safe as they travel on our highways or go to sleep at night.

This is threatening the stability and continual existence of Nigeria as one indivisible nation. Religion which is supposed to be the way to relate with the Supreme Being and a uniting factor (since it is a belief in the Supreme Being) seems to be the very potent dividing force in this nation.

People kill or are killed in the name of religion and so many tend to lose faith in religion and so are advocating for the return to tradition religion, because just as Chinua Achebe said, “they came and destroyed that which binds us together: (paraphrased).

It is also no longer news that lives and properties are daily destroyed to the detriment of the good image of Plateau State known as the State of Peace and Tourism.

This is really affecting the investment opportunity for the State that is not only a tourist attraction, but a State well-endowed with both human and natural resources.

These resources if fully harnessed would bring employment opportunities, increase the wealth of the state and promote the economy of the entire nation.

Unfortunately, there looms the danger of hunger as insecurity has hampered both farming and mining activities across the State. Similarly, the youths who are supposed to be vanguards of wealth and greatness of the State are today enslaved in different negative activities like drugs, promiscuity and other vices that are detrimental to their health and general productivity.

THE PROBLEM

Intolerance, religious fanaticism, Reprisal attacks, hate speeches, wrong practice of religion,

politization of religion, religious intolerance, etc.: The underlisted are some reasons for violence in the name of religion:

a. Misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Scriptures and Misuse of Religion: Owing to lack of in-depth understanding, outright ignorance, sheer mischief or whimsical and capricious interpretations/misinterpretation of scriptural texts towards predetermined ends championed by religious fanatics/fundamentalism. Some people use religion as a cover for ethnic unrest, for all round discrimination, as a vehicle for disunity. Closely related to the above is preaching Unforgiveness, Vengeance and Reprisal attacks which has become the order of the day.

Media propaganda: Bias, unconfirmed, untrue, and doctored reports tailored at suiting the reporters and their sponsors or audiences, thereby inciting carnage are now rampant. The Print and social media have most often contributed to the crisis, reprisal attacks etc. in Nigeria.

Any time there is crisis, you find inciting messages and gory photo-shopped pictures including videos to aggravate the crisis. Government indifference seen in the continuous shielding of perpetrators and the lack of will in maintaining the rights and safety of citizens. Selective justice is now the order of the day with religion as the determining factor and not who is guilty

Corruption which is a canker work in the Nigerian society and all parts of the world is spreading like gangrene on a daily basis in

all ramification of human endeavour.

People have become inhumane to the extent of taking advantage of others and deny them their rights. All forms of evil are perpetuated today in different guises as get-quick syndrome as pervaded the entire society at the detriment of others peace, security and wellbeing.

This development too has put our society backward and raising a generation that does not see integrity as what pays off. This menace has not only brought hardship on the populace but it has turned the once peaceful and loving Nigerians to criminals, angry, and depraved people who can do anything to make ends meet.

Obviously, today, the problem facing our society especially moral decadence and insecurity is a collective irresponsibility of the religious leaders on one hand and the parents on the other.

The religious leaders seem to have abandoned their God-given responsibility of turning back the hearts of men in this perverse generation to their creator and helping them to lead godly lives through religious instructions as contained in their holy books.

But out of greed, deviated from the path of truth, are engaged in hate speeches, and championing violence against humanity responsible for the spate of destruction of lives and property. They have failed to mobilize their congregants to do the needful for the "Common Good" of all humanity. While the parents seem to abandon their responsibility of nurturing their children in the fear of the Lord. Indigene/settler divide and Separation of loving areas according to religion and ethnicity

Parental failure, Pursuit of money at the detriment of raising godly children (the money we acquire and the empire we struggle to build may be destroyed by the children we fail to raise).

Pursuit of money instead of education by the youths, Extravagant lifestyle and promiscuity, Pursuit of pleasure instead of spirituality.

Lack of equal opportunities leading to frustration, lack of justice and equity, lack of fair hearing and partial/selective justice - in every society where there is no equal right and justice, peace becomes a stranger there.

Unfortunately, in the Nigerian society people are hardly placed in positions of authority based on their qualifications but based on their ethnic, religious and social affiliations.

Similarly, many people have lost confidence on the judicial system and security architecture of this nation due to delay and denial of justice.

This is breeding agitations, reprisal attacks, circle of violence, etc. the common saying, Justice delayed is justice denied is true in this situation.

Unemployment, Hunger and Poverty – it is no longer news that Nigeria, the one-time Giant of Africa is becoming the hub of poverty in spite of her vast human and natural resources. The citizens are wallowing in abject poverty while the wealth of the nation is circulating in few hands and stacked most times in foreign accounts.

So, people can do anything to make a living including causing instability and destroying the lives and properties of others. One little wonder why anytime there is unrest, shops and

warehouses become targets.

THE EFFECT

Implication of Instability on the People and Nation at large
Educational – This development affects theological education and secular education as seen in incessant strikes, production of half-baked professionals, educational backwardness in some quarters where there are no private schools, decline in the educational standards as we have crash programs and school drop-outs, since only the rich can afford private schools, we produce youths who end up as nuisance to the society and threat to lives of students and lecturers. More widows, widowers and orphans are produced daily as the circle of violence continues. More Internally displaced persons and caps are littered around the State. These results to high level of promiscuity, diseases, drug addiction, abortion, etc. Because, people are lumped together in camps for displaced persons without adequate security, privacy and provision of

essential social amenities. Similarly, it breeds disunity, suspicion, fear, proliferation of arms and leading to Reprisal attacks, lack of faith in the government. Socio-economic implications: it negatively impacts the family ties and solidarity Christians and Muslims are known for in Northern Nigeria, and has affected economic activities in the North with looming hunger due to herdsmen bandits attack that hindered farming activities. Investors won't come, business premises are destroyed, business activities halted or hampered, no business opportunities, death of bread winners, reduction in work force. More so, Prostitution and unwanted pregnancies, destruction of social amenities, affects the good image of the State, bonds of unity, peace and progress are broken, while all forms of vices come to play. Spiritual implication: Religion that we seem to be protecting and hold in high esteem is now given a bad name and even religious activities are affected due to curfew, and other security

challenges, therefore, spiritual activities are hindered.

1.4 Past efforts

Government agencies
Security efforts
Interreligious relations
Non-Governmental organizations

1.5 Failures of past efforts

Not being proactive
Cosmetic approach to security issues
Dealing with the fruits instead of the root causes of insecurity and Biases in dealing with Tribalism and Nepotism. Injustice and Paying lip services Activities of conflict merchants Governments insensitivity to citizens need and rights.

Ways forward

We need to go back to the drawing board where security is everyone's business and every child is everyone's child. Evil doers should not be shielded but exposed by religious, community, traditional rulers and parents

Unity among Religious and



Traditional Leaders: If religious figures come together, it shows communities that there is no reason why they should see their identity in conflict with one another. But that they have more in common than that which divides them.

Preaching and teaching on peaceful coexistence: They should dwell more on what binds us together than on what divides us. They should concentrate on our common humanity and the sanctity of human lives and sacredness of holy sites.

Exemplary lives: They should sue for peace and interfaith dialogue; and avoid extreme perception. They should lead by example

Regulating against hate preachers: Avoid hate speeches and raise policies/punitive measures against violators. Inculcate the fear of God, accountability and the fact that leadership is a higher calling that everyone involved in it would give account before his creator on the day of retribution. (Ecc. 12:1-3).

Dialogue and walking the talk and not only talking the walk. It is not primarily a search for agreement or solutions, although it can serve as a foundation for collaborative action and coexistence. In dialogue, participants are expected to seek or find "common ground" no one is asked to compromise their core religious-ethnic beliefs or values.

Promoting National peace and forgiveness. Calling for seminars, workshops, prayer sessions, etc. to seek God's face for all our inhumane treatments to one another. This may bring healing, thereby, fostering peaceful coexistence and nation-building.

Discouraging jungle justice and vengeance but promoting the spirit of forgiveness. Promoting the teaching on peace, dialogue and religious harmony in all schools from the primary to the tertiary institutions to raise a generation that will not only tolerate one but would co-exist as it was before.

Discourage reprisal attacks because: it only makes you the same as the other wicked ones; makes you a criminal; set you against God; makes you guilty of murder, it obstructs peace and continues the circle of violence, it is a proof of unforgiveness, it is a target at the wrong and innocent people, it sets you against man and God, it amounts to taking laws into your hands, etc. Just as we expect God to forgive us, let us also extend the same forgiveness to our offenders as instructed in the Bible.

The Government should set aside special Award nights at all levels to appreciate and honour worthy youths who have contributed in one way or the other; Empowerment of the Youths, creation of Job or/and economic opportunities; and strive to join hands with relevant stakeholders to deradicalize religious fundamentalists and fanatics. Similarly, "the book" should be sought for and perpetrators punished or prosecuted to serve as deterrent to others.

Encouraging parental responsibilities as against Negative Parenting. The home front is the most crucial place for leadership training and godly virtues to be inculcated in the children and of course the future leaders. It is the place of moulding godly leaders and youths who would champion national development.

Therefore: parents should live

exemplary lives for their children to emulate, for the state of each society is seen in the family particularly on the lives of the parents.

Parents should try to understand the reality of the problem at hand, admit the fact that it is a threat to the future of our youth, and become resolute to overcome the challenge.

Conclusions

Kidnapping has become a lucrative business today with no one left behind. The situation seems to be taking a different dimension as religious leaders are becoming the target. Worse still, even when ransom is paid, it is not a guarantee that the victim will be released as some were killed or the person who takes the ransom becomes kidnapped too.

Similarly, Banditry and Farmers'/Herders' Crisis is rising daily with the threat of looming hunger because some were not able to go to their farms and those who farm end up harvest nothing either because cattle eat up the crops or they were not able to care for the farms due to fear of being killed. This development is biting hard and breeding fear, suspicion, hatred, reprisal attacks, destruction of properties and displacement of whole communities.

Therefore, the menace of insecurity cannot be over emphasized because the effects can be seen daily manifesting in all areas of human endeavour and Plateau State over the years has had her fair share of the effects of Insecurity.

Similarly, the menace seems not to be abating as it is taking a different dimension and raising its ugly head almost on a daily basis across the length and breadth of the State. They do alienate and separate people.

They violate religious teaching on love, humility and harmony. Insecurity can lead to sinful actions, therefore, stand against it as quick as possible. If all the variables discussed above can be adhered to, then peace can be restored, and harmony and national development will surely ensue.

Plateau State is blessed with so many valuable human and natural resources, if peace is restored, there will be development all round, friendship, community spirit and unity will be seen. Yes, we can. We just need the inner will to say YES! Animals do not fight based on religious beliefs of their owners – if animals can live in peace, then we too can. Note that peace with God results to peace with men. You cannot say you love God whom you cannot see when you hate your fellow human whom you see. (1 John 4:20-21)

Recommendations

Citing Napoleon, the writer agreed that, “The world suffers a lot not because of the violence of bad people, but because of the silence of the good people.”

Hence the presenter recommends the following: Insisting on forgiveness and peace with God which makes peace with men possible. Revenge at first sight is sweet when being contemplated but it is bitter to carry out because, the target of revenge deserves to be hurt so as to feel exactly if not more than what we feel but God's people never take revenge as an option.

Intensive prayer for national repentance of God's people in the order of 2 Chron. 7:14; Raising godly people in the Political arena.

Imbibing and encouraging the culture of integrity.

Encouraging the concept of the common good to live with all men as God would do.

Teaching forgiveness and discouraging reprisal attacks.

Seminars and symposiums

We need to concentrate, strengthen and build on the things that bind us together, rather than on things that divide us, sharing our joys and sorrows together. The wall of division between us can be broken down and there will be room for us to reach out to the Muslims. (Palmer 356).

Deliberate and Decisive efforts towards eliminating the menace. Empowering the NGOs focusing on this thematic area.

Equity and Justice – in every just society, stability is the order of the day; therefore, merit should be encouraged as against mediocrity. These virtues – equity and justice should be elevated in all circles.

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DECLARATION OF PEACE AND CESSATION OF WAR - DPCW: THE DECLARATION THAT WILL SUSTAIN GLOBAL PEACE

By Clement Iorver Iornongu Esq (Notary Public)

INTRODUCTION

Peace Loving citizens of the world are deeply concerned about the increasing violent conflicts and insecurity around the world. The on-going war between Russia and Ukraine and the internecine war in the Middle East between Israel, Hamas, and including Hezbollah are serious issues of concern to mankind.

From time immemorial, mankind has always been in pursuit of self-destruct. Violent conflicts/wars took place frequently in the 20th Century. Since then, the world has been free from violence caused by war for only very short period of time.

From 1900 to the present time it has been estimated that 187 million people died as a result of wars. The actual number could be likely far higher. Maybe the following statistics can well illustrate the above assertion.

HISTORY OF WARS

The Boer War, 1899–1902; First World War, 1914–1918; Russian Civil War, 1917–1922; Third Afghan War, 1919; Irish War of Independence, 1919–1921; Irish Civil War, 1922–1923; Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939; Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–1939; Second World War, 1939–1945;

Jewish insurgency in Mandatory Palestine, 1944–1948; Partition of India, 1947; Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1948 onwards; Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960; Yangtze Incident, 1949; Korean War, 1950–1953;; Kenya Emergency, 1952–1960; Cyprus Emergency, 1955–1959; Vietnam War, 1955–1975; Suez Crisis, 1956; Brunei Revolt, 1962–1963; Indonesian Confrontation, 1963–1966; Aden Emergency, 1963–1967; 'The Troubles', 1969–1998; Falklands Conflict, 1982;; Gulf War, 1990–1991; Sierra Leone Civil War, 1991–2002; Bosnian War, 1992–1995; Kosovo War, 1998–1999; War in Afghanistan, 2001–2014; Iraq War, 2003–2011; Libya Conflict, 2011–present; Syria Conflict, 2011–present; Yemen Conflict, 2014–present; Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, 2014–present

THE COSTS OF WAR

According to a grantee of Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Costs of War project uses research and a public website to facilitate debate about the costs of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and related violence in Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and elsewhere. There are many hidden or unacknowledged costs of the United States' decision to respond to the 9/11 attacks with

military force. The project aims to foster democratic discussion of these wars by providing the fullest possible account of their human, economic, environmental, and political costs, and to foster better informed public policies. Created in 2010 and housed at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the Costs of War project builds on the work of over 60 scholars, human rights and legal experts, and physicians from around the world.

There are reverberating costs, the human cost of war, that people in the U.S., for the most part, don't really know or think enough about," said Stephanie Savell, co-director of the Costs of War project. "We hear talk about the endless war being over now that U.S. troops have left Afghanistan, but one significant way that these wars are continuing is that the people in the war zones are continuing to suffer the consequences. The U.S. has been involved in these really violent wars. There's been intensification as a result of U.S. involvement. And at this point, the issue is really: How do we come to terms with a sense of responsibility?"

The violence stemming from

conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and other areas has directly resulted in the deaths of approximately 905,000 to 940,000 people. Several times as many more have been killed as reverberating effects of the wars, losing their lives due to water loss, sewage and other infrastructural issues, and war-related diseases.

As with most wars, we may never know the full extent of the loss of life and injuries. The direct effects include the hundreds of thousands of people who have been killed and injured due to the fighting — killed by bombs, bullets, and fire. The number of people killed directly in the violence of the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and other war zones is estimated here.

The report *How Death Outlives War* (May 15, 2023) reviews the latest research to examine the causal pathways that have led to an estimated 3.6–3.8 million indirect deaths in post-9/11 war zones, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

With direct deaths, the total death toll in these war zones could be at least 4.5–4.7 million and counting, though the precise mortality figure remains unknown. Some people were killed in the fighting, but far more, especially children, have been killed by the reverberating effects of war, such as the spread of disease.

The report examines the devastating toll of war on human health, whoever the

combatant, whatever the compounding factor, in the most violent conflicts in which the U.S. government has been engaged in the name of counterterrorism since September 11, 2001. Rather than teasing apart who or what is to blame, or separating out the negative enduring effects of prior wars and sanctions, this report shows that the post-9/11 wars are implicated in many kinds of deaths.

In laying out how the post-9/11 wars have led to illness and indirect deaths, the report's goal is to build greater awareness of the fuller human costs of these wars and support calls for the United States and other governments to alleviate the ongoing losses and suffering of millions in current and former war zones.

The report highlights many long-term and under acknowledged consequences of war for human health, emphasizing that some groups, particularly women and children, suffer the brunt of these ongoing impacts.

Furthermore, indirect war deaths are caused by economic collapse, food insecurity, the destruction of public services and health infrastructure, environmental contamination, reverberating trauma and violence, and other impacts. Again, internal displacements increase people's vulnerability to the negative health effects of war — including malnutrition, maternal and new-born complications, injury, and disease — which disproportionately impact women and children.

We have all seen the devastating effects war on women and children in the on-going conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Gaza on one hand Israel and Hezbollah on the other. About 39,000 lives have so far been lost. It is appalling that very recently 12 Children were taken out of existence by an attack on the Druze community in the Golan Heights. Another sad consequence of War.

Any number is limited in what it can convey about displacement's damage. The people behind the



numbers can be difficult to see, and numbers cannot communicate how it might feel to lose one's home, belongings, community, and much more.

Displacement has caused incalculable harm to individuals, families, towns, cities, regions, and entire countries physically, socially, emotionally, and economically.

Intervention efforts to stop the wars by the United Nation/International Instruments

Concerned about the devastating and destructive effects of unrelenting wars, a veteran of the Korean War, Chairman Man Hee Lee, had a vision of how to end all wars and restore the values of heavenly culture of peace here on earth thus creating One Global Family of Peace.

Chairman Man Hee Lee, the Chairman of Heavenly Culture, World Peace Restoration of Light (HWPL), himself, a Veteran of the Korean war has gone on more than 30 world tours, encouraging global citizens to “become messengers of peace and leave a legacy of peace for future generations” Experts and leaders in politics, religion, education, media, law and more that HWPL has encountered along the way, have agreed with HWPL's solution for peace and promised their cooperation.

Thus, at the 2014 HWPL World Peace Summit held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 16 to 19 September 2014, former and current heads of state, chief justices and political leaders from around the world signed

the Agreement to propose the Enactment of International Law for the Cessation of Wars and World Peace.

Meanwhile, 422 leaders of 18 religions from different nationalities signed the World Alliance of World Religions Agreement, promising to cooperate in ending conflicts caused by religion.

The Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW), HWPL Document.

In 2016, HWPL and international law experts worked together to draft the Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW), which spells out how everyone – from governments to international organizations to civil societies to individuals – can participate to achieving peace and cessation of war.

The Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW) was proclaimed on 14 March 2016 and aims to promote the respect of fundamental human rights and international law. Following the preamble, Articles 1-7 address fundamental human rights, especially the role of state concerning the promotion of Peace, Justice and Freedom.

The second part of the DPCW introduces rights (Articles 8-10), which develop currently existing international law, in order to promote the freedom of religion and the rights of individuals to participate within their communities.

The DPCW was heavily influenced by the Charter of the United Nations as well as the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, which are both milestones for the protection of human rights.

Their core meaning as well as the fundamental human rights of the DPCW (freedom, justice, peace, security, inter-generational solidarity, the promotion of social progress and standards of life, tolerance and respect in the context of religious beliefs and traditions) are already introduced in the preamble and reflect existing fundamental rights, especially the prohibition of the use of force between states, the prohibition of discrimination of people, equality between states peaceful dispute settlement. All states are called upon to protect and develop these rights.

Article 1 and 2 address the prohibition of the use of (military) force between states, which is affirmed and further exemplified in the call to respect the territorial integrity of a state. Furthermore, measures to reduce war potential are determined (disarmament and production and trade of weapons).

Articles 3-5 address friendly relations between states, respect of borders and the right to the self-determination of the people. All these rights can be considered to be fundamental rights between states and are accompanied by a number of measures which the United Nations and the international community follow to reach peaceful co-existence and the reduction of war potential.

By protecting the sovereignty of states (i.e. their independence, integrity and prevention), these

norms reflect a general principle of international law.

The right to self-determination is well-mentioned in the Charter of the United Nations and was also affirmed by the majority of states in the General Assembly (Resolution 2625 (XXV)).

The use of force shall be prohibited but in an exceptional situation of self-defense, Article 7, which is an accepted exception under current international law (Article 51 UN-Charter), shall be governed by strict procedural requirements.

The DPCW thus also addresses dispute settlement mechanisms, and the need to establish them in international law, in order to solve conflicts peacefully.

Specifically, it refers to the international court of justice, the main judicial organ of the United Nations. The DPCW calls upon states to generally accept the jurisdiction of the international Court of Justice as it constitutes the most effective way to settle dispute.

Finally, Articles 8-10 a development in current international law with regard to the promotion of the freedom of religion and of a culture of peace. The freedom of religion shall be actively protected by states and must not be used as grounds for conflict or acts of violence.

These contain the rights to adopt, change or renounce a religion or belief, the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, the freedom to worship and the protection of places of worship,

religious symbols and observation of holidays and the days of rest. States must refrain from coercing a religion.

A culture of peace shall be promoted based upon education, pluralism, freedom of press and participation in general. Special focus must be placed upon the aim of empowering individuals and groups, allowing them to actively take part in their political and social community. This reflects a number of fundamental human rights prescribed in various international instruments, such as the international convention on civil and political rights, the international convention on economic, social and cultural rights and other declarations made by the United Nations General Assembly.

CONCLUSION

The DPCW is unique, as it aims for cessation of wars. By the means of prohibiting weapons and transforming them into daily tools, war and warlike activities cannot be initiated. Therefore, sustainable peace can be achieved by implementing this declaration. Also, it combines the fundamental human rights both aiming for peace and peaceful dispute settlement between states as well as peace within states by promoting freedom and peaceful co-existence of religions and beliefs.

It therefore protects human rights as well as the core rights of the states. Most of the DPCW addresses fundamental rights already prescribed by international law. By developing those well-established rules, and adapting them to the instrument

of rules to reach sustainable peace. As those rules become accepted the more states adhere to them, and as they aim for a global application, all states should agree upon the rules prescribed in the DPCW

The frightening threat of escalation weapons pileup is disturbing as a President of Russia has recently indicated intention of acquiring more Missiles while USA has entered into Pact with Japan on nuclear armament is also worrisome.

There is therefore the urgent need to save the world from the impending disaster by preventing the previous holocaust as enunciated above. Global Declaration of Peace Cessation of War (DPCW) by United Nations will go a long way to de-escalating mounting tensions.

Owing to the efforts made by HWPL/DPCW, citizens around the world have sent over 600,000 Peace Letters since 2018, to leaders in over 192 countries, urging them to support the DPCW so that its principles of peace may be introduced into international law.

Certainly, the Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War, is a credible and viable Document globally accepted to complement other UN Instruments to bring enduring peace, harmony, cooperation and development for sustainable human community.

Community Engagement And Strategic Partnership For The Societal Reintegration Of Ex-convicts

By Nicodemus Samson Beska



Abstract

Reintegration of ex-convicts has the potential to increase crime with negative consequences for peace when the reintegration process is faulty. Individuals with criminal convictions often face significant discrimination, stigma, and employment denial and are perceived as unproductive and untrustworthy. This paper explores the efforts of government and civil society organisations in Plateau State in building strategic partnerships and collaboration and the challenges encountered in the reintegration of ex-convicts. A qualitative research method was employed through a review of related literature and a semi-structured interview technique. By using purposive sampling, the study engaged founders, executive directors, CEOs, and employees from 10 civil society and governmental organisations; three were from government agencies, two were international NGOs, and five were from local NGOs based in Plateau State.

The interview was conducted in person and on the phone by the researcher and transcribed to support his argument. The findings revealed inadequate community engagement and poor collaboration among these organisations in reintegrating ex-convicts.

The study suggests intensifying public awareness and advocacy, mentoring individuals with criminal histories, and implementing funded programmes to promote their social inclusion. Strengthening partnerships between government and civil society organisations is crucial for reducing recidivism, promoting social inclusion, and preventing crime.

Keywords: reintegration, community engagement, discrimination, inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

A successful crime and conflict prevention strategy must address factors contributing to the large number of crimes that are

committed by individuals who have served a term of incarceration and failed, upon their release, to integrate into their community as law-abiding citizens (Rakis, 2005).

In the absence of material, psychological, and social support at the time of their release, offenders may have a very difficult time breaking the cycle of release and re-arrest. Short-term prison terms and extended terms of remand in custody provide limited opportunities for successful treatment and interventions to prevent future recidivism.

A majority of convicted offenders have at least one prior conviction, either in youth or adult court, and among recidivists, nearly one-third have a prior conviction and nearly 75 percent have multiple prior convictions.

Community safety makes it imperative that governments and communities develop effective interventions that will assist ex-prisoners to successfully

reintegrate into the community and avoid further criminality. Managed offender reentry processes and programmes are gaining acceptance and may offer a cost-effective way of preventing crime. There is need for an increasing focus among policymakers and practitioners on identifying programmes and strategies that will help prisoners successfully reintegrate back into their communities without re-offending.

Nigeria grapples with significant challenges related to the reintegration of former inmates into society. Upon release, these individuals often find themselves trapped in a web of complex obstacles, ranging from limited access to employment opportunities to unstable housing conditions.

The stigma associated with their past incarceration exacerbates their difficulties, hindering their efforts to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society.

Moreover, the ripple effects of incarceration extend beyond the individual to affect their families, who often bear the brunt of socioeconomic hardships such as children's school dropouts, divorce, unwanted pregnancies, and early marriages.

These challenges not only perpetuate cycles of poverty and crime but also contribute to broader public health and socioeconomic issues within the community.

Reintegrating ex-convicts into society is a global concern, given its possibility of increasing recidivism if it is futile and its huge strain on the criminal justice system and society.

According to a report from the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Justice (2021) data suggest that adults released for less than 12

months of custodial sentences had a proven reoffending rate of 59.7%.

Those released from 6-month or less sentences had a proven 62.0% reoffending rate (Ministry of Justice, 2021). In the United States, a similar trend is present. The US National Institute of Justice suggests that almost 44% of released offenders return to prison within a year (World Population Review, 2021).

As reported by the Alaska Department of Corrections, two-thirds of those released are re-incarcerated within six months in Alaska. Such statistics in the United States have a long trend, as seen in 2005, where within a 3-year period, 68% of 405,000 released prisoners were arrested for a new offence and 77% were arrested within 5 years (World Population Review, 2021).

In Nigeria, the trend is not different, given its high recidivism rate, estimated at 52.4% (Abrifor et al., 2012). There are bodies of literature that offer different arguments for the increasing rate of recidivism in Nigeria. Igbo and Ugwuoke (2003) argued that it is based on harsh prison conditions; Chenube et al. (2011) say it is substance abuse; and Ismail (2022) says it is employment discrimination.

Others are "limited emphasis accorded to communities in the reintegration process" (Ike et al., 2021). Recent research on the reintegration of ex-offenders has also focused on inmates, ex-convicts, and programmes designed to foster their reentry (Salaam, 2013; Stephen and Dudafa, 2016; Uggen et al., 2006; Ugwueze et al., 2022; Visser and Travis, 2003, cited in Tarela, Dung, Mileyebi, and Evangelyn, 2023).

Even when it focuses on the community, the emphasis seems

directed at how the community perceives the reintegration of a specific group of ex-offenders based on the type of crime committed (Abrifor et al., 2012; Ike et al., 2021, 2022b; Hassan and Tyvoll, 2018).

This strand of literature emphasizes that a negative disposition towards the type of crime or groups the ex-offenders were once affiliated with (e.g., terrorism) could limit reintegration (Ike et al., 2022b; Owonikoko, 2022).

For instance, Ike et al. (2022b) study suggests that the community resisted the reintegration of ex-Boko Haram offenders due to a negative disposition towards the Boko Haram group and the emphasis accorded to the former Boko Haram members with limited focus on the community.

A limitation with differentiating crime committed as a basis for predicting reintegration is that the law and society frown against all crimes, regardless of the type, due to the social harm they could cause society.

Some of the related studies tend to focus on burning issues such as stigma, discrimination, and the indirect impact the label of being a prisoner or ex-offenders plays in serving as barriers to reintegration and growing recidivism (Ahmed, 2015; Moran, 2012; Schneider and Weber, 2020).

Ahmed's (2015, cited in Tarela, Dung, Mileyebi, and Evangelyn 2023) study further finds that criminal records and racial and social discrimination predict criminal recidivism.

This paper explores the efforts of government and civil society organisations in Plateau State in building strategic partnerships and collaboration and the challenges encountered in the reintegration of ex-convicts. A

qualitative research method was employed through a review of related literature and a semi-structured interview technique. By using purposive sampling, the study engaged founders, executive directors, CEOs, and employees from 10 civil society and governmental organisations; three were from government agencies, two were international NGOs, and five were from local NGOs based in Plateau State. The interview was conducted in person and on the phone by the researcher and transcribed to support his argument. Understanding the concepts of societal reintegration, community engagement, and strategic partnership. In the criminal justice system, reintegration refers to the process of reentry into society by people who have been incarcerated. Social reintegration is often understood as the support given to offenders during their reentry into society following imprisonment. A broader definition, however, encompasses a number of interventions undertaken following an arrest to divert offenders away from the criminal justice system to an alternative measure, including a restorative justice process or suitable treatment. It includes imposing community-based sanctions rather than imprisonment in an attempt to facilitate the social reintegration of offenders within the community rather than subjecting them to the marginalising and harmful effects of imprisonment. For those who are sentenced to imprisonment, it includes correctional programmes in prison and aftercare interventions (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006).

It's vital to realise that prison is really a culture within a society, which means that there are radically different social and cultural norms in prison. As a result, returning to the outside world is not an easy undertaking since a person must reacquaint themselves with how to live outside, in society, without having all of their decisions made for them. As a result, it is fairly uncommon for people who have been released from jail to wish to return to their pre-prison life in order to adjust to the changes. However, because that lifestyle led to their incarceration in the first place, the reintegration process is not easy. It entails significant conscious lifestyle changes that are complicated and difficult. (Ron, 2018) Community engagement seeks to engage communities to achieve sustainable outcomes, equitable decision-making processes, and deepen relationships and trust between government organisations and communities. Although there is no widely accepted definition of community engagement and its use varies greatly (sharing concepts of consultation, participation, collaboration, and empowerment), community engagement captures its meaning in shared decision-making. People, governments, and organisations collaborate to develop and implement long-term visions for their communities' future. Governments and organisations must collaborate with and listen to communities in order to foster long-term partnerships and discover meaningful solutions to complex situations. Deepening these relationships should prioritise the value of inclusivity, with government institutions engaging in

discourse with the very diversity of their communities.

A strategic partnership includes numerous relationships and all kinds of collaboration at various levels and in different parts of the partner organisations. Such complicated connections require their own mutual framework to ensure coherent and strategic collaboration.

One of the primary motivations for forming a partnership is to combine the abilities and knowledge of two organisations' personnel, as well as their respective resources, to create a great product or service and aid in commercial success. Co-creation and innovation, like knowledge exchange, begin with developing a culture that encourages thinking outside the box and playing to each other's strengths.

Challenges of ex-convicts and societal reintegration

Ex-convicts are confronted with numerous barriers, including stigmatisation, discrimination, a lack of requisite educational and job skills, and limited access to housing and healthcare (Moran, 2012).

Empowerment programmes that address these barriers are essential for facilitating successful reintegration but are lacking, thereby hindering the effective reintegration of ex-fenders.

Lack of education and vocational training opportunities, mental health and counselling services in correctional centres, community willingness to accept ex-convicts, and inadequate public awareness remained major challenges confronting the reintegration of ex-inmates in Nigeria.

By equipping former inmates with the tools and resources they need to succeed, we can help

break the cycle of recidivism and promote positive social change (Ray, Grommon, & Rydberg, 2016).

Inadequate community engagement

Societal reintegration of inmates can only be effective if communities are properly engaged.

As a matter of fact, there are little or no community engagement efforts towards addressing the challenges of ex-inmates' reintegration.

Awareness about this subject matter is inadequate, thereby increasing the risk factors for reoffending (Ahmed, 2015).

An interaction with one of the civil society executive directors in Plateau State revealed that community engagement on the subject matter needs to be intensified.

He went further to argue that ex-inmates are seen as endangered species, little effort is made to support them in their self-recovery (Personal communication, June 15, 2024).

Poor reintegration process

Reintegration is a process by which an inmate is prepared for release and to transition back into society.

Nancy La Vigne (2023), the director of the National Institute of Justice, argued that reentry processes range from risk and needs assessment at admission, programme, treatment, and educational attainment during incarceration to case planning for release and post-release supervision and reintegration. Nancy argues that reentry is not one-size-fits-all.

An inmate's pathway into the criminal justice system is unique as they reenter society (Beska, 2024). By preparing inmates in the prison for a meaningful life there after their imprisonment

and building systems that can help them in their reintegration.

Inadequate funding

Funding for prison community projects are limited. Donor fatigue is a phenomenon characterised by a decrease in charitable giving or involvement over time.

It occurs when individuals or organisations feel overwhelmed by the continuous and often relentless appeals for support for various causes. In an interview, the respondent asserted that the challenge of accessing prison-associated grants has left NGOs focusing on intervention where grants are made available (Personal communication, June 12, 2024).

Many NGOs are pursuing too few grants that are associated with prison projects, thereby causing competition among NGOs and neglecting the prison community's ability to benefit from transformative programmes.

Strategic approaches to the societal reintegration of ex-convicts

Fighting discrimination and stigma against ex-inmates

Criminals were human beings at first, before they took the path of crime.

Therefore, they should be treated as such, no matter what.

It is good that criminals are fetched out and punished for their wrongdoing, but they should be given a second chance after their imprisonment to prove themselves again.

The caller on the Who Cares Show advocates that civil society organisations should join the fight against discrimination and stigmatisation of ex-offenders within our communities, as it were with HIV/AIDS (Michael, April 7, 2024).

By partnering with the government and engaging relevant communities at different levels, we will reduce the likelihood of ex-inmates committing crimes.

Mentoring and counseling of ex-inmates

Mentoring and counseling remain the key approaches to the successful reintegration of inmates. It can be argued that criminal risk factors can be reduced by mentoring and counseling.

Criminal behaviour is the product of a malfunctioning society; they respond to situations swiftly, thereby affecting behavior positively or negatively. Since behaviour is subject to change, it can easily be transformed.

By mentoring ex-convicts can reduce the risk factors of crime and be productive and contribute meaningfully to the society.

Co-creating and implementing reintegration programmes

A holistic approach to the societal reintegration of ex-inmates is a call for collective responsibility.

It is not enough to simply release inmates from prison and expect them to seamlessly reintegrate into society (Michael, April 7, 2024).

In an interview, the respondent pointed out that the government cannot effectively reintegrate inmates after serving jail term without the support of the general public (Personal communication, June 10, 2024). Working closely with government agencies saddled with the responsibility of rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration in the design and implementation of programmes can help in the transition of the inmates into society.

In another interview, the interviewee made a case for a lack of involving government agency in the design and implementation of projects that affect individuals under their custody (personal communication, June 2024). Deliberate efforts to support reintegration programmes by civil society organisations through funded projects have a tendency to lower the recidivism rate.

Building a receptive community
The risk of reoffending is lower when our society is ready to accept individuals affected by the criminal justice system, reintegration becomes easier. Organisations can strengthen the reintegration process by building a receptive community through community engagement, strategic partnership, and collaboration. The role of the community in supporting the reintegration process cannot be overemphasized. Often, ex-convicts face ostracization and discrimination from their communities, making it difficult for them to rebuild their lives. However, by fostering a culture of acceptance and inclusion, communities can provide a supportive environment for former inmates to thrive. Community-based initiatives, such as mentorship programmes, support groups, and advocacy campaigns, play a vital role in breaking down stereotypes and promoting social cohesion (Personal communication, June 12, 2024). By engaging with community members and raising awareness about the challenges faced by ex-convicts, we can work towards creating a more inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Collaboration and Partnership
Partnership and collaboration are key to winning any cause at all levels.

By working together to complement each other's efforts in making our society a crime-free and peaceful place for all, it is emphasised that the need for collaboration and partnership between government agencies, non-profit organisations, and civil society groups in addressing the reintegration challenge is crucial.

No single entity can tackle this complex issue alone. Instead, it requires a coordinated and multi-sectorial approach that leverages the strengths and resources of diverse stakeholders.

Reasons for strategic partnership and collaboration for the societal reintegration of ex-convicts Networking, strategic partnerships, and collaboration between government and nongovernmental organisations act as catalysts for growth, expansion, innovation, and prosperity.

By harnessing the strengths of many organisations, we can meet challenges, seize opportunities, and create a strong and prosperous future. In today's globally interconnected economy, recognising cooperation as a necessary strategy for winning and pursuing sustainable development is not just an option but a necessity (Personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Reduce weaknesses and create a formidable force.

In an interview, a respondent lamented that his organisation was not given access by an organisation saddled with the responsibility of rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration to carry out programme in their

facility for not including them in the design and implementation of the programme (Personal communication, June 15, 2024). They were seen as threats rather than partners. Where two or more speak to a negative cause through supporting positive ones, their voices have a tendency towards wilder acceptance.

Therefore, strategic partnerships enable organisations to combine resources, knowledge, and technologies, creating win-win collaborations for both parties. By partnering with organisations that have complementary strengths, partners can reduce weaknesses and create a formidable force in the marketplace.

Such alliances not only broaden the social impact but also increase competition by introducing new markets, customer segments, and distribution channels.

Increases innovation and the collision of ideas

Conversation leads to innovation. It exposes partners to new ideas. Collaborating with organisations from different industries or with specific skills encourages the collision of ideas, leading to innovative and disruptive solutions.

It also makes partners remain agile and adaptable to an ever-evolving social environment. An interviewee argued that it facilitate the exchange of best practices, insights, and emerging trends, enabling partners to quickly adapt in response to social changes (Personal community 12, 2024).

Reduce risk and improve social impact

Strategic partnership reduces risk and improves impact. By using strategic partnerships, organisations can spread the financial burden and reduce the

risk posed by individuals. This joint risk-sharing model enables organisations to explore new projects or only undertake ambitious projects that may be too risky or resource-intensive Shine (December 14, 2023). Moreover, sharing can improve cost efficiency by sharing resources, infrastructure, or joint research and development efforts, optimising operating costs. It can increase overall social impacts.

Provides visibility and credibility Shine (December 14, 2023) argued that strategic partnerships can significantly strengthen an organisation's ability to navigate donor fatigue, where too many organisations are pursuing too few grants.

By partnering with iconic brands or industry leaders, companies can leverage a partner's brand equity and reputation to increase their credibility and visibility and lower the risk of looking for grants.

Furthermore, collaboration often leads to increased social impact or services that meet a broader range of needs, resulting in greater satisfaction and loyalty. Research findings

The reintegration of ex-convicts in Plateau State and Nigeria is hindered by a lack of in-depth knowledge of the community, particularly the prison community.

Additionally, there is a funding gap due to donor fatigue and insufficient prison community action-led projects and coordination.

Collaborative gap. The Nigerian Correctional Service has little involvement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Either they are not receptive to collaboration, or the NGOs are

not prepared to collaborate. The efforts of the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are insufficient to assist effective ex-convict rehabilitation and reintegration.

Inadequate community engagement: there are little or no community engagement towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates. We need to increase community engagement through media advocacy, awareness, and stakeholder engagement.

Recommendation

We require more of the following approaches:

Increased media advocacy and awareness. Government agencies in charge of rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), should engage the media more to raise awareness and advocate for policy reform.

More coordination and collaboration between the correctional service and NGOs, as well as among NGOs themselves, to combat discrimination and stigmatisation of ex-inmates in Plateau State and elsewhere.

Reduce donor fatigue by partnering and exploiting our capabilities, rather than focusing just on grants. Remember your organization's weakness is a strength for another non-governmental organisation.

Less competitive and more of a strategic relationship among NGOs. The issue of superiority and hijacking idea cannot be entirely eliminated in the NGOs system, but we can do more by collaborating with groups that have a bright future while you do not.

We should stop resisting the process and instead compliment or strengthen it. We often engage

in more fighting than strengthening. No statutory organisation would allow an attack; they would always create defences.

Conclusion

Applying a non-kinetic approach to prevent and combat crime in Nigeria by providing former inmates with the support they need to successfully reintegrate into society will help break the cycle of incarceration, reduce recidivism rates, and thereby benefit individuals and families, which will also alleviate pressure on the criminal justice system and promote community safety.

Through community awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts, we can tackle the challenges of societal stigma and discrimination against former inmates while promoting acceptance and inclusion.

This will create a more compassionate and cohesive society where all individuals are valued and respected.

By targeting marginalised populations, such as former inmates and their families, to overcome systemic barriers and build brighter futures for themselves.

This empowerment will extend beyond individual lives to create ripple effects of positive change throughout communities.

Implementing the strategies above would not only reintegrate ex-inmates but also strengthen family relationships, promote community well-being, and reduce recidivism and crime in Nigeria.

By pooling our expertise, resources, and networks, we can develop comprehensive reintegration programmes that address the root causes of recidivism and promote sustainable social inclusion.

These include advocating for policy reforms, securing funding for empowerment initiatives, and fostering cross-sector partnerships to maximise impact.

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YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND PEACE IN PLATEAU STATE

By David James Buoro



Abstract

This discourse sheds light on how Lutrics Edu, an innovative educational tool, serves as a catalyst for promoting youth empowerment and peacebuilding.

Lutrics Edu, a digital platform equipped with a sound system, visual display, and internal storage, offers a learning solution for rural areas in Plateau State where internet connectivity is limited.

Through this device, youth can access educational content on peacebuilding, fostering positive engagement and productivity in peace efforts. The content spans various subjects, including ethnoreligious harmony, safety skills, and peacebuilding strategies.

By equipping young people with the necessary skills and knowledge, Lutrics Edu empowers them to contribute to peace building and socio-economic development. Youth empowerment, when pursued through education and collective action, becomes a critical tool for peace and national development.

INTRODUCTION

The interplay between youth empowerment and peace building is crucial to addressing the socio-political challenges that Plateau State faces. Youth empowerment is not only essential for personal growth but also central to the collective development of society.

In a region marked by ethnic and religious tensions, unemployment, and political instability, empowering young people is vital for creating sustainable peace.

This article explores how youth empowerment, facilitated through innovative platforms like Lutrics Edu, can contribute to peacebuilding and development in Plateau State. It also highlights the role of education, skills development, and socio-political inclusion in fostering ethnoreligious harmony and reducing conflict. Youth and Peacebuilding
Young people are often at the epicenter of both conflict and peace building efforts. While youth are frequently portrayed as either victims or perpetrators

of violence, their role as agents of positive change is increasingly recognized. In conflict-ridden areas, young people face specific challenges, including interrupted education, unemployment, and social isolation. These factors, if unaddressed, can lead to youth involvement in criminal activities or extremist groups. However, when equipped with the right skills and opportunities, youth can become instrumental in peacebuilding processes.

Peace education is critical in transforming young people into peacebuilders. Training them in conflict resolution, leadership, and ethnoreligious tolerance enables them to become advocates for peace within their communities. Additionally, fostering political participation and social inclusion among youth strengthens social cohesion and empowers them to take on leadership roles in their communities.

The Lutrics Edu platform exemplifies how technology can be leveraged to provide rural youth with peace education, enabling them to actively participate in the peacebuilding process.

Key Challenges Facing Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment in Plateau State faces several challenges that impede the realization of its full potential.

Some of the key barriers include:

1. **Lack of Skills:** Many young people lack the necessary skills to engage in peacebuilding or secure

gainful employment. This skill gap stems from limited access to education, especially in rural areas, and a lack of investment in vocational training.

2. Lack of Awareness: Many youth are unaware of opportunities for education, employment, or peacebuilding. The absence of proper guidance and mentorship further limits their ability to access these opportunities.
3. Social and Economic Barriers: Economic disparities, gender discrimination, and technological barriers significantly hinder youth development. In Plateau State, poverty and illiteracy are prevalent among young people, limiting their ability to access credit and other resources necessary for entrepreneurship and socio-political engagement.
4. Vulnerability to Extremism: The economic and social marginalization of youth makes them vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups. Addressing the root causes of youth radicalization requires a comprehensive approach that includes economic empowerment, education, and social inclusion.

Entry Points for Youth Empowerment

Effective youth empowerment strategies must focus on enabling young people to become active agents of change within their communities.

Some strategic entry points for youth empowerment in peacebuilding include:

- Peace Education: Providing youth with training in conflict resolution, leadership, and ethnoreligious harmony is

essential for equipping them with the tools necessary for peacebuilding.

- Strengthening Youth Networks: Establishing national and regional youth peace networks allows young people to collaborate, share knowledge, and mobilize their communities for positive change.
- Gender Inclusion: Encouraging the participation of young women in peacebuilding ensures that peace efforts are inclusive and reflective of diverse perspectives. Addressing patriarchal attitudes and gender biases is crucial for empowering all segments of society.
- Economic Empowerment: Providing youth with alternative livelihoods, particularly in areas affected by conflict, helps to stabilize their economic prospects and reduces the risk of involvement in criminal activities.
- Community Engagement: Engaging youth in community recovery efforts, such as rebuilding social infrastructure, fosters a positive image of youth and strengthens their role in reintegration processes.

Recommendations

Achieving youth empowerment requires a concerted effort across multiple sectors. The following recommendations are essential for promoting youth empowerment and peacebuilding in Plateau State:

1. Invest in Youth Skills Development: There must be deliberate efforts to train and empower young people through vocational programs, entrepreneurial training, and leadership development.
- Economic empowerment

through grants and contracts can provide youth with the resources needed to create sustainable livelihoods.

2. Leverage Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship offers a low-cost pathway to self-empowerment and economic independence. By encouraging youth to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, the state can foster innovation and create a more peaceful and stable environment for development.
3. Leadership Training: Developing leadership potential in youth is critical for ensuring that young people can contribute effectively to their communities. Youth empowerment leadership training programs should be implemented to enhance the capacity of young people to lead peacebuilding and development efforts.

Conclusion

Youth empowerment is a vital strategy for promoting sustainable peace and development in Plateau State. By equipping young people with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities, they can play a central role in addressing the socio-political challenges that the region faces.

Platforms like Lutrics Edu demonstrate the potential of technology to bridge the gap in education and provide rural youth with the tools needed for peacebuilding. Empowering young people is not only a moral imperative but also a practical necessity for creating a more peaceful, prosperous, and harmonious Plateau State.

Promoting Religious Harmony in Nigeria: The Role of Interfaith Dialogue

By Matthew Tegha

- Introduction
- Historical Context of Religious Tensions in Nigeria
- The Concept and Importance of Interfaith Dialogue
- Case Studies of Interfaith Initiatives in Nigeria
- Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC)
- Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)
- The Kukah Centre
- Challenges to Interfaith Dialogue in Nigeria
- The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Harmony
- The International Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue
- Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Interfaith Dialogue
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1. Introduction

Nigeria is a nation of over 200 million people, divided among more than 250 ethnic groups and two major religions: Christianity and Islam. This diversity has both enriched Nigerian society and fueled conflict, particularly when religious and ethnic identities overlap. In this complex landscape, fostering religious harmony is critical for national unity and stability. Interfaith dialogue has emerged as a key strategy for achieving this goal. This article examines the role of interfaith dialogue in Nigeria, exploring its successes, challenges, and potential for promoting peace and cooperation among diverse religious communities.

2. Historical Context of Religious Tensions in Nigeria

Nigeria's religious tensions are

deeply rooted in its history, with significant conflicts often coinciding with political and economic crises. The introduction of Islam in the 11th century and Christianity in the 19th century set the stage for religious plurality, which was later exacerbated by colonial policies that favored certain regions and religions over others. Post-independence Nigeria has seen numerous religious conflicts, often linked to struggles for political power and economic resources. The Biafran War (1967-1970), though primarily an ethnic conflict, also had religious undertones. In the decades that followed, religious violence erupted in various parts of the country, including the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s, which were fueled by Islamic extremism, and the religious riots in Jos and Kaduna, where Christians and Muslims clashed over political representation and land ownership.

3. The Concept and Importance of Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is a process that involves open

communication between people of different religious traditions, with the aim of fostering mutual respect and understanding. It is not merely about discussing theological differences but about building relationships and addressing common challenges. In Nigeria, where religion is a major identity marker, interfaith dialogue is crucial for preventing and resolving conflicts that arise from religious misunderstandings. The importance of interfaith dialogue in Nigeria extends beyond conflict resolution. It is also about nation-building. By promoting values of tolerance, respect, and cooperation, interfaith dialogue can help to create a more inclusive society where religious diversity is seen as a strength rather than a source of division.

4. Case Studies of Interfaith Initiatives in Nigeria

Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC)

The Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna is a pioneering example of interfaith dialogue in Nigeria. Founded by Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad

Ashafa, the IMC has been instrumental in mediating conflicts in Northern Nigeria. The Centre's approach is unique in that it emphasizes personal transformation and reconciliation, with the founders themselves being former enemies who have reconciled.

The IMC's activities include peace education, conflict resolution training, and the promotion of inter-religious cooperation. Its impact has been significant, particularly in areas prone to religious violence. The IMC has not only prevented conflicts but also fostered long-term relationships between Christian and Muslim communities, helping to build trust and cooperation.

Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) was established in 1999 as a platform for dialogue between the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). NIREC's mission is to promote peaceful coexistence and national unity through regular dialogue, joint initiatives, and conflict resolution efforts.

NIREC's impact has been particularly notable during periods of national crisis. For example, during the 2011 post-election violence, NIREC played a crucial role in calming tensions and promoting reconciliation between Christian and Muslim communities. The Council's ability to bring together religious leaders from across the country has made it a key player in Nigeria's peacebuilding efforts.

The Kukah Centre

The Kukah Centre, founded by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, is another important player in Nigeria's interfaith dialogue landscape. The Centre focuses on

promoting dialogue, research, and advocacy on issues related to religion and society. It has been involved in numerous initiatives aimed at fostering understanding between Christians and Muslims, including dialogue sessions, workshops, and public lectures. The Kukah Centre's approach is holistic, addressing not only religious issues but also the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to religious tensions. By engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including religious leaders, policymakers, and civil society organizations, the Kukah Centre has been able to influence public discourse on religious harmony in Nigeria.

5. Challenges to Interfaith Dialogue in Nigeria

Interfaith dialogue in Nigeria faces numerous challenges, many of which are deeply entrenched in the country's socio-political landscape. One of the most significant challenges is the deep-seated mistrust between religious communities. Historical grievances, reinforced by cycles of violence and discrimination, have created a culture of suspicion that makes open and honest dialogue difficult. Political manipulation of religious identities is another major challenge. Politicians often exploit religious differences to gain support, exacerbating tensions and undermining dialogue efforts. This has been particularly evident in election periods, where religious rhetoric is used to rally voters, sometimes leading to violence.

Security concerns are also a significant barrier to interfaith dialogue. In regions affected by violent extremism, such as the Northeast, interfaith activities can be dangerous for participants. The threat of violence from groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa

Province) makes it difficult to organize and sustain dialogue initiatives. Moreover, the government's sometimes heavy-handed security responses can further alienate communities and hinder dialogue efforts.

Another challenge is the lack of institutional support for interfaith dialogue. While there are several successful initiatives, they often operate with limited resources and face difficulties in scaling up their activities. The absence of a national framework for promoting interfaith dialogue means that efforts are often fragmented and lack coordination.

6. The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Harmony

Religious leaders in Nigeria hold significant influence over their followers, making them crucial actors in promoting interfaith dialogue and religious harmony. Leaders like Pastor Wuye, Imam Ashafa, and Bishop Kukah have shown that religious figures can play a transformative role in peacebuilding by using their moral authority to advocate for dialogue, tolerance, and reconciliation.

The involvement of religious leaders in dialogue initiatives also helps to legitimize these efforts in the eyes of the public. When respected religious figures speak out against violence and promote understanding, it sends a powerful message that resonates with their followers. This can help to counteract the narratives of extremist groups that seek to exploit religious differences for their own ends.

However, the role of religious leaders is not without challenges. In some cases, religious leaders themselves may harbor biases or be influenced by political considerations. Ensuring that religious leaders are genuinely committed to interfaith dialogue and are not using it as a platform for other agendas is crucial for the

success of these initiatives.

7. The International Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is not unique to Nigeria; it is a global phenomenon with a long history in many cultures and religious traditions. Internationally, interfaith dialogue has been promoted as a tool for peacebuilding, particularly in regions affected by religious conflict. Organizations like the United Nations and the World Council of Churches have supported interfaith initiatives around the world, recognizing their potential to promote peace and social cohesion.

In Nigeria, international organizations have played a significant role in supporting interfaith dialogue. For example, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has funded several initiatives aimed at promoting religious harmony in Nigeria. Similarly, international NGOs like Search for Common Ground have been active in facilitating interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding in conflict-prone areas.

The international perspective on interfaith dialogue also highlights the importance of learning from global best practices. Countries like Indonesia and Lebanon, which have also experienced religious conflicts, offer valuable lessons for Nigeria. In these countries, interfaith dialogue has been institutionalized, with strong support from both the government and civil society. By drawing on these experiences, Nigeria can strengthen its own efforts to promote religious harmony.

8. Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Interfaith Dialogue

To enhance the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue in Nigeria,

several policy recommendations can be made:

Institutional Support: The government should provide institutional support for interfaith initiatives, including funding, security, and platforms for dialogue. This support should be non-partisan and aimed at promoting genuine reconciliation. **Education and Awareness:** There should be increased efforts to incorporate interfaith dialogue into educational curricula. By teaching young people about the importance of religious tolerance and cooperation, future generations can be better equipped to navigate Nigeria's religious diversity.

Engagement of Youth and Women: Interfaith initiatives should actively engage youth and women, who are often the most affected by religious conflicts but are also critical agents of change. Programs that empower these groups to participate in dialogue can have a lasting impact on community relations.

International Collaboration: Nigeria should seek to collaborate more with international organizations and countries that have successfully implemented interfaith dialogue initiatives. Learning from global best practices can help to improve the design and implementation of interfaith efforts in Nigeria. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** It is important to establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of interfaith initiatives. This will help identify best practices and areas for improvement, ensuring that these efforts remain effective and relevant.

9. Conclusion

Promoting religious harmony through interfaith dialogue is not only essential for peace and stability in Nigeria but also for the nation's development. While

challenges remain, the successes of initiatives like the Interfaith Mediation Centre, the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council, and The Kukah Centre demonstrate the potential of dialogue to transform relationships and build a more cohesive society. By continuing to support and expand interfaith efforts, Nigeria can pave the way for a future where religious diversity is celebrated and respected. The involvement of religious leaders, the engagement of youth and women, and the support of the international community will be crucial in achieving this goal.

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Building A Sustainable Culture of Peace in Plateau State: Strategies, Challenges, And Pathways to Development

By: Alexander Longdi Yildet



Abstract

Plateau State, Nigeria, like many regions within the country, grapples with a persistent lack of peace and stability due to its multi-religious and ethnically diverse composition, compounded by complex cultural dynamics. This paper underscores the urgent necessity of fostering a sustainable culture of peace in Plateau State, highlighting the critical role peace plays in promoting social cohesion, economic development, and overall societal well-being. The study identifies significant obstacles to peace, including entrenched historical grievances, political instability, and the pervasive issue of youth unemployment. Drawing on both theoretical frameworks and practical case studies, this paper explores effective strategies for cultivating peace, such as community dialogue and reconciliation, peace education, economic empowerment, institutional strengthening, and the active engagement of women in peacebuilding efforts. Particular emphasis is placed on the empowerment of youth and

the promotion of interfaith cooperation as essential means of enhancing social cohesion and mitigating conflict. Furthermore, the paper argues for the importance of inclusive and transparent governance in building trust and cooperation among Plateau State's diverse communities. By addressing the root causes of conflict and recognizing diversity as a potential strength, Plateau State can overcome its challenges and emerge as a model of harmony and development. This study aims to provide policymakers, civil society actors, and community leaders with practical recommendations for sustainable peacebuilding initiatives. The conference seeks to inspire collaborative action and the exchange of best practices to achieve enduring peace in Plateau State. Through collective efforts, stakeholders can create a peaceful and prosperous environment for all residents of the region.

Introduction

Plateau State, Nigeria, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse ethnic

composition. However, this diversity has also been a source of significant challenges, particularly in maintaining peace and stability. Ethnic, religious, and political conflicts have frequently disrupted the socio-economic fabric of the region, leading to widespread suffering and hindering development. The cultivation of a culture of peace in Plateau State is therefore crucial for fostering social harmony, driving economic development, and ensuring the overall well-being of its inhabitants. This paper examines the critical importance of peace, the challenges that impede its realization, and potential strategies for fostering a sustainable culture of peace in Plateau State.

The Importance of Peace

Peace is a foundational element for the sustainable development and prosperity of any society. In the context of Plateau State, the importance of peace is particularly pronounced due to several key factors: Social Cohesion: Peace is essential for promoting unity

and mutual understanding among the diverse ethnic and religious groups in Plateau State, thereby fostering a more cohesive and inclusive society. Ajadi (2023) asserts that "peace fosters social cohesion, which is essential for the harmonious co-existence of different groups" (p. 45).

Economic Development: A peaceful environment is a prerequisite for economic growth, as it attracts investment, boosts tourism, and stimulates economic activities, leading to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction. According to Ajadi (2023), "economic development is significantly hindered in conflict-prone areas, making peace a prerequisite for prosperity" (p. 47).

Education and Health: Stability is critical for ensuring uninterrupted access to education and healthcare services, which are vital for the overall development and well-being of the population. Ajadi (2023) emphasizes that "access to education and health services is often compromised in regions plagued by conflict, underscoring the need for peace" (p. 49).

Challenges to Peace in Plateau State

Despite the paramount importance of peace, achieving it in Plateau State is fraught with numerous challenges:

Ethnic and Religious Tensions: Deep-seated historical grievances and competition for scarce resources have fueled conflicts among the various ethnic and religious groups in Plateau State. These tensions are deeply ingrained and frequently result in violent clashes.

Political Instability: Political rivalries and systemic corruption undermine efforts to build trust and cooperation among communities. The absence of

transparent and accountable governance exacerbates tensions and impedes conflict resolution initiatives.

Youth Unemployment: The high levels of unemployment among the youth population make them particularly susceptible to manipulation by conflict instigators. Unemployed youth are more likely to be drawn into violent activities, further destabilizing the region.

Strategies for Fostering a Culture of Peace

To effectively cultivate a culture of peace in Plateau State, a comprehensive and multifaceted approach is necessary. The following strategies are proposed:

Community Dialogue and Reconciliation: Promoting open and inclusive dialogues among the diverse ethnic and religious groups in Plateau State can help address long-standing grievances, build mutual understanding, and facilitate reconciliation. Initiatives such as peace forums, interfaith meetings, and cultural exchange programs can play a critical role in this process.

Education and Awareness: The implementation of peace education programs in schools and communities is vital for instilling values of tolerance, respect, and non-violence in the younger generation. Additionally, public awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of peace and the costs of conflict can significantly contribute to the cultivation of a peace-oriented culture.

Economic Empowerment: Providing economic opportunities, particularly for the youth, is essential for reducing the appeal of violence and conflict. Programs focused on skills training, entrepreneurship, and access to microfinance can create jobs and improve

livelihoods, thereby contributing to peacebuilding efforts.

Strengthening Institutions: Building strong, transparent, and accountable institutions is critical for maintaining law and order and ensuring justice in Plateau State. This includes reforming the security sector, improving governance practices, and promoting the rule of law.

Involvement of Women: Empowering women and involving them in peacebuilding efforts can lead to more sustainable and inclusive solutions. Women often play a crucial role in mediating conflicts and fostering community cohesion, making their participation in peace initiatives indispensable.

Conclusion

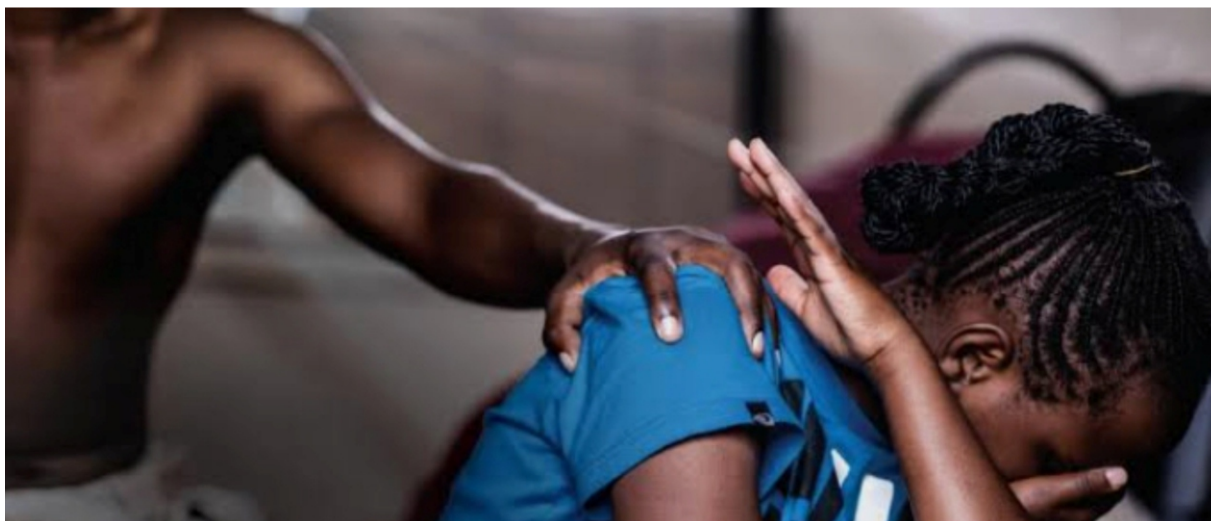
The cultivation of a culture of peace in Plateau State necessitates coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, religious leaders, and the international community. By addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting dialogue and reconciliation, empowering communities economically, and strengthening institutional frameworks, Plateau State can lay the groundwork for lasting peace and prosperity. Embracing diversity as a source of strength rather than division is key to achieving this goal. Through collective action and a steadfast commitment to peace, Plateau State can overcome its challenges and become a beacon of harmony and development within Nigeria.

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Hidden Dangers of Sending Young Girls From Plateau State As Domestic Workers: A Call For Empowerment, Protection, And Community-led Solutions

By Ambassador Bridget Dakyes



Abstract

The practice of sending young girls from Plateau State to other parts of Nigeria as domestic workers has been entrenched in the region for generations.

While this tradition is often seen as an economic necessity and a rite of passage, it raises critical issues related to child rights, exploitation, human trafficking, and the perpetuation of poverty. This paper examines the cultural, economic, and social dimensions of this practice, while highlighting its hidden dangers. It calls for a peacebuilding approach that centers on the education, empowerment, and protection of young girls. The paper argues that by empowering communities, providing alternative solutions to domestic labor, and addressing systemic inequalities, it is possible to protect these girls from exploitation and build a brighter future for them.

Key recommendations include community-led education programs, economic

empowerment initiatives, health and wellbeing services, legal frameworks for child protection, and community sensitization campaigns.

1. Introduction

The migration of young girls from Plateau State to urban areas in other Nigerian states to work as domestic servants has become a widespread phenomenon. Driven by poverty, limited educational opportunities, and cultural perceptions, many families view this practice as a way to ensure survival, while girls are often seen as contributors to household income. However, this practice exposes young girls to significant risks, including child labor, exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking. The implications of this practice go beyond the immediate physical and emotional harm to these girls. It also undermines their future prospects by denying them access to education, perpetuating cycles of poverty, and reinforcing

gender inequality.

Given the gravity of the issue, it is imperative to explore sustainable solutions that not only protect the rights of these girls but also promote community empowerment and development.

This paper proposes a peacebuilding approach that integrates education, economic empowerment, healthcare, legal protections, and community engagement to address the root causes of this problem and safeguard the wellbeing of young girls in Plateau State.

2. Cultural Tradition vs. Child Rights

2.1. The Tradition of Domestic Work

In Plateau State, the practice of sending young girls to work as domestic servants is deeply embedded in local customs and economic survival strategies. Many families view it as a temporary solution to financial difficulties and a means for their daughters to acquire life skills and earn money. It is often seen

as a rite of passage, preparing girls for adulthood by exposing them to urban environments and work experiences.

2.2. Child Rights Violations

Despite the cultural acceptance of this practice, it fundamentally violates the rights of the children involved. International conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), emphasize the right of every child to education, protection from exploitation, and the ability to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. Sending girls away to work at a young age deprives them of their childhood, education, and safety, leaving them vulnerable to abuse and trafficking.

In many cases, these girls endure long hours of work under poor conditions, with little to no access to education, healthcare, or social protection. Moreover, they are often subjected to physical, emotional, and sometimes sexual abuse, leading to lasting trauma. The lack of legal protections and accountability mechanisms exacerbates these issues, making it difficult for victims to seek justice or escape abusive situations.

3. Poverty and Economic Factors

3.1. Economic Realities in Plateau State

Poverty remains one of the primary drivers behind the practice of sending girls away as domestic workers. Plateau State, like many other parts of northern Nigeria, faces high levels of unemployment, underdevelopment, and economic inequality. Families struggling to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, and healthcare, often feel compelled to send their daughters away in search of income. These financial pressures are particularly acute for widows and single-parent households, where the

responsibility of providing for the family falls heavily on young girls.

3.2. Economic Disempowerment of Women and Girls

The economic marginalization of women and girls further perpetuates this practice. In many rural areas, girls are viewed as economic assets who can contribute to the family income through domestic labor. With limited access to education and vocational training, girls face a narrow range of opportunities, making domestic work one of the few options available to them. This cycle of economic disempowerment not only reinforces gender inequality but also deprives communities of the potential contributions of educated and empowered women.

4. Lack of Education and Opportunities

4.1. Barriers to Education

Limited access to education is a significant factor in the perpetuation of child domestic labor in Plateau State. Many rural communities lack adequate schools, teachers, and resources, making it difficult for children, especially girls, to access quality education.

For families living in poverty, the costs associated with schooling—such as uniforms, books, and transportation—are often prohibitive, leading them to prioritize immediate economic survival over long-term educational goals.

4.2. Impact of Educational Deficits

The absence of education not only perpetuates cycles of poverty but also leaves girls vulnerable to exploitation. Without education or vocational skills, girls are limited to low-paying, exploitative jobs such as domestic work. The lack of education also undermines their ability to advocate for their

rights, recognize exploitation, and seek better opportunities in the future.

5. Exploitation, Abuse, and Human Trafficking

5.1. Exploitation of Child Domestic Workers

Many young girls who are sent to work as domestic servants experience exploitation in the form of long working hours, low or no wages, and poor living conditions. Some are subjected to forced labor, working without rest, food, or proper care. These girls are often isolated from their families and communities, making them more vulnerable to abuse. Employers may take advantage of their vulnerability, knowing that these girls have no legal recourse or support systems to protect them.

5.2. Human Trafficking

In some cases, the practice of sending girls away for domestic work leads to human trafficking. Girls may be recruited by traffickers who promise their families that they will receive education and employment opportunities, only to exploit them in forced labor or sex trafficking rings. Human trafficking networks prey on the economic desperation of families, exploiting their need for income and their trust in intermediaries who arrange employment for their daughters.

6. Peacebuilding Approaches and Solutions

6.1. Community-Led Initiatives for Education and Skills Training

One of the most effective strategies for addressing the root causes of child domestic labor is the provision of education and skills training. By empowering girls with education and vocational skills, they can pursue gainful employment and break the cycle of poverty.

Community-led initiatives that provide access to quality

education, scholarship programs, and vocational training for girls are essential in ensuring that they have viable alternatives to domestic work.

6.2. Economic Empowerment Programs for Women and Girls

Economic empowerment programs targeting both women and girls are critical in addressing the financial pressures that drive families to send their daughters away. Microfinance initiatives, entrepreneurship training, and job creation schemes can help women and girls achieve financial independence, reducing the need for child labor. These programs should focus on providing sustainable income-generating opportunities that benefit entire communities, including those in rural areas.

6.3. Health and Wellbeing Programs

Holistic health and wellbeing programs are necessary to support the physical, emotional, and psychological development of girls. Access to healthcare, counseling, and mentorship programs can help girls recover from the trauma of exploitation and build resilience. These programs should also address the broader health needs of families, as poor health often exacerbates poverty and economic vulnerability.

6.4. Leadership Development and Mentorship

Leadership development and mentorship programs can play a

transformative role in empowering girls to become role models and change agents within their communities. By fostering leadership skills, self-confidence, and critical thinking, these programs can inspire girls to pursue their aspirations and advocate for their rights. Mentorship from successful women in the community can provide guidance, support, and motivation for girls to overcome challenges and achieve their potential.

6.5. Community Sensitization and Awareness Campaigns

Changing cultural perceptions and practices requires sustained efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of child domestic labor and the importance of protecting children's rights.

Community sensitization campaigns can challenge harmful traditions and promote alternative pathways for girls' empowerment. These campaigns should involve community leaders, religious institutions, and local media to ensure widespread outreach and engagement.

6.6. Alternative Care Arrangements and Legal Frameworks

In cases where girls are orphaned or vulnerable, alternative care arrangements such as foster care or group homes can provide a safe and supportive environment for their development.

Strengthening legal frameworks for child protection, including laws against child labor and trafficking, is also essential in

preventing exploitation. Enforcement mechanisms must be put in place to hold perpetrators accountable and protect victims from further harm.

6.7. Empowering Families and Community Development

Addressing the root causes of child domestic labor requires investing in the economic and social development of communities. Empowering families through financial support, social services, and community development initiatives can reduce the economic pressures that lead to child labor.

By creating local opportunities for employment and education, families can keep their children at home and invest in their futures.

7. Conclusion and Call to Action

The practice of sending young girls from Plateau State as domestic workers exposes them to significant risks of exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking.

While driven by cultural traditions and economic necessity, this practice violates the rights of children and perpetuates cycles of poverty and disempowerment. It is imperative to adopt a peacebuilding approach that prioritizes the education, empowerment, and protection of girls, while engaging communities in finding sustainable alternatives. Through community-led initiatives, economic empowerment programs, health and wellbeing services, leadership development, legal protections, and community sensitization campaigns, it is possible to create a safer and more just environment for girls.





Effective Youth Engagement: A Panacea to Poverty and Insecurity

By Iliya Patience Toscanini

Introduction

Youth represent the backbone of any society, and their engagement is crucial for sustainable development, peace, and prosperity. According to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/162 (1995), youth is defined as individuals in the transitional stage between adolescence and adulthood, generally between the ages of 15 and 30. Globally, there are over 1.8 billion young people, with 60% residing in Asia and 30% in Africa. In Nigeria, youth make up approximately 70% of the nation's 220 million people (based on the 2006 Census). Despite their potential, many young people face challenges that hinder their development, including poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. Addressing these issues through effective youth engagement is paramount for building a prosperous society and breaking cycles of poverty and violence.

The State of Youth in Society

Youth constitute a vital demographic group, yet they face various barriers to reaching their full potential. These

challenges include inadequate access to quality education, limited employment opportunities, and insufficient healthcare services. In Africa, where the majority of young people reside, poverty remains a key issue, compounded by a lack of resources to support their growth and empowerment.

Consequences of Unengaged Youth

When young people are not meaningfully engaged in society, they become more susceptible to social ills, including criminality, extremism, and violence. The disengagement of youth from positive societal structures often results in social unrest and contributes to insecurity. Unaddressed, the frustration and disillusionment of young people can lead to their involvement in criminal activities, extremist groups, and other harmful behaviors, destabilizing communities and posing significant risks to national security (Bjørge and Horgan, 2009). In this context, the lack of opportunities and pathways for constructive engagement exacerbates poverty and insecurity, perpetuating a vicious

cycle of marginalization.

Benefits of Effective Youth Engagement

Effective youth engagement offers a wide array of societal benefits, particularly in addressing poverty and insecurity:

- 1. Poverty Reduction:** By providing young people with education, skills development, and job opportunities, societies can help them escape poverty and improve their socio-economic status. Engaged youth become economically independent, contributing to national growth and development.
- 2. Increased Security:** Youth engagement reduces the likelihood of young people engaging in violent or extremist activities. Constructive involvement in societal processes enhances their sense of purpose and belonging, leading to a more stable and secure society.
- 3. Social Cohesion:** Youth engagement fosters social harmony and community development by encouraging understanding, tolerance, and

respect among diverse groups. As young people become active participants in peacebuilding processes, they help to mitigate tensions and foster national unity.

4. **Economic Growth:** Young people are a key driver of innovation and entrepreneurship. Through youth engagement initiatives, societies can harness the creativity and energy of the youth to spur economic growth and sustainable development (Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives, 2017).

Strategies for Effective Youth Engagement

To ensure successful youth engagement, a multi-faceted approach is required. The following strategies highlight essential areas of focus:

1. **Education and Skills Development:** Access to quality education and vocational training is critical to preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship. Equipping youth with relevant skills ensures they can meet the demands of the labor market and contribute meaningfully to society.
2. **Job Creation and Employment Opportunities:** Governments and private-sector actors must work together to create job opportunities for young people. Supporting youth-led entrepreneurship initiatives, particularly in emerging sectors such as technology and renewable energy, can boost economic growth while reducing youth unemployment.
3. **Participation and Representation:** Youth should be actively involved in decision-making processes at all levels of governance. This includes

providing platforms for youth to engage in political, social, and economic discourse, ensuring that their voices are heard in shaping the future of their communities.

4. **Community Development Initiatives:** Engaging youth in community development projects fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility. Programs that encourage volunteerism, civic engagement, and social work can strengthen the fabric of society and promote peacebuilding.
5. **Mentorship and Support Networks:** Establishing mentorship programs is essential for guiding young people in their personal and professional development. Experienced mentors can offer invaluable advice and support, helping youth navigate challenges and achieve success in their endeavors (Marope, Holmes, and Chakroun, 2015).

Conclusion

Effective youth engagement is a critical solution to the twin challenges of poverty and insecurity. By empowering young people with education, skills, and job opportunities, society can break the cycle of poverty and create a secure and prosperous future. Moreover, involving youth in decision-making processes and community development promotes social cohesion and fosters peace. Governments, civil society, and the private sector must collaborate to develop and implement youth engagement strategies that empower the next generation to be leaders, innovators, and peacebuilders.

Recommendations

1. **Increase Investment in Youth Development Programs:** Governments and organizations should prioritize funding for

education, skills training, and job creation initiatives targeted at youth. Increased financial support for youth-led projects can foster entrepreneurship and innovation.

2. **Promote Youth Participation in Governance:** Policies should be established to encourage youth involvement in decision-making processes. Ensuring youth representation at local, state, and national levels is key to fostering leadership development.
3. **Support Community Development Programs:** Community-led initiatives that engage youth in peacebuilding, environmental sustainability, and social welfare activities should be promoted. These programs enhance social cohesion and empower youth to play active roles in their communities.
4. **Foster Collaboration Across Sectors:** Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector actors must work together to create a holistic youth engagement framework. Collaborative efforts ensure that youth programs are adequately resourced and sustainable in the long term.

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The Quest for Supremacy: A Threat to Religious Harmony in Plateau State

By Salis Muhammad Abdulsalam

Introduction

Plateau State, a region historically known for its ethnic and religious diversity, is currently facing a significant challenge: the rising quest for religious supremacy. This phenomenon, characterized by competition for numerical dominance among religious leaders and organizations, has fostered religious intolerance, deepened divisions, and adversely affected the social and political spheres. The constant pursuit of supremacy, often manifested through unhealthy rivalry between religious groups, undermines efforts to promote peaceful coexistence, unity, and cooperation.

In a society, already fraught with ethno-religious tensions, the relentless drive for supremacy intensifies existing fault lines, threatening to destabilize the fragile peace in Plateau State. This paper explores the factors contributing to the quest for supremacy, its impact on religious harmony, and the broader implications for society. Finally, it presents recommendations to



mitigate this growing menace, fostering a more harmonious, inclusive, and peaceful environment.

The Pursuit of Numerical Superiority: A Catalyst for Intolerance

One of the primary drivers of religious intolerance in Plateau State is the desire for numerical superiority. Religious leaders and organizations, motivated by the need to outdo one another, focus on increasing the number of adherents rather than fostering unity. This competitive mindset leads to an atmosphere where congregations are pitted against one another in a race for dominance. This pursuit of numbers often comes at the expense of cooperation, mutual understanding, and respect.

This rivalry manifests in different ways. For instance, adherents often refuse to participate in congregational prayers or religious services when they are away from their own denominations. Instead of embracing the spirit of collective worship, they remain loyal to their sect or denomination, even in places where their religious community is not

present.

This loyalty to one's group breeds exclusivity and encourages intolerance, contributing to an "us versus them" mentality. As a result, people from other sects or denominations are seen as misguided, inferior, or even enemies of the faith.

The emphasis on numerical superiority has also led to the practice of proselytizing through aggressive and often manipulative tactics. In some cases, religious organizations promise material rewards, employment opportunities, or social status in exchange for religious conversion, reducing spirituality to a mere transactional activity. These practices not only undermine the integrity of religion but also deepen distrust among different groups.

Religious Leaders and Sectarian Divisions

Religious leaders play a central role in shaping the attitudes of their followers, but many are increasingly focused on promoting sectarian interests at the expense of unity. Instead of fostering dialogue and collaboration, some religious leaders resort to castigating, maligning, and tarnishing adherents of other denominations or sects, even within the same faith. This creates a toxic environment where adherents are pitted against one another, further exacerbating existing divisions.

This quest for supremacy among religious leaders has had far-reaching consequences, extending into the political sphere. In Plateau

State, religion and politics are deeply intertwined, and many religious leaders support political parties based on sectarian or denominational lines. As a result, adherents are often compelled to follow the political preferences of their religious leaders, further polarizing the political landscape. The intersection of religion and politics has also influenced social interactions, marriages, and decision-making processes within communities, often leading to alienation and resentment.

Moreover, religious leaders who prioritize supremacy are less likely to address the pressing social and moral challenges facing society. Issues such as moral decay, the breakdown of family values, and the erosion of communal responsibility are often neglected in favor of competing for followers. This diversion of focus weakens the moral authority of religious institutions and contributes to the fragmentation of the societal fabric.

The Commercialization of Religion

Another consequence of the quest for supremacy in Plateau State is the commercialization of religion. Religious leaders and organizations, in their pursuit of dominance, have increasingly prioritized material wealth over spiritual growth. Lavish spending on grandiose structures, extravagant religious ceremonies, and the accumulation of personal wealth have become common among religious elites. This commercialization has led to the commodification of faith,

where spirituality is measured by material contributions rather than the depth of one's commitment to religious values.

This shift toward materialism has not only eroded the spiritual essence of religion but has also created a culture of competition among religious organizations. Adherents are often pressured to contribute financially, with the promise of divine favor or blessings. Those who are unable to meet these financial demands are made to feel inadequate or unworthy. This creates an environment where religion becomes transactional, with spiritual fulfillment tied to one's financial ability.

In such a context, religious leaders have lost sight of their true calling—nurturing the spiritual and moral growth of their adherents. Instead, they have become entangled in the pursuit of wealth and influence, contributing to a culture of materialism that undermines the core tenets of faith.

Political Polarization and Social Fragmentation

The quest for supremacy has further exacerbated political polarization in Plateau State, where religious leaders wield significant influence over the political preferences of their followers. Religious allegiances often dictate political alliances, with leaders endorsing candidates and parties based on sectarian lines rather than policies or ideologies. This practice deepens sectarian divisions, as adherents feel compelled to vote along religious lines, even

when such choices may not be in their best interest.

The entanglement of religion and politics has also had a detrimental effect on social cohesion. Marriages between adherents of different sects or denominations have become increasingly rare, and social interactions between individuals of different religious backgrounds are often strained. This polarization extends to decision-making processes within families and communities, where religious loyalties often take precedence over rational discourse and mutual understanding.

The Way Forward: Addressing the Quest for Supremacy

The growing quest for religious supremacy in Plateau State presents a significant threat to religious harmony, social cohesion, and political stability. However, it is possible to reverse this trend through concerted efforts by religious leaders, adherents, and political actors.

1. Refocusing on Righteous Concerns

Religious leaders must shift their focus from competing for supremacy to addressing the pressing moral and social issues facing society. They must prioritize nurturing the spiritual and ethical development of their adherents, promoting values such as compassion, tolerance, and mutual respect. By refocusing on righteous concerns, religious leaders can reclaim their moral authority

and serve as agents of positive change.

2. Promoting Interfaith Dialogue and Collaboration

Interfaith dialogue is essential for fostering understanding and cooperation between adherents of different sects and denominations. Religious leaders must actively promote dialogue, encouraging their followers to engage with those from other faith communities. This can be achieved through joint community projects, interfaith services, and collaborative initiatives aimed at addressing common social challenges. By recognizing the value of diversity, religious leaders can help bridge divides and promote a more inclusive society.

3. Challenging the Commercialization of Religion

To address the commercialization of religion, religious leaders must place a greater emphasis on spiritual growth rather than material wealth. This requires a reorientation of priorities, where religious institutions are more focused on serving the spiritual needs of their adherents rather than accumulating wealth. Religious organizations should also implement transparency measures to ensure that financial contributions are used for community development and charitable initiatives.

4. Separating Religion from Politics

The entanglement of religion and politics has contributed

significantly to the polarization in Plateau State. Religious leaders must adopt a more neutral stance in political matters, encouraging their adherents to make informed decisions based on policies and ideologies rather than sectarian allegiances. This will help reduce political divisions and promote a more unified society.

Conclusion

The quest for supremacy among religious leaders and organizations in Plateau State poses a grave threat to religious harmony, social cohesion, and political stability. The relentless pursuit of numerical superiority, coupled with sectarian divisions and the commercialization of religion, has created an environment of intolerance, division, and polarization. To address this growing menace, religious leaders must refocus their efforts on promoting unity, understanding, and cooperation. By fostering interfaith dialogue, challenging the commercialization of religion, and separating religion from politics, it is possible to build a more harmonious and peaceful society in Plateau State. The future of the region depends on the ability of its religious and political leaders to rise above narrow sectarian interests and work towards the common good.

Gender Mainstreaming Through Positive Peace Peacebuilding

Ambassador Vivien E. Abara

"When women are empowered, nations are more secure and peaceful." Madeleine Albright*



ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of gender mainstreaming in cultivating a culture of peace in Plateau State, North Central, Nigeria through the framework of positive peacebuilding.

The eight pillars of positive peace:

well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, free flow of information, good relations with neighbours, high levels of human capital, acceptance of the rights of others, low levels of corruption and sound business environment are analyzed through a gendered lens. This article addresses various forms of violence affecting Plateau State, which includes gender-based violence with domestic violence, human trafficking, child labour, abuse, and sexual violence topping the chart, while also emphasizing how women play a crucial role in peacebuilding processes. By examining best practices and strategies for integrating gender in peacebuilding, this paper argues that the inclusion of women in peace processes not only fosters peaceful coexistence but also ensures impactful and sustainable development. Gender-sensitive peacebuilding is vital for resolving conflicts, promoting reconciliation, restoration, and building social cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding in conflict-affected regions requires more than just conflict resolution; it requires addressing the root causes of violence, empowering marginalized groups, and fostering conditions for lasting peace. The integration of gender into peacebuilding is crucial, as women and girls are often disproportionately affected by violence, including gender-based violence such as domestic violence, human trafficking, child labour, and

sexual abuse. This paper explores how gender mainstreaming, using the eight pillars of positive peace, can create sustainable peace in Plateau State.

GENDER AND POSITIVE PEACEBUILDING IN PLATEAU STATE

1. Well-functioning Government

A well-functioning government is the bedrock of positive peace. In Plateau State, the government's role in ensuring security and justice

for all citizens is paramount and of great importance in ensuring positive peace. However, weak institutions, corruption, and a lack of representation of women in decision-making processes have hampered efforts to address gender-based violence, especially human trafficking effectively. Women's voices are often marginalized in governance structures, limiting their impact on peacebuilding efforts. A government that includes women at all levels

of decision-making is more likely to address the specific needs of women, including survivors of gender-based violence.

2. Equitable Distribution of Resources.

Inequitable distribution of resources, including access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, disproportionately affects women and girls in the state. Gender inequality fuels conflict, as marginalized women are more vulnerable to domestic violence, human trafficking, child labour, and sexual exploitation. Ensuring that women have equal access to resources not only empowers them economically but also reduces the risk of exploitation and violence. Empowerment of women contributes to peacebuilding by fostering social and economic stability in communities.

3. Free Flow of Information

Access to information is critical in the fight against violence and human trafficking. In Plateau State, the lack of adequate information channels exacerbates the problem of gender-based violence, as many victims do not have the knowledge or resources to seek help. Community radio, women's advocacy groups, and digital platforms have the potential to spread awareness about gender violence, human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation. It is through the free flow of information that

gender-sensitive policies and interventions can reach those most in need.

4. Good Relations with Neighbours

Intercommunal violence has been a significant challenge in the state, where ethno-religious conflicts have led to displacement and insecurity. Women often bear the brunt of such violence, facing heightened risks of domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and abuse. Positive peacebuilding requires fostering good relations between communities through interfaith dialogue and conflict mediation. Women's involvement in interfaith and intercultural dialogues is essential, as they can bridge divides and promote reconciliation at the grassroots level.

5. High Levels of Human Capital

Education is a fundamental tool for peacebuilding, yet many girls in Plateau State are denied this right due to conflicts, poverty, early marriage, and cultural practices. The lack of education makes girls more susceptible to domestic servitude, teenage pregnancy, child abuse, labour, and exploitation, including trafficking. Gender-sensitive education policies and programs that prioritize girls' education and skills development are crucial for building human capital and creating a more peaceful

society. Educated women are more likely to participate in peacebuilding processes and contribute to community resilience.

6. Acceptance of the Rights of Others

A society that respects human rights is one where peace can thrive. The rights of women and girls are often violated through gender-based violence and exploitation due to violent conflicts, which leads to displacement. Gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding involves promoting the rights of women and girls, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes at all levels. Programs that protect women's rights and provide support for survivors of violence are critical for fostering a culture of peace.

7. Low Levels of Corruption

Corruption undermines peace efforts by perpetuating inequality and injustice. In the context of gender-based violence and human trafficking, corrupt practices within law enforcement and judicial systems often result in impunity for perpetrators. Efforts to reduce corruption in Plateau State must include strengthening legal frameworks to protect women and girls, ensuring accountability for crimes such as rape, domestic violence, and trafficking. Women-led anti-corruption initiatives can also play a key role in enhancing transparency, inclusion and justice.

8. Sound Business Environment

A stable business environment is crucial for economic growth and peace. However, women in the state often face barriers to entrepreneurship due to lack of access to credit, discriminatory laws, and social norms that limit their economic participation. Gender-inclusive economic policies that support women entrepreneurs can help reduce poverty and create jobs, thereby contributing to peace and stability. Economic empowerment of women is directly linked to the reduction of violence and the promotion of positive peace.

BEST PRACTICES IN GENDER-SENSITIVE PEACEBUILDING

Best practices in gender-sensitive peacebuilding in Plateau State include community-based interventions that focus on empowering women and girls, thereby addressing the specific challenges they face. One example is the establishment of women's peace committees that will work alongside traditional leaders to mediate conflicts and advocate for the rights of women, girls and children. These committees have proven effective in preventing violence and fostering dialogue between conflicting groups. Another best practice is the integration of gender perspectives into formal peace processes, ensuring that women have a seat at the table

during negotiations and decision-making processes. The inclusion of women in peace negotiations leads to more sustainable peace agreements that address the needs of all members of society.

CONCLUSION

Cultivating a culture of positive peace in Plateau State requires the active participation of women and the integration of gender perspectives into all aspects of peacebuilding. Through gender mainstreaming and the application of the eight pillars of positive peace, sustainable peace can be achieved. Women's empowerment is not just a goal in itself but a critical pathway to reducing violence, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring the well-being of future generations. By addressing gender-based violence like domestic violence, human trafficking, child labour, abuse, and sexual exploitation, this paper underscores the need for holistic peacebuilding approaches that prioritize the voices and rights of women in Plateau State

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PEACEBUILDING AND INTERFAITH /INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: THE ROLE OF WOMEN: JUSTICE, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION MOVEMENT (JPRM) EXPERIENCE:

Elder Ambassador Justina Mike Ngwobia

Introduction

In the midst of increasing violence, tensions and wars, polarization, and religious extremism/ radicalism around the world, especially in Africa, having a platform of inter- faith relations and dialogue aimed at bringing together people of diverse religions, cultures, traditions and institutions to promote peaceful co-existence and common humanity through interfaith/ inter-religious, and inter- cultural dialogue is very critical, urgent and important. Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM) which is an inter faith organization have over the years brought people of diverse backgrounds in Plateau State and beyond to reason together towards a peaceful and just communities.

Dialogue among different faiths and religions constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace. It enhances mutual understanding, harmony

and cooperation among people of different faiths. It is no longer news that in recent times, religion has become a key player in Modern societies, it has often been manipulated and exploited to justify extremist behaviors in its diverse forms and expressions. Therefore, the need for interfaith dialogue/relations becomes very imperative to counter the narratives and as well increase social cohesion, mutual understanding and beyond tolerance, increase and strengthens acceptance and Trust.

Religion can be an invaluable source in promoting understanding and reconciliation, and it can provide a foundation for peace building efforts (Abu-Ninew, 2001). All of the world's major religious have a significant strain emphasizing peace (Coward and Smith, 2004) uses the term religious peace building to describe the range of

activities performed by religious actors and institutions for the purpose of resolving and transforming deadly conflict, with the goal of building social relations and political institutions characterized by a mission of tolerance and non-violence (p.6). In addition to conflict resolution, religious peace building includes individual and grassroots efforts for promoting human rights, cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue. We today live in a world were violent conflicts, wars, insurgency, religious intolerance, increase hate among others have seemingly become insurmountable.

Inter-religious dialogue is a clear path towards building more peaceful societies and women have played key roles in the promotion of peace through inter-faith relations/dialogue in their various communities, and society.

Inter-religious/interfaith dialogue strives to create



trusting connections that support people to live and cooperate with each other across boundaries. It also assists in solving disagreement, issues or tensions at risk of escalating into violent conflict especially in contexts where cultural and religious identities are at stake or part of the subject matter. (KAICIID IRD-GUIDE, 2021).

The purpose of inter-religious/inter-faith dialogue is to convene people from different backgrounds, religious, cultures and identities in a safe constructive space to discover similarities and identify differences.

Conceptual Clarification: Peacebuilding:

From conflict to peacebuilding: A conflict-habituated system or society is when the conflict is integrated in the system and becomes the norm; it becomes a habit; it is integrated and part of the normal life to a degree that members of such society are not able to imagine their reality without the conflict. The conflict behaviors become part of the daily life of individuals in their institutions, society, and even cultural patterns. Peacebuilding aims at creating the tangible and intangible conditions to enable a conflict-habituated system to be transformed into a peace system. Peacebuilding processes are often aimed at creating change in the power relationships among the conflicting parties and transform it into a constructive and more sustainable one. Its processes “infuse hope and help the conflict parties construct a new vision for future relationship. Galtung (1996) defined peacebuilding as the process of creating supporting structures that removes the causes of wars

and offer alternatives to war in situations where war might occur. UN Peacebuilding support office sees PB as a continuum of strategy, processes and activities aimed at sustaining peace over the long term with a clear focus on reducing chance for the relapse into conflict.

Looking at the above, it is pertinent to say that peacebuilding is a process that facilitates the establishment of lasting and sustainable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing the root causes of the conflict through social processes

Dialogue:

Dialogue deals with personal and collective preconceived notions and prejudices by focusing on questioning, listening, the suspension of judgment, and the search for commonalities based on respect of differences. Dialogue deals with thinking and understanding, and has a mission to clarify and overcome misunderstanding. Dialogue therefore focuses on listening, understanding, and acknowledging the perspectives and views held by others. This is done through: building relationships; finding common ground; and focusing the dialogue process on similarities and differences. The final purpose is thus to build bridges of communication among those who are different and to transform the relationship from a state of intolerance, stereotyping and misunderstanding to a state of deeper understanding and respect of each other's differences. If applied properly, dialogue process can also produce an agreed upon joint plan of action

Dialogue is a transformative peacebuilding method. It is transformative because it changes individual perceptions of the other and therefore of the conflict. As a result, it transforms the relationship between the parties from an adversarial relationship to a relationship of understanding and respect. It helps the participant to differentiate between the person and the problem; it helps to view the individual within the larger group that is perceived as an adversary.

Interfaith/inter-religious Dialogue:

While dialogue can simply be referred to conversation between different people, it is also seen from a perspective of whether it is intra or inter religious, inter cultural, or inter civilisation, as a form of interaction between two or more persons of different identities that emphasises self-expression and reciprocal listening without passing judgement, in an intellectual and compassionate spirit of openness to mutual learning with deep transformative potential. (KAICIID)

Inter religious dialogue, also referred to as inter faith dialogue is about people of different religious backgrounds and faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other despite their differences. It also refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e. Faiths) at both the individual and institutional level. Each of the party usually stick to or committed to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice

their faith freely.

Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk, it includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between communities, neighbours, schools, market places and other informal settings. Dialogue therefore should be an on-going affair/ daily routine.

The role of women in peacebuilding and interfaith/ inter-religious dialogue

The women in Nigeria have played critical role in peace building through inter-faith dialogue and inter-faith relations. This has helped in strengthening and building positive relationships, trust and increase cooperation between and among different faiths. (Intra and at Inter-faith levels). Women have also participated in a lot of conferences and trainings organized by the following interfaith organizations and beyond this, they have organized many of such activities in hybrid levels.

- (a) Justice Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM)
- (b) KAICIID International Dialogue Center Vienna Austria.
- (c) Inter-faith Dialogue Forum for Peace (IDFP).
- (d) Women of Faith Peace Building Network.
- (e) Women Peace Builders Network in Nigeria (WOPEN)
- (f) Women for positive peacebuilding Initiative (WOPPI)
- (g) Women Initiative for Sustainable community Development (WISCOD)
- (h) UN women, Nigeria.
- (f) Women Peace Mentors and Mediator Forum.
- (g) Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth (WMC)
- (h) Faith to Action Network.
- (i) Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC).
- (j) Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Among many others.

The Summary of Activities of Women in Interfaith Relations/ Dialogue through Peacebuilding

- (a) Advocacy Visits/Courtesy

Visits: Visits of the pilgrimage of Justice and peace (WCC) in Nigeria. We participated in advocacy visits to state's stake holders among others.

- (b) Conferences/Trainings: Through the activities of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM), in collaboration with WOPEN Initiative for Youth and Women Empowerment under the project titled: Women Empowerment and Economic Program (WEEP), Women have organized several conferences on Christian-Muslim relations, peace building, conflict prevention and monitoring, EWER, leadership and governance, mentoring of young girls and boys, Gender and peace building, women empowerment, gender justice and women's rights, dialogue forum, Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB), rallies, peaceful walks, media



- engagements among others. All were aimed at building the capacity of women to engage in their various communities as peace actors and promoters of inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter world view dialogue and cooperation.
- (c) Humanitarian Response Programs in IDP Camps and host communities (Food and non-food items).
 - (d) Trauma Healing and Psycho Social Support.
 - (e) Praying Together (Interfaith Prayers)
 - (f) Celebrations of major landmark events e.g. International Women's Day, International Peace day and International day for the family among others.

Why Women are Important and Critical Actors in the Peace Process

- * The UNSCR 1325 is a landmark resolution which has created space for women to be included in peace building. This is because of the important roles' women are playing in their homes, the Church and society in general.
- * Women make up to half of the world's population therefore, excluding them in peace processes means excluding half of the world.
- * Women are central care takers of families in many cultures, everyone suffers when women are oppressed victimized and excluded.
- * Women have the capacity for both violence and peace. Therefore, they must be encouraged to use their gifts in building

peace.

- * According to the President of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM), Rev Dr. Habila M. Istifanus during women's day celebration 2023 interview with him, he said “No society can develop without the inclusion and participation of women; therefore, it is imperative that women are part of the peace processes in our society, that is the only sure way to achieve peace and sustainable future”. This is why the issue of women's empowerment is one of the key thematic areas of Justice Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM)
- * When women are educated, included in decision making processes, it brings about a just, developed and peaceful homes which leads to peaceful societies. An Adage goes thus; “When you train a man, you train an individual, when you train a woman, you train the nation”

Conclusion:

Nigeria is one of the countries in the world that have over the years been ravaged by violent conflicts which till date have led to devastating effects on its citizens due to colossal loss of lives, destruction of properties, infrastructures and means of livelihood. This has also led to traumatic situations, increased IDPs, widows and orphans in the country. Most of the causes of the violent conflicts has been as a result of religious differences and misunderstandings which the political class have for over the

time manipulated thereby turning most conflicts to become religious.

As at today, the huge number of the population still lives in abject poverty. There is a lot of marginalization, injustice which also amounts to Gender Injustice leading to violence against women which is one of the critical challenges facing the Nation. It is no longer news to say that women and children suffer most in cases of violent conflict and yet they are the most disadvantaged in decision making processes. Therefore, involving and engaging women in interfaith relations/ dialogue and peace processes including leadership decision making is not only urgent but critical.

Finally, women (Christians and Muslims) have ensured that peace is restored in their communities as a result of these activities mentioned above using their God given roles as Peace builders. When you build the woman, you build the Nation.

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From Conflict to Cohesion: Leveraging AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Government Commitment for Sustainable Peace in Plateau State



By Albert Pam Mangs

*“Victorious warriors win first and then go to war,
while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.”
Sun Tzu's The Art of War.*

Introduction

In the heart of Nigeria's Middle-Belt, Plateau State has grappled with a history of inter-communal violence and breakdown of peace. The complexity of any peacebuilding response to conflict requires a highly contextualized, localized response at the individual, community, State and even national levels. Violence and conflict in Nigeria's Middle-Belt and Northwest are driven by several factors, including ethnicity, politics, lack of accountability and access to justice, criminal organized violence, insecurity and increasing competition over dwindling land resources as well as religious differences. I

was pivoting and leading into the Middle-Belt region, a countering violent extremism (CVE) program that sought to foster a culture of peace – the program had been doing quite well during the previous eight years deploying the adaptive programme management approach in the Northeast (NE). The CVE program named Nigeria Early Recovery Initiative was generously funded by leading international development partners in Nigeria. This article briefly explores the innovative strategies employed, the role of artificial intelligence, and how important the unwavering commitment of government is essential in cultivating a more harmonious and resilient

society.

A Pivotal Moment

In early 2021, those chilly days in January on the Jos-Plateau - a critical juncture arose as the program I was part of in NE Nigeria shifted its focus to the Middle-Belt. My mandate was very clear: Provide leadership for a dynamic community-led multi-stakeholders programming portfolio that will anticipate, prevent, and respond to the escalating violence that threatened the region's stability. Recognizing the complex interplay of factors driving the conflict, the program adopted a highly contextualized approach, tailored to the specific needs of Plateau and Kaduna States. The program's success, no doubt hinged on a



multifaceted approach that leveraged both traditional and innovative strategies. A key element was the strategic use of small grants to empower local communities and foster ownership of outcomes. Others include prioritizing inclusive processes and emphasizing the importance of community engagement which made the program to quickly gain acceptance, build trust and strengthen social cohesion.

A Community-Driven Approach to Peacebuilding

The program prioritized community-led initiatives, providing small grants to local partners to address specific needs and challenges. While outputs were important, the process of fostering inclusive engagement and collaboration was equally valued. Over 40 distinct but interconnected activities were implemented to support peacebuilding and social cohesion in affected communities in Plateau State alone. The Plateau State Peacebuilding Agency (PPBA) played a central role in the program. With our support, the PPBA conducted needs assessments, strengthened its institutional capacity through training and technical assistance, and improved its ability to design and deliver targeted interventions.

To enhance coordination and collaboration, the program supported the PPBA in convening regular meetings and facilitating positive exchanges among stakeholders and peace practitioners. This led to significant improvements in the PPBA's coordination role and contributed to positively moving the needle on the

overall peacebuilding efforts in the State. In addition to these activities, the program provided immediate relief to conflict-affected communities, including supporting the reconstruction of damaged houses in eight LGAs. By fostering community resilience, promoting dialogue, and addressing the root causes of conflict, the program aimed to create a more peaceful and sustainable future for the Plateau State

Innovative Strategies and the Role of Technology

AI's ability to process, evaluate and make sense of vast amounts of data has revolutionized conflict analysis. By leveraging data mining techniques, AI can identify patterns, trends, and early warning signs of conflict. For example, AI algorithms can study social media data to detect and track the spread of hate speech and disinformation, which can often fuel tensions and contribute to violence. In the context of the ongoing conflict in the Lake Chad Basin region, AI has been used to simplify satellite imagery and social media data to identify areas of conflict, track the movements of armed groups, and assess the humanitarian needs of affected populations. Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) is a critical avenue for enhancing peacebuilding efforts because AI-powered tools have been employed to scrutinize data, identify early warning signs of conflict, and facilitate more targeted interventions. This information has been invaluable for humanitarian organizations and peacekeeping forces in responding to crisis situations.

By harnessing the potentials of technology, the program aimed to create a more proactive and data-driven approach to peacebuilding.

Fostering Unity and Understanding Through Cultural Exchange

To promote mutual understanding and trust, we organized a variety of inter-community exchanges and cultural events to reduce the risk of conflicts and consolidate on peace gained. These activities include working with cultural icons on promoting folklores, storytelling, music, and traditional dances that aimed to foster relationships across ethnic and religious lines and reduce anti-social behaviours. Such events provided a sense of normalcy and healing for communities affected by conflict. Prominent peace advocates from both the public and private sectors were invited to deliver keynote speeches at special events, reinforcing the importance of peace and reconciliation. The events also included rallies, roadshows, media campaigns, intra and inter-community sports tournaments, and townhall summits to ensure broad community participation. The presence of high-level government officials and religious leaders was crucial in demonstrating their commitment to social cohesion. Special goodwill messages, cultural performances, and traditional activities were common features of these special events. In some communities, guided tours to sacred ancestral sites or places of natural beauty were organized to showcase the rich cultural

heritage of the region. The Jos Plateau, with its abundant rocky caves and historical sites, offered numerous opportunities for such excursions.

Government Commitment: A Double-Edged Sword

The cultivation of a culture of peace required concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the government. The success of any peacebuilding initiative hinges on the unwavering support and commitment of the government and duty bearers at all levels. In the case of PPBA's role the team did well in coordination efforts, convening critical stakeholders and further legitimized the program in the State. However, navigating the complexities of government bureaucracy and securing consistent support proved to be a significant challenge. While the PPBA played a pivotal role in fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, the program faced several obstacles related to government commitment. Inadequate funding often hampered the agency's ability to implement its internal complementary initiatives effectively, limiting its reach and impact. Additionally, the lack of consistent backing from executive powers at that particular administration, and the influence of political interference, including subtle inter-agency rivalry, posed significant challenges. To overcome these hurdles, the program in the Middle-Belt and Plateau State in particular, adopted the adaptive approach in its delivery of outcomes – this approach emphasized flexibility, responsiveness, and strategic engagement with

government officials. By understanding the prevailing political dynamics on ground and navigating the challenges with tact and diplomacy, the program was able to secure the necessary support and maintain government commitment through its scope and time.

Recommendations for Cultivating and Sustaining Peace in Plateau State

1. Continued Investment in Peacebuilding Initiatives

To ensure the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding efforts in Plateau State, it is imperative for both government and international development partners to prioritize sustained investment in contextualized and evidenced based peacebuilding initiatives. Some examples of actions may include:

- **Allocating adequate resources:** Governments and peacebuilding practitioners should allocate sufficient funds to support peacebuilding programs, ensuring that they have the necessary resources to implement their activities effectively.
- **Establishing long-term partnerships:** Building long-term partnerships between governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations can provide a stable foundation for peacebuilding efforts.
- **Exploring innovative funding mechanisms:** Exploring innovative funding mechanisms, such as social impact bonds or crowd-funding, can help diversify funding sources and ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives in

the State.

2. Strengthening Government Institutional Capacity

The PPBA and other relevant institutions like the Plateau State Emergency management Agency (PLASEMA) play a crucial role in promoting peace and de-escalating conflicts through monitoring early warning systems (EWS). To enhance their capacity and effectiveness, it is pertinent for the current administration to:

- **Provide ongoing training and development:** Invest in training programs to equip staff with the skills and knowledge needed to implement effective peacebuilding strategies.
- **Strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs):** Foster collaboration between the PPBA and civil society organizations including the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) to leverage their expertise and networks for joint actions, shared experiences, research and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).
- **Improve access to resources:** Ensure that the PPBA and other relevant institutions have access to the necessary resources, including technology, equipment, and financial support.

3. Expanding the Use of Technology

Leveraging technology can provide valuable insights and tools for conflict prevention and resolution. This includes:

- **Utilizing AI for early warning systems:** Employing AI-powered tools to analyze data and identify potential conflict hotspots.

- **Developing mobile applications for community engagement:** Creating platforms for communities to report incidents, share information, and participate in peacebuilding activities.
- **Using social media for peacebuilding advocacy:** Leveraging social media to raise awareness, mobilize support, and amplify the voices of peacebuilders.

4. Promoting Inclusive Governance

Ensuring that all voices are heard and represented is essential for building a just and equitable society. This requires:

- **Strengthening democratic institutions:** Promoting fair and transparent elections, protecting human rights, and ensuring the rule of law.
- **Encouraging participation from marginalized groups:** Creating safe spaces for marginalized groups to express their concerns and participate in decision-making processes.
- **Implementing transitional justice mechanisms:** Addressing the legacies of past violence through truth commissions, reparations, and prosecutions to promote reconciliation and prevent future conflicts. Transitional justice is more crucial than ever in the context of peacebuilding in Plateau State. By addressing the root causes of past conflicts, transitional justice mechanisms can help to prevent future

violence, promote reconciliation, and build a more just and equitable society.

Conclusion

The journey toward a culture of peace in Plateau State is ongoing, the modest achievements made through the short-pivoted peacebuilding program I shared here, and many other fantastic initiatives by members of the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) offers so much glimmer of hope. Finally, when we collectively leverage the power of community engagement, garner government commitment, and explore the powers of emerging technologies – carefully considering some of the above recommendations and addressing the challenges of transitional justice, then it is possible to create a more peaceful, just and prosperous future for citizens and people of Plateau State.

As Bob Marley famously said, **"One love, one heart, let's get together and feel alright."**

Ends!

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- Nigeria Early Recovery Initiative (NERI) (2023) - **Final Program Evaluation Reports:** Comprehensive evaluations of the program's effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Enhancing Peacebuilding through the Open Government Partnership in Plateau State - Phase 2

By Engr. David Wuyep



Introduction

Plateau State, with its rich ethnic and religious diversity, has long been both a cultural mosaic and a flashpoint for conflict in Nigeria. This diversity, while a potential asset for socio-economic and cultural development, has often given rise to inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions that have, over time, resulted in violence and instability. These conflicts, exacerbated by socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and political contestations, have hampered peace and security in the region, leading to a breakdown in trust between communities and the government. Consequently, the region's development has been stunted, as insecurity drives away investment, limits access to education, and undermines public health efforts.

In response, the Plateau State

government has undertaken numerous initiatives aimed at fostering peace and reconciliation. However, it became increasingly clear that government-led efforts alone were insufficient. For true, lasting peace to take root, the involvement of citizens—particularly in preventive measures and post-crisis recovery—was vital. It was against this backdrop that the Plateau state government signed on to the **Open Government Partnership (OGP)**, establishing a framework for deeper citizen engagement and accountability in governance, with a strong focus on peacebuilding.

The Open Government Partnership and Peacebuilding

The **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** is a multilateral initiative that

seeks to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. Since its inception, OGP has served as a platform for collaboration between governments and civil society organizations, with the aim of ensuring that citizens play an active role in governance.

In Plateau State, the OGP has emerged as a vital instrument for fostering inclusive governance, especially in relation to peace and security. By creating mechanisms through which citizens can participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, the OGP contributes to the enhancement of transparency, accountability, and trust between citizens and the government. Importantly, these elements are key to mitigating conflict and

fostering peace.

Recognizing this, the first **Plateau State OGP State Action Plan (SAP-1) 2021 - 2023** integrated peacebuilding as a central focus, particularly through the establishment of the **Plateau State Peace and Security Trust Fund (PSTF)**.

The Plateau State Peace and Security Trust Fund (PSTF)

One of the major commitments of **SAP-1** was the creation of the **Plateau State Peace and Security Trust Fund (PSTF)**, a multi-stakeholder mechanism designed to support and coordinate peacebuilding activities in the state. The rationale behind the PSTF was simple but profound: effective peacebuilding requires sustainable funding and the active participation of a broad range of actors, including government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the international community.

The PSTF, when fully operational, would be chaired by a respected figure from outside the government, ensuring that the initiative remains independent, transparent, and focused on its core mission of peacebuilding. The fund was designed to mobilize resources from various sources, including:

1. Government

contributions: A portion of the state's budget allocated to peacebuilding and security initiatives.

2. Private sector support:

Contributions from businesses and corporate entities operating in Plateau State, with a vested interest in maintaining stability for their operations.

3. International partners and donors: Support from global development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign governments committed to peace and development in Nigeria.

4. Community-based organizations and public-spirited individuals:

Engagement of grassroots groups and individuals with an interest in promoting peace within their localities.

The fund would provide financial support to both state and non-state actors involved in peacebuilding efforts, with a particular focus on conflict prevention, mediation, and post-crisis recovery. Moreover, the PSTF would foster coordination among peacebuilding actors in the state, ensuring that efforts are aligned, complementary, and mutually reinforcing.

Implementation of the PSTF under SAP-1

The implementation of the PSTF commitment under **SAP-1** was spearheaded by the **Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA)**, in collaboration with a coalition of civil society organizations under the banner of the **Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN)**. These entities worked closely with other government agencies and local stakeholders to develop a comprehensive framework for the establishment and operationalization of the PSTF.

After extensive stakeholder consultations, including dialogues with traditional

rulers, religious leaders, youth groups, and women's organizations, an Executive Bill was drafted and presented to the Plateau State Parliament. This bill sought to formally establish the PSTF and outline its governance structure, funding mechanisms, and areas of intervention.

As of the conclusion of **SAP-1** in June 2023, the bill was still undergoing legislative processing, with robust discussions taking place among lawmakers and stakeholders to ensure the PSTF is designed in a manner that meets the needs of the state and its people. The delay in passing the bill reflected the complexity of the issue, as well as the importance of building consensus among all key actors to ensure that the fund achieves its intended objectives.

The Transition to SAP-2: New Commitments for 2024 - 2026

As Plateau State transitions into the second phase of its OGP journey with the development of the **State Action Plan 2024 - 2026 (SAP-2)**, the PSTF remains a central pillar of the state's peacebuilding agenda. SAP-2 builds upon the foundation laid during SAP-1, with an enhanced commitment to ensuring the passage and signing of the PSTF Bill into law, followed by its full operationalization.

Two thematic areas under **SAP-2—Land and Spatial Planning and Public Service Delivery**—were identified as critical to peacebuilding and have been directly linked to the implementation of the PSTF.

1. Land and Spatial

Planning: One of the primary drivers of conflict in Plateau State is disputes over land ownership, access, and use. The thematic area of Land and Spatial Planning under SAP-2 aims to address these issues by improving land governance, ensuring equitable access to land, and promoting transparency in land transactions. The PSTF will play a key role in mediating land-related disputes and supporting efforts to establish clear, fair, and transparent processes for land management in the state.

2. **Public Service Delivery:** Poor delivery of essential services such as healthcare, education, water, and electricity has historically fueled grievances that contribute to conflict. SAP-2 focuses on improving the quality and accessibility of public services, particularly in conflict-prone areas. The PSTF will provide financial and technical support to initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery in these areas, helping to address underlying factors that drive conflict and insecurity.

The Role of Citizens and Civil Society in Peacebuilding

One of the core principles of the **Open Government Partnership** is citizen engagement. In the context of peacebuilding, the active participation of citizens and civil society organizations is essential for the success of the PSTF and the broader OGP agenda in Plateau State.

Civil society organizations, including the **Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN)**, have been instrumental in shaping the peacebuilding framework in Plateau State. These organizations serve as a bridge between the government and local communities, ensuring that the voices of citizens are heard in policymaking processes. Their continued involvement in the implementation of SAP-2 will be critical in ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the people.

Moreover, the success of the PSTF will depend on the willingness of citizens to engage in dialogue, participate in peacebuilding initiatives, and hold the government accountable for its commitments. Citizens must be empowered to take ownership of peacebuilding efforts within their communities, whether through participation in local peace committees, mediation efforts, or community development projects.

Challenges and the Way Forward

While the OGP framework and the PSTF hold great promise for enhancing peacebuilding in Plateau State, several challenges remain. These include:

- **Political Will:** Ensuring that the PSTF Bill is passed and fully implemented will require sustained political will from both the executive and legislative branches of government.
- **Sustainability:** The success of the PSTF will depend on

its ability to secure sustainable funding from diverse sources, including the private sector and international partners.

- **Coordination:** Effective coordination among peacebuilding actors is essential to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that resources are used efficiently.
- **Community Buy-in:** Ensuring that local communities support and participate in peacebuilding initiatives is critical for long-term success. This requires continuous engagement, trust-building, and transparency.

Conclusion

The **Open Government Partnership** has provided a unique platform for fostering peacebuilding efforts in Plateau State, with the **Plateau State Peace and Security Trust Fund** serving as a key mechanism for mobilizing resources and coordinating interventions. As Plateau State moves into **Phase 2** of its OGP journey with **SAP-2**, the focus must remain on ensuring that the PSTF is operationalized, and that all stakeholders—government, civil society, and citizens—play an active role in promoting peace and development. With sustained commitment and collaboration, Plateau State can build a more peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous future for all its people.

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT IN PLATEAU STATE:

A Comprehensive Analysis and Path to Transformation

By Amina Ahmed

Introduction

For the past two decades, Plateau State has been a flashpoint of violent conflict, with countless lives lost, property destroyed, and a population left grappling with the aftermath of severe trauma. The conflicts, largely rooted in ethnic, religious, and political divisions, have inflicted long-lasting damage on the social and economic fabric of the region. With memories of loved ones lost and livelihoods disrupted, many communities remain fragile, unsure of how to move beyond the scars of their past. Despite substantial efforts by federal, state, and local governments, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to address the root causes of these conflicts, Plateau State remains vulnerable to new outbreaks of violence. Conflict, as we know, behaves like a living entity: it is conceived, born, grows, and—if left unaddressed—matures and persists, sometimes for generations. However, the life cycle of conflict can be shortened or even terminated through strategic interventions. This is why understanding conflict as a dynamic process and applying appropriate conflict analysis and transformation tools is crucial for sustainable peace.

The Life Cycle of Conflict: Conception, Growth, and Maturity

Conflict is not a static occurrence but rather an evolving phenomenon. It begins with underlying tensions, such as competition over resources, ethnic divisions, or religious differences. These tensions may simmer for years or even decades, until a trigger—such as a political

dispute, land use disagreement, or a provocative event—pushes communities into open conflict. In Plateau State, several factors have consistently contributed to the outbreak and perpetuation of violent conflict, including:

1. Ethnic and Religious

Divisions: Plateau State is home to a mosaic of ethnic and religious groups, often competing for political power, access to land, and other resources.

2. Land Disputes:

Disagreements over land ownership and grazing rights between farmers and herders have fueled numerous violent confrontations.

3. Political Manipulation:

Politicians, seeking to gain support, often exploit these divisions, aggravating tensions for personal gain.

4. Inequality and

Marginalization: Perceived or actual economic and political marginalization of certain ethnic or religious groups further entrenches grievances, contributing to cycles of violence.

Government and NGO Efforts to Address Conflict

Over the years, the government at all levels—along with civil society organizations—have made significant efforts to address the drivers of conflict in Plateau State. Some of the notable initiatives include:

1. **Peacebuilding Agencies:** The establishment of the Plateau State Peacebuilding Agency (PPBA) has been a critical step in mediating disputes, fostering dialogue, and implementing early warning mechanisms to prevent outbreaks of violence.

2. **Federal Interventions:** At the federal level, security forces have been deployed to maintain order and respond to violent outbreaks. Moreover, various presidential committees and panels of inquiry have been set up to investigate the root causes of conflicts and recommend solutions.

3. **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** International and local NGOs have played a significant role in providing humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected communities, promoting reconciliation, and advocating for policy reforms. Organizations such as Search for Common Ground and the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network have been instrumental in promoting dialogue and peacebuilding in the region.

However, while these efforts have yielded some positive outcomes, they have not been sufficient to fully address the deeply ingrained structural and social issues that drive conflict in Plateau State. This is why more comprehensive and systemic approaches are needed.

The Conflict Analysis and Transformation Paradigm

To effectively address the conflict in Plateau State, it is essential to apply conflict analysis and transformation methodologies. This approach helps stakeholders understand the complexities of conflict, assess past and ongoing efforts, and develop strategies to mitigate future violence. The paradigm for conflict analysis and transformation involves several key stages:

1. **Understanding the Nature of the Conflict:**

- What is the conflict about? In Plateau State, the conflict is multi-layered, involving ethnic, religious, and political dimensions. These factors intersect with economic issues, such as competition over land, and social issues, like access to political representation and services.

2. Identifying Contributing Factors:

- What factors have contributed to the conflict? In addition to ethnic and religious divisions, other factors, such as youth unemployment, political manipulation, and inequality, have played significant roles in fueling violence.

3. Early Warning Signs:

- What are the early signs that a conflict may erupt? In Plateau State, factors such as inflammatory rhetoric by political or religious leaders, escalating land disputes, and electoral tension have often preceded violent outbreaks.

4. Efforts Made to Stop the Conflict:

- What has been done to prevent or mitigate the conflict? Government initiatives like the deployment of security forces, peace talks, and peacebuilding agencies have played a role. NGOs have also contributed by mediating disputes and advocating for non-violent solutions.

5. Losses Incurred and Consequences:

- What are the social, economic, and political costs of the conflict? More than 10,000 lives have been lost in Plateau State over the past two decades, depending on who is providing the figures. The violence has devastated communities, leaving behind widows, orphans, and massive economic losses, while also disrupting local governance and security.

6. Strategies for Future Conflict Prevention:

- What can be done to prevent future conflicts? Strategies for conflict prevention must

include comprehensive peacebuilding programs that address the root causes of violence, such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization. Conflict transformation also requires the creation of platforms for dialogue between conflicting groups, strengthening of local governance structures, and enhanced collaboration between government, civil society, and international organizations.

Recommendations for Sustainable Peace in Plateau State

1. Strengthening Peacebuilding Institutions:

- The Plateau State Peacebuilding Agency (PPBA) and other related institutions need to be supported with adequate resources and given the autonomy to mediate disputes without political interference. They should also be tasked with creating comprehensive early warning systems to detect potential conflicts before they escalate.

2. Inclusive Dialogue and Reconciliation Programs:

- Ethnic and religious leaders, community groups, and civil society organizations must be actively involved in dialogue and reconciliation efforts. Building trust between communities through shared economic and social initiatives, such as joint agricultural programs, can foster cooperation and reduce tensions.

3. Land and Resource Management:

- Many of the conflicts in Plateau State are rooted in disputes over land use. The government must develop clear land tenure policies that address the needs of both farmers and herders. This should be accompanied by the establishment of community-led mechanisms for conflict resolution over land disputes.

4. Addressing Youth

Unemployment:

- High levels of youth unemployment contribute to the cycle of violence, as young people are often drawn into conflict for economic reasons. Job creation initiatives, vocational training programs, and access to credit for small businesses are essential for reducing youth involvement in violence.

5. Enhancing Political Inclusivity:

- Political marginalization of certain ethnic or religious groups exacerbates tensions. It is important for the government to ensure that all communities have representation in local governance structures and that political appointments are based on merit rather than ethnicity or religion.

Conclusion

The past two decades of conflict in Plateau State have left deep scars on its people and its landscape. While progress has been made in addressing some of the root causes of violence, much remains to be done to ensure sustainable peace. The paradigm for conflict analysis and transformation offers a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of conflict and for developing comprehensive strategies to address it. By strengthening peacebuilding institutions, promoting inclusive dialogue, resolving land disputes, addressing youth unemployment, and enhancing political inclusivity, Plateau State can begin to break the cycle of violence and build a more peaceful and prosperous future for all its citizens. Sustainable peace is possible, but it requires commitment from all stakeholders—government, civil society, and the people of Plateau State themselves.

THE TATAAUNAWA POLICY BRIEF

SEPTEMBER 7, 2001 – SEPTEMBER 2022: CONFLICTS, TRAUMA, AND PEACEBUILDING IN PLATEAU STATE



Executive Summary

This policy brief provides a comprehensive overview of the conflicts, trauma, and peacebuilding efforts in Plateau State from September 7, 2001, to September 2022. The region, marked by its ethnic, religious, and political diversity, has witnessed a series of violent confrontations, many of which have spiraled into mass killings and widespread destruction of property. Estimates suggest that more than 43 major confrontations have occurred over this period, resulting in the loss of over 10,000 lives, although the exact figures vary depending on the sources consulted.

This document highlights the key events, triggers, casualty counts, and peace efforts, such as Panels of Enquiry, Inquiries, and Commissions of Inquest, aimed at addressing the root causes of the crises. It also underscores the long-term impacts of these conflicts, particularly the deep-seated trauma experienced by the people of Plateau State. Lastly, it explores current peacebuilding

efforts, such as community-led interventions and governmental strategies, and provides actionable recommendations for sustainable peace.

Introduction

Plateau State, located in Nigeria's Middle Belt, is known for its ethnic diversity, with more than 50 ethnic groups calling the region home. This rich cultural tapestry has historically been a source of both strength and tension, as long-standing grievances over land ownership, political representation, and religious identity have frequently erupted into violence. Since September 7, 2001, when a single incident triggered large-scale unrest, Plateau State has experienced a series of violent conflicts that have devastated communities, left tens of thousands displaced, and strained the social fabric.

Chronology of Key Conflicts (2001-2022)

1. The September 7, 2001 Crisis
 - Trigger: A confrontation between Christians and Muslims in Jos, the state

capital, during a Friday prayer service, escalated into large-scale violence.

- Casualties: Approximately 1,000 deaths in less than a week.
 - Impact: The violence spread to neighboring towns, leaving thousands displaced and setting the stage for future ethnic and religious violence.
2. 2002 Yelwa Shendam Massacre
 - Date: February 2002
 - Trigger: Tensions over land ownership between the Tarok and Fulani communities.
 - Casualties: Over 500 deaths.
 - Impact: Sparked retaliatory attacks between neighboring communities, further inflaming ethnic tensions.
 3. November 2008 Jos North Crisis
 - Trigger: Disputes over the outcome of local government elections in Jos North Local Government Area.
 - Casualties: Approximately 700 deaths and over 10,000 displaced.

- Impact: Intensified the religious divide in Jos, creating “no-go zones” based on religious identity.
4. January 2010 Dogo Nahawa Massacre
 - Date: March 7, 2010
 - Trigger: Retaliatory attacks by Fulani herdsmen on Berom communities following prior confrontations.
 - Casualties: More than 500 people killed, including women and children, in a single night.
 - Impact: Marked a significant escalation in Fulani-Berom hostilities and attracted international condemnation.
 5. 2011 Christmas Eve Bombings
 - Date: December 24, 2011
 - Trigger: Coordinated bomb attacks by suspected Boko Haram militants targeting Christian areas during Christmas celebrations.
 - Casualties: Over 80 deaths.
 - Impact: Worsened the religious divide and introduced a new element of terrorism into the Plateau crisis.
 6. 2013 Barkin Ladi and Riyom Attacks
 - Trigger: Herdsmen attacks on Christian villages in Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas.
 - Casualties: Over 150 deaths.
 - Impact: Triggered mass displacement of local populations and increased militarization in the region.
 7. 2018 Plateau State Massacre
 - Date: June 23-24, 2018
 - Trigger: Herdsmen attacked multiple Berom villages in Barkin Ladi and surrounding areas.
 - Casualties: Over 200 deaths.
 - Impact: Widespread condemnation led to
- heightened security presence, but the cycle of attacks and retaliations persisted.
8. 2021 Bassa and Jos North Clashes
 - Date: August 2021
 - Trigger: Renewed tensions between the Irigwe and Fulani herders over land and grazing rights.
 - Casualties: Over 45 deaths in a week of clashes.
 - Impact: Further strained relations between farmers and herders, sparking displacement and renewed calls for peacebuilding.
- Root Causes of the Conflict
- The causes of violence in Plateau State are numerous and interlinked, with ethnic, religious, political, and socio-economic factors at play.
1. Ethnic and Religious Divisions: The state is divided largely along ethnic and religious lines, with indigenous groups, mostly Christians, clashing with Hausa-Fulani settlers, predominantly Muslims. These conflicts are exacerbated by perceptions of political and economic marginalization.
 2. Land Ownership and Grazing Rights: Disputes over land ownership between farming communities and nomadic Fulani herders have been a significant trigger for violence. These conflicts are often presented as ethnic or religious but are fundamentally about access to land and resources.
 3. Political Manipulation: Politicians have often exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions to secure votes or maintain power. Manipulating identities for political gain has created deep-seated grievances that often erupt into violence.
4. Unemployment and Poverty: Economic hardships, unemployment, and lack of opportunities for youth have contributed to rising tensions and provided fertile ground for recruitment into militant or extremist groups.
 5. Inadequate Justice and Accountability: A lack of accountability for perpetrators of violence and the failure to address grievances through legal or institutional means have allowed a culture of impunity to thrive.
- Casualty Estimates
- More than 10,000 lives have been lost since 2001, depending on which source is consulted. The exact number of casualties is difficult to ascertain, as different groups provide varying estimates. For instance, government figures often report lower death tolls, while civil society organizations and international bodies report higher figures based on independent investigations.
 - Over 300,000 people have been displaced, many of whom remain in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps to this day.
- Government and Civil Society Peace Efforts
1. Panels of Inquiry
 - Jos Crisis Commission of Inquiry (2001): Set up to investigate the causes of the September 7, 2001, crisis, the panel made recommendations for reconciliation but failed to achieve meaningful implementation.
 - Yakubu Gowon Peace and Reconciliation Committee (2004): Chaired by former Head of State General Yakubu Gowon, the committee sought to foster dialogue between conflicting groups but was largely symbolic.

2. Plateau Peacebuilding Agency (PPBA)

- Established in 2016, the PPBA is a unique institutional mechanism dedicated to conflict prevention and management. It focuses on early warning systems, peace education, and inter-community dialogue.
- The Plateau State Peace and Security Trust Fund (currently in legislative review) promises to institutionalize funding for peacebuilding initiatives.

3. Operation Safe Haven

- A military task force deployed to restore peace in Plateau and surrounding states. While it has reduced the frequency of violence, its presence has also been criticized for human rights abuses and exacerbating tensions.

4. Civil Society Interventions

- Organizations such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre and the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network have been active in facilitating dialogue between warring groups.
- Community peace committees have been established to mediate land and grazing disputes at the local level, achieving relative success in some areas.

Trauma and the Long-Term Impact of Conflict

The cycle of violence in Plateau State has had profound psychological and social impacts, with large segments of the population suffering from trauma, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many survivors, particularly women and children, face long-term mental health challenges, while communities continue to struggle with social fragmentation,

distrust, and loss of social cohesion.

Recommendations

1. Sustainable Peacebuilding Initiatives: It is essential to support locally led peacebuilding efforts, ensuring that communities are equipped with the tools and resources needed to mediate disputes and prevent violence.
2. Justice and Accountability: The government must prioritize the prosecution of individuals responsible for inciting or committing violence. Establishing a culture of accountability is crucial to breaking the cycle of impunity.
3. Economic Empowerment: Addressing the economic roots of conflict, particularly through job creation for youth and improved access to education and vocational training, will help to alleviate some of the pressures that lead to violence.
4. Interfaith Dialogue: The establishment of sustained interfaith dialogue forums, particularly between Christian and Muslim leaders, will help to rebuild trust and promote mutual understanding.
5. Implementation of Peace Recommendations: Many of the recommendations from past inquiry panels and peacebuilding efforts have not been fully implemented. Urgent action is needed to ensure that the conclusions of past efforts are put into practice.

Conclusion

The history of violence in Plateau State is long and complex, rooted in ethnic, religious, political, and socio-economic factors. While more than 43 major conflicts have devastated the state since 2001, resulting in the loss of more than 10,000 lives, there are

ongoing efforts to rebuild and promote lasting peace. A comprehensive approach that includes justice, economic empowerment, and the fostering of inter-community relations is essential for creating a peaceful future for Plateau State.

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Recommended Reading

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 - An academic paper that traces the long history of communal violence in Plateau State, highlighting major incidents and their impact on peacebuilding efforts.

Conclusion

The conflicts in Plateau State over the last two decades have taken a heavy toll, with significant loss of life, displacement, and lasting trauma. While efforts to address these crises have been substantial, much remains to be done to ensure lasting peace and security. This policy brief, by highlighting the root causes, key incidents, and peacebuilding efforts, underscores the importance of continued community engagement, justice, and accountability in preventing future violence. Comprehensive understanding and strategic interventions are essential for breaking the cycle of violence in Plateau State and fostering enduring peace in the region.

The Transition: Reflections on Growth, Change, and the Way to Peace

By Shalom Kasim



When I received my appointment as Editor-in-Chief of *Insights*, the university journal at Wukari, it felt like the world had just opened up a new door—a door filled with equal parts opportunity and chaos. I remember my crush walking up to me, saying, "Congratulations, Kasim, but can you cope?" She paused for a second before adding, "In this department?" If I were to answer her truthfully, my response would have been a resounding "No." And she had every reason to doubt my ability to juggle it all. Here I was, fresh off a grueling test (the kind everyone dreaded), now saddled with the weight of an Editor-in-Chief title, project deadlines, end-of-semester exhaustion, and the constant reality of being, well... dead broke.

Fast forward to 2024, and I find myself sitting behind a desk as Programme Officer at the International Center for Peace, Charities, and Human Development (INTERCEP), an NGO focused on peacebuilding and advocacy. How did I get

here, transitioning from editing student submissions to orchestrating civil society fieldwork and strategy meetings? Here's my story—and the lessons I've learned along the way.

The switch from Editor-in-Chief to Programme Officer at INTERCEP is more than just a change in titles or office spaces (though I must admit, the cubicles at INTERCEP are smaller and have less space for books). It's a shift in mentality, responsibility, and purpose. But looking back, as I sit here at INTERCEP, I realize the transition isn't as far-fetched as I once thought. Publishing and civil society work may seem worlds apart, but there are hidden threads that connect them. There are unexpected similarities, and yes, stark differences that have shaped who I am today.

At *Insights*, I spent my days walking into editorial meetings armed with a notepad and pen. Those meetings were often filled with debates over headlines, arguments about article layouts,

and heated discussions over comma placements (yes, we fought over commas). I miss the late-night editing marathons, the adrenaline rush of beating deadlines, and the sweet satisfaction of sending the final proof to the printers. The work was chaotic but rewarding in a way that only editors understand.

Then came INTERCEP. Here, the stakes are different, but the pressure feels eerily familiar. Instead of meeting print deadlines, I now face the urgency of projects that could directly impact lives. One day, I'm organizing community outreach programs for conflict-affected youths, and the next, I'm coordinating webinars on educational policies. In both worlds, deadlines loom large, but now the stakes are about livelihoods, not just layout designs. It's not just about ensuring a catchy headline anymore; it's about securing funding for projects that can feed entire communities. Yet, the core skill remains the same: effective communication,

whether on paper or in a room full of stakeholders.

But the differences between my editorial desk and my role at INTERCEP go beyond deadlines and pressure. In publishing, every word mattered. At

Insights, I obsessed over each sentence, making sure everything was polished to perfection. Now, at INTERCEP, words still matter, but they're about more than just grammatical correctness. Writing a proposal is no longer an exercise in eloquence—it's about conveying urgency, about ensuring someone reads that proposal and decides to fund our next peacebuilding initiative. At *Insights*, my work ended when I hit 'send.' At INTERCEP, that's where the real work begins: following up, making calls, coordinating teams, and executing plans.

And then, of course, there's the 'people' part. Back at *Insights*, I worked with a team of diverse, sometimes eccentric characters. One friend insisted on using semicolons in the most bizarre places—her editorials read like something straight out of the 18th century! Our meetings were often filled with laughter, inside jokes, and shared snacks. These moments, however trivial, taught me the value of teamwork, the beauty of bringing together different minds to create something greater than the sum of its parts.

INTERCEP isn't so different in that regard. My colleagues here bring their quirks and strengths to the table as well. There's Anas, who always greets me with her signature line, "Mr. Kasim, just you in the office again?" And there's Chinyere, the master of persuasion who could convince anyone to support our projects. Then there's my Executive Director, Barrister Clement Iornongu,

whose network and influence open doors I never imagined possible. He has taught me the power of brand-building and networking, skills that are invaluable in the civil society space.

It reminds me of the time at *Insights* when a writer mistakenly submitted an article titled, "Why Pizza is the Root of All Evil," instead of "Why Procrastination is the Root of All Evil." Auto-predict had a field day with that one. I still get teased about it. That sense of camaraderie, the occasional slip-ups, the heated debates over seemingly small issues—they all exist at INTERCEP too, only now the debates are about strategy, not semicolons.

I remember a time at university when a student protest shut down campus for two weeks. If I had been Editor-in-Chief during that period, we would have faced enormous pressure to tell the story responsibly. One wrong headline, one misstep, and we could have fanned the flames even higher. In that way, the work of an editor and a peacebuilder are not so different—both require sensitivity, diplomacy, and an understanding of the power of words.

Now, as a peace advocate, I often imagine what it would be like to fumble in my role. I picture myself coordinating a peace dialogue in a community torn apart by violence. One wrong gesture, and months of progress could unravel. These are hypothetical fears, of course, but they serve as reminders of the responsibility that comes with the work I do. Communication isn't just about informing anymore; it's about healing, about bringing people together.

But it's not all intense, high-stakes work. There are moments

of humor too. I imagine a future community outreach where one of our team members, in trying to greet a local chief, ends up saying, "We are cattle traders here to sell goats," instead of "We are honored to be here."

That team member, in my imagination, is always me.

The similarities between my time at *Insights* and my current role at INTERCEP are clear: both revolve around communication, adaptability, and teamwork. But the key difference is the impact. At *Insights*, the impact was measured by the conversations we sparked on campus. At INTERCEP, it's measured by the smiles of children who benefit from our programs, by the communities that find hope in our work, by the lives we touch every day.

Life is a funny journey, full of unexpected twists. Every phase prepares you for the next, even when you don't realize it at the time. Editing student articles prepared me for writing proposals that change lives. Debating semicolons prepared me for debates about strategy. Each step of the way, I've grown in ways I never imagined.

So, what's next for me? I don't know. But whatever it is, I'm ready. Because if there's one thing I've learned, it's that life is just one big editorial process: you write, you revise, and sometimes, you start over.

How do you measure growth? By the titles you've held, the deadlines you've met, or the communities you've helped? Or is it, perhaps, by the stories you've lived? Whatever the answer, if it leads to a more peaceful, loving world, that's your path. Stick to it

Fostering Peace in Plateau State: Building Social Cohesion Through Community Engagement.

By Nankilng Mutfwang



Introduction

The conflict in Plateau State, has been one of the most protracted and complex in Nigeria's recent history. Rooted in a mix of ethnic, political, and religious tensions, the crisis has claimed thousands of lives and left communities divided along ethnic and religious lines. Historical tensions between indigenous communities and settler groups, compounded by issues of land ownership, political exclusion, and competition for resources, have led to persistent cycles of violence. While efforts by both state and non-state actors have brought periods of relative calm, sustained peace remains elusive. Peacebuilding is a multifaceted process that requires input from various sectors of society. In communities that have

xperienced prolonged conflict or are at risk of violent outbreaks, fostering peace goes beyond state policies and institutional reforms. It requires direct engagement with the people who live through these challenges and a conscious effort to mend the social fabric that binds them together. Community engagement and social cohesion are two essential components of peacebuilding that, when effectively implemented, can pave the way for lasting stability. For lasting peace, the people of Plateau State must address the root causes of the conflict by cultivating a culture of peace built on grassroots engagement, social cohesion, and inclusive governance. Peace is not merely the absence of violence; it is the presence of justice, equality,

and mutual respect. For peace to take root, it must be cultivated from the grassroots level and sustained through strong relationships within and between communities. This article explores the vital role of community engagement and social cohesion in building peace and fostering stability

Community Engagement: The Foundation Towards Achieving Peace:

Community engagement is the process of involving local people in decision-making and action-oriented initiatives that affect their lives. When applied to peacebuilding, it focuses on ensuring that community members are active participants in designing, implementing, and monitoring efforts aimed at resolving conflicts and fostering peace. It is particularly powerful because it allows for context-specific solutions that resonate with the people directly impacted by the issues.

Building Local Ownership of Peace Initiative

In peacebuilding, local ownership is crucial. Peace efforts are often more successful when they are led and shaped by the people they are meant to benefit. External interventions, though necessary, often fail to address

the underlying grievances within communities. By contrast, when communities take the lead in peacebuilding, they are more likely to develop sustainable solutions.

communication and collaboration between local leaders, citizens, and government officials. When communities are actively involved in

They are more likely to participate in reconstruction efforts and to ensure that the social and economic damage caused by conflict is addressed in a way that benefits



Local ownership can be achieved through the establishment of peace committees, forums for dialogue, and conflict resolution mechanisms that involve all stakeholders, including traditional leaders, women, youth, and marginalized groups. These platforms empower communities to resolve disputes through non-violent means and foster a sense of responsibility for maintaining peace

Strengthening Relationship Between Communities and Authorities

One of the main challenges to peace in conflict-affected areas is the breakdown of trust between local communities and government authorities. In many cases, communities feel neglected or victimized by the state, which exacerbates feelings of exclusion and injustice. Effective community engagement can help restore this trust by encouraging open

peacebuilding processes, they are more likely to trust authorities who listen to their grievances and work with them to find solutions. Moreover, transparency in decision-making and inclusivity in representation help reduce the sense of disaffection that often drives conflicts.

Enhancing Community Resilience Against Conflict
Communities that are engaged in peacebuilding are more resilient in the face of conflict. They have the tools and resources to manage disputes internally before they escalate into violence. Community engagement promotes the development of early warning systems, local mediation efforts, and collaborative security measures that enable communities to respond swiftly to potential threats. In addition, communities with high levels of engagement are better equipped to recover from the aftermath of conflict.

everyone.

Social Cohesion: The Glue that Gums Community Together:

Social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community. It is a critical element in sustaining peace, as it promotes cooperation and collective action. In divided societies like Plateau state, social cohesion is often eroded by years of violence, distrust, and prejudice. Rebuilding these connections is essential for long-term peace.

Promoting Inclusive Participation

Inclusive participation is at the heart of social cohesion. When people feel included and valued in their communities, they are more likely to engage in constructive dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Inclusive participation requires that all segments of society regardless of ethnicity,

religion, gender, or economic status are given equal opportunities to contribute to peace efforts.

In many post-conflict settings, exclusion from political or economic processes is a major driver of continued unrest. To build social cohesion, it is crucial to break down these barriers and ensure that everyone has a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. This can be achieved through participatory governance models, community dialogue sessions, and initiatives that address inequalities in access to resources and services.

Encouraging social integration

Social integration is another key factor in building cohesion. In societies where conflict has driven divisions along ethnic, religious, or social lines, efforts must be made to bring people back together. Initiatives such as inter-community sports, cultural festivals, theatre activities and cooperative economic ventures can help foster positive interactions between formerly antagonistic groups.

Educational programs that promote peace and tolerance can also be powerful tools for social integration. Schools, churches, and community centers can be places where the values of mutual respect, empathy, and coexistence are taught and reinforced, especially to younger generations. Such efforts build bridges between communities and help reduce the likelihood of future conflicts.

Addressing Historical Grievances and Fostering Reconciliation

A major obstacle to social cohesion is the persistence of unresolved historical grievances. Many conflicts, especially in Plateau State, are rooted in long-standing issues of land, resource, and political representation. To build lasting peace, these grievances must be addressed in a fair and transparent manner.

Reconciliation processes that focus on restorative justice can help heal the wounds of the past. Truth-telling initiatives, public apologies, and restitutions for victims of violence are essential steps in rebuilding trust. Communities that have experienced deep divisions need structured opportunities to confront their past, acknowledge the harm done, and work together to rebuild a shared future.

Linking Community Engagement and Social Cohesion for Peace

While community engagement and social cohesion are distinct concepts, they are deeply interconnected in the peacebuilding process.

Effective community engagement strengthens social cohesion by bringing people together to address common challenges and by promoting shared values. Equally, high levels of social cohesion enhance the effectiveness of community engagement by creating an environment where people are willing to collaborate and trust each other.

In practical terms, this linkage can be seen in community-

driven peace initiatives that focus on both resolving current conflicts and preventing future ones. For example, peace committees that include representatives from all ethnic and religious groups can foster dialogue and cooperation, while also addressing the underlying causes of conflict such as poverty, marginalization, and political exclusion.

Conclusion

Cultivating peace through community engagement and social cohesion is a powerful strategy for rebuilding trust and ensuring lasting stability. While military interventions and top-down peace initiatives may provide short-term relief, true peace must be rooted in the people and their relationships. When communities are empowered to take ownership of peacebuilding, and when social bonds are strengthened across divides, peace becomes a shared responsibility. In Plateau State, where conflict has torn apart the social fabric, the road to peace is long and challenging. However, by prioritizing grassroots involvement and fostering unity, communities can begin to heal the wounds of the past and work toward a future marked by stability, justice, and cooperation. Peace is not an abstract concept; it is built from the ground up, by the hands of those who live through both the conflict and its resolution.

The Importance of Psychosocial Support in Cultivating a Culture of Peace

By Mrs. Helen Philemon Haggai



In the heart of Nigeria lies Plateau State, a region of striking natural beauty, where rolling hills, lush highlands, and vast plateaus converge to create a landscape of breathtaking contrasts. The iconic Jos Plateau dominates the terrain with its volcanic formations, dramatic granite rock outcrops like Shere Hills, and deep valleys that cradle rivers such as the Kaduna and Benue. These cool, fertile grasslands and savannahs have long provided an agricultural haven, sustaining local communities with bountiful harvests. This land, rich in history and natural resources, also became home to early

Christian missionaries, such as those from the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and Sudan United Mission (SUM), who established mission fields and churches, including the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) and the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA). The region's favorable climate, scenic landscapes, and hospitable people earned it a reputation as a tourist hub and rest haven.

However, beneath this peaceful façade lies a region scarred by conflict. The same fertile lands that attract farmers and herders have also become a source of intense competition. Over the

years, an uncontrolled influx of herders into Plateau State has sparked violent clashes with farmers, leading to tragic losses on both sides. What was once a harmonious coexistence between agrarian and pastoral communities has deteriorated into a cycle of conflict, leaving deep divisions and bloodshed in its wake. Farmer-herder clashes, alongside other inter-communal and faith-based conflicts, have taken an unimaginable toll, resulting in loss of life, destruction of property, and displacement of entire communities.

In response to this devastation, both national and international NGOs have launched various peacebuilding efforts across Plateau State, offering psychosocial support, trauma healing, and reconstruction initiatives. Despite these efforts, the emotional and psychological scars borne by survivors of these violent conflicts often remain unaddressed. The trauma is profound, and for many, the path to healing is fraught with challenges. The rising number of survivors struggling with trauma underscores the urgent need for ongoing psychosocial

support to foster emotional recovery and prevent further divisions.

One such story of survival and healing is that of Ulo Sati, a 35-year-old widow from Rukkuk village in Plateau State. Ulo lost her husband during a brutal attack on their community in 2021, plunging her into grief and despair. Overwhelmed by the violence and the sudden loss of her husband, Ulo's emotional and physical health rapidly deteriorated. Her trauma was deepened by her isolation, as she struggled to cope with widowhood in a society already grappling with the aftershocks of conflict. It was only when she reluctantly joined a psychosocial support workshop organized by TEKAN Peace Desk that her healing journey began. Through sharing her pain with others who had experienced similar loss, Ulo slowly began to rebuild her emotional strength and regain her sense of self.

Her transformation from a broken widow to a source of strength within her community illustrates the profound impact psychosocial support can have on survivors of trauma. Today, Ulo uses her own experiences to support others in her community, helping them to heal from their wounds and rebuild their lives. Her journey from trauma to hope underscores the importance of psychosocial support in cultivating a culture of peace. When individuals are given the space to heal emotionally, they not only regain control over their own lives but also become

agents of change within their communities, helping to break cycles of violence and trauma.

Ulo's story resonates with the theme of the 2024 World Peace Day, "Cultivating a Culture of Peace," which emphasizes the importance of reconciliation, healing, and community engagement in building a peaceful future. Her personal journey is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of psychosocial support in post-conflict recovery. As NGOs and local governments continue to provide aid, it is clear that sustainable peace cannot be achieved through infrastructure rebuilding alone. Emotional and psychological healing must go hand in hand with material reconstruction.

The challenges of psychosocial support, however, are significant. Trauma is not a one-time event, but an enduring emotional experience that can deeply shape individuals and communities for generations. It requires sustained effort and ongoing support to truly address the emotional needs of survivors. Moreover, there is often a cultural stigma around seeking emotional and psychological help, particularly in rural areas where traditional healing practices may still dominate. Integrating psychosocial support into peacebuilding efforts thus requires not only professional expertise but also community-level engagement and cultural sensitivity.

Despite these challenges, the role of psychosocial support in peacebuilding is undeniable.

For communities torn apart by conflict, healing must take place not just in the physical realm but in the emotional and social spheres as well.

Addressing trauma and providing survivors with the tools to heal is critical in breaking the cycle of violence and fostering lasting peace.

In Plateau State, where farmer-herder clashes, communal violence, and religious tensions have left a legacy of pain and division, psychosocial support plays a crucial role in rebuilding not just structures, but the very fabric of society. It offers a pathway for individuals and communities to reconcile with their past, rebuild trust, and create a future grounded in peace and understanding. By cultivating a culture of peace through healing, Plateau State can begin to move beyond its history of conflict and toward a more peaceful and cohesive future.

As the global community reflects on the importance of peace, it is vital to recognize that true peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of healing, empathy, and mutual respect. Through psychosocial support and community engagement, we can begin to sow the seeds of peace, allowing them to take root in the hearts of those who have suffered the most. This, in turn, will create a foundation for sustainable peace that can endure for generations to come.

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS: PEACE, JUSTICE, AND COMPASSION

By Maimuna I. Abdullahi and Prince Charles Dickson, PhD

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, people of various faiths and nationalities interact more frequently, necessitating dialogue about interfaith relationships. Islam, as a faith rooted in values of justice, compassion, and equity, provides clear guidance on how Muslims should relate to non-Muslims, be they relatives, neighbors, or colleagues. However, misconceptions about these interactions have emerged, resulting in conclusions that are disconnected from the teachings of the Qur'an and the practices of Prophet Muhammad (p). To foster a more peaceful and inclusive society, it is crucial to revisit these Islamic principles and rediscover the paths to peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

Normative Relationship

The Qur'an offers an explicit framework for how Muslims are to engage with non-Muslims, with justice, fairness, and peace being central to these interactions. One of the most notable examples of interfaith harmony in Islamic history is the *Madinan Charter*, the first-ever written constitution, which guaranteed the rights and protection of all religious groups within the state. This constitution, backed by the Qur'an (60:8-9), emphasized justice and equity, serving as a guiding model for coexistence. The Prophet



Muhammad's life was a testimony to this, as he consistently promoted goodwill, ensuring that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims was not one of hostility, but of mutual respect, justice, and the pursuit of common good (Qur'an 5:32).

Peaceful Coexistence

Islam prioritizes peace and cooperation over conflict, and the Qur'an explicitly outlines the ideal of peaceful coexistence. Hostility and fighting are portrayed as exceptions, rather than the rule, with strict guidelines governing when conflict is permissible (Qur'an 2:190). Instead, Islamic teachings emphasize arbitration, forgiveness, and charity as the bedrock for societal peace (Qur'an 42:40). The legal and ethical objectives of Islam—the *maqasid al-shariah*—are oriented toward

creating a harmonious society where social justice and compassion prevail, ultimately fostering peace (Qur'an 4:114).

Rights of Non-Muslims

Islam accords non-Muslims significant rights, particularly in the context of Islamic governance. Non-Muslims living within an Islamic state, known as *dhimmis* (protected people), are granted protection and are free to practice their faith (Qur'an 2:256). Their rights to life, work, and religious freedom are safeguarded. Throughout Islamic history, non-Muslim communities coexisted peacefully with Muslim populations, with instances of conflict occurring only when peace treaties were violated (Qur'an 8:72). This demonstrates that Islam, from its inception, was deeply committed to maintaining peaceful interfaith relationships.

Historical Context

The Prophet Muhammad's (p) relationship with his non-Muslim contemporaries further illustrates the Islamic approach to interfaith interactions. Whether they were his relatives, neighbors, or allies, the Prophet consistently advocated for goodwill, regularly engaging in social activities such as greeting, eating, and exchanging gifts with non-Muslims (Qur'an 60:8-9). These peaceful exchanges were not limited to Christians and Jews (People of the Book) but extended to polytheists and adherents of other faith traditions (Qur'an 5:5). By treating others with dignity and fairness, the Prophet set a powerful example of interfaith harmony.

Objectives of Islamic Law

Islamic law, or *shariah*, is primarily concerned with promoting welfare and preventing harm. The Qur'an calls for justice and equity in society, with particular emphasis on protecting the rights of individuals and communities, regardless of their faith (Qur'an 2:185). The *maqasid al-shariah*, or objectives of Islamic law, highlight that the ultimate purpose of law is to secure benefits and ward off harm. Peaceful relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims play an essential role in ensuring social stability and fostering development. A society that embraces diversity and cultivates peace is one that thrives and fulfills the higher purposes of Islamic law.

Interfaith Dialogue

Dialogue between different faith groups is essential for promoting understanding and peaceful coexistence. Islam encourages Muslims to seek common ground in discussions with people of other faiths (Qur'an 29:46). Through

respectful dialogue, barriers are broken, misconceptions are clarified, and mutual respect is strengthened. Interfaith dialogue, grounded in sincerity and openness, is key to dismantling prejudice and cultivating relationships based on mutual trust and compassion. The Qur'an's directive to engage in peaceful dialogue (Qur'an 16:125) provides a timeless model for addressing religious and cultural differences in a constructive manner.

Social Justice

At the heart of Islamic teachings on interfaith relationships is the commitment to justice, fairness, and compassion. Muslims are commanded to uphold justice, even if it means standing against their own self-interests or those of their family members (Qur'an 4:135). This commitment extends to all relationships, including those with non-Muslims. The Qur'an stresses that justice should be maintained without bias, ensuring that no individual or group is marginalized or oppressed. By upholding social justice in interfaith interactions, Muslims contribute to the creation of an equitable and peaceful society.

Conclusion

Islam unequivocally maintains that peace is indispensable to societal development, and its teachings are fundamentally oriented toward accruing benefit and preventing harm (Qur'an 2:185). The Qur'anic emphasis on peaceful coexistence, justice, and fairness offers a robust framework for interfaith relationships, where Muslims and non-Muslims can collaborate to foster mutual understanding and collective progress. By adhering to these

principles, communities can transform potential conflicts into opportunities for growth, reconciliation, and cooperation (Qur'an 49:13).

Recommendations

- 1. Promote Interfaith Dialogue:** Encourage open, respectful conversations between Muslims and people of other faiths to foster understanding and dismantle stereotypes (Qur'an 16:125).
- 2. Guarantee Rights of Non-Muslims:** Reaffirm the Islamic commitment to the rights of non-Muslims, ensuring they have the freedom to practice their faith and contribute to society (Qur'an 2:256, 10:99).
- 3. Foster Peaceful Relationships:** Strengthen bonds between Muslims and non-Muslims through shared social activities, such as exchanging gifts, visiting each other, and engaging in community service (Qur'an 60:8-9).
- 4. Support Social Justice:** Uphold the principles of justice and fairness in all interfaith interactions, ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect (Qur'an 4:135, 5:8).
- 5. Pursue the Objectives of Islamic Law:** Promote the *maqasid al-shariah* by seeking to prevent harm and facilitate benefit for all members of society, regardless of their faith (Qur'an 2:185, 4:58).

By embracing these recommendations, Muslims and non-Muslims alike can contribute to building a world rooted in peace, justice, and compassion, where interfaith understanding leads to societal harmony and progress (Qur'an 49:13).

Empowering Leaders, Ensuring Freedom: I-RENEW Project's Impact on FoRB in Nigeria

By Search For Common Ground Nigeria



Freedom of Religion or Belief is an incredible divine gift bestowed upon humanity, a notion ardently emphasized by Barrister Izang Aware, who previously held the esteemed position of Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association in Jos. This perspective was articulated during an insightful discussion on the radio show "Common Ground Matters," which is broadcasted on Peace 90.5 FM. Such a viewpoint underscores the fundamental nature of religious freedom as a basic human right, advocating that individuals should remain free from judgment based solely on their personal beliefs or spiritual practices. The foundational principles underlying Freedom of Religion or Belief are designed to safeguard individuals from various forms of coercion, the threat of violence, actual violent

acts, discrimination, and various punitive actions that may arise due to differing beliefs.

In the last few years, Nigeria has been experiencing a concerning rise in incidents of violence motivated by religious beliefs. Some of the most tragic occurrences include the murder of a young Christian woman in Sokoto, the public stoning of a Muslim butcher accused of blasphemy, and the heart-wrenching killing of a Muslim woman along with her four children in Southern Nigeria. These horrific events have garnered significant global attention and concern for Nigeria, a nation that was once recognized for its progress and commitment towards ensuring Freedom of Religion or Belief for all its citizens.

In response to these pressing issues, the I-RENEW project is being implemented in Plateau

and Kaduna states by Search For Common Ground with funding from the European Union. This initiative aims to address the multifaceted problems surrounding religious violence and tension by empowering women leaders from various religious backgrounds, as well as youth activists, to cultivate an environment of peaceful coexistence and actively promote the ideals of Freedom of Religion or Belief. The objectives of the I-RENEW project focus on bolstering the capacities of these influential leaders and contributing significantly to creating a supportive policy environment that nurtures and encourages FoRB initiatives.

Over the past 18 months, the dedicated I-RENEW team, together with their partners, which include the Federation of Muslim Women Associations

(FOMWAN) and the DREP center, have undertaken a plethora of activities aimed at addressing the challenges associated with Freedom of Religion or Belief in Plateau and Kaduna states. Among the success stories emerging from these efforts are initiatives designed to foster interfaith solidarity and advocacy visits aimed at policymakers and religious institutions, which followed intensive training sessions in Search's signature Common Ground approach to religious engagement and advocacy. During these activities, key advocacy issues have been brought to light by participants, such as the evident lack of designated worship places for Christian students studying at Kaduna State University, as well as Muslim students at Plateau State University. Additionally, there have been instances of roads being obstructed during worship services held by churches and mosques, infringing on the rights of others in the community. As a result of concerted advocacy efforts, the Plateau State government responded to the latter issue by enacting Executive Order 003, which seeks to alleviate such disruptions.

Recently, a group of trained activists representing various religious networks has undertaken sensitization efforts at several universities to raise awareness surrounding the concept of Freedom of Religion or Belief. They are working diligently to encourage student engagement in promoting these vital values within their respective communities, ensuring a better understanding of the significance of FoRB. In addition to these efforts, 72 episodes of the radio show "Common Ground Matters" have been produced and aired across four different radio stations in Plateau and Kaduna states, aiming to enhance public comprehension of FoRB and underscoring the essential roles that women and youth have in facilitating religious coexistence. Feedback from listeners indicates a notable growth in interest regarding Freedom of Religion or Belief among the populace, suggesting a shift in attitudes.

In Plateau State specifically, Search For Common Ground has played a supportive role in the inauguration of the Plateau State Youth Inter-Faith Forum (PYIF) following an enriching Interfaith Dialogue that prioritized the inclusion of youth voices. This

newly established forum is comprised of recognized youth groups representing a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, and it is set to function as a crucial platform for constructive dialogue and collaborative efforts towards enhancing peace. In cooperation with the Special Adviser on Religious Matters to the Governor, the forum is dedicated to building capacity through training initiatives centered on interfaith dialogue and effective advocacy practices.

The PYIF is driven by a vision to equip young leaders with the necessary tools and skills to promote unity and foster a spirit of understanding among different faiths within Plateau State. By acting as champions for social cohesion, these young leaders will play an essential role in advancing peace initiatives. Through fostering rich dialogue and instilling a sense of social responsibility, this youth-led initiative stands to significantly contribute to the cultivation of a more peaceful and harmonious society. More importantly, it aims to empower participants with critical thinking abilities and conflict resolution skills that are crucial for navigating the complex social issues that arise in their communities.





JISRA

Faith communities for peace



The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) is a consortium of faith-based and secular organisations promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and peacebuilding internationally, including in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States, and towards the institutions of the European Union. The consortium supports religious actors - particularly women and youth - to become agents of peace and inclusion, and strengthens their capacities to engage in advocacy work on FoRB, women's rights, youth rights, and related issues. In Nigeria, JISRA is being implemented in Kaduna and Plateau States.

Rooted in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Section 38 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), JISRA's FoRB work contributes to SDGs 5 and 16+. JISRA's approach to FoRB is relational (trust-building), localised / contextualised, collaborative, inclusive, practical, proactive, and mutually reinforcing of other human rights. **Background**

Religion and Conflict

Religion has significance for billions of people - in their daily lives, communities, politics, and social contexts. It can act as a powerful force for peace and social cohesion but also be used to justify violence against other groups or individuals. This occurs both between communities of different faiths and within religions themselves, 'where different interpretations and perspectives are often not accommodated'.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

The right to Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) is enshrined in several (inter)national legal and policy frameworks, notably Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Section 38 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), and it includes:

- (1) the freedom to have, adopt, change or renounce a religion or belief without coercion, and

- (2) the right to manifest one's religion or belief.

FoRB is a right that applies to religious and non-religious people alike. It protects individuals' right to have and express a religion or belief, rather than religions themselves. As such, it is indivisible from other human rights and cannot be used to curb said rights.

FoRB in Conflict

While FoRB is recognised as a fundamental human right, the actual practice of FoRB encounters many challenges, particularly in the peace and security spheres. Often, people do not experience this freedom in practice, because of discrimination in access to services, interreligious tensions, religious violence, unbalanced security responses, etc. These issues further worsen in contexts where civic space is restricted or repressed.

Violations of individuals' right to freedom of religion or belief are particularly common in fragile or conflict contexts, where they can be both a symptom of and the root cause of violence.

Religious Actors

Religious actors - which include religious leaders but also influential voices outside traditional power structures - play a crucial role in furthering FoRB and upholding a vibrant civil society. While some already advocate on these issues, many others do not fully exercise their power to promote positive change as they are driven by other interests, feel politically disenfranchised, or have limited capacities to effectively influence communities or policies.

Women and Youth

Women and youth experience specific violations of their FoRB and other human rights, in addition to being traditionally excluded from policymaking and governance spaces. Harmful norms and practices persist, resulting in violence, human rights violations, and prejudice that impede equality and peaceful coexistence among people of all ages, genders, and sexual orientations. Often, these norms are justified by religious doctrines and understanding, and challenges to

existing leadership - usually of older men - are seen as challenging the sacred doctrines themselves.

Yet religious actors can also have a very empowering role for women and youth in their community, promoting human rights, combating exclusion, and reducing vulnerabilities by grounding themselves in inclusive interpretations of the same religious doctrines.

The JISRA Programme

Core Beliefs

JISRA is based on the premise that FoRB and interreligious dialogue are integral to the realisation of peaceful and resilient societies. Women and youth can and should play an important role in this process as change makers, and their voices must be heard. The JISRA partners believe that

1. FoRB, women's rights and youth rights are integral parts of the human rights framework and should be seen as mutually reinforcing.
2. Youth and women are changemakers in FoRB and peacebuilding, despite facing obstacles. They should be recognised and supported, and their voice must be heard.
3. Awareness and religious engagement on the part of decision- and policy makers is key to preventing and solving conflict.
4. Constructive interfaith collaboration increases understanding of diversity and contributes to peace.

Bridging Communities for Peace

JISRA is a partnership between faith and non-faith-based groups - including Christian, Islamic, interreligious, and secular organisations - formed to support peaceful and just societies where all enjoy FoRB in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and Uganda, as well as in international and regional fora.

Over the course of five years, JISRA

will strengthen the voice of religious actors in civil society and in nurturing civic space, leverage religious actors' constructive role in high level advocacy (national, regional); build on the consortium's extensive FoRB experience and best practices; and support the inclusion of women and youth as change makers in FoRB and peacebuilding spaces.

The programme's overarching goal is to create peaceful and just societies where all enjoy freedom of religion and belief. Its strategies for change are divided along the following three pathways. Through the **intrareligious** pathway, JISRA empowers, partners with, and connects religious actors to promote inclusive and tolerant attitudes amongst their constituencies, including by increasing the faith literacy of both religious actors and communities and promoting a pluralistic interpretation of religious texts. The **interreligious** pathway focuses on creating peaceful, respectful, and long-lasting tolerance and cooperation between religions and beliefs. This involves building or strengthening interfaith capacities and platforms at the community, regional, and (inter)national levels, as well as providing alternative narratives to counter intolerance and radicalism.

Via the **extrareligious** pathway, JISRA engages with non-religious actors and institutions through academic research, media messaging, advocacy, and policy work, strengthening CSOs and religious actors' capacities to engage with each other on FoRB, women's and youth rights, and other relevant

issues at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

Crosscutting all pathways are JISRA's efforts to empower women and youth to engage in existing religious structures, as well as advocate for and enable their inclusion in religious communities, CSOs, and authorities.

Who We Are

JISRA is made up of a **global consortium of 50 global and grassroots organisations** across more than seven countries. They include interfaith associations, youth organisations, religious non-profits, women's movements. Its four consortium partners are:

- **Tearfund / Tearfund Netherlands (Consortium lead Nigeria)** – a Christian charity that partners with churches in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries. They tackle poverty and injustice through sustainable development, by responding to disasters and challenging injustice. We are aligned with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity.
- **Mensen met een Missie** – a Dutch Catholic organization and is leading the global consortium. It fights for a world where all people are equal regardless of religious convictions, ethnicity or gender, and believes in the unifying power of religion.
- In Nigeria represented by

CAFOD: The official Catholic Agency for Overseas Development for England & Wales. CAFOD

takes great pride in pioneering a partnership model in international development and humanitarian programming based on values of compassion, hope, dignity and solidarity.

Search For Common Ground

– a US- and EU-based secular, international non-profit organisation operating in 36 countries (including Nigeria, with a mission to transform the way the world deals with conflict away from adversarial approaches toward cooperative solutions.



Local Partners in Nigeria include:

DREP - Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace (DREP) Centre
DREP is an initiative of the Catholic Archdiocese of Jos. It was established in 2011 by His grace, Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, as a result of the tense and often escalating violence in Plateau State to proactively respond to the incessant destruction of lives and property, the polarisation of communities across religious lines, the 'revenge' mentality among youths, and the gap created by prejudice and ignorance of religion.

RURCON

RURCON is an independent Christian development education organisation, serving churches and Christian organisations and engaging directly with communities in Africa. RURCON was formed to address the issues of dichotomy and bring about

wholeness in development, thereby improving the quality of life. We are involved in training, counselling, networking, and partnership and dialogue through the following thematic areas; holistic development education programme, peace building and conflict transformation programme, governance advocacy programme, church and community mobilisation process programme, partnership and networking programme, creation care programme, food security and agricultural development, fund development and institutional development.

FOMWAN

Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) was established in October 1985 and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission the same year. With a consultative status with the United Nations, FOMWAN is a non-profit and non-governmental civil society umbrella body for Muslim women associations in Nigeria. Today FOMWAN is in 36 States of the federation including Abuja and has over 500 affiliate groups.

SUWA

Scripture Union West Africa (SUWA) is a faith based organisation working across all faith in creating transformed and sustainable communities using; peace building/ conflict resolution, women empowerment/income generating activities, community mobilisation, advocacy, SGBV, family life development, OVC interventions, partnership/ collaboration, parent child communication as strategies.

WIC

Women's Interfaith Council (WIC) is a women-led interfaith organisation of women of faith working together as mothers of a culture of peace. Through dialogue and solidarity, WIC actively promotes peaceful Muslim and Christian coexistence in society. WIC's priorities include women's rights, the empowerment of women and youth, and ensuring their inclusion in decision-making as protagonists of a peaceful society. WIC is also particular about the care of the environment as a common home.

JPRM

JPRM is an inter-faith organisation with the mandate to ensure justice, promote peace, and reconcile people. JPRM started as the 'justice group' in 1990, conceived as a small development association to help the under-privileged which was later registered as a non – governmental organisation. We work with over 40 communities in Adamawa, Taraba, Kaduna, and Plateau states. Our thematic areas include Justice and Peace Promotion, Adult Education and Literacy Program, Women Empowerment and Economic Program, Christian Muslim Dialogue, Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Direct Community Project Support, Community Exchange visits, Community Joint Projects, Emergency/Humanitarian Intervention.

DIWA

Development Initiative of West Africa (DIWA) is a Non-Profit

making organisation that addresses the critical long-term challenges affecting vulnerable communities in the areas of access to education, health and nutrition, water, capacity-building, good governance, emergency relief, other social services, and peaceful co-existence in a multi-religious and multi-cultural environment.

DIWA takes pride in its grassroots consultative approach to problem-solving, vast indigenous partner network, and the careful monitoring of projects. We do these through networking, partnerships, and grassroots consultation. Our beneficiaries cut across all walks of life and different strata of society. Thus, we deliver our output to men, women, youth, and people with disabilities, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDP) across geographic and organizational communities. We have been present in several West African countries, namely Nigeria, Niger, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Cameroon, and Ghana, delivering respective outputs.

In addition, the programme collaborates with **the University of Utrecht** and **the University of Groningen** as research partners. JISRA is funded through the **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs'** Power of Voices Strategic Partnership.



Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) A Catalyst for Sustainable Peace in Nigeria

Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) - A Catalyst for Sustainable Peace in Nigeria

Introduction:

The Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN) is a pioneering initiative established in 2009 to foster collaboration, coordination, and collective action among non-profit organizations, civil society groups, and stakeholders working towards peace and development in Plateau state and Nigeria. This appendix provides a comprehensive overview of the network's goals, objectives, activities, and impact, highlighting its contributions to cultivating a culture of peace.

Vision:

A peaceful and harmonious Plateau state, where diverse communities coexist, thrive, and contribute to sustainable development.

Mission:

To strengthen the capacity of peacebuilding stakeholders through coordination, advocacy, research, and capacity building, ensuring effective conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Coordination and Advocacy: Facilitate research, publications, monitoring, supervision, and evaluation to promote informed peacebuilding practices.
2. Synergy and Collaboration: Foster solidarity and cooperation among members, leveraging diverse strengths and expertise.
3. Partnership Management: Develop and manage partnerships, ensuring effective collaboration and resource mobilization.
4. Capacity Building: Provide in-house training and capacity development in key areas, including:
 - Smart peace practices
 - Proposal and report writing
 - Monitoring And Assessment, Accountability And Evaluation
 - Fundraising
 - Tech skills
 - Project Management
 - Compliance, Regulatory Frameworks
5. Resource Mobilization: Generate funds for members, enhancing their capacity to implement peacebuilding projects.

PPPN's Impact:

- Enhanced coordination and collaboration among peacebuilding stakeholders
- Improved quality of peace and security actions in Plateau state and Nigeria
- Strengthened capacity of member organizations
- Increased access to resources and funding opportunities
- Promoted a culture of peace, tolerance, and understanding

Key Achievements:

- Conducted research and published reports on peacebuilding and conflict resolution
- Organized training and capacity-building programs for members
- Facilitated partnerships with local and international organizations
- Mobilized resources for peacebuilding initiatives
- Provided platforms for stakeholder engagement and dialogue

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- Coordination challenges among diverse stakeholders
- Limited resources and funding
- Context-specific peacebuilding complexities
- Importance of adaptive and inclusive approaches

Conclusion:

The Plateau Peace Practitioners Network serves as a beacon of hope for sustainable peace in Nigeria. By fostering collaboration, building capacity, and mobilizing resources, PPPN has made significant contributions to peacebuilding efforts in the region. This appendix highlights the network's commitment to cultivating a culture of peace, serving as a valuable resource for peace practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.

Recommendations:

- Continued support for PPPN's initiatives
- Enhanced collaboration among stakeholders
- Increased investment in peacebuilding research and capacity development
- Context-specific peacebuilding approaches

Bio of Authors

Matthew Tegha

Matthew Tegha is a distinguished Nigerian media consultant, blogger, and peace advocate renowned for his unwavering commitment to promoting social justice, religious harmony, and human rights. As the coordinator of the Plateau Peace Media Network (PPMN), Tegha has emerged as a leading figure in efforts to advance peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State. His extensive work spans various forms of media, including journalism and documentary filmmaking, with a focus on interfaith dialogue, community development, and addressing the root causes of ethnic and religious tensions.

Through his insightful writings and media productions, Tegha has provided a platform for marginalized voices, drawing attention to critical issues such as conflict resolution and social cohesion. His documentaries and articles have shed light on the complex dynamics of religious and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, offering solutions grounded in dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. Tegha's dedication to peace advocacy has made him a respected voice in both local and international circles, where he continues to influence policies and grassroots initiatives aimed at fostering lasting peace in diverse communities.

Bridget Dakyes

Ambassador Bridget Dakyes is a renowned Development Worker, Peace Builder, and Women's Rights Advocate from Plateau State, Nigeria. She is the Founder/Executive Director of Women and Girl-child Rescue & Development Initiative (WGRDI) and has worked extensively in conflict-affected communities, facilitating peace dialogues and advocating for women's rights and empowerment. Through her organization, Ambassador Dakyes has implemented various projects, including peace building, women's empowerment, and menstrual hygiene management education. She has partnered with local and international organizations, such as Women for Women International, Mission21, and Procter and Gamble, to train and empower over 5000 women and girls in skills like tailoring, fashion designing, and reusable menstrual pads production. Ambassador Dakyes has received numerous awards and recognition for her selfless service, including the Humanitarian Service Award and the Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna Distinguished Leadership Award of Excellence. She is a member of various peace committees and boards, including the Peace Advocacy Committee (PAC) of the Heavenly Culture World Peace Restoration of Light (HWPL) and the International Women's Peace Group (IWPG).

Comrade Gad Peter.

Gad Peter. Ph.D is a dynamic leader and a development professional with over 18 years of impactful experience in the field of human rights, gender, good governance, public safety, peace and development.

A passionate advocate and activist for peacebuilding, human rights, and good governance, Gad has a strong track record in community mobilization, gender advocacy, youth engagement, budget tracking and monitoring. He has demonstrated his expertise in strategic leadership roles and engagement with both local and International NGOs some of which are the British Council, Creative Associates International, Equal Access International and CLEEN Foundation

Gad's commitment to social change is evident in his roles on several government committees and his active membership in the Plateau State Open Governance Partnership. He has led and supported several organisations and coalitions in sponsoring pro-development bills and driving reforms that have become key laws in Nigeria.

Gad, is a mentor and an advocate of good governance, and social justice, he believes that the efficient administration of Justice is key to restoring faith in the social governance system in Nigeria.

Iliya Patience Toscanini

Patience Toscanini is a dedicated civil society activist and program manager with a passion for women's empowerment and youth development. With extensive experience in curriculum development, facilitation, and community outreach, Patience has made a significant impact through her work at Mobilization towards Leadership for Women and Youth Development Initiative (MOLDEV). Her commitment to creating positive change has led her to focus on pressing issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive health, climate justice, and leadership development. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Patience is a loving mother and nature enthusiast who finds solace in floristry and adventure. Her global outlook and dedication to humanitarian work continue to inspire her to strive for a more just and equitable world.

Through her tireless efforts, Patience has created safe and inclusive spaces for young people to learn, grow, and become active agents of change. Her work has not only empowered individuals but also fostered a sense of community and social responsibility. With a heart full of compassion and a mind full of innovative ideas, Patience continues to inspire and uplift those around her, leaving a lasting impact on the world.

Salis Muhammad Abdulsalam

Salis Abdulsalam, a dedicated peace advocate and founder of the Displaced Women and Children Foundation. Born and raised in Jos, Plateau State, Salis has spent his life promoting peace and supporting vulnerable communities in Northern Nigeria.

With a strong educational background, Salis attended Methodist Primary School, Jos, Mada Hills Secondary School, Akwanga, and graduated from the University of Maiduguri with a degree in Language Education.

Salis' extensive experience spans entertainment entrepreneurship, transportation, and education. As an entertainment entrepreneur, Salis organized Plateau Charity Concerts, Pageants, and Musical Concerts, promoting cultural events and supporting local talent. As a transporter and transport unionist, Salis managed transportation services and advocated for union rights.

Salis founded the Displaced Women and Children Foundation, implementing interventions that support vulnerable communities in Northern Nigeria. Salis has collaborated with local organizations and stakeholders to promote peace and development, earning the title of Face of Peace Global.

A skilled peace advocate and conflict resolver, event manager, and community developer, Salis is passionate about promoting peace and supporting vulnerable communities. Married with children, Salis lives in Jos, Plateau State, and continues to dedicate his life to making a positive impact.

Vivien E Abara

Ambassador Vivien E. Abara is a distinguished leader, humanitarian, and gender advocate recognized globally for her unwavering commitment to peace, human rights, and the protection of vulnerable populations. With a career spanning extensive work in social justice, human rights, and community leadership, she has garnered international acclaim for her tireless efforts.

As a seasoned Frontline Rescue Social Worker, Vivien plays a pivotal role in aiding and rehabilitating survivors of violence, trafficking, and exploitation. Her expertise in Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and leadership roles in various organizations, including Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse, and Labour (NACTAL) and Child Labour, Elimination, and Response (CLEAR), solidify her position as a leading advocate against human trafficking, child abuse, and labor.

Vivien's dedication to impactful peace initiatives and social cohesion is further underscored by her roles as a Positive Peace Activator, Rotary/IEP Positive Peace State Representative, and IEP Global Peace Ambassador. She addresses the root causes of conflict, including gender inequality and human rights abuses, and advocates for women, girls, and children's rights. Her leadership in various

organizations, including the Rotary Club of Jos Central and Peace Advancement Action Against Violence and Rape Foundation (PAAAVARF), highlights her commitment to humanitarian projects in peace and conflict resolution, education, and community development.

David Jaafaru Wuyep

Engr. David Jaafaru Wuyep is the Co-Chairman of the Plateau State Open Government Partnership Steering Committee, where he previously served as the Point of Contact (PoC)/Secretary between 2020 and 2023.

Engr. Wuyep also served previously as the Commissioner for Energy and Water Resources in Plateau State and later as Chief Technical Advisor on Development Strategy to the State Governor. He is a Harvard Scholar and a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with a B.Eng from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; MBA from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and currently pursuing a PhD from Nasarawa State University, Lafia.

Engr Wuyep, the Executive Director of FundLink Aid International, is married with children and lives in Abuja and Jos, Nigeria

Albert Pam

Albert Pam Mangs is a seasoned international development professional with over 22 years of experience implementing USAID and other donor-funded programs. He specializes in democracy, peace, and governance programming, with expertise in CVE, peacebuilding, governance, civic engagement, policy advocacy, and Organizational Development. As the Chief of Party for the USAID Nigeria Northeast Connection Program, he successfully managed a large-scale initiative to counter violent extremism and build community resilience in Northeast Nigeria. He has also held leadership roles in other donor-funded programs in West and East Africa. **Albert** is known for his strong communication skills, effective team management, and ability to build relationships with key stakeholders. **Albert** is currently exploring areas of interest in the nexus between Artificial Intelligence and Non-Violent Communication.

Justina Mike Ngwobia

Elder Ambassador Justina Mike Ngwobia is a renowned Nigerian peacebuilder, mediator, and women's rights advocate. She serves as the Executive Director of the Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM), a organization dedicated to promoting peace and reconciliation in Nigeria.

Ambassador Ngwobia is also the founder and co-chair of the Women Peace Builders Network in Nigeria (WOPEN) and co-chair of the Women Peace Mentors and Mediators Forum. Her expertise in peacebuilding and mediation has been recognized globally, earning her fellowships from prestigious institutions such as KAICIID in Vienna, Austria, and

the Chartered Institute for Leadership, Education, and Development (FCILED).

In addition to her impressive credentials, Ambassador Ngwobia serves as a mentor and ambassador for UN Women in Nigeria and is a member of the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth (WMC) in the United Kingdom. Her tireless efforts to promote peace, justice, and women's empowerment have made a significant impact in Nigeria and beyond.

TRICentre

The Tattaunawa Roundtable (TRICentre) is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-allied, community centered organization operating out of Plateau State, North Central Nigeria. Tattaunawa brings people together. Connecting people of all ages and backgrounds to bridge the *gaps in community needs*.

The Tattaunawa Roundtable Initiative (TRICentre) is a member of several coalitions and networks across areas of our thematic operations, expertise, and interventions.

We do our work, creating spaces through partnership with groups, community based organizations, not for profit, civil societies, faith based organizations, youth and women centric organizations facilitating public state and non state actor dialogue and engagement to facilitate innovative approaches for long-lasting solutions at all levels of society.

Prince Charles Dickson PhD

Prince Charles Dickson is a renowned peace practitioner and policy analyst with an impressive track record in media, public policy, psychology, and development practice. Based in Jos, Plateau State, he is a pivotal figure in the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Nigeria, dedicated to fostering dialogue, understanding, and sustainable peace within communities.

As the Team Lead for the Nigerian-based Tattaunawa Roundtable Initiative (TRICentre), Dr. Prince Charles Dickson collaborates with various stakeholders to address critical issues related to peace and security. His work emphasizes the importance of inclusive dialogue and collective problem-solving.

Dr. Dickson's diverse expertise, which includes training in journalism, psychology, and numerous certifications in fields such as Religion and Global Politics, Negotiation and Conflict Management, and Interfaith Peacebuilding, enables him to address the complex and multidimensional nature of peacebuilding.

By seamlessly integrating his academic knowledge and practical experiences, Dr. Dickson has developed a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding that addresses both the psychological and policy dimensions of conflict resolution. This unique perspective allows him to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring the effectiveness of his work.

Nankilng Mutfwang

Nankilng Mutfwang is an experienced peacebuilding professional with over a decade of work experience particularly in Plateau State and Northeastern Nigeria States. She holds a B.A. in English and Postgraduate studies in Social Work. Along with various training and certifications on Peace. This has strengthened her skills in conflict resolution, gender-based violence prevention, and community engagement. As the Peace Building officer at Community Health Justice and Peace Initiative for Development (JDPH), Nankilng leads all peacebuilding initiatives in the organization. Nankilng Mutfwang's passion for peacebuilding is deeply rooted in her personal experiences growing up in Plateau State, a region that has endured prolonged conflicts. Witnessing firsthand the devastating effects of violence on communities and families, she developed a strong commitment to fostering peace and social harmony. Her drive comes from a belief that sustainable peace can only be achieved when communities are empowered to resolve their own conflict. This passion motivates her to work tirelessly in developing innovative, inclusive strategies for conflict resolution and reconciliation, particularly those that amplify the voices of women and marginalized groups.

For Nankilng, peacebuilding is not just a profession; it is a lifelong mission to create environments where every individual feels secure, valued, and heard. Her motivation to contribute to this journal is driven by a desire to share practical solutions that foster community engagement and rebuild social trust. Through her writing, she hopes to inspire others to contribute to sustainable peace by promoting inclusion, cooperation, and the collective effort needed to heal societies fractured by conflict.

Helen Philemon Haggai

Helen Philemon Haggai is the Coordinator of the TEKAN Peace Desk and serves as the Special Adviser and Coordinator for NGOs to the Plateau State Governor. With over two decades of extensive experience in Northeast and Central Nigeria, Helen has made significant contributions in peacebuilding, psycho-social support, and humanitarian interventions, providing vital skills to communities affected by conflict. Her work has played a crucial role in fostering stability in these regions. A graduate of the University of Jos, she holds a Master's degree in Public Administration, underscoring her strong foundation in governance and public service.

Nicodemus Samson Beska

Nicodemus Samson Beska is a multifaceted professional with a strong background in economics, peace studies, and conflict resolution. He holds certification in Economics from the University of Jos and in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution from the National Open University of Nigeria. As a Nigerian police officer, Beska has extensive experience in training, facilitation, mediation, and

social justice advocacy. His research focus is on the criminal justice system, and he has authored two books and five articles on related topics. He has also presented papers at various conferences in Nigeria. Beska is the founder of Mulapnen Capacity Building Initiative (MUCABI), a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting peace, justice, and security through education and leadership development. Through MUCABI, he aims to make a positive impact on his community and beyond.

David James Buoro

David James Buoro, a trailblazing tech enthusiast and driven development professional. With a unique blend of agricultural and computer science expertise, David is a force to be reckoned with in the NGO sector.

As a dynamic and responsible youth, David is dedicated to harnessing technology to drive growth, success, and positive impact. His extensive experience in the developmental field is matched only by his passion for innovation and progress. With a robust educational background and a slew of certifications under his belt.

Shalom Kasim

Shalom Kasim has a working relationship with the International Center for Peace, Charities, and Human Development (INTERCEP). He holds a Bachelor's degree in English and Literary Studies from the Federal University, Wukari, where he also served as Editor-in-Chief.

Currently, he is the Managing Editor at Mud Season Review, and contributes to a range of publications, including Erato Magazine, Pictura Journal, and Biochar Magazine. In 2022, he was longlisted in the Best Nonfiction category of the African Writers Award.

He is the founder and curator of the storytelling blog, Naija in the Mix.

Maimuna I. Abdullahi

Hajiya Maimuna I. Abdullahi is a passionate development worker and consultant dedicated to fostering sustainable growth and social justice in her community. As Vice President of the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN), Secretary of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), and a member of the Plateau Youth Interfaith Forum (PYIF), she has played a pivotal role in advocating for the empowerment of individuals and communities. Her leadership and commitment to positive change continue to inspire those around her, making a lasting impact on the society she serves.

Samuel Goro

Rev. Samuel A. Goro is a distinguished leader and expert in peacebuilding, public affairs, and leadership development. As the Executive Director of the Centre for Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN), he has dedicated his career to promoting peace, justice, and compassion for the poor and vulnerable.

A seasoned preacher and public affairs analyst, Rev. Goro has a wealth of experience and skills in various fields. He has attended numerous schools and professional courses both in Nigeria and internationally, honing his expertise in leadership, peacebuilding, and community development. Rev. Goro is a respected voice in his field, having written several articles and presented papers at conferences and seminars worldwide. Notably, he presented a paper on the Jos crisis at the prestigious Chatham House in the UK in 2013.

As a Commonwealth Fellow, Rev. Goro has demonstrated his commitment to growing young leaders and promoting peace and development in Nigeria and beyond. His passion for leadership development and peacebuilding has earned him recognition and respect from his peers and the communities he serves.

With his extensive experience, skills, and passion for peace and development, Rev. Samuel A. Goro is a true leader and change-maker in his community and beyond.

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David James Buoro

Director of Communication and Publicity

(Netaccesss Foundation)

PPPN Organizations

1. Netaccess Foundation.
2. International Center for Peace, Charities and Human Development (INTERCEP)
3. Social Justice for Human Development and Peace Initiative (JDPC)
4. Thinkshe Aid Foundation
5. Rural Development Counsellors for Christian Churches in Africa (RURCON)
6. Christian Council of Nigeria, Peace Building and Trauma Healing Center (CCNICS)
7. The Tattaunawa Roundtable Initiative (TRICENTRE)
8. Relief and Hope Foundation. (RAHF)
9. Saphira Global Centre for Social Development
10. Women and Girl-child Rescue and Development Initiative (WGRDI)
11. Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS)
12. Justice Peace and Reconciliation Movement (JPRM)
13. Emancipation Centre for Crisis Victims in Nigeria (ECCVN)
14. BEGE Foundation for Women and Youth Empowerment
15. Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN)
16. Alheri AGAPE Hope Foundation (AAHF)
17. Pleasant Community Initiative (PCI)
18. Journalism Communication And Media Centre (JCM Centre)
19. Women Wing Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN)
20. Shalom Youth Development Initiative (SYDI)
21. Centre for Peace Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN)
22. Media Team Network Initiative (MTNI)
23. Kuyimiki Development Initiative (KDI)
24. Zima Child Health Initiative (ZICHI)
25. Women Initiative for Sustainable Community Development (WISCOD)

26. Esther Mallo Women Initiative (EMWI)
27. Centre for Faith and Community Development (CFCD)
28. Peace Advancement Action Against Violence and Rape Foundation (PAAAVARF)
29. Peace Seeds Development Foundation (PSDF).
30. Integrated Community Development Initiative Of Nigeria (LCIN)
31. Grassroots Researchers Association (GRA)
32. Tekan Peace Desk, Jos
33. League for Human Rights
34. Displaced Women and Children Foundation
35. Zaka Foundation for the Promotion of Peace and Dialogue (ZAFPPAD)
36. Community Health, Justice and Peace Initiative for Development (JDPH)
37. Crest Research and Development Institute (CRADI)
38. Centre for Community Actions for Peace and Development (CCAPAD)
39. Mobilization Towards Leadership for Women and Youth Development Initiative (MOLDEV)
40. Reconciliation Trainer's Africa (RETA).
41. Beacon of Hope Initiative
42. Mulapnen Capacity Building Initiative (MUCABI)
43. Centre for the Advocacy of Justice And Rights (CAJR)
44. SIMJI Girl-child Empowerment Initiative & Orphanage (SGEIO)
45. Bellwether International
46. Jos Town Ambassadors Foundation (JTA)
47. Derek Charles Joy Foundation (DC JOY)
48. Unique Centre For Peacebuilding And Trauma Healing (UCPTH)
49. Intellectual Youth Initiative for Peace and Development
50. Help International.
51. Manna Resources Development (MRDC)
52. Life Line Compassionate Global Initiatives (LCGI)

53. Safer World Foundation (SWF)
54. Pankshin Catholic Justice Development and Peace Caritas (JDPC).
55. Peace Training Centre
56. Center for Healthcare and Economic Empowerment for Women and Youth (CHCEEWY)
57. Centre for Peace Initiative and Development (CEPID).
58. Ascend Community Wellness Centre (ACWC)
59. Community Reflective Peace Practice Initiative of Nigeria (CORP-PIN).
60. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)
61. Icon Afrique
62. Wise Youth Development Foundation (WISE-DEF)
63. Women and Children in Support of Community Development Initiative (WOCCI Nigeria)
64. Paradise Mission for Widows and Teenage Girls, (PMWTG)
65. Building Relationship In City Center (BRICC)
66. Voice for the Girl Child Foundation
67. Scripture Union West Africa (SUWA)
68. Kazatsi Reconciliation Centre And Human Development (KRACENAH)
69. Network for Empowerment in Rural Areas and Townships (NERAT)
70. Alheri Danko Ne Charity Foundation
71. FOMWAN
72. Youth Initiative Against Violence and Human Right Abuse (YIAVHA)
73. Para-Mallam Peace Foundation (TP-MPF)
74. Triple Nexus Consult
75. Back on Track Charity Foundation
76. Hope for Africa Leadership and Development Initiatives (HOFORA)
77. Hopewell Advancement for Community Development
78. AUPRIMAC NIG
79. ALHERI Danko NE Charity Foundation