CONNECTING AND AMPLIFYING VOICES OF YOUTH BUILDING PEACE IN NIGERIA

In Commemoration of the 5th Anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security

Foreword by Saji Prelis

Building Blocks for Peace Foundation
DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated to the youth, women, children, humanitarian staff, security personnel and every other person who have lost their lives or families to the insurgency, terrorism and any form of violence in Nigeria.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it."

H.E. Luccock

This work is the result of immeasurable contributions from different actors. Particularly, we would like to thank all our authors and their organizations for their cooperation and sacrifices in making this publication a reality by sharing their inspiring stories. This is a unique publication, conceived and facilitated by young people in commemoration of the 5th Anniversary of the historic United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

We would like to thank our international partners, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) for their generosity, and for supporting local action on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250. We express our gratitude to the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-Nigeria), African Union Youth, Peace and Security Africa Program for their technical and moral support. Lastly, we thank Gizem Kilinc, Khaled Emam, Eliška Jelínková, leaders of the GPPAC-UNOY working group on youth, peace and security; Allwell Akhigbe and Efetobor Effevottu, co-editors of this project; Kola Ibrahim, who proof read, and every other person who contributed to its success.

While we cannot take credit for all content herein, we take full responsibility for the publication.

Rafiu Adeniran Lawal
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FOREWORD

Nigeria, with a median age of 18, is home to one of the youngest populations in the world. This young population is experiencing widespread political, social, and economic exclusion that is exacerbating their collective mistrust in the systems that are supposed to serve, care and protect them. As I pen this note, they are protesting around the country to end police brutality and rampant corruption. Despite the widespread exclusion, young Nigerians have shown time and time again that they can be the best assets for the country. This book showcases a common truth many young activists are driven by--hope, courage, resilience, and deep commitment to peace and justice.

This book is filled with concrete evidence of how Nigerian youth are passionately contributing to building peace in local communities across the country despite the few resources they can muster and how these young peacebuilders deploy creative means to reach their peers and create a culture of peace. Organizations like Building Blocks for Peace Foundation are a tremendous source of inspiration to the global #Youth4Peace community as they are shining the light on the positive contributions of young Nigerians. Through all these examples, this book is a clarion call for the Nigerian and international policymakers to ensure they see this growing youth bulge as a peace bulge that needs investments, protection and partnership so that they have a safe space to scale up their peacebuilding work.

I urge policy makers and investors to consider this book’s key messages as a source of guidance and inspiration, as we collectively strive toward strengthening more inclusive, fair, just and peaceful societies across Nigeria.
Thank you for amplifying the voices and nonviolent actions of #Youth4Peace in Nigeria.

Saji Prelis
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INTRODUCTION

THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION (UNSCR) 2250 AND YOUTH PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA

Akhigbe, Allwell O. and Effevottu, Efetobor S.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2017) reported that the number of adolescents and young people (between 10 and 24 years old) was roughly 1.8 billion, which represents the highest number in human history. A large percentage of these young people live in developing countries and are faced with numerous challenges such as high rate of unemployment, poor health, HIV/AIDS infections, few marketable skills, and social exclusion. These numbers alone justify the need for youths’ inclusion and active participation in decision making, especially in relation to peacebuilding and development. However, global discourses on young people centre on their involvement in conflicts and violence. In Nigeria specifically, young people are usually regarded as perpetrators and major protagonists in most violent conflicts. They are seen as having little regards for constituted authorities and are incapable of playing positive role in the socio-political and economic development in their various communities and regions. Despite these stereotypes, Nigerian youths have been actively involved in aiding, promoting and maintaining peace and development. Even in remote parts of the country, formal and informal youth groups are always on ground inspiring people to take actions towards finding permanent solutions to society's problems.

A major step in ensuring the recognition of the positive role of youths in peacebuilding was taken by the United Nations Security Council in 2015 through the adoption of the Resolution 2250 which
centred on issues relating to Youth, Peace and Security. The first report by the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace and Security since the Security Council adopted resolution 2250, presented in March 2020, reaffirmed correctly that young people around the world are striving for peace, justice, inclusion, gender equality and human rights.

Nevertheless, there remains a critical gap in information on the activities young people are undertaking across communities. The significance of their efforts as young people is unnoticed as they continue to work for peace, using innovative ways that are far beyond imagination to make huge impacts.

Similarly, one of the outcomes from the **2019 Nigeria Youth for Peace Forum** organised by Building Blocks for Peace Foundation in collaboration with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) Nigeria, was the need to connect and amplify all the existing youth voices in Nigeria.
As part of activities aimed at commemorating the 5th anniversary of the United Nation Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, this project was designed to honour the works of young peacebuilders in Nigeria by giving them a space and voice to share their stories, especially how they are putting UNSCR 2250 to practice. The project brings to fore the implementation of UNSCR 2250 in Nigeria, from policy to practice.

‘Connecting and Amplifying Voices of Youth Building Peace in Nigeria Through Storytelling’ project seeks to showcase, profile and highlight the works and contributions of young people, drawn from communities across the various geopolitical zones in Nigeria, to peacebuilding and sustainable development – which have hitherto received limited recognition – by giving them a space to tell the world their success stories, challenges and how they are overcoming these challenges in the midst of glaring socio-economic and political realities.

This chapter therefore interrogates the trajectories of youth peacebuilding in relation to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250. While there is no universal definition of the concept of youths, and without prejudice to the Nigeria National Youth Policy (2019), this chapter adopts the African Union Youth Charter’s definition, characterising youth as person between the age of 18 and 35 (AU, 2006).

**Background to the UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security**

Youths are often branded both as perpetrators and victims of violence. As perpetrators, young people are considered as primary actors in violent conflicts such as combatants, terrorists and thugs. Meanwhile, they are also seen as the victims of violent conflicts because they are part of those affected in the course of these violent conflicts. Both perceptions of young people paint them as the trouble-makers as well as helpless victims, denying
them any form of initiative in promoting peace in conflict areas. In recent decades, there have been several attempts by civil society organisations, youth-led organisations, local and international non-governmental organisations and the United Nations to change this negative narrative of youth as perpetrators of violence by showcasing youth’s capacity for peacebuilding.

In January 2012, a Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding was established to provide a platform for information-sharing, coordination, policy discussions and joint advocacy to youth organisations, non-governmental organisations and UN entities working on promotion of youth participation in peacebuilding. The lack of a policy framework on youth, peace and security led the Working Group to develop the Guiding Principles on Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding. Launched in April 2014, these principles were designed to provide direction to key actors in peacebuilding such as national and international non-governmental organisations, UN entities, civil society organisations, etc. These Guiding Principles were also intended to aid inclusive, participatory and intergenerational peacebuilding programmes and strategies that encourage and guarantee the participation and contributions of young people in peacebuilding.

Furthermore, in April 2015, the United Nations Security Council, under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, held an open debate on “The Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace”. Although, most of the interventions centre on countering violent extremism and terrorism, most States also acknowledged the peacebuilding capacity of young people. In opening the debate, the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, announced that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan would host a Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security. In August 2015, a Global Forum for Youth, Peace and Security was therefore held in
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Jordan, bringing together nearly 600 participants, including 200 young people representing 80 nationalities. The forum signifies a major landmark in the recognition of youth peacebuilding through an intergenerational and multilevel discussion, which led to a new international agenda on Youth, Peace and Security.

A major outcome of the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security was the adoption of the “Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security”, which represents youth’s commitment to fostering peaceful societies. It presented mutual vision and roadmap towards a strengthened policy framework to support young people’s role in transforming conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace. The Declaration also included a call on the United Nations to create a global policy framework on youth in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. It suggested a United Nations Security Council resolution on Youth, Peace and Security as the ideal outcome.

The UNSCR 2250 was therefore passed and adopted by UN member states on 9 December 2015 at the 7573rd meeting of the
United Nations Security Council under the leadership of Jordan. The resolution was a result of decades of advocacy by young people for the recognition of their vital contribution to peacebuilding. In the run-up to its actual adoption, young people mobilised themselves under the #Youth4Peace movement and the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security to secure the support of UN entities, civil society organisations, and national and international non-governmental organisations. The resolution was also an outcome of the United Nations’ Security Council open debate on the role of youth in countering violent terrorism and building peace. It was also a direct follow up to the Global Youth Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, which resulted in the Amman Youth Declaration. The resolution formalised an international framework to address the role of youth in countering violent terrorism and building sustainable peace (Cox, Nozell & Buba, 2017). The purpose of the UNSCR 2250 was to identify and acknowledge youths as partners for peace, rather than as perpetrators of violence. It referenced the UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security which deals with the role of women in conflict, the impact of conflict on the lives of women, and their participation in peacebuilding.

**The UNSCR 2250 and Youth Peacebuilding**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 represents the first attempt by the United Nations to give formal legitimacy and recognition to the efforts of youths on issues relating to peace and security. The UNSCR 2250 is a historic and landmark document as it helps to change the negative perceptions people have about youths, by creating a new narrative of youths as agents of peacebuilding. It is also symbolic as it places youths at the centre of the international peacebuilding agenda, acknowledging their positive contributions to peace and security, while requesting programmes and policies by the UN member states and the
international community to ensure meaningful participation of youth in the peace and security agenda. This pivotal instrument identified five pillars of actions to ensure youth’s role in peacebuilding: Participation, Protection, Partnership, Prevention (4Ps) and Disengagement and Reintegration:

i. Participation: This first pillar captures the essence of the resolution by enhancing the participation of youths in peacebuilding. It is worth noting that youths have been actively participating in peacebuilding long before the resolution, without any form of recognition from the government and other stakeholders. Often times, youth voices were side-lined in peace agreements and negotiations, with their concerns relegated to the background. Excluded from the decision-making table, youth bore the greatest consequences for decisions that were taken without their input. However, this UNSCR 2250 unequivocally asks member states to “increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels; in institutions and mechanisms for prevention and resolution of conflicts.” Thus, it urges member states to support local youth peace initiatives, empower youth in peacebuilding and factor in the needs of youth when making peace decisions.

ii. Protection: This pillar requires that young people be protected from every form of harm. It charges the government and other policymakers to take all necessary measures to ensure that youths are protected in their societies. This is important as statistics have revealed that youth make up the majority of the population in fragile and conflict-affected societies. Therefore, the resolution makes the case for the upholding of human rights of youths displaced by conflict, such as the Internally Displaced Persons and refugees. Youths should also be protected from structural forms of violence including sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Protecting youths implies investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the crimes carried out against young people.
Besides general protection for vulnerable youth, there is the need to ensure protection for youth peace-builders who stand against violent conflicts and work towards managing and resolving them in local communities. These youths face particular dangers including: stigmatization from high-handed security forces, risks of bodily harm by armed groups and the abuse of their fundamental human rights. It is, therefore, crucial to secure these youths to propagate the essential work they carry out in local communities, in order to encourage other youths in joining the peacebuilding movement.

iii. Prevention: This pillar impresses it on governments and policymakers, the need to create the enabling environment for youth to promote violence-prevention activities. This idea is founded on the reality that youths are in the best position to share the tenets of peace with their peers. Therefore, relevant stakeholders should cultivate youth-friendly policies that enable young people to actively participate in peacebuilding efforts. Another preventive measure to be adopted is the provision of youth with quality education that promotes non-violence and peaceful means to respond to conflict. Such education can then inspire a culture of peace among young people that emphasises tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

iv. Partnerships: Here, the resolution emphasises that partnerships are crucial towards sustaining peace. Thus, governments of member-states, civil society and other stakeholders are urged to maintain strong partnerships with youth to guarantee success of peacebuilding efforts. This means that youths are appropriately engaged in the development of peacebuilding strategies during and after conflict. In addition, partnerships involve the engagement of relevant community actors and the youth in efforts to counter violent extremism and promote social cohesion and inclusion. Partnerships are particularly important for the African continent where the youth continue to be stigmatised as
perpetrators of the violent conflicts, rather than as agents of peace. Between August and September 2020, the African Union Youth Envoy convened several Inter-Generational Dialogue for Peace across the various regions for youths to work together with elder statesmen and policymakers to dispel the wrong perception about youth, and provide an integrated approach to working together for peace on the continent.

v. Disengagement and Reintegration: This pillar underscores the point that youth needs should be mainstreamed in policies around Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The post-conflict process of DDR should ensure that youths are not considered as an after-thought but a critical part of the process. Therefore, their voices and concerns should be heard and reflected in the agreement. In essence, youth employment should be made a priority to empower them with the socio-economic opportunities required to eliminate their marginalization in the society. There should be room for capacity-building of young people to meet the demands of employers, while also supporting entrepreneurial and livelihood initiatives undertaken by youth and youth-led organisations. By keeping the focus on helping to rehabilitate the few youth involved in violence, DDR efforts can become more sustainable and effective.

Youth and Peacebuilding in Nigeria

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and is gifted with immense human and material resources. Well known as one of the largest producers of oil in the world, it is Africa's giant and leads in the arts, culture and music. However, the country has had to grapple with several conflicts in recent times, including the Boko Haram terrorism, Farmer-Herder conflict, militancy in its oil region, as well as ethno-religious and inter-religious conflicts and violence. Young people have taken the initiative to design various innovative
peacebuilding initiatives to respond to these conflicts in the Nigerian society. Some of these initiatives include countering violent extremism (CVE) responses, skills empowerment, peace education campaigns, use of media, sports and short films, gender empowerment, interreligious dialogue and partnerships for peace.

The UNSCR 2250 has had an immense impact on youth-led peacebuilding in Nigeria in several ways. First, it has provided a platform for Nigerian youth to identify with and participate actively in peacebuilding. The awareness of the resolution has brought more youths into the peacebuilding sphere. Majority of the organisations whose impacts are documented in this book were created in the post-2015 UNSCR 2250 era. They all credit the resolution with inspiring them to start a youth movement for change. Knowing that they had the backing of the international community, these youths acted on their keen desire to make a change in their local communities. Through the implementation of several peacebuilding projects within their communities, their actions have borne fruit and inspired other people towards positive change.

Second, the UNSCR 2250 has helped to create partnerships between youth-led organisations and other peace stakeholders. The five pillars of the resolution have presented young people as credible partners for peace that should be consulted and empowered in peace and security space. Thus, some youth-led organisations have been able to strike important partnerships with stakeholders that have helped them to scale up their peacebuilding work. Furthermore, with the UNSCR 2250, it has become easy for youths to approach government, local and international institutions, for funding on some of their activities. Despite the gains recorded thus far, there is still room for improvement.

Finally, the resolution has served as an effective advocacy tool for youth peacebuilders. All member states, including Nigeria, have agreed to implement the resolution in their domains, in order
Connecting and Amplifying Voices of Youth Building Peace

Nigerian youths continue to use the resolution to carry out advocacy with the federal, local and state governments to support youth-led peace initiatives and create an enabling environment to support youth leadership. The #ActOn2250 social media movement has been used by Nigerian organisations to raise awareness of the resolution and demand for its accountability. For example, the Nigeria Youth for Peace Forum, now in its 3rd edition, is an annual platform organised by the Building Blocks for Peace Foundation for dozens of youth peacebuilding organisations to meet with critical stakeholders to map out the progress made so far in implementing the UNSCR 2250. The results have begun to bear fruit with the completion of the National Youth Action Plan for Peace to be unveiled shortly, in support of youth peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Challenges of Youth Peacebuilding in Nigeria

Since the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 in December 2015, the concept of Youth, Peace And Security is now been explored in increasing number of security policy discussions worldwide. There is also an increase in the recognition of youths’ positive contributions to peacebuilding and development both locally and globally. Despite these noticeable achievements, there exist several challenges and obstacles that interrupt youths’ active engagement in peacebuilding, some of which are hereunder discussed.

One of the challenges that limit the active participation of Nigerian youths in the peacebuilding sphere is the lack of financial support. Youth-led organisations involved in peacebuilding and development are often self-funded, which presents a huge financial pressure on them for the implementation of peace initiatives. Due to limited or lack of funding from government and, local and international donors, most of these organisations often lack the
financial resources needed to reach a large number of beneficiaries during their project implementation.

The lack of active political participation represents another hindrance to youth peacebuilding in Nigeria. The UNSCR 2250 provides recognition and legitimacy to youth peacebuilding efforts at local, national and global level. Yet, across Nigeria, youths are continually denied a seat at the negotiating table. Youths continually face political resistance and are often marginalised during political transition, as well as in decision making. The exclusion of youths from key decision-making processes creates huge gap in democratic governance, aggravates tensions and threatens youths’ ability to build sustainable peace and development. Furthermore, their absence as political actors also means that youths will continue to lack the opportunity and avenue to engage in peacebuilding activities at the national level.

The UNSCR 2250 brings visibility to the projects, initiatives and actions taken by youth-led organisations towards promoting peace, justice and reconciliation. Despite this, youth-led organisations continue to face negative stereotype by people seeing them as overly ambitious and incapable of fostering peaceful coexistence.

In general, youths are also faced with the challenges of education, employment, housing, identity, political participation, social integration and the politicization of ethno-religious communities, all of which hinder their active contribution to peacebuilding. Furthermore, despite the importance of the UNSCR 2250 and its implementation by several UN member states, including Nigeria, there is still the challenge of translating the security policy into practice both locally and nationally, which acts as a limiting factor for youth peacebuilding in Nigeria.
Conclusion and Recommendations

In the professional sphere as well as the academia, it has hitherto been opinionated that youths are perpetrators of violence and are obstacles to the attainment of sustainable peace and development. However true, evidential and widely accepted this may be, there are also evidences that showcase youths as peacebuilders and development drivers, and such perspectives ought to be taken into account. For instance, Nigerian youths have been actively involved in several peacebuilding processes and in making their voices heard, ranging from their efforts in preventing violent extremism, tracking and reporting conflict, engaging in peace education and advocacy, to promoting good governance, spearheading women and youth empowerment, organizing capacity-building trainings, endorsing leadership education and creating civic consciousness for peaceful social relations and development etc.

Therefore, this chapter offers a shift from the dominant stereotypical narratives of youths as threats to sustainable peace and development and calls for a more inclusive approach to the implementation of UNSCR 2250 and subsequent resolutions at both local and national levels. It argues that the inclusion of youths in the peacebuilding and decision-making processes has a positive impact on their transformation into agents of peace within their communities. The chapter concludes by stating that policy makers run the risks of escalating conflicts and violence when youths are excluded from the decision-making process. From the foregoing, the chapter makes the following recommendations:

i. There is need for active participation of youths in decision-making and leadership so as to influence the entire peacebuilding process. Unless youths are treated as leaders of today rather than of tomorrow, their trajectories in peacebuilding would largely be underutilized or ignored.
ii. Youths are not only at the frontline in conflict zones but are also the keeper of hope of communities. Thus, they should be provided with an enabling and safe environment where they can contribute meaningfully to sustainable peace and development.

iii. It is pertinent for the Nigerian government to create initiatives that can respond to the socio-economic, political and cultural hindrances that youths face in their quest to become positive agents of peace and development in their communities.

iv. There is need for youth economic empowerment and employment for peacebuilding. In addition to educational training and theoretical knowledge on peacebuilding, young people also need internships, mentorships and practical peacebuilding experience to ensure that they understand the trajectories involved in youth peacebuilding.

v. The government needs to provide youths with the tools that they need to think critically, because it is only when young people are socio-economically and politically equipped that they can constructively and meaningfully engage in peacebuilding. Furthermore, the Nigerian government should encourage direct engagement with youths and youth-led organisations so as to foster their engagement in building sustainable peace.

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References
CHAPTER 1

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PEACE ‘CARE’ MODEL: A SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK FOR THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

Rafiu Adeniran Lawal and Mark Patrick
Building Blocks for Peace Foundation

Introduction

Violence in Nigeria is escalating exponentially, without adequate constraint mechanisms. Violence in Nigeria can be observed in form of religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, communal clashes, political violence, terrorism, cult and street gangster clashes, kidnapping and banditry. Consequently, the participation of young people in violence and the effects of violence on youth make it a critical and worrisome issue for Nigeria. There is an increasing concern over surge in young people’s involvement in violence and criminality. The activities of Boko Haram, Niger Delta militants and local secessionist groups such as the proscribed Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and properties worth billions of naira according to the National Human Rights Commission 2016 Report.

It is very important to note that young people do not participate in violence just because they want to be nefarious. Young people are rational beings and their actions and inactions are driven by rational, albeit existential, choices they make. The choices they make are products of available options the society provide them with, and the conditions in which they are while making these choices. As violence escalates in Nigeria, young people’s choice in participating in violence and violent extremism is dictated by socioeconomic deprivation and political marginalization. While young people are exposed to violence by the limited choices
available to them, their participation in violence and violent extremism further worsens society’s security. This pushes more young people into violent acts, while those already involved get more entangled, as they seek to protect themselves through unconventional and irregular means. This consequently generate a vicious cycle, if not a vicious spiral, as more and more young people get exposed to, and entrenched in violence. Young people’s exposure, vulnerability, involvement and entrenchment in violence and violent extremism therefore need serious attention and response. Hence, the need for an Agenda centred on Youth, Peace and Security.

Presently, it is estimated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) that there are over 1.847 billion young people aged between 10 to 24 years, in the world. This is 23.7 percent of the 7.795 billion estimated world population in 2020. It is further estimated that one in every four young people is affected by violence and armed conflicts (UN, 2018). Majority of the global population of young people affected by violence are largely located in developing countries, which have seen surge in youth population (UNFPA, 2018). This data expressly illustrates the peculiarity of violence in Nigeria and its destructive impacts on young people.

Nevertheless, there is also growing evidence of the contributions of young people to peace and security. Young people are involved in preventing violence and recruitment into violent groups; and promotion of peace through peer-to-peer education. They work across communities and religious groups to foster understanding and tolerance, and build the capacity of other youths to speak up and address grievances constructively, without violence; while equipping them with skills in communication, advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving. Young people are taking advantage of the media to produce and amplify new narratives. They share their stories and ideas about a future without
violence through traditional media outlets to reach millions of people of all ages. They also use social media to amplify new, authentic and original voices that connect with those vulnerable to online recruitment into violent extremist narratives. They are involved in community entrepreneurship and livelihood programmes, thus, contributing to local economies and creating employment opportunities.

The first notable global policy framework which is borne out of the evolving recognition of young people participation in peacebuilding is the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250), adopted on December 9, 2015. It was the first resolution that legitimized the contributions of young people in peacebuilding processes. The resolution can simply be described as one which intends to serve as policy guidelines meant as a guiding format in regional and national youth and peace policy formulations. As the focus on Youth, Peace and Security becomes an emerging priority globally, the unprecedented UNSCR 2250 has further led to enactment of subsequent resolutions 2419 and 2535 to compliment frameworks and guidelines for achieving the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

It was against the backdrop of the adoption of UNSCR 2250, that Building Blocks for Peace Foundation was formed in 2016 to mobilise and empower young people and raise awareness for the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Nigeria. For this purpose, this chapter will critically discuss and evaluate the Building Blocks for Peace ‘CARE’ Model used in fostering youth participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding across communities in Nigeria.

Overview of Building Blocks for Peace Foundation and UNSCR Resolution 2250

Building Blocks for Peace Foundation also known as BBFORPEACE, is a registered non-governmental and non-profit
youth-led organization working on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, accountability, good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. Building Blocks for Peace had its roots in a youth-led movement known as the Nigeria Youth for Peace Initiative (NY4PI) formed to mobilize vulnerable youths in Nigeria to peace actions. This movement is made up of youths who are dissatisfied with the involvement of some other youths in violent extremism, and the negative characterisation of youth as threats, as well as the exclusion of youths from the decision-making process (BBFORPEACE, 2018). Building Blocks for Peace Foundation seeks to achieve a more peaceful and stable society by adopting innovative peacebuilding approaches such as peace advocacy, dialogue, research, peace education (through training, workshops, mass media campaigns and community sensitization), sport and empowerment programmes, towards implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

Since the adoption of UNSCR 2250, we in the BBFORPEACE have continued to leverage on this historic resolution to mobilise broader support and build necessary strategic partnerships for our peacebuilding work. With this resolution, we now have direct access and easy interaction with various UN entities, embassies, government ministries, INGOs and other relevant stakeholders working on peace and security in Nigeria. For BBFORPEACE, the UNSCR 2250 serves as an advocacy tool to support our campaign for young people’s participation in decision-making and peacebuilding/peace-sustainability process. It also serves as pivotal tool to validate our quest for appropriate protection mechanisms for young peacebuilders working in conflict and post-conflict communities.
**Interventions**

Ugly iterations and recycling of violence in Nigeria, coupled with young peoples’ vulnerability and participation in violent extremism underscores the development of the 'CARE' model by BBFORPEACE, which is aimed at promoting and implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. The CARE model stands for **Capacity-building, Advocacy, Reward system and Empowerment**. Notably, Nigeria is one of the countries in the world most affected by the spread of violent conflicts and the deterioration of peace (Kwaja and Owonikoko, 2020). As a matter of growing concern, young people’s participation in violent conflicts threatens national and regional stability.

As space for peace shrinks and violence rate ascends to an unacceptable level in Nigeria, young people are the only viable mechanism to drive, restore and sustain peace in Nigeria. Given young people’s demographic and democratic advantage – if right atmosphere in terms of socioeconomic and political policies are provided by state and non-state actors, and the international community – they can help to erect infrastructure for peace, and be active peace promoters. This means that initiatives to build peace in
Connecting and Amplifying Voices of Youth Building Peace

our communities and society should come from youths, through the process of engagement, involvement and assimilation.

To mobilise, empower and strengthen the agency of youth for sustainable peace in Nigeria, Building Blocks for Peace Foundation uses innovative and creative strategies which include **Capacity-building, Advocacy, Reward system and Empowerment** (known as CARE) as a strategic and constructive way to consolidate sustainable peace. Thus, the 'CARE' model is explained below:

1. **Capacity Building and Training**

   Our capacity-building work aims to equip young peacebuilders through training on civic education, conflict prevention, peace dialogue and negotiation skills. As part of the organization’s objectives to address capacity deficit among youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, BBFORPEACE organizes annual capacity-building training and workshops for its interns, volunteers, staff and youth activists and leaders on non-violence strategies and peacebuilding in communities.

   For example, on the 12th of June, 2019, BBFORPEACE organized a one-day Capacity Building Training which focused on the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. These training introduced 22 youth leaders to the concepts of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding; the United Nations Security Council 2250 on Youth, Peace And Security; Strategies for Transforming Violent Narratives and Fundraising Strategies for youth NGOs. Some of the participants at these training have gone ahead to set up their youth initiatives using the skills acquired, and are now working on UNSCR 2250 implementation across local communities in Nigeria. Participants were also inducted into Building Blocks for Peace Foundation’s Nigeria Youth 4 Peace Initiative, a national network of young peace-builders working for peace in Nigeria where they continue to
discuss with peers on peace initiatives. Since 2016, over 500 young people have benefitted from these capacity building sessions.

Our capacity-building trainings are driven by the following objectives:

1. Training and equipping young people with relevant skills and ideas to prevent violence, as well as propagate the necessity of peacebuilding.
2. Identifying relevant and key stakeholders to propagate the nitty-gritty of peace in Nigeria, and building a network of young peacebuilders across the nation.
3. Campaigning for peace and establishing relevant mechanisms to counter the escalation of violence in Nigeria.
4. Stepping down of workshops and capacity building most especially at the grass-root level.
5. Constructive use of the media to mitigate the propagation of violence, and for the promotion of peace.
6. Creating an early warning and early response system to prevent conflict outbreak.

2. Advocacy:

Building Blocks for Peace Foundation invests heavily in policy advocacy and the domestication of relevant normative guidelines such as UNSCR 2250, UNSCR 2419, UNSCR 2535, AU Youth Charter and the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security. We educate, lobby and engage with policymakers on the best ways to strengthen the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and create the needed institutional framework to support young people's effort on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We interact with government ministries, academia, media, embassies, religious bodies, community leaders, civil society groups, ECOWAS, AU and other relevant actors in the peace and security sector on youth peace interventions and strategies; advocate for meaningful
engagement of youth in the political process and decision-making institutions, and request for increased youth partnership for sustainable peace and development, through advocacy visits, media engagement, community education and sensitisation.

In December 2019, with support from the United Network of Young Peacebuilders – a global network of youth peace organisations based in The Hague, Netherlands –, we joined our peers from other African countries on an advocacy mission to the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to meet with relevant AU entities and officials, to discuss the roles and contributions of youth to peace in Africa, sharing the Nigerian perspectives and proffering opportunities for supporting the youth, peace and security agenda on the continent. One of the outcomes of our advocacy engagements with the AU is the adoption of the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security, which is very similar to the UNSCR 2250 in content and letters. We have also supported the drafting of Nigeria's National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and continue to lead the campaign for its implementation.

We have established a strong working relationship with the United Nations Information Centre, Lagos and the United Nations Development Programme-Abuja, working together to connect existing dots and amplify youth voices in Nigeria.

3. Rewards System
   **Nigeria Youth4Peace Award:**

   At BBFORPEACE, one of our strategies for mobilising young people into peace actions and disengaging young people from violent actions across communities in Nigeria is through the creation of appropriate stimulation and motivation. We believe peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence can be achieved if we create the right incentives for it, especially among young people.
The lack of recognition of young people’s efforts has also been identified as one of the challenges hindering young people’s participation in peacebuilding in Nigeria. As a result, in 2018, Building Blocks for Peace Foundation launched the ‘Nigeria Youth 4 Peace Awards’.

The Nigeria Youth 4 Peace Awards is an annual event, designed to reward, celebrate and showcase young people who are making exceptional contributions to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustainable development in Nigeria. Since 2018, young peace-builders working across communities have been recognised annually for their outstanding contributions and sacrifice to peacebuilding and community resilience in Nigeria. Prizes include peacebuilding materials, micro grant of 300 dollars, certificates and a year-long technical support. According to Olasupo Abideen, 25years old winner of the 2018 Nigeria Youth 4 Peace Award, "this award will go a long way in showing all fellow youth that whatever you do, no matter how little, someday it will be recognised. I won’t forget today". This recognition now serves as an inspiration and motivation to young people who look forward to being recognised and celebrated.
4. **Empowerment, Humanitarian Assistance and Social Entrepreneurship:**

Empowerment and social entrepreneurship is also a key component of our contributions to tackling some of the challenges of peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. BBFORPEACE has a good history of offering humanitarian relief services to the less privileged in the society where it operates. This is based on the realization that you cannot preach peace to people on an empty stomach. Part of her humanitarian engagements include providing emergency relief and need-based humanitarian aid, and ensuring that basic human needs are met.

In August 2017 and 2018, we visited and provided relief materials worth hundreds of thousands of naira to orphans at the Orphanage Homes in Ikorodu, Lagos and to young inmates in Agodi Prisons (now Correction Centre) in Ibadan, Oyo State, both in Nigeria. During the COVID pandemic and lockdowns in year 2020 in Nigeria, over 50 vulnerable people including the elderly, young men and women in Egbeda Local Government in Oyo State, Nigeria were assisted with food and non-food items to cushion the effects of the lockdowns. Young people are also being recruited and enrolled in our funded skills acquisition programmes across Nigeria. With this, we train youth on cake making, event decoration, soap making, plumbing etc. Over the last three years, over 100 youths have graduated from our skills acquisition centres and meaningfully engaged in productive ventures including starting their own business ventures.

The Impact of CARE Intervention Model

The **CARE** Model has been examined in the light of ongoing developments and activities at the organisation from 2016 to 2020. It is a developing model yet with great accomplishments. As a result of our interventions and approach, there is a growing awareness of
the growing positive perception of youth by communities in both urban and rural contexts in Nigeria. Young people's opinions are now being heard and considered by traditional and political leaders, a development that was hitherto absent. Also, a second key impact is young people's acquisition and development of fundamental civic and peacebuilding skills, which put them in a better position to contribute meaningfully to local and national peace and security issues. Through our capacity building training, over 500 youth leaders have been trained, equipped and empowered with relevant skills and knowledge on non-violent strategies and existing normative frameworks and their usefulness for youth peacebuilding.

Specifically,

1. Participants learned to be active listeners, and to properly scrutinize information before dissemination.

2. Participants acquired new knowledge and deepened their understanding of UNSC Resolution 2250 and 2419; UN-commissioned independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (2018), and how well they can impact society and make it a better place for all to live.

3. Participants were also encouraged to put what they learnt into practice by teaching other youths about their role in building peace in their immediate communities and the world at large.

**Challenges of the BBFORPEACE ‘CARE’ Model**

Despite the opportunities and achievements, the BBFORPEACE ‘CARE’ model faced certain challenges that may limit future implementation of the peacebuilding model.

a. **Perception**

One of the existing challenges faced is the discouraging perceptions of youth by political leadership. Youth often are not taken seriously by political actors and parties. This is because there
is strong doubt over the capacity, and motivation driving youth participation, in decision-making institutions and youth motivated initiatives. Adults not only do not trust them but often censor and discourage young people from expressing their ideas.

b. Limited Funds

Sustaining the Capacity Building Trainings and the Nigeria Youth4Peace Peace Forum and Award requires adequate funding. Limited or paucity of funds to finance peacebuilding-projects is a serious barrier that could frustrate the CARE peacebuilding approach being initiated and coordinated by BBFORPEACE, meant to implement the UNSCR 2250, 2419 and 2535. Our projects and activities have been largely financed by volunteers who sacrifice their time and also donate regularly to support the organisation. We also get in-kind support from other organisations/ partners and sympathisers to our work. Over the years, we have received support from organisations like GPPAC Foundation, UNOY Peacebuilders, Search for Common Ground, Nigeria, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP Nigeria) and Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), who have donated peacebuilding materials worth hundreds of thousands of naira to our Youth4Peace projects. But more supports are still needed to move forward and achieve more.

c. Limited Partnership

Carrying out peacebuilding programmes and activities requires the full support of relevant stakeholders to help Building Blocks for Peace to achieve its organizational goals and objectives. The organisation requires more concerted partnership from local and international actors to make more impact.

d. Institutional Challenges

Internal challenges such as limited human, material and financial resources impede the growth and expansion of the organisation. Due to these challenges, Building Blocks for Peace
Foundation is limited in carrying out its peacebuilding projects and activities in Nigeria. The inability to sustain interns and compensate volunteers appropriately affects project and organisational sustainability.

**Opportunities for Expansion**

With estimated over 200 million population, 65 percent of which are young people - many of whom with great energy, creativity and ideas on how to build a sustainable society - BBFORPEACE intends to transform these into peace dividends. With appropriate financial and technical supports, we will scale up our impact and reach especially in the frontline communities, by empowering youths to be active agents of peace. BBFORPEACE peacebuilding activities have mainly been dominant in few states in the southwestern part of Nigeria while other regions, especially the conflict ravaged northeastern part of Nigeria, are excluded. Thus, the BBFORPEACE ability to expand its state concentration of peacebuilding projects will go a very long way in impacting young people with peacebuilding skills and also ensuring communities are resilient to violence.

**Conclusion**

According to the Next Generation report 2016, Nigeria stands on the threshold of what could be the greatest transformation in her history. It will be one of the few countries in the world that has young workers in plentiful supply. Youth, not oil, will be the country’s valuable resources in the twenty-first century. If Nigeria fails to harness this demographic dividend, the negative impact of this predicament cannot be underestimated. Her prospects will be bleak and situation could be catastrophic. One big lesson from our youth and peace interventions is that young people have untapped great potentials in terms of ensuring peace and
security. Their biggest strength is their capacity to mobilise vulnerable youths and their communities towards peacebuilding, when they are supported.

Therefore, all stakeholders need to increase investment in youth and peacebuilding activities, be it through direct partnerships with youth-led organisations, developing the capacity of youths from diverse backgrounds, meaningfully involving them in local, national regional and international decision making, or by providing them with spaces to manifest their work, talent and ideas. We also need to properly recognise youth-led organisations making exemplary efforts to peacebuilding and sustainable development.

As the international community celebrates the 5th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and moves toward achieving Agenda 2030, young people must not be left behind. Ensuring the active, systemic and meaningful participation of youth in issues of peace and security is a demographic and democratic imperative. A successful peacebuilding process must be transformative and all-inclusive.

From our experience in Nigeria, youth empowerment, education and engagement programmes must top any strategy for achieving global peace and security, as this will go a long way in addressing the vulnerability of youth to violence and violent groups.

**Recommendations**

a. We must strengthen the capacity of youth-led organizations to build the resilience of other peers and stakeholders. Training should be done for youth organisations on community engagement, project design and implementation, and how best to monitor and evaluate their projects for sustainability.

b. There is the need to create and open relationships, partnerships and exposure to regional and international platforms
to enhance youths' skills, build networks, exchange best practices and experience, and deepen relationships with other youths.

c. Make funds and technical resources available to youth organisations. Barriers and obstacles to accessing these funds should be reduced with a flexible reporting mechanism.

d. Removing all legal and socio-economic hindrances to young people’s participation in decision making is very essential. One of the benefits from Women, Peace and Security Resolution (UNSCR 1325) is the useful quota system which encourages a particular percentage of women to be included in decision-making institutions. Youth should also enjoy such affirmative policy. This will go a long way in increasing their participation in decision making. It is suggested that, at least, 25 percent of available political appointive and elective positions in Nigeria must be reserved for young people.

e. Government must strengthen existing accountability mechanisms for law enforcement conducts towards youth to regulate the use of force, limit abuse of power and discriminatory practices and create an ombudsman to hold police and security forces accountable.

f. We must prioritize and foster the participation of young people in economic development planning, and the development of fair and inclusive labour policies at all levels, particularly at the local and national levels, and invest in infrastructural development so as to address economic exclusion of young people and address unemployment.

AUTHORS’ PROFILE

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CHAPTER 2
BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Patience Ikpeh -Obaulo, Olufemi Michael Emmanuel and Oyindamola Somoye
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Introduction
Nigeria has witnessed a surge in conflicts across the six geopolitical zones of the country, which has continued to threaten her political stability, human security and development. These conflicts have manifested in diverse forms in different areas. Notably, the northern region of the country has been a hotbed of violence and violent extremism in the last decade. The North-East has been ravaged by the menace of Boko Haram and various Islamic Fundamentalist groups. The North Central zone has become a boiling point with the resurgence of the agro-pastoralist conflict. Herdsmen have continued to carry out frequent attacks on farming communities and innocent citizens, leaving thousands of people injured, dead and internally displaced. In the North-Western States of Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina, rural banditry has also reached alarming heights with bandits terrorizing villages and communities with impunity.

In the South Eastern zone, there have been strong agitations by some youths for secession. These sentiments and agitations for Biafra, arising out of alleged discrimination and persecution, had earlier led to the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970, which claimed the lives of millions of people. The renewed tensions have facilitated a buildup of arms and continuous mobilization by the youths in this region with a frequent face-off with the Nigerian Military and
security agencies. Other incidences of conflict include militancy in the Niger Delta, and cult clashes cum street gangs in the South West and South-South respectively. Also, kidnappings, land disputes, chieftaincy tussles and electoral violence have been widespread across the nation.

Furthermore, newspaper reports validated by WANEP’s *National Early Warning System* has reported different violent incidents which have resulted in the death of more than 60,000 Nigerians[1]. The *Round 26 Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)* assessment by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) further stated that between 20 October, 2018 and 20 January, 2019, the trends from six states most affected by displacement (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe) showed about 1.9 million people have been internally displaced and over 50,000 people dead with numerous properties and farmlands destroyed.[2]

In all of these incidences, the youth have been used as cannon fodders. They have been strategically recruited by terrorist organizations and other violent groups to execute armed attacks. In Nigeria, as in other countries globally, young men and women are primary targets of recruitment by extremist terrorist groups and armies. On one hand, youth participation in terrorism has been voluntary; while on the other it has been conscripted.

The intransigence of these conflicts is the new dynamics of a violent culture that has corrupted the values and moral ethos of the country. A major challenge from this has been the impact of violence on youths. This exposure to violence has greatly influenced the psycho-social orientation of children and young people that place them at the risk of fostering various manifestations of violent radicalization and violent character capable of further destabilising peace, security and development. The collapse of normative structures has fostered an atmosphere of confrontation, prejudice,
stereotype and distrust by Nigerian youths, which exacerbates delinquent actions and total disregard for existing social structures.

Formal education sectors have also been negatively affected by this situation as the level of violence has resulted in gradual decadence within the school system. Acts of cultism, rape, intimidation and bullying, to mention but a few, have trickled down from the tertiary institutions to post-primary and primary schools. As the trend and pattern of these violent actions in schools increase, alarm bells have been triggered among state and non-state actors on what efforts or steps need to be taken to mitigate the situation. It has raised varied questions on what needs to be done and by whom. What role does government agencies such as the Ministries of Education and school boards play in averting these trends and how will that impact on the transformation of youths as change agents within the society? What role can civil society play to complement the efforts of state and other non-state actors in addressing the involvement of youths in violent conflicts within the formal education sector?

Out-of-school youth have equally posed a huge threat to peace and security in Nigeria. Often referred to as street children and in the Northern part of the country as Almajiris, these children live in abject poverty, either on the streets or in makeshift homes in slums. They have no chance to claim their rights, they struggle to access education, and they are marginalized from mainstream society. These make them more susceptible to being used as instruments of violence. Some of the street children are engaged in many social vices including illegally carrying weapons, selling drugs, collecting extortion money and perpetrating political violence. Some of these young people are involved in suicide bombing and even contract killings. It is recognised that the Federal Government of Nigeria has made diverse efforts to engage the youth in peace and decision-making processes in the country. Notably, the
adoption of the National Youth Policy, enactment of the Not-Too-Young-To-Run bill into law - which reduces eligibility criteria to enable young persons’ representation in elective positions - and operationalization of the Youth Parliament are some of the steps taken in this direction by the government. However, progress has been slow. More still needs to be done as the government alone cannot ensure full and meaningful participation of youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Notably, youths have, in recent times, proven through their active engagement in peacebuilding initiatives in communities, that they can be a relevant agent of peaceful change rather than perpetrators of violence. Considering the large population of youth in the country, a few are profitably engaged in entrepreneurial initiatives, driving the economic growth of the country; while others continue to lend their voices to non-violent activities that ensure national peace and security. However, the inability of the government to productively engage and cater for its teeming population continually threatens internal security and inevitably
provides a channel for mobilization of youth by desperate armed groups.

Since youths play a critical role in nation-building and development, their energies and capacities must be harnessed to support government initiatives in promoting peace and human security. To achieve this, there is the need to equip young persons with the skills and knowledge of active non-violence, and provide platforms for continuous engagements to enhance participation in peacebuilding at all levels. This will enable them to become more effective change-makers, able to impact the society positively.

It is in recognizing the risk to security and development posed by the growing radicalization of young people to violence globally that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted resolution 2250 on December 9, 2015. The Resolution recognizes that the growing radicalization of youth to violence can incite conflict, and in turn, disrupt peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. Generally, UNSCR 2250 affirms the important contributions of young people towards the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in countering violent extremism and terrorism. Accordingly, the resolution reiterates the need to actively engage young people on issues of peace and security, given that the large youth population presents a uniquely democratic and demographic dividend that can contribute to sustainable peace and economic prosperity through inclusive and youth-friendly policies. [3]

It should be known that peace is a collective responsibility that requires the active participation of everyone. Peace is not necessarily the absence of conflict but a state of harmonious coexistence without rancour and devoid of fear. It is a process and a culture that should be imbibed particularly by the youths who are the future generation. This brings to the fore the need for peace education in formal and informal sectors. The strategic importance
and correlation of Peace Education and the active involvement of youth in the process to the growth and development of any society and nation cannot be overemphasized. Youths are the main movers of the economy as they form the bulk of the labour force and the active population. The propagation of peace among this powerful mass would ensure that society that embraces dialogue, tolerance and the principles of non-violence eventually emerges. Getting youths involved in peacebuilding would ensure that more energy is being channelled in the right direction.

**WANEP-Nigeria Activities on the Active Non-Violence and Peace Education Programme**

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding Nigeria (WANEP-Nigeria) was established out of necessity to provide an organized platform for collaborative peacebuilding for conflict transformation and development in Nigeria by indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations with diverse capacities and interests in human rights, conflict transformation and good governance. Our operations are structured along with the geopolitical constellation of Nigeria and target grassroots ownership of peacebuilding initiatives through its member organizations in all the thirty-six (36) States of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).
Intervention programmes of the Network are divided into five basic thematic areas: Conflict Prevention; Women in Peacebuilding; Active Non-Violence and Peace Education; Democracy and Good Governance; Research and Documentation.

The challenge of youth involvement in cultism, kidnapping, banditry, substance abuse, violent extremism, ethno-religious violence and political conflicts in the various geopolitical zones either as actors or victims, has heightened culture of violent behaviour and attitude exhibited by this demographic group, which has been transported into the school system. The formal education sector has been negatively affected by this situation as the level of violence has resulted in gradual decadence within the school system. These are young people with potentials and capacity to contribute to peace, security and development of their communities and country. To ameliorate the situation, WANEP in 2000 designed the Active Non-violence and Peace Education project to address the rising involvement of children in violent conflict in the region. The targets, primary and post-primary students, are equipped with the knowledge and skills for non-violence and conflict management, which will transform their attitude, foster social cohesion, inculcate the culture of peace and alternative sets of skills that they can apply in conflict situations. The programme promotes peer mediation and peace clubs in schools.

In Nigeria since 2003, representatives of Ministry of Education, Nigeria Educational and Research Development Council (NERDC), Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Parents Teachers’ Association (PTA), School-Based Management Committees (SBMC), teachers and students in Bauchi, Delta, Enugu, Lagos, Ogun, Plateau and Rivers states have benefitted from the peace education project and instituted peer mediation and peace clubs in focal schools through
series of capacity building. In these states, the project took cognisance of the following factors;

- The growing rate of children and adolescent delinquencies, and involvement of children in violent activities.
- The deteriorating cultural and social institutions for positive psycho-social orientation;
- The emergence of Cultism in primary and post-primary schools and the proliferation of violence in schools.

The strategic goal of the Peace Education Project is to reduce the involvement of children and adolescents in violent activities by giving them the skills of alternative dispute resolution and citizenship. Also, it aimed to develop a road map for the inclusion of peace education in primary and post-primary schools’ curriculum at the state and federal levels. The stages of implementation of the project in targeted states include;

1. Project Planning and Manual Review meeting to introduce the project to critical stakeholders in the Education sector, including State Ministries of Education, State Universal Basic Education Boards, Parents Teachers Associations, benefiting schools etc., in order to conceptualize the project that will suit the realities on the ground and the beneficiaries.

2. Consultation with Heads of Selected Schools to discuss plans for effective implementation of the Peace Education in selected Schools.

3. Training of Trainers for the selected teachers from each school on Peace Education/ Peer Mediation.

4. Replication Training for the selected students in each benefiting schools on Peer Mediation.

5. Formation of Peace Clubs and establishment of Peer Mediation Centres in participating schools.

6. Commencement of Mock Classes on Peace Education within schools.
7. Production of Information, Education and Communication Resource Materials
8. Retreat for the Members of the Peace Clubs/Supervising teachers to develop strategies for Peace Festival, etc.
9. Implementation Planning Meeting with key educational stakeholders on mainstreaming Peace Education into schools’ curriculum.
10. Advocacy visit to introduce the project to key stakeholders in the education sector

**Practical Actions taken on Peace Education Project**

At Federal Level: Tertiary Educational Trust Fund (TETfund); Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR); Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

At the State Level: Ogun State Universal Basic Education Board (OSUBEB); Delta State Universal Basic Education Board; Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board; Plateau State Universal Basic Education Board; Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board; Ogun State Ministry of Education; Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (LSUBEB); Lagos State House of Assembly and Kosofe Local Government Secretariat.

a. Training for the selected pupils and students on Peace Education and Peer mediation in 24 public primary schools and 20 public secondary schools in Lagos state.

b. Visit of project beneficiaries to two Special Correctional Centre for girls and boys at Idi-Araba and Oregun, Lagos State to deter involvement in violent acts in schools and community.

c. Soccer for Peace Programme to educate out-of-school youths on the need to shun violence and embrace a culture of peace.

e. Advocacies for the integration of Peace Education into the school curriculum in Lagos State.

f. The teaching of Prevention of Violent Extremism Curriculum in primary and post-primary schools in Bauchi State.

It is noteworthy to know that WANEP has already developed “Youth and Peace Education Programme: Peer Mediation Manual”, “Peace Education in Formal Schools in West Africa: An implementation Guide” and Lessons Learnt Reports, to document WANEP-Nigeria’s experience in the field. This book, Lessons Learnt Reports, analyses WANEP-Nigeria’s experience working in violence-prone communities using peace education as a tool to make violence less attractive amongst the youth, so that the culture of peace can take root and grow.

Impact of the Peace Education Programme in Nigeria

WANEP-Nigeria has recognized the importance of Peace Education as a key initiative for the actualization of the prevention and participation components of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security in Nigeria. Since 2013, the Peace Education project has succeeded in the following areas:

- Training a mass of over 3,000 pupils and students in peace education and enrolled them as members of Peace Clubs in the beneficiary schools. The slogan, “No to Violence; Yes to Peace” has been adopted as their watchword to promote a culture of peace in the schools and their communities.
- Over 250 peace clubs were established in the schools in the six states to train students in peer mediation and intervene in disputes among pupils/students in schools.
● Expansion of the project beyond the anticipated local government areas to other conflict-prone communities in project states, thereby increasing the number of primary and secondary beneficiaries.

● Deepened appreciation and capacity for positive behavioural change by students in participating schools and expressed commitment to sustain peace within their schools and communities.

● Expressed interest by policymakers in the educational sector to expand, and infuse the Peace Education programme into the curriculum of schools in the South-West geopolitical zone.

● Since most of the schools are owned by the state governments, some of the teachers and heads of schools who benefited from the consultation and *Training of Trainers* in the initial pilot schools were transferred to new schools, which were not beneficiaries of the project. However, due to their (heads of schools and teachers) interest and commitment to the project, they were able to introduce the project in the new schools. This has expanded the number of schools that committed to the Peace Education project.

● The discussions on project sustainability and networking have provided the platform for WANEP Nigeria to create a directory of the name and contacts of all members of the peace club in each participating school on its website. They are referred to as Peace Ambassadors.

● Member organizations of the Network notably *Ideal Women Advancement Initiative* in Delta State and *Stephanie Peacebuilding and Development Foundation (SPADEV)* in Ogun State have adopted the initiative of Peace Education, and are currently partnering with the state Universal Basic Educations Boards to implement it in schools in their states.
• Pidgin English was often used to impact understanding and a deeper appreciation of the training to the students by the teachers in rural areas of southern Nigeria. Pidgin was used as a language of choice due to its social acceptance for communication amongst members of the community in these states. It facilitated greater interaction and participation as everyday events were used as examples by the teachers to validate their points.
• In schools, songs and dramas on the conflict that had traditional social connotations were used by the teachers to provide a relaxed and conducive atmosphere for the students while in some, football competitions were organized to create the needed awareness beyond the benefitting school.
• Most of the project beneficiaries have noted that the programme has provided opportunities for them to develop themselves through the exchange of ideas with students from other participating schools, as well as their capacity to resolve conflict with their peers.
• It creates a unique platform for some of the Peer Mediators to: build their capacity in agenda preparation, write minutes and organize programmes as the high point of their involvement.
• Some of the schools have been able to develop their constitution and structures for the clubs, while others have produced the first magazine for the club.
• In all the benefiting schools, the level of fighting and bullying has reduced, and the pupils/students can resolve their disputes peacefully.

Challenges of the Programme

In sustaining this programme, there have been challenges such as inadequate funds to implement the planned activity. In this
regard, WANEP Nigeria had to build up funds to implement some of the project activities, particularly in Lagos State. Also, the network of local implementing organizations has been unable to implement some peace education initiatives in the states due to logistical delays. The benefiting schools also complained about financial difficulties in organizing follow up activities, especially where they had more than anticipated number of students who were eager to participate in the project.

Other challenges experienced include the end-of-term vacations observed by schools. This delayed some of the replication training in schools. Changes in key officers within government institutions such as the State Ministry of Education, the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and Head-teachers/Principals of benefitting schools often meant repeating advocacy and sensitization of the new officers to key into the project and to sustain the process.

**Opportunities for Project Expansion**

The Peace Education Initiative has successfully taken root in seven states – Bauchi, Delta, Enugu, Lagos, Ogun, Plateau and Rivers – across Nigeria. In six of the states, the trained teachers have taken the initiative to expand the project beyond their schools to other schools either within or outside school premises. This has, in turn, provided a platform to expand the scope of the project and the number of beneficiaries. The commitment shows the potential gains from continued expansion of the initiative to more schools with the possibility of institutionalizing Peace Clubs in all schools across the country.

In Lagos State, WANEP–Nigeria has been partnering with a community-based educational organization named School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) to implement the Peace Education project. Officers of the committee are trained to monitor the
impact of the training within schools in the state. From feedback reports, the over one thousand pupils and fifty teachers trained in twenty-one primary schools have been equipped with the knowledge of peacebuilding and peer mediation skills and are actively wading into disputes in schools to ensure peaceful resolution. A unique platform has been created for pupils to build their capacity in promoting peaceful co-existence. This has promoted the expansion of the project in Lagos State beyond one educational district to three education districts in the state. Also, WANEP–Nigeria is in discussions with the Lagos State Ministry of Education to expand the project to post-primary schools in the state. These outcomes have further generated the interest of the Lagos State House of Assembly to integrate Peace Education into the curriculum in all schools in the state.

Presently, there have been recommendations for the project to expand to other states across Nigeria, particularly targeting youths in the North East. Terrorism and violent extremism remain a major threat to peace and sustainable development in Nigeria, creating an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and insecurity in vulnerable communities. However, recognizing peace education as a major development intervention for building peace and preventing violent extremism is critical to sustaining peace and security in the country. Based on this premise, the Peace Education project has been expanded to Bauchi State under the title; “Preventing Violent Extremism in Schools”.

The project aims to prepare young persons to acquire knowledge, skills and positive attitude that allow them to live and interact in a diverse social and cultural dynamic environment peacefully. It builds the resilience of young people in preventing violent extremism. Over 30 teachers and key officers in educational institutions have been trained to develop strategies to educate youths on preventing/tackling violent extremism in their schools
and communities. Expansion of the project to other non-benefiting schools and states in the North-East geo-political zone will create more opportunities for peace in the region, as pupils and adolescents who are exposed to violence will be equipped with non-violent skills. Opportunities to be radicalized will be minimized to the barest minimum.

Other strategies for expansion are building knowledge and capacity of out-of-school youths in peace education. This has been sustained through organizing peace-related competitions like quiz, soccer and short drama (Skits) with peace themes in Enugu and Lagos states. This has facilitated networking amongst out-of-school youths in implementing various peacebuilding activities. Other community-bonding activities are planned to ensure that in-school and out-of-school youths serve as peace ambassadors wherever they find themselves, rather than be available tool for violence.

Conclusion

Indeed, there has been expressed satisfaction over the introduction of the peace education within benefiting states in Nigeria as one of the panaceas to youth involvement in violence. The education of youth and their active participation in peace process will help to build a critical mass of young persons that are willing to embrace dialogue, tolerance and principle of non-violence in achieving their potentials. Getting youths involved in peacebuilding will ensure that more energy is being channeled in the right direction, and this will go a long way in achieving the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 in Nigeria.
AUTHORS’ PROFILE

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CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT VISUAL STORYTELLING: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIAN YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS

Lucky Chinwike
ShortFilms for Peacebuilding Initiative (SFPB)

Introduction

At various levels of community existence (local and global), the multiplicity of conflicts has been overwhelming, with a far-reaching impact on human lives and existence. In a world that is constantly grappling with various dimensions and impacts of conflicts, new solutions are being researched and existing interventions reinforced to address conflicts. Of great importance, therefore, is the need to develop more effective, sustainable, participatory methods and tools that serve to prevent likely and unanticipated conflicts.

This is where visual storytelling becomes imperative as a tool for addressing conflicts and engendering new narratives for development and peacebuilding interventions across communities, locally and globally. The importance of a free, professional and plural media and visual storytelling in contributing to good governance has gained traction in the international development community. A vibrant media gives people free-flowing access to information, enables dialogue, encourages people to express their views, prompts greater political participation and encourages accountability (UNDP, 2017). Visual storytelling and by extension, creative media offers youth, opportunities to overcome exclusion and marginalization and build knowledge, tools, and relationships that help them understand their context, express and empower
themselves, engage their community, and become agents of political change (UNOY, 2016).

It is to this end, that **Shortfilms for Peacebuilding (SFPB) Initiative** was set up to engage the untapped power of visual storytelling for Nigeria's development intervention as well as peacebuilding processes. This is premised on our belief that young people can be equipped to own this space and drive these changes. 

**Shortfilms for Peacebuilding (SFPB) Initiative** is an art and media initiative geared towards developing inspiring visual stories as a tool for social change across relevant themes of Peacebuilding, Accountability in Governance, Gender, and Participatory Democracy. The organization works to highlight prevalent development issues in local communities, using this to stir difficult conversations geared towards policy changes from government structures, as well as development interventions from policymakers and society at large. We focus on drawing strength from empathy to tell impactful stories of resilience, transformation and change, of mostly hard-to-reach communities.

**Role of the UNSCR 2250 in SFPB Initiative**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 provides a critical framework and support, of international dimension, for young people across the globe. Our work at SFPB continues to rely on this policy document to drive the changes we want to see. The 5 pillars of the UNSCR 2250 framework have given us the backing to mobilize young people, through our initiative, to become self-aware of their critical place in nation-building by empowering them to make meaningful contributions to national and global peace and security.

Recognizing the inherent power of creativity in young people, we emphasize training young people to channel this creative energy towards social good. Thus, with the UNSCR 2250,
young people at SFPB are using an interdisciplinary approach of peacebuilding research and visual storytelling to create and own spaces for expression, inclusion, and partnership. In the GAGE project, for instance, the collaborative effort of TicAfrica, as well as policymakers are helping us to demand civic spaces that enhance democratic tenets across various strata of the populace, especially in the rural populations. The pillars, as emphasized in the UNSCR 2250, have set the platform for us to engage collaboratively with other civic organizations as well as policymakers in contributing to driving positive changes.

Youth have the creativity, the potential and the capacity to make change happen – for themselves, for their communities, and the rest of the world (UNESCO, 2020). They make up about 70 per cent of the population in Nigeria and across the continent of Africa, with most possessing innate ability and energy to explore and impact their environment. By 2030, the continent’s youthful population is set to increase by two-thirds, from 370 million adults in 2010 to over 600 million in 2030 (GESCI, 2019). For the most part, this population continually craves for avenues to expend their energy and creativity. The absence of adequate and meaningful platforms at all levels, such that encourage them to put these energies and creativity to use sometimes account for why they are mostly drafted towards social vices.

However, digital-media-enabled creative and cultural industries offer huge opportunities for meaningful engagement (GESCI, 2019). Young people, especially millennials and generation Z, exert a huge presence in the media and digital space. This means that young people can be trained to use the media-enabled creative space for conflict prevention, and drive positive changes against violent extremism. Consequently, this calls for the need for stakeholders to increase support and investment in young people to build capacity in digital creative media, such as visual storytelling.
This is key to addressing global youth needs and aspirations, which is essential for young people to maximise this space for global peace and security. Developing the skills of this population is vital, and guiding them to put this energy into positive use is critical to achieving peace and security across the globe. Our mandate at SFPB to empower young people with creative skills in media-enabled visual storytelling, as well as the UNSCR 2250 policy on youth peace and security, represent an opportunity for young people to secure civic spaces for participation and inclusion. Recognizing the inherent power of creativity in young people, we emphasize on training young people to channel this creative energy towards social good.

Evident also, in the recent UNSCR 2535, is the recognition that digital spaces provide innovative participatory opportunities for dialogue, accountability and transparency in decision-making, including in conflict-affected contexts. At the same time, it recognised that inequalities with regards to access to technology remain widespread; and that internet and social media can be used to spread disinformation and terrorist ideologies. This can lead to threats and attack on young activists and the general population. Furthermore, there are concerns over increasing use, in a globalized society, by terrorists and their supporters of new information and communication technologies for terrorist purposes (UN, 2020). However, Africa's young and growing population, coupled with youth engagement in digital creative media, presents a huge opportunity for young people to truly tell their stories and deliberately create their positive narrative.

SFPB aims to strategically build networks across the federation where more young people are trained to truly engage visual storytelling as well as utilize media platforms to secure civic and political spaces and, communicate the changes they desire. This is even as the need to support global efforts on preventing and
countering violent extremism in the media space becomes essential to winning the war against violent conflicts and global terrorism.

If, as some leading research works have argued, terrorism is a communicative act, then we need to invest seriously in challenging and disrupting its messages using the same communication channels and strategies (The Conversation, 2014). A key element here is embracing multimodal communication platforms that combine image, text and sound to reach people in the same way that sophisticated violent extremist propaganda routinely achieves (The Conversation, 2014). An opportunity to engage messaging platforms therefore presents itself, in order to communicate short visual peace narratives created by young people to counter extremist media propaganda across media platforms. This is why short films present an overriding advantage of brevity, creativity, innovation and budget – key features which make it ideal and suited for us to host visual contents on inexpensive, accessible and user-friendly distribution sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Whatsapp, Twitter and Instagram.

Visual storytelling is indeed an opportunity to minimize security risks to young peace-builders as captured in the UNSCR 2250, which advocates adequate protection of young peacebuilders who go all out to engage with communities and chart new development and peacebuilding initiatives. On many occasions, young peacebuilders at SFPB work in remote communities, making efforts to tell stories of local communities to policymakers, who oftentimes, are not aware of the resilience and challenges of people in local communities. Protection for young creative minds and peacebuilders is an opportunity for them to do more, which is vital not only for their security but also the development initiatives they drive.

Visual storytelling is also important in curbing the age-long negative narrative associated with the utilization of creative skills by
young people. The use of digital media by young people has been stereotyped as unproductive, time-wasting and hedonistic. But creative media initiatives such as visual storytelling provide opportunity for young people to interpret their creative energy in a positive light, leading to more inclusive civic space for positive community impact. If we are to really empower young people at local communities with visual storytelling skills, it is apparent that short-term training would be insufficient for the youth in communities to truly take an active part in the long-term sustainability projects and initiatives, such as that of the **GAGE** project.

Consequently, SFPB initiated a long-term participatory video training for a target population of 50 youth in rural communities in Ibadan and Iseyin, both in Oyo State, as a pilot phase of an initiative targeted at training 5,000 young people in 100 rural and hard-to-reach communities across southwestern Nigeria. This was to further help in empowering young people with relevant digital and creative skills, so that they can contribute to the democratic development of their communities. The long-term implication and larger impact of this informal education are to enable the locals to take ownership of the **GAGE** social solution for the overall development and sustainability of their communities — a skill for which they can further utilize for self-sustenance within and outside their immediate community.

**Intervention Carried Out**

Oftentimes, and across all levels, governments are seen to develop and implement policies and programmes that the people are unaware of, thereby increasing citizens' non-participatory roles in development programmes that directly or indirectly affect them, with the rural population most affected. This has alienated the citizens from their governments, which further engenders
disinterest in governance on the part of the citizenry. It is also true that citizens have become accustomed to living with or without any tangible government presence, especially in the Global South countries such as Nigeria. This is as a result of the age-long failure of the government to make a meaningful impact on citizens’ lives. This is why accountability in governance has become a major part of our society’s problems. For one reason, apart from citizens being unenlightened about the power they have in holding government to account, they are also not interested in government activities and programmes that affect them.

In contrast, however, accountability in governance begins with the people’s heightened consciousness of the power they wield to hold the government accountable. For most citizens, this self-consciousness is very low or non-existent. Next is the need for citizens to be aware of government policies, activities, programmes, and interventions, even before they are implemented. With this knowledge, they can track government programmes and monitor implementation of such interventions, even as it affects them as well as rate performance and impact of any such interventions within their localities. It is often the case that despite government’s efforts to inform citizens of its policies and programmes, many people, especially the rural population and border communities, is often left out. This robs them of their rights to be part of peace and development initiatives of the government. It then becomes a problem to invoke the powers vested in the citizens to hold the government to accountable.

**Intervention**

Young peacebuilders at *Shortfilms for Peacebuilding Initiative (SFPB)* in collaboration with ‘TicAfrica’, undertook a visual storytelling project to ascertain a cross-section of citizens' awareness of and participation in government policies and
interventions in their communities. This was the drive behind the GAGE project. GAGE is an externally-funded, technology-driven development solution created to empower citizens with the ability to view, comment and rate government’s projects, programmes and interventions through communication platforms such as text messages, social media and internet.

Our role in the GAGE project was first to capture the story and disposition of an average Nigerian citizen, who are unaware of, or uninterested in government’s presence or otherwise, in their communities and; secondly, to introduce the technology solution that was being developed by ‘TicAfrica’, an organisation empowering citizens to take charge of the social contract that inevitably exist between them and the government. While we adopted a cross-sectional audience approach, the rural population was the main priority because we understood the exclusionary nature of such population in intervention processes. We captured the stories in the natural environment of these participants – where they live or work. In the rural population, however, we not only focused on capturing the stories, but we also adopted a participatory approach where locals and SFPB volunteers alike dialogued and learned first-hand how to tell their stories using videos. This was a chance to empower 11 young people in Badeku village - a small community in the southwestern part of Nigeria, on the use of video to tell their most pressing stories. This singular approach informed our subsequent projects where the local populations only granted us access when we involved members of their community in the shooting of the films.

**Impact of the Project**

The GAGE project has attracted the attention of relevant policymakers at the state level. This shows, among other things, how the project can serve as an interface between the citizens and
government for the sole purpose of delivering democratic dividends to the people. Furthermore, rural engagements are currently ongoing to enroll citizens on the platform, even as the platform is being modified for better efficiency. As a fundamental core of our work at SFPB, it was important to understand that our impact would transcend meeting the immediate specific goals of the GAGE project. Indeed, the project did empower eleven (11) young local community members in story-telling techniques. However, it had far reaching impact. For example, during the dialogue sessions at the community level, youth in Badeku village in Ibadan, Nigeria, whose parents we primarily wanted to film at the oil palm production site, volunteered to learn and capture the interview sessions, initiating a way to take charge of their story. It mattered to the project that participants took charge of their stories as much as they wanted to. For the young people who participated, this project gave them a powerful tool with which they can project their concerns and take active roles in development, peace and security of their community long after the GAGE project phase was over. Moreover, it can serve as a basis to impact a life-changing tool to the young people, who may develop careers, creativity and talents from such involvement.

**Challenges Faced in the Course of Project and as an Organisation**

The camera, as we believe at SFPB, is a magnet. But while it can attract a lot of positive attention, it can also be a reason to be turned down, when and where it matters most. As part of ethical considerations, our first assignment, especially in the rural population, was to seek consent, collaboration and support from the community leaders in Badeku village to be able to access the human and material resources we needed. It was important to gain trust and support from local participants, especially persons we intended filming, and only a support from the community leaders
could guarantee us such trust. Consequently, our first point of contact in Badeku village was the community head, simply addressed as Baale. This was a safe-landing for our team and the eventual successful execution of our project.

However, despite being given all possible and necessary permissions and personnel by the Baale (traditional ruler), the mere sighting of our cameras by some of the locals we intended to film created a backlash. The challenge was that project beneficiaries were reluctant to share their stories using short films claiming that previous attempts by other development actors only used them for their selfish interests without any alleviation of their plight. At the local oil palm factory, the women working at the factory initially denied the SFPB team consent to interact with them or film them. For them, it was a narration of how they had been used many times for cheap publicity with promises of concrete interventions which had never come through. Most of them, septuagenarians, decried the lack of government priority to develop their community and told stories of how corporate and non-profit organisations had commercialised their plight without any dividends.

Therefore, they associated us with the government that had failed them and declined to give us access. Instead of considering their initial opposition as a stumbling block, our team decided to address their concerns. Essentially, this notion became a common ground for both our team and the women. We considered their position as rather an entry point as we empathize with them. Several rounds of dialogue and persuasions ensued as our position highlighted how we bore the same pain of distrust, and that that was the basis for which we were doing what we were doing. This gradually began to soften their hitherto strong position on the issues and eventually, after about 3 hours of dialogue, they finally accepted to allow us access with our cameras.
Inadequate resources also pose a challenge; preventing us from reaching more rural populations in need. For instance, the non-availability and high cost of internet services in most rural communities remain a challenge to meaningful engagement of the skills gained by young people in the local community. The internet, as it stands, is more or less a vehicle to transmit the stories as captured by the locals and the absence of such a vital tool further perpetuates their non-inclusions in development processes.

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt that visual storytelling is a crucial instrument for addressing conflicts and engendering new narratives for development and peacebuilding. Through the GAGE project, young peacebuilders at Short Films for Peacebuilding (SFPB) have been able to showcase the effective usage of visual storytelling; drive its wide acceptance by young people and ensure its applicability, especially in rural and hard-to-reach communities to promote development and prevent conflicts. An important feature of this medium is how it allows the local population to tell their own story and own the process of conveying their issues to the world. Amidst several merits of this initiative, one of its derivatives is the impacting of media and digital skills in the participants – something which can become useful to them as life skills.

The medium however does not come without challenges, some of which are inadequate resources, suspicion by the local population and lack of internet access in rural communities. Therefore more need to be done to assist young peacebuilders to overcome these challenges to be able to sustain this important work, which is helping to break down old barriers while equipping young people with a new tool to tell their own stories; and by doing so bringing development and fostering peace in their communities.
AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Lucky Chinwike is a Development Visual Storyteller with Shortfilms for Peacebuilding (SFPB) Initiative, an organization that equips young people with skills to adapt evidence-based Peacebuilding research into visual storytelling for Conflict Prevention, Conflict Transformation as well as Advocacy on SDGs 5, 6, 16 and 17. Lucky currently leads a growing team of young people who leverage peacebuilding research and visual storytelling for social impact in local communities. He has a strong background in education, peace and conflict studies as well as professional experience in Storytelling and Filmmaking.
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CHAPTER 4
COUNTERING AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION, INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND SPORT FOR PEACE

Imrana Alhaji Buba and Muhammad Haruna Alhaji
Youth Coalition Against Terrorism (YOCAT)

Introduction

Years of violence perpetrated by Boko Haram have triggered a humanitarian crisis in Nigeria (Elden, 2014). The escalating violence has displaced more than 2.5 million people; hindered economic activities; negatively impacted livelihoods, and restricted access to basic services (Onouha and Oyewole, 2018). However, just as Boko Haram terrorists recruit followers, thousands of people actively mobilize and organize for peace. Research by Paluck et al. (2016) demonstrates that just as social processes make violence possible, so too can they foster tolerance and violence reduction, particularly when led by ‘social referents’ – high-influence individuals (Paluck and Ball, 2010). For example, many young men and women are tirelessly working to prevent conflict and sustain peace in their communities. They are combating terrorism and other violent crimes through the use of largely unconventional means of countering the ideology of violence, stopping the flow of youths towards violent extremism, de-radicalizing those who are to be reintegrated into the community, rehabilitating victims of terror attacks, restoring community cohesion and building trust and community resilience at the grassroots.

Recognizing the important roles of young people in the area of peace and security, the United Nations Security Council adopted three resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security: Resolution 2250 of 9 December 2015, Resolution 2419 of 6 June 2018, and Resolution
2535 of 14 July 2020. Resolution 2250 recognises the contribution of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, while resolution 2419 highlights the role of youth in negotiation and mediation processes. Resolution 2535 includes operational provisions aimed at promoting and institutionalising the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda by the Security Council, UN entities and member states. The need for resolutions that recognize young people’s positive contributions to peacebuilding arose from decades of analysis and programming, based frequently on inaccurate assumptions that labelled young men as perpetrators of conflict and young women as victims, creating a two-fold problem that compounded age-based stereotypes with gender-based ones. However, even many years before the UN Security Council resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security, many local youth-led organisations were working actively to promote peace. One of such organisations is the **Youth Coalition Against Terrorism (YOCAT)**.

(YOCAT) is a volunteer-based youth organisation that aims to weaken the appeal of Boko Haram and other terror groups in northern Nigeria through counter-radical peace education and skills training for vulnerable youths. We have been operating since 2010 as a volunteer-based network of students, teachers, social workers, and activists. In 2018, we registered as the *Youth Initiative Against Terrorism* a full Non-Governmental Organisation to broaden the scope of our activities, and unite young people against Boko Haram. YOCAT organises programmes to prevent youths from engaging in violence associated with radical religious ideologies and groups.

As a youth-led organisation, we realised that most young people do not want traditional peacebuilding programmes – having a facilitator, books, fliers, etc. to teach them peace; instead, they prefer the use of theatre arts, music, etc. That is why we introduced innovative and participatory approaches, like organising stage
drama and sporting activities in schools to teach young people about peace, tolerance, unity and active citizenship. Through our conflict prevention programmes in many rural areas, we have been able to interact and understand that violent extremist groups often target young people because society has failed to make them feel safe, acknowledged and empowered.

**Interventions and Outcomes**

Youth Coalition Against Terrorism’s work is centred on weakening the appeal of violent extremism through counter-radical peace education programmes and interfaith dialogues in schools and villages of north-eastern Nigeria. Our youth-focused programmes in Borno and Yobe states, Northeastern Nigeria range from working to counter Boko Haram's recruitment to projects designed to mitigate structural causes that make youth vulnerable to recruitment. As young people ourselves, our age makes us able to freely interface with other young people of varying age groups, thus enabling us to develop successful youth-focused peacebuilding programmes. Our top 3 successful interventions are *Peace Education and Mentorship for Students (PEMS)* Programme, *Interfaith/Multi-stakeholder Dialogue*, and *Sport for Peace*.

1. **Peace Education**

   In July 2013, Boko Haram announced attacks on “un-Islamic” schools and endorsed the killing of teachers. Subsequently, over 900 schools were attacked and male students and teachers brutally massacred, mostly in Yobe State. Some were slaughtered with knives, many were shot, while others died when the school buildings were bombed. Many students that survived the attacks suffered severe emotional trauma. Left unchecked, many of these students will grow up believing that violence is the only way to cope, and as a result, might become susceptible to extremist views.
Our **Peace Education and Mentorship for Students (PEMS)** programme has trained over 2000 students to learn how to better cope with emotional trauma, reject violence, respect one another, and embrace the values of peace in their everyday living. These lessons were strengthened through role-playing and other forms of creative reinforcement. We also offer counselling services to the students, so that frustration and hopelessness do not force them to join terrorist organisations. The programme is closely aligned with four major aspects of school improvement: (a) a safe, disciplined environment; (b) a positive school climate and culture; (c) promising instructional strategies; and (d) resiliency.

The delivery of the programme in the school environment requires that teachers facilitate the skill-building process in their students. Therefore, we trained 200 stakeholders who played key roles in managing conflicts in schools and communities, such as teachers and school leaders, youth facilitators, peace advocates and religious leaders, in order to sustain mentoring of the students. The curriculum used for training the mentors focused on teen-related issues, including violence, anger, cultural differences, violent extremism, and sexual harassment. The materials incorporated
activities that foster cooperation and problem solving as a means of minimizing aggression and violence.

After one of the peace education trainings, a teacher wrote this in her evaluation form: “I have learned how to discuss issues of terrorism and violent extremism with my students, how to discourage them from joining extremist groups like Boko Haram. I have also learned how to report Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) cases to the nearest agencies”. Many teachers that have participated in our training have become advocates of peace education, and as a result, peace education has been institutionalized in many schools as a standard school subject, rather than as a short-term programme. Our evaluation shows that the programme resulted in positive changes in students’ behaviour from one that is disobedient, disrespectful, and disruptive to one that is conducive to solving problems and minimizing conflict.

2. Interfaith/Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

Boko Haram justifies its violence as a means ‘to purify Nigerian society’, and much of the rhetoric seems to indicate a commitment towards religious ideas. Boko Haram’s religious propaganda, particularly Shekau’s literalist interpretation of the Qur’an to justify attacks, was a clear attempt to spark inter- and intra-religious violence.

Recognising that trust needs to be built between Muslim and Christian communities in North-Eastern Nigeria to avert religious violence, we partnered with the Yobe State Ministry of Religious Affairs to organise series of Interfaith and Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues from 2016 to 2019. One of such dialogues in Yobe State led to the establishment of an Interfaith Council, the aim of which was to create a unified voice of religious leaders against extremism. Members of the council were old and young, progressive and conservative, men and women, and of different
cultural and social backgrounds. The Interfaith Council has continued to organize monthly interfaith meetings, providing consultations and situational analysis. Ultimately, it has been able to build resilience through responsiveness and leadership, with a wide reach and access to diverse segments of the population in a region of the country that is particularly vulnerable to extremism.

Moreover, the continued proliferation of the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria led to the deployment of many security personnel in the affected communities. But a conspiracy theory emerged that the security agencies are the ones carrying out the attacks. This conspiracy theory was compounded by the fact that most of the terrorists use military uniforms. To address this issue, we organized 16 town hall meetings with the representatives of security agencies, young people and community leaders, to promote understanding and friendly civil-military relations.

One of the main positive impacts of the project has been its ability to promote a culture of dialogue among main stakeholders, which is necessary in peacefully addressing conflict, and has ultimately succeeded in promoting trust. Furthermore, the project’s activities helped to increase collaboration among community members, by promoting social cohesion and a sense of community belonging among people living in the target areas. During such community dialogues in rural areas, we have been able to interact and understand that violent extremist groups often target young people because society has failed to make them feel safe, acknowledged and empowered. Through these important conversations, we addressed some issues of youth voice, grievance, and variance in narratives. In recognition of our multi-stakeholder dialogues, our Founder, Imrana Alhaji Buba won the 2016 Queen’s Young Leaders Award from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the 2017 JCI’s Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World Award.
3. **Sport for Peace**

At YOCAT, we realised sport is a uniting tool of participation, inclusion and citizenship. As a universal language, sport can be a powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding by bringing people together across boundaries, cultures and religions. Its intrinsic values such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, respect for the opponent and rules, ability to accept defeat, and being magnanimous in victory, are understood all over the world. That is why in February 2018, our organisation introduced the use of stage drama and sport in schools to teach young people about peace, tolerance, unity and active citizenship.

One of our **Sports for Peace** activities is the ‘*Nigeria United*’ Football Match held on 8th June 2019 at the El-Kanemi Stadium, Maiduguri, Borno State. The event aimed to: celebrate Nigeria as one team that embraces people of different religious, ethnic and social backgrounds; and encourage people to play alongside those of different backgrounds or religions, as well as harness the influence of professional players as role models for tolerance and interfaith harmony. The event attracted around 5,000 young people at El-Kanemi Stadium, who participated in a friendly ‘Peace Match’,
and a series of talks on how football can promote peace and unity in Nigeria. The campaign also featured social media (predominantly Facebook) videos to target an urban segment of our audience in Maiduguri, while using local and regional radio to reach important rural audiences outside of the city. After the completion of the project, our evaluation revealed that the use of these innovative approaches is very effective in teaching peace to young people, especially teenagers in primary and junior secondary schools (between the age of 5-13).

**Challenges faced by YOCAT**

Like any other youth-led organisation in an insecure environment, our organisation faced challenges related to high-security risks to the movement of personnel and materials during the implementation of programmes, incessant attacks by Boko Haram, exclusion of youth from decision making, inadequate funding, absence of coordinating government agency handling PVE, lack of trust by conflict-affected communities, and dearth of useful data.

When we started the organisation in 2010, securing funding was our main challenge. This was primarily because we had less technical capacity or experience in applying for grants when compared with some other organizations with experienced leadership. But a few years after we started receiving some grants, most of the challenges we faced have been related to safety. For example, in November 2015, a few days after we launched the Peace Education and Mentorship for Students (PEMS) project in rural areas, suspected members of the Boko Haram sect threatened to kill our founder. The death threat conveyed in a text message read thus: “*Imrana, we have seen you against us. You will die like other infidels that we captured. We will use your blood to send a warning to others*”. As a result, his identity had to be protected for
many weeks. Moreover, the fact that discussion on issue of Boko Haram easily evokes fear meant that only few volunteers and partner organizations were willing to take part in some of our programmes. This also affected the willingness of the schools to assist in hosting it. So, these difficulties affected our work negatively.

We consulted the police and some partner organizations on how to overcome these challenges and we decided to: inform the state Ministry of Education to allow us host the programme in public schools; involve local police for monitoring of security situations, and avoid undue publicity for the programme. We also organized Hostile Environment First Aid Training (HEFAT) for our volunteers. That was how we were able to implement the programme successfully. Since then, we have been using a robust Safety and Security plan to safeguard staff, beneficiaries and assets; conduct security assessments in all project locations (updated regularly along with mitigation plans), and adopt a low profile when and where necessary.

Opportunities for Expansion

In addition to our ongoing programmes, we are exploring the idea of implementing some of the following interventions:

1. **Providing better access to socioeconomic activities and job opportunities for young people:** Despite laudable programmes that are aimed at providing socioeconomic activities and job opportunities in north-eastern Nigeria, there is need for more programmes to reduce the vulnerabilities of youths to violence in communities. More and more youths need to be meaningfully and productively engaged. There is need to bring out the best of their potentials and talents, make them catalysts and agents of development, and reduce their vulnerability and exposure to extremist groups and ideologies. Structured programmes that teach
vocational and soft skills that ensure youths have the self-awareness and aptitudes to seek meaningful employment in combination with job placement, are shown to be critical elements for P/CVE programming.

We want to focus on improving the livelihoods of at-risk youths and other vulnerable populations through a greater focus on ‘hotspots’, improved access to jobs, skills-building programmes and education. This will be done through strengthening and scaling up of existing programmes. We will explore the possibility of working with the private sector to support such interventions. A recent study by Ekpon (2017) revealed that there is little or no support from the private sector to youth-led P/CVE initiatives. Funding from the private sector will strengthen and boost these Market System initiatives.

2. Intergenerational dialogues between adults (elders) and youth: To bridge the gap between the adults (elders) and the youth, build trust across different generations and government, we plan to implement programmes to improve youth engagement in the local governance processes. By providing more diverse spaces for dialogue, synergies between youth and other community members would be enhanced to build foundations and capacities for resilience. The establishment of the Community Resilience Groups, with the inclusion of young people into the groups, would help to bridge the gap between different generations and strengthen social ties in communities. Incorporating intergenerational dialogues into leadership programmes helps to give young people positive role models to learn from, and share experience before turning towards violence and crime. Creating both physical and virtual environments for at-risk youth to express their opinions and have their voices recognized by adults empowers youth to be agents of change in their communities. Through our work in many rural areas, we have been able to interact and understand that violent extremist groups
often target young people because society has failed to make them feel safe, acknowledged, empowered and included. Intergenerational dialogues would create communal environments for training, dialogue, and educational/civic engagement activities.

3. **Establishing and strengthening community security architectures to prevent and mitigate both violent attacks and kidnapping in communities.** This would provide an opportunity for collaborative approaches amongst community stakeholders to report, share and respond to early warning signs of violent attacks, abductions and kidnapping. This will further strengthen civil-military relations, as most communities rely on both community vigilante groups and security forces to prevent attacks, and rescue victims of kidnapping. For this to be effective, we plan to train community stakeholders on early warning signs of extremism and violence, for them to be able to easily identify and respond to them effectively, and share information with other stakeholder groups. We will also focus on the pull factors created by early and forced marriage and long-term deficits of girls lacking equal access to education.

**Conclusion**

As young people ourselves, our demography makes it easy to interact with other young people of varying age groups freely; and this enables us to develop successful youth-focused peacebuilding programmes. Our work reinforced the belief that youth-led organisations tend to develop innovative violence prevention programmes through the use of Sport, Peace Education and Interfaith Dialogue. For example, using sports as a vehicle to teach peace and conflict resolution and leadership skills is a relatively recent but promising approach to engaging vulnerable youth. Intentional and behaviour-based messaging and skills development woven into the broader sports activities is key to successful programmes. To sustain youth-led and youth-focused
efforts to prevent violent extremism, a greater emphasis must be placed on addressing root causes of conflict and building stronger relationships among governments, communities and youth groups.

AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Imrana Alhaji Buba is the Founder/Coordinator of the Youth Coalition Against Terrorism (YOCAT), a volunteer-based youth organization working to unite youth against violent extremism in north-eastern Nigeria. The organisation promotes peace education and provides skills training and psycho-social support to young people affected by Boko Haram insurgency. He is also a Generation Change Fellow of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Mandela Washington Fellow, and Peace and Security Fellow of the AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub. Imrana received the 2016 Queen’s Young Leaders Award from Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and the 2017 JCI Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World Award, in recognition of his effort to counter violent extremism and promote a culture of peace in Nigeria. He holds B.Sc., Political Science (First-Class) from the University of Maiduguri and M.Sc., Africa and International Development (Distinction) from the University of Edinburgh, UK.
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CHAPTER 5
TOWARDS A VIOLENCE-FREE BENUE: STRIDES FROM ANGEL SUPPORT FOUNDATION (ASF)

Mary Sewuese Ugbaa
Founder, Angel Support Foundation (ASF)

Introduction
Violent Extremism, in this contemporary time, has become a global security threat that has also seriously infected Africa and Nigeria in particular. Most often, this has led to a full-blown war with the destruction of lives and property, disruption of economic activities and displacement of people especially women and children. In the northeastern part of Nigeria, violent extremist activities have led to the death and displacement of a significant number of the population within the region. The Global Conflict tracker (2020) estimates that as of June 2020, over 37,500 persons have been killed by the Boko Haram insurgency with more than 2.5 million refugees displaced across the Lake Chad Basin and nearly 244,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in several IDP camps across the north-east particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states.

The insurgency in the northeast has created a spill-over effect to the north-central states where fleeing insurgents and other forces, coupled with age-long nationality problems, have combined to make north-central Nigeria insecure. For instance, Farmer-Herder conflicts have ravaged farming communities and created a significant displaced population who no longer have access to their farms, thus threatening food security in the affected communities, and nationally. On the part of the youths, violent extremist activities such as cultism, arms trafficking, kidnapping and so on, have become very prevalent.
This is the situation in Benue state where the youth are radicalized into violent extremist activities, especially in the local government areas that are already ravaged by perennial conflicts related to chieftaincy matters, communal conflicts and fish pond ownership disputes. According to the African Business Magazine (2020), over 1,000 lives were lost to Farmer-Herder conflict in Benue as of 2018 and another 300,000 people forced to flee their homes and live in IDPs camps across the state. Local government areas (LGAs) that have been severely affected by the conflict include Kwande (where Moon, a council ward has been plundered till date), Logo, Guma, Agatu, Buruku and Ado, with its perennial chieftaincy disputes.


The United Nations Security Council is saddled with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and sets the agenda for member states to follow in this regard. This also includes integrating and engaging the various actors and stakeholders such as the youth, multilateral agencies, community actors and governments at all levels, considered critical to maintaining world peace.

The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda has gained momentum in recent years; and marks a shift in the understanding of who young people are and their role in peace and security. The United Nations Security Council adopted unanimously, on 9 December 2015, a ground-breaking resolution on Youth, Peace and Security which recognizes that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”. The Council has identified five (5) key pillars around which it works: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and, disengagement and reintegration. This resolution
is symbolic and provides a roadmap for the Member States to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels, and to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes, rather than being portrayed as protagonists of war and conflict.

In countries affected by conflicts and violence, young people are commonly perceived as either perpetrators or victims. Turmoil and instability – including, in recent years, the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa, and socio-political crisis and conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa - are often characterised by youth bulge and youth agitations. The surge in terrorism, banditry, communal clashes and violent extremism in the past 15 years also tend to be linked to the role of young men, and increasingly, young women. Even electoral violence is also often attributed to the youth. In reality, the role of young people concerning peace and security is poorly understood and much more complex than these stereotypes suggest.

The work of Angel Support Foundation in the area of preventing violent extremism is in line with the UNSCR 2250 and aims towards achieving a violence free society. In line with the resolution also, Angel Support Foundation operates on the realization that youths play a key role in the establishment and maintenance of world peace and security. This accounts for why its PVE programmes are aimed at achieving strengthened youth and community resilience against violent extremism in the communities of intervention in particular and Benue State in general. Projects implemented in this area inter-alia set out to address the lack of sense of purpose, poverty, lack of opportunities and the attraction to perceived improvements in status, power and promise of financial gain by joining violent extremist groups. These, we
consider as major drivers of violent extremism in the context in which the organization works.

To address this, the organization has engaged a variety of stakeholders and community change-agents, such as young women and young men, local religious teachers, traditional and administrative leaders, in order to strengthen community systems and structures that support resistance to recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism. Also, the organization has over time enhanced livelihood opportunities to reduce individual vulnerability and increase self-confidence and worth among vulnerable youths in the communities of implementation. In this regard, the organization has combined the approaches of intensive capacity strengthening of the aforementioned stakeholders, advocacy and the provision of skills development for students in secondary schools with the provision of avenues for ICT learning. Apart from the fact that these approaches and strategies are in themselves aimed at enhancing community knowledge and strategies on how to prevent the recruitment and radicalization to
violent extremism of young persons, they will enable all stakeholders and the youths themselves come up with self-perceivable, community-driven initiatives to help them mobilize, organize and represent their interests and actively engage with authorities on issues that matter and, are relevant to them.

All the employed approaches by Angel Support Foundation support the UNSCR 2250 resolution of creating a roadmap for young people to lead initiatives of establishing peace structures in the communities which they reside. Beyond this, instilling a sense of responsibility in youth will encourage them to see themselves as part of the process rather than just being at the receiving end. This is in line with some of the key pillars of the UNSCR i.e. participation, protection and prevention. Whereas our work allows youths to greatly participate in the peace process, since they are affected by the same, the platforms created to facilitate the development of partnerships actually cut across all youth divides (age, gender, social status, religion, ethnic background, etc.), which ultimately aims at preventing youths' radicalization to violent extremism.

**Angel Support Foundation (ASF)**

Angel Support Foundation (ASF), a Non-Governmental Organization with special consultative status with United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC), is a non-religious, non-partisan and non-racial organization that derives her existence from the need to create a society and people with a purpose-driven attitude towards environmental sustenance, with particular focus on women, children and the youth. This, we hope to achieve by creating an adequately sensitized and mobilized populace to embrace positive environmental and hygienic behaviour that would ultimately support livelihood. The organization also derives the essence of its existence from the burning need for gender equality in communities, and the need for peaceful co-existence among inhabitants. This, the organization does by initiating self-reliant
projects and advocacies aimed at creating awareness on vital environmental activities, promoting gender equality, while building peaceful co-existence among inhabitants and communities in Benue State in particular, and Nigeria in general.

Angel Support Foundation was established in 2012 and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 2013 with registration Number; CAC/IT/65283. ASF’s mandate is to: create awareness and promote ecological community-based development solution; promote gender equality, thereby contributing to economic, social and civic empowerment of children, women and youth, and strengthen resilience, humanitarian response and recovery of vulnerable people to conflict and disaster (natural and manmade). The organization has its head office in Makurdi, Benue State, and is administered by a Board which approves its programmes, and ensures the foundation fulfills its desired mandate.

**Vision:** A sustainably developed, gender-inclusive, peaceful, just and environmentally conscious society.

**Mission:** To promote and ensure the rights of women, children and youth to social, political and economic development.

**Value Statement:** Angel Support Foundation is an organization built on integrity, accountability and transparency, respect for human life, and team spirit towards achieving set goals.

**Thematic Areas:**
- Environment
- Peace and security
- Women and youth empowerment
- Gender
- Governance

Preventing violent extremism forms a core of the organizational mandate under the peace and security thematic area. Against this background, Angel Support Foundation (ASF) has
worked with communities, security agencies and multi-stakeholder platforms to build resilience among the youths in Benue, with particular interest in the LGAs with the highest indices of violence, in order to disengage them from eventual radicalization to violent extremism. This also serves as the organization’s contribution to the Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

**Project Formation**

ASF, with funding and technical support from Women Environmental Programme (WEP), carried out a Needs Assessment with community members in LGAs affected by different forms of armed conflicts in Benue State. Findings from the Assessment revealed that youths are vulnerable to being radicalized into violent extremist activities as a result of:

- Politics and leadership tussle
- Forced migration resulting from the activities of Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria
- Poverty and lack of opportunities
- The promise of financial gains by violent extremist groups
- Land and border disputes
- Perceived marginalization
- Climate change.

With this in mind, Angel Support Foundation explored avenues to design project initiatives that would address these identified problems. In the bid to secure funding opportunities to address them, Angel Support Foundation got enlisted into a consortium with Women Environmental Programme (WEP) as the principal recipient on the implementation of a project to address the challenges identified during the Community Needs Assessment. The project titled “**Connecting Women and Youth in Violent Extremist prone areas through Empowerment and Skill Acquisition**
in Benue State”, sought to deliver a strengthened resilience against violent extremism among the youth in Benue State, particularly in the LGAs that have been affected by different forms of conflicts. The consortium had other organizations such as Centre for Development and Social Justice (CEDASJ), Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) and Gender and Risk Reduction Initiative (GERRI). Implemented in two phases (2016-2018, and 2019 till date), the consortium worked to prevent violent extremism and created five initiatives with each consortium member focusing on one initiative. The initiatives are:

1. Preventing the recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism of in-school youth.
2. Preventing the recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism of out-of-school, unskilled and uneducated youth
3. Disarmament
4. Resolution of Herder-Farmer conflict
5. Conflict management.

These initiatives ran concurrently across the LGAs of implementation with Angel Support Foundation focusing on Initiative 1: “Preventing the Recruitment and Radicalization to Violent Extremism of in-school youth”. The activities implemented under this initiative are:

1. Advocacy to critical stakeholders
2. Training workshops on preventing violent extremism for stakeholders such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, women, youth and security agencies
3. Sensitization rallies in higher institutions in Benue State
4. Establishment of solar-powered digital/creative computer laboratories in two schools each across the six implementing LGAs.
Implemented Activities under the Project

With the overall objective of achieving a strengthened resilience against violent extremism among youth in Benue State, the project implemented the following activities:

1. **Advocacy**: The project undertook wide advocacy to critical stakeholders both at state and local government levels. The advocacy targeted the Benue State Executive Council, the House of Assembly, relevant ministries, departments and agencies, international and local non-governmental organizations, civil society coalitions, and security agencies such as the Nigerian Police and the DSS. At the community level, the advocacy targeted local government councils, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth groups and educational institutions. A total of 428 critical stakeholders were engaged during the advocacy and have become change agents, leading initiatives at their various levels to help prevent youth radicalization into violent extremist activities.

2. **Training workshops on preventing violent extremism**: As part of capacity development activities, the project held capacity-building workshops across six LGAs on preventing violent extremism for critical stakeholders including teachers, women, youths, traditional leaders and local government administrators and security agencies. The capacity-building workshops strengthened the capacity of stakeholders in the areas of preventing violent extremism, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and the nature and causes of conflicts in Africa. These training workshops, which were held in four rounds each across the implementing LGAs, built the capacity of over 2,165 critical stakeholders who have been equipped to make positive change in their respective communities.
3. Sensitization rallies in secondary schools and higher institutions in Benue state: As youths were the prime target for this project, one of the activities of the project was the sensitization of students in higher institutions in Benue State against the recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism. The project was able to reach a total of eight secondary schools across the state; Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi; Benue State University, Makurdi; Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo; Akperan Orshi College of Agriculture, Yandev; College of Education, Katsina-Ala; University of Calabar, Katsina-Ala Campus; Fidei Polytechnic, Gboko, and College of Education, Oju. In all the sensitization rallies, over 5,498 students were reached as direct beneficiaries.

4. Establishment of digital/creative solar-powered computer laboratories in secondary schools in the state. To develop life skills and purpose of in-school youths, the project established a digital/creative club in each of twenty (20) secondary schools across the focused LGAs, making a total of 20 digital clubs. The digital/creative computer laboratories are in the following schools:

   **Kwande**
   1. Shangev-ya Community Secondary School, Ajio
   2. Turan Community Secondary School, Jato aka
   3. Barakur People’s Comprehensive Secondary School, Ichor
   4. Adikpo Comprehensive College, Adikpo

   **Logo**
   1. God’s time Secondary School, Ugba
   2. Gifted Hands Secondary School, Ugba
   3. Mbavuur Community Secondary School, Abeda-shitile
Each of the schools listed above were provided with ten brand new HP desktop computers and solar power panels to guarantee access to ICT skills to in-school youths on a sustainable basis and give them creative livelihood skills, which would be useful to them and their communities beyond secondary education. This, the project hopes, will build the minds of students in the outlined secondary schools, and eventually prevent them from being radicalized into violent extremist activities.
Major Outcomes/Impact of the Project

The implementation of the project “ Connecting Women and Youth in Violent Extremist Prone Areas through Empowerment and Skill Acquisition in Benue State” has been highly impactful in Benue communities and beyond.

The most significant impact of this project is the imparting of relevant knowledge on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) among relevant stakeholders across Logo, Kwande, Ado, Agatu, Guma, and Buruku LGAs. This is more so that PVE is an evolving theme in the community development matrix and as such, the knowledge of the phenomenon can help communities to device creative ways of ensuring that their communities are violence-free. Also, the training sessions on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) have exposed local communities to different alternative ways of resolving disputes, which were hitherto not explored. For example, a traditional leader in the Ukemberagya community in Logo LGA of Benue State remarked that he was now resolving more disputes than the conventional police station in his community. According to him, this is as a result of the application of the ADR knowledge gained from
our training sessions. This has also inspired confidence among his subjects in the ADR mechanism. Religious leaders in those LGAs are also including messages of PVE in their preaching and interactions in churches and mosques. Women and women groups are leading and sustaining initiatives at family and societal levels to prevent violent extremism among youths in their communities.

The youth, as the primary beneficiaries of the project, on their part, are leading initiatives such as community-wide sensitizations against violent extremism; establishment of community monitoring structures, and establishment of interfaith peace committees, through open and transparent communication and other community-driven initiatives for peace. Through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism, they are creating structures for community policing and peaceful resolution of disputes. This has been established in all the communities in the LGAs where the project has been implemented.

Another significant impact of the project is the sense of purpose, which the project has provided among students of secondary school through information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, exemplified by the provision of twenty (20) solar-powered digital/creative computer laboratories. By providing 20 computer laboratories to secondary schools, the project is inculcating in youths between the ages of 15 and 35, life-transforming skills in this digital era. Students are already putting such knowledge to practical use. Some others now operate computer centre business as a means of sustaining livelihood after secondary education, while waiting to secure admission into tertiary institutions. This has prevented them from keeping their minds idle, and has significantly reduced their susceptibility to violent extremist propaganda. With enhanced ICT knowledge, ex-students in the project communities are exploring low-level career opportunities even beyond their localities and are engaged in meaningful
ventures. This has created a sense of purpose on the part of the youths and improved access to livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries and their families.

Furthermore, as a result of sustained engagements, the project communities have witnessed reduced violent confrontations between communities through the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) structures in place. One of the findings from the baseline study undertaken before the implementation of the project was that several communities in Logo, Kwande, Ado and Agatu were experiencing different forms of communal conflicts, with many people displaced in some of the communities. Sequel to the implementation of the project, most of the communities have recorded peace while normalcy is being restored in terms of economic and social activities.

Lessons Learnt from project implementation

Over the implementation period, key lessons have been learnt. Some of the lessons include;

1. Women at community level, and with the requisite capacity, can play a very active role not just in the area of homemaking but also in preventing violent extremism. This has contributed significantly to achieving the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

2. Community change drivers such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, teachers, women and community-based associations are key in driving project initiatives in communities and providing the impetus upon which such initiatives are sustained over a long period.

3. With proactive alternative dispute resolution structures and adequate knowledge, communities can devise means of settling various disputes in timely and in more peaceful
manner, devoid of the conventional dispute resolution channels available in their vicinity.

4. With strengthened institutions, youths are willing and able to participate in the promotion of peace and security within their communities, thus helping to achieve the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth Peace and Security.

**Challenges faced by Angel Support Foundation**

1. Inadequate funding has been a major constraint for ASF projects including the one discussed above. Paucity of Funds posed a serious constraint on the number of beneficiaries reached on the project. This is coming on the heel of the enormous challenges posed by youth engagement in violent extremism in communities in Benue state and Nigeria in general. Many community members attempted to be part of our training workshops, given the impact of the project (as testified by former participants). Unfortunately, many of them could not be admitted, given the limited budget provided for the project.

2. Limited collaborative opportunities at the international level. Given that ASF is still a growing organization, the organization is faced with limited international collaborative opportunities which would have supported immensely, what the organization does in the area of PVE. With the achievement of a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the organization hopes things will increase in this regard.

3. Inadequate support and cooperation from government MDA. Most of the PVE initiatives implemented by the organization have government counterpart components aimed at instilling sustainability and ownership. This requires government counterpart support in terms of technicality and funding which has not been forthcoming.
Opportunities for further intervention

The implementation of this project is a “drop in the ocean”, given the magnitude of the problem posed by violent extremism in our communities and the need to build resilience in youth around such crimes. This is especially so when compared with the efforts on the ground so far and what needs to be done. This means that more avenues exist for projects and initiatives on preventing violent extremism to be designed and implemented in our communities. Further interventions can therefore target increased capacity development of youth, women, traditional and religious leaders as well as other critical stakeholders. With the right knowledge in our communities on the subject matter, resilience would be enhanced and more peaceful communities will evolve.

Apart from a sense of purpose, women and youths need viable skills that can engage them and sustain livelihood without which their vulnerability index of being radicalized into violent extremist activities will increase. Due to paucity of funds, this project could not focus so much on skills development of the youth.

AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Sewuese Ugbaa is a development expert with a focus on the environment, women empowerment, peace and security. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree in Public Administration from the great Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State. She has over 9 years of experience in development. She is the founder and Chief Executive officer of Angel Support Foundation. She was awarded Community Activist of the Year 2018 by Women on Fire, Outstanding Youth Peacebuilders’ Award 2019 by Building Blocks for Peace Foundation, and also 2019 Climate Ambassadors Award. Through her peace and security initiatives, about 11,132 persons have been reached.
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CHAPTER 6

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME OF YOUPEDA AND WORLD FAITH: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN NASARAWA AND BENUE STATES

Obi Peters
Youth for Peacebuilding and Development in Africa

Introduction

The incessant communal conflicts, insecurities and killings in the North-Central part of Nigeria have made women and youths vulnerable to chaotic conflict conditions. Such vulnerability affects their human capacity to initiate any livelihood or sustainably support their lives. The “Women Savings, Credit and Cooperatives and Farming Project” was established by YOUPEDA as a way of addressing some of the vulnerabilities faced by women and youths in North-Central Nigeria. This project availed women and youths in communities in Nasarawa State, including refugees from Benue State, the opportunity to come together and engage in family business, basic entrepreneurship and petty trade as a means of survival. The project identified certain cultural attitudes and norms affecting women’s access to finances. These usually create hindrances to their ability to make livelihood during conflicts and post-conflict situations.

Majority of the women and youths in the project location lack the knowledge to operate in the informal sector due to inadequate business and management skills, limited entrepreneurial culture, and low capacity to upgrade their businesses from small scale to macro-level. The African Development Bank (AfDB) reports that women’s entrepreneurship in micro and small businesses have not been able to reach the
growth potential, despite concerted efforts of poverty reduction initiatives through increased access to skills training and micro-credit.

Through World Faith's support, YOUPEDA focused on stimulating vulnerable women and youths to start up small and medium scale businesses. In Ara, a rural and remote community in Nasarawa Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with less than 800 women and youths, the livelihood of the community, especially that of women, is hampered by several factors, ranging from cultural indifferences, herdsmen destruction of farms, communal conflict, interreligious misunderstanding, intolerance, insecurity, lack of entrepreneurship skills as well as high rate of illiteracy and lack of capital. When clashes and civil crises occur, women, youths, and children are most vulnerable.

The Needs Assessment from our project indicated that majority of men in the community did not support their wives and families financially, thus putting more burden on women. Majority of the men live outside the community and keep maintaining the masculine posture of being the man, from where they are, without supporting their wives as expected. This was despite the cultural perception that the men were to be responsible for provision for
their families. However, a paradigm shift indicates that women and young people in Ara community, no doubt have demonstrated the dynamic nature of culture as they resort to agriculture as a means of livelihood to foster peace, togetherness and harmony, thereby defeating stereotypes, intolerance, discrimination and violence that threaten the fabrics of their communities. These women and young people have continued to be relevant in transforming conflicts and promoting peace. For many women and youths, economic dependence limits not only their capacity to provide for their family, but also their ability to escape abusive spouses or become financially viable.

**Intervention**

*Youths for Peace Building & Development in Africa (YOUPEDA)* was founded in 2008, as a non-profit organization and is legally registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), under Part C of Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990 of Federal Government of Nigeria. *YOUPEDA* empowers communities, women, children, men and youth, to actively engage in the wider community and to fully explore the potential of peace, interfaith dialogue, health, education, governance, environment and democracy with locally driven options and solutions. With our support, we help them towards tackling the challenges therein. Through our work, YOUPEDA encourages communities to think creatively, and in doing so, support them in the transformation of ideas to actions.

In 2018, YOUPEDA, in collaboration with World Faith, Abuja, an international organisation that engages with religiously diverse youths to lead development projects locally in their community, launched the ‘Women Savings, Credit and Cooperatives and Farming Empowerment’ initiative as part of the effort to empower local women through agricultural entrepreneurship. YOUPEDA signed a two-year lease of a 4000m² space in Ara town, Nasarawa
with approval from community leaders and elders. A selected and trained group of 25 marginalized women and youths, including widows and those facing spousal abandonment, were trained with relevant skills to carry out different aspects of this cooperative farming project. Through this programme, these women were engaging in farming activities, planting perishable goods and selling their produce. With this, they could provide for themselves and their families, and become more economically independent. The selected women also reflected the diversity of Nigeria, representing different tribes, religious communities, and states of origin.

Unemployment cannot be separated from conflicts and insecurity that lead to restless and displaced communities, involving women, youth and children. This, in turn, leads to poor quality learning environments that could boost mental, physical and intellectual creative ability to learn and develop for societal good.

Conflicts and unemployment are closely connected. Conflicts destroy both human and infrastructural facilities in our learning spaces, create poverty, increase crimes and no doubt contribute to high level of hunger in communities. In a learning environment, where students do not have adequate educational facilities such as classrooms, research incentives, laboratories, dormitories, computers, machines, camps, libraries, and qualified and motivated teachers, the output will be more violence and joblessness. Expectedly, young people and women will be available tools in the hands of the terrorist groups and other extremist forces. It is important to note that, the nexus that exists between unemployment and violence are so strongly linked and too connected that they are capable of destroying the peace and social fabrics of any nation.
Project Objectives:
This project set out primarily with 3 objectives:

1. To foster peaceful co-existence in the local communities. The current vulnerable situation that these women and youth face is such that they could not start or initiate any livelihood activities on their own; hence the two cardinal strategies which address and promote livelihood in diverse communities and at the same time foster peaceful co-existence through joint farming for a living.

2. The main objective centres on turning the resilience of suffering women, youths and girls in midst of conflict escalations and collapsed livelihoods into peaceful intercultural dialogue opportunities and practical alternatives to rebuilding lives of women. This enables them to regain a sense of purpose and start to engage in basic entrepreneurship, through farming, as a means of survival.

3. Another objective is to identify the challenges these people face in their cultural environments; inculcate the ability to work with people of other religions and develop trust and acceptance for people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

Results/Impacts
To address the problem of conflict and violence in the specifically mentioned communities, non-state actors and players have proven that prevention, response and resilience is not only a governmental affair but also those of non-governmental organisations, applying locally driven and people-centred practical solutions. YOUPEDA and World Faith set out to fill this gap in the project by providing livelihood support to the vulnerable population and transforming the existing conflict dynamics. The impacts of the project include:
1. **Economic Improvement**  
   According to project findings, the average rise in income for women who participated in the 2018/2019 Abuja programme was 297%. In addition to this, 46% of women went from stating that they could not provide for their family before the programme, to 66% saying they could after. At the completion of the programme, 96% shared that they were confident this programme positively affected their economic status (though this qualifies as a leading question). While the average income before was about 42% of the $1.90/day threshold for abject poverty in Nigeria, this subsequently rose to 125%. Given that 92% of the participants were mothers (averaging three children each), the post-programme income would still constitute poverty conditions for the majority of participants. However, as a sign of increasing discretionary spending, we saw the portion of mothers in the programme able to pay their children’s school fees increase from 26% to 91%.

2. **Peacebuilding Progress**  
   This programme was intentionally targeted at participants from diverse religious traditions so that we could explore changes in religious prejudice among participants as a result of participating in the programme. Using a before- and after-surveys that posed questions which were scaled from disagreeing to agree (Likert Scale), there were a couple of questions targeting this goal:

   “Are you afraid of people from other religious traditions?”

   Before the project, 36% of participants agreed with this sentiment to some degree (2-5) but, after-survey showed only 4% concurred. This follows the general trend we have found with similar World Faith programmes. Through positive collaboration with people of different religious identities, prejudice and fear reduce.
“I feel comfortable doing business with people of my faith more than others from different faiths.”

Before this programme, 100% of women agreed with this statement to differing degrees (2-5 on Likert scale); but after, only 40% did. This change is relatively consistent with the pattern established with the prior question. It humanizes and demystifies those that are different from them.

The first phase of this programme was both effective in its objective of economically empowering the participants, while contributing to a drop in prejudice between those of different religious communities. However, there are several concerns and opportunities for improvement, mapped out below. This programme is currently undergoing a second phase of the pilot scheme with a new cohort, incorporating feedback and insight from the first round. Similarly, we intend to gather the follow-up data from the first cohort in the coming months. In the final report, we intend to review all the results and compare the outcomes to similar interventions, with the aim of determining whether or not agriculture is the most effective form of women’s economic empowerment.

**Challenges and Recommendation**

Women and youths that are without entrepreneurial skills, and are unemployed are two-edged instruments in conflicts and violence. They use themselves and at the same time, they can be used for stirring conflicts. This dimension of involvement brings untold hardships and deaths to so many youths that decide to seek better lives through borders, deserts and violence.

To begin to address the above in the context we have, brings a lot of challenges, one of which is weak collaboration and support with the government, and other stakeholders in the field. We have observed that the government shows little interest in organisations
working tirelessly to help to bring peace in the communities. Sometimes, religion puts some interventions in questionable suspense; bringing along with it, a challenge of trust and tribalism. There are inadequate support and appreciation for the tough and difficult work we do in communities.

Lack of solidarity and cooperation from aid agencies is another challenge. Some aid agencies working in Nigeria, most times, prefer to work with organisations that are more established or with foreign organisations that meet their criteria based on past engagements. Youth-led organisations do not get enough solidarity or acknowledgement of their efforts from the international NGOs working locally. This is a big challenge for hardworking organisations that do not receive support from aid agencies. As such, aid and relief organisations supporting other organisations can do better by supporting other local or community-based organisations that respond to the growing number of violent conflicts through solidarity and cooperation. Experience shows that some communities and people in conflicts need more solidarity than charity or aids.

Identity crisis, cultural differences and interreligious conflict are a big challenge for us: Interfaith dialogue is one of the complex missions of our work. As a result of the different beliefs of both religions, it is sometimes very difficult to bring opposite faiths to discuss, meet and move forward through compromise and tolerance.

Low capacity building for parties involved in ending interfaith violence is a big challenge, as this might cause a re-emergence of resolved issues by parties that feel they are left without adequate engagement and a system that sustain peaceful relations. There is a need for stronger sustainable partnership, networking through empowerment via training, and continuous human engagement system support. Another challenge is the
scarcity of core funding and support for peacemakers and interfaith actors. This has been a major challenge because it hampers smooth working operations and affects peacebuilding and violence prevention processes in communities. The same thing goes for security risks to lives that peacemakers face. We cannot function well when our lives are not secured. Also, there is a lack of political will and support to improve our work.

**Conclusion**

Awareness and knowledge of living in peace increased substantially through regular farming activities such as planting, weeding, supervising, harvesting together with all women involved. This togetherness in sharing the same farm, same hoes, cutlass and other farming tools encouraged mutual understanding and tolerance. The harvesting and the selling of farm produce happened in harmony and the produce shared equally among women, who in turn supported their children in education and other household needs. Consequently, more people (the public) are now discussing the issue and taking actions along the line of women for peace intervention.

Generally, the attitude and behaviour of many community people have changed to the extent that women have become a strong force of community intercultural dialogue strategy. This shows the culture of silence that incubates the issue is being broken, and this demonstrates a shift in the cultural base of the problem. The “*Women Farm for Living for Peace*” is a success. However, more follow up actions are needed because challenges of cultural diversity may not necessarily be eradicated by a single dose of intervention.

Available interventions must also be made more popular at the community and state levels, and information that merge peace with cultural norms but emphasise peaceful coexistence must be continuously engaged. This can be done through workshops,
capacity building, women empowerment, jingles, talk shows, role modelling, editorial commentaries and interventions of opinion, community and religious leaders. ECOWAS, NGOs/CSOs/FBOs and stakeholders must engage communities conscientiously through aggressive intervention efforts like the women farm for living for peace and other innovative approaches. At the same time, civil society organisations are much closer to the communities than the government itself; monitoring and evaluating the activities of farmers is one way to measure the impact of conflicts prevention and response to peace. This is because through local actions and contributions like this, global changes are made and achieved.

Without doubt, good and functional families, communities and societies exist due to cooperative spirit and ability to work as a team. Without harmony and a goal-oriented approach towards peace, it will be an impossible mission to achieve peace. Besides, it is only through this that communities that are threatened will have the strength to keep to the solutions made in ensuring that we have fewer violent conflicts in our communities. Having community support groups on peace action is one way towards achieving the SDGs 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) at the local levels.

**AUTHOR’S PROFILE**

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CHAPTER 7

MEDIA AND PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF ‘DEVELOPMENT TODAY’

Oladayo Ogunbowale
Shannah Initiative for Human Development-Nigeria

Introduction

History has shown that the media can incite people to violence. Hitler used the media to construct a worldview of contempt for Jews, gays, and other classes of minorities. RTLM radio in Rwanda encouraged listeners to pick up machetes and take to the streets to kill what they call 'the cockroaches'. Radio broadcasters in the Balkans divided local populations, thus contributing to an outbreak of sectarian violence. The effect of the media on worsening conflict is more generally accepted than the influence of the media on building peace. Yet it is not unusual to hear experts say the media's effect on peacebuilding needs to be given due attention given its tendency to incite conflict. However, this simple relationship must not be taken for granted and should be examined critically with a view to arriving at an understanding of how to use the media most effectively for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This chapter attempts to shed light on the merits and demerits of exploiting the media concerning peacebuilding or otherwise, with special focus on maximizing radio broadcasting as a veritable tool for peace education and engagement.

The Media and Peacebuilding

Worldwide, the impact of the media in the last six decades cannot be overemphasized, especially its ability to either escalate or de-escalate possible conflicts. The media has a key role in raising awareness of trending and emerging development issues, and is
expected to support civil society in this process. It is worthy of note that radio remains the best medium for reaching people (irrespective of their status or location) across the globe, despite increasing global internet penetration.

“The media” refers to several mediums or channels used in an organized fashion to communicate information to groups of people, as a service to the public (Howard, 2002). Media platforms are universally acknowledged as a means of sharing information. Mass communication is a key tool for democracy. Broadcasting news by using community radios can help reach people in different areas, even with different languages, more easily. This way, people can be addressed directly, and their personal experiences and lives can be incorporated much better, than with foreign media. The danger of manipulation and inflammation of ethnic or religious tensions, however, cannot be ignored. Another advantage of local media, especially radio is that, in border areas, it is possible to convey peace messages to passing fighters and refugees alike. (Nora Kuusik, 2010).

For the media, it can be problematic to find a balance between preventing harm caused by speech and protecting individual right to expression. Being able to find this balance, however, is important especially in conflict situations. Responsible journalism does not just re-publish press releases but is truly concerned with a truthful, balanced and fair account of events. To achieve this, journalists have to avoid judgmental representations and describe reality without embellishment. (Koven, Ronald, 2004).

The media is a double-edged sword. It can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of intolerance or misinformation that manipulate public sentiment. It can also be an instrument of conflict resolution, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views.
The role of the media is twofold: on the one hand, the media reports and reflects on pressing issues and can help to question established concepts and ideas. On the other hand, they can be used for propaganda purposes and, instead of revealing truths, try to cover things up and by this, curtail people’s freedom and right to information. Regardless, the potential of the media in conflict and post-conflict situations remains a net positive and has been sadly underutilized to this point in time. (Nora Kuusik, 2010).

In addition to media structure, dispute must be viewed in the light of their political, social and cultural angles, if we are to consider the best practices in the media. Today's conflicts are, in many ways, more dynamic and multidimensional than ever. The bulk of violent deaths occur during civil wars and not between states conventional armed forces. There has been a rise in the rate of dispute relapse over the last decade. Conflicts are less likely to be resolved by traditional political agreements, due primarily to the rise of organized crime that continues to intensify the fragility of the state and weaken the legitimacy of the state; the internationalization of civil wars (e.g. Syria), and growing violent extremism.

Interventions

1. Development Today

As at December 2019, Oyo State had no less than 25 functional radio stations broadcasting on the terrestrial FM frequency. Only one had a dedicated programme for the development sector. The story is also not different across the nation as less than 5 radio stations have such dedicated programmes amongst the over three hundred stations broadcasting daily, nationwide.
The dearth of a credible and well-designed programme on the radio to meet the yearning and demands of the teeming audience for civic education and proper citizen-government engagement in Oyo State, led to the conception and eventual activation of ‘Development Today’ on the radio.

A brainchild of Shannah Initiative for Human Development (SIHD), Development Today was conceived and premiered on IBR 92.5fm in Ibadan, Oyo State on June 7, 2018, as a weekly media ‘Safe Space’ to drive the conversation on the peacebuilding work of local and international organisations. The weekly one-hour programme was broadcast live with special guests drawn from different civil society groups, covering various core thematic areas. One key area that got massive attention on the programme was the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which has to do with what governments across the board were doing, as well as projects and programmes being executed by relevant stakeholders in the development sector locally and internationally.

To achieve maximum media impact on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the following strategies were employed on the
radio programme as adapted from the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) Briefing, October 2008:

- **Conflict-sensitive and Peace journalism:**
  Basic journalism, teaching accurate, impartial and responsible reporting, remains a core component of media development. Conflict-sensitive journalism goes beyond this, by encouraging journalists to be aware of what effect their language and reporting can have on conflict—as well as how they may become victims of the violence.

- **Peace-promoting Citizen Media:**
  Citizen media largely falls into two sub-categories: community media and user-generated content emerging from new technologies. Community media operates on a local level through traditional platforms such as television, radio and print. In general, it serves as a conduit for community information. The power of citizen media lies in its grassroots, bottom-up authenticity and spontaneity. Leveraging its potential, therefore, will come less from trying to “organize it” than from showing citizens, through training, how to use new tech media or how to counter hate media when it arises in community outlets.

- **Advertising or social marketing for conflict prevention and peacebuilding:**
  The media leverages many distribution channels and formats, ranging from soap operas to public service announcements (PSAs), to street theatre and concerts. Its dramatic, often fictional formats, offer the advantage of being able to tackle contentious and divisive issues that might be too inflammatory to discuss in real life.
2. **2019 General Election Observation**

One major milestone for Nigeria was the successful completion of the electioneering process that led to the heralding and replacement of democratically elected leaders across the board in the country. Shannah Initiative for Human Development (SIHD) participated actively as a partner with a foremost youth-led governance-oriented civil society group, **YIAGA**. SIHD partnered with YIAGA to observe the whole electioneering process including Pre-election, Election-day and Post-election activities in Oyo State, with special focus on Lagelu local government, where the founder was the Local Government Focal Person. Regular reports from the field were collated, curated and forwarded to the centralised Situation Room of YIAGA located in Abuja, Nigeria. The process was also funded by YIAGA with support from notable donor agencies.

It is noteworthy that pre- and post-election violence were moderately mitigated through the help of the consistent collection, interpretation and publication of ‘early warning signals’ from certain selected locations. Approved reports from the eventually published election observation were also shared with the audience of ‘**Development Today**’ radio programme regularly.

**Outcomes**

Weekly radio programmes were aired in English and sometimes mixed with Yoruba on Impact Business Radio 92.5 FM with effective reach across the length and breadth of Oyo, Osun and parts of Ogun and Ondo States in Nigeria between 2018 and 2019. The programme started in 2018 as a minimal 35 minutes programme. However, based on popular demand, it was expanded to full one-hour before the end of 2018. Aimed at creating more open state-society relations, making communities more resilient to conflict, and encouraging people to participate in public dialogue and hold their leaders to account; ‘**Development Today**’ sought to
amplify the activities of key players in the development sector in the country.

In the run-up to the 2019 elections, Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on television were aired, urging Nigerians to go out and vote without violence. The producer cum presenter participated actively in several qualitative studies with public policy and media experts, as well as Civil Society Organisations such as YIAGA - a renowned youth-led organisation at the forefront of election observation - to assess the project's impact. Conversations on ‘Development Today’ reached out to more than a million Nigerians mostly within the southwest region.

The initiatives cumulatively reached an estimated 6 million individuals by extension. The conversations were effective in encouraging people to participate actively in the electioneering process, while major players and stakeholders also enjoyed hearing a variety of views and opinions without bias. To a large extent, ‘Development Today’ was successful in helping to shape the role of citizens in conflict resolution, engaging government and being part of public life. The array of well-curated and researched topics selected each week helped common citizens and politicians understand our rights and duties as well as how they could respond to the democratic processes by presenting scenarios. People who tuned in to listen to the programme either live or online submitted to have learned more, debated more and became more interested in politics, even after accounting for other factor that could have influence the survey results (e.g., age, employment, education, and policy interest). The preparation, broadcast and capacity building activities of the project have produced useful results along the line of production and editorial expertise for partners who had little or no broadcast media knowledge, allowing them to produce and distribute trustworthy and engaging content for governance.
This project was mostly funded by the CRIBAP fellowship of ‘Youthhub Africa’ with support from ‘Malala Fund’.

**Challenges**

The conception of ‘Development Today’ as a full-fledge programme for broadcast on the radio was completed as at February 2018 but due to a couple of constraints, it did not go live until June 7, 2018.

Funding was a major challenge in that the radio stations that were approached failed to see the immediate and or long term commercial viability of such a novel radio programme though, they acknowledged its quality. Suffice to say that well over 80% of the radio stations in the state were barely managing to meet up with their monthly wages and salary obligations, hence they found it costly sacrificing a minute off their most precious airtime for a novel programme that was not coming with full sponsorship. It is on record that the producer cum presenter had to resort to bargaining for a ten thousand naira per 30 minutes slot with the only radio station willing to tag along (IBR 92.5FM). This lasted for well over 3 months before the station decided to expand the allotted time to a full hour while retaining the same amount for 30 minutes. To make ends meet, NGOs that had upcoming events were encouraged to come and feature on the programme for a subsidized fee. The entire financial struggle ended when the producer cum presenter was selected to participate in the 2018/19 CRIBAP fellowship of ‘Youthhub Africa’ with support from ‘Malala Fund’, which ensured that the programme was supported financially.

Another challenge faced, was that of acceptance. It was a tad difficult to get people to tune in for a radio programme that is neither entertainment, religious nor political. However, within the first quarter (3 months) of airing the programme, prospective players in the development sector and even government agencies
started taking interest in the programme. The populace also gradually warmed up to ‘Africa’s numero uno development programme on the radio, ‘Development Today’.

**Lessons/Opportunities for Expansion**

It is however unfortunate that by December 2019, the programme was rested following the end of the fellowship programme that provided funding coupled with the institutional challenges facing the radio station hosting the programme. At the moment, a reliable and consistent funding source is being sought via the coordinating NGO, Shannah Initiative for Human Development (SIHD).

The programme by design is meant to cater to the needs of the citizen via amplifying the activities of the numerous hard-working civil society organisations across the country. ‘Development Today’ is hence designed for the national audience and by extension the whole continent of Africa, with a plethora of underdeveloped and developing nations.

Development Communications is still quite untapped in Nigeria and ‘Development Today’ wished to help change that when it was fully supported especially by international donor agencies. We wished to ensure smooth and unhindered broadcast schedule, with live streaming from a specially designed studio. ‘Development Today’ was also designed to convene monthly conferences where key issues would be discussed at a town hall gathering with relevant members of the development sector, civil society as well as government agencies being present. We hope that we will get adequate financial, technical and logistic supports from local and international donor organizations, interested in bringing development issues to the grassroots and local people, in order to bring these lofty agenda to fruition through the resuscitation of 'Development Today'.
Media and Conflict Management Recommendations

a) There is the need to ensure that all media for peace interventions reinforce shared identities and not differences between opposing groups.

b) Stakeholders and practitioners must develop ways to better understand local audiences.

c) We must examine the drivers of violent extremism in details, and how the media can influence certain drivers in the long term.

d) Stakeholders and media practitioners must be fully informed of changes to ensure that implemented programmes take advantage of — and are not foul with - 'new' ways of communicating. This might include establishing a forum for exchange of information on new developments and producing regular country and sector updates.

e) We must work together to create a stronger evidence, based on what works in this field.

f) There is the need to provide capacity building for media practitioners to develop their technological, editorial and management skills to deliver trustworthy and engaging contents, aimed at minimizing all types of violence. Such content should promote governance based on the rule of law, while upholding the principles of justice and human rights.

g) Stakeholders should support projects aimed at increasing awareness of the need for responsible and fact-based communication among people — including opinion leaders such as politicians, religious leaders and others in public life.

h) Media practitioners should not underestimate the strength of mass media (radio and television) in reaching the most excluded of the populace, especially the young and weak.
These may also include radio and television drama and entertainment.

AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Ogunbowale Oladayo is a media professional, involved in youth development; a peace, democracy and good governance advocate and social media buff. His experience spans across project incubation, execution and management, developing social media campaigns for social causes and policy development for youth organizations and government agencies. He is a 2018 & 2019 fellow of the Youthhub’s Africa Child Right Media Advocacy Fellowship supported by Malala fund. He is the founder of Shannah Initiative for Human Development (SIHD) – formerly known as ‘Change Alliance Initiative’ – a youth focused non-governmental organisation. A frontline development communicator, Oladayo currently works with the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) as a News and Current Affairs analyst/presenter on the corporation’s major channels (BCOS TV and Oluyole 98.5FM).
CHAPTER 8

PEACE EDUCATION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Moses Abolade and Blessing Dorcas Adekanye,
Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET)

Introduction
Civil unrest, structural violence, and low level of development, among others, are serious social challenges facing the Nigerian society. This prompted Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET), an NGO working in the area of peacebuilding, to set up a plan for operation in early 2019 with a focus on root causes of violence, probing into why the Agbowo community of Ibadan, Nigeria has witnessed increased crime rates and cult clashes; and tackling these causes. Children and youths in the community were seriously affected and had begun to idolize cybercriminals, who wreaked havoc on the community. These actions are not only connected to the economic inequalities but also fundamental issues of identity crisis facing Nigerian society. This chapter discusses the peace education work of PEPNET in Agbowo community of Ibadan, and traces its impact on its beneficiaries.

Peace Education
The United Nations Children’s Fund, (UNICEF), in 2001, defined peace education as:
The process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that will enable children, youth, and adults, to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intra-personal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.
Peace education is a non-negotiable part of creating peaceful societies. It is transformative. James Page projected Peace Education;

“as encouraging a commitment to peace, as a settle disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; as informing the student on the consequences of war and social justice; as informing the student on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; as encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; and as caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others” (Page, 2008)

Veronica Gumut (2006) conceives peace education as the deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peacemaking skills in homes, schools, and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization. She further explained that,

“Peace education is an investment in the younger generations, and by educating young minds in the virtues of peace, the skills of conflict analysis and management, identification of conflicts and sources of conflict, among others, a more peaceable future could be secured.” (Gumut, 2006)

Objectives of Peace Education

Peace education aims to create means of addressing conflict and minimizing violence using peaceful methods. Basically, the objectives of peace education are:

i. To create awareness of the multiple perspectives of peace, beyond the traditional sense of peace as the absence of war, and developing a personal sense of the culture of peace.
ii. To develop an intercultural understanding among people of diverse cultures and religions.

iii. To have the knowledge of peace education, which gives people a sense of unity, especially in multicultural societies, where everyone is treated with respect and as humans.

iv. To inculcate in people the consciousness of forgiveness, tolerance, and cooperation.

v. To equip people with skills to independently manage and resolve everyday conflict without the involvement of a third party, and to curtail such conflict from degenerating into violence.

vi. To provide adequate information related to values, customs, and practices of the members of a different culture, for better understanding of others, thereby reducing prejudices.

vii. To develop a means of changing negative stereotypes and tensions among people who belong to different cultures.

viii. To teach the skills and values associated with peaceful behaviour.

Peace education programmes are designed to enable and encourage people to think constructively about issues, both physical and social, and to develop constructive attitudes towards living together and solving problems that arise in their communities through peaceful means (Ogundele, 2015). These programmes allow learners to practice these skills and help them discover the benefits for themselves so that they psychologically ‘own’ skills and behaviour. Its syllabus covers topics such as; conflict resolution, democracy education, justice education, human right education, empathy, religious tolerance, gender equality and equity, negotiation/dialogue, disarmament and conflict response techniques. In assisting students, however, the goal of peace education programmes must include but not be limited to: valuing diversities, increasing democratic participation of students,
developing empathy for others, understanding consequences of actions and decisions taken, and creating a peaceful environment.

Peace education programmes are conducted mostly by non-governmental organizations interested in peace education or academic institutions which focus on peace and security studies. However, more conscious efforts should be made by governments, through education boards, to key into the peace education programme, quickly and aggressively. Teaching peace education can be done through training, workshops, seminars and conferences, all of which can help people reflect on their understanding of personal peace, interpersonal peace, and the way they co-exist peacefully in a particular society. Thus, organizations in Nigeria, considering the situation and context of their society, will do more by training parents, teachers, children and youths to practice peace at home and schools (Abebe T., 2006).

The peace education programme is proposed either as an independent non-formal centre or in conjunction with formal schooling, which might be at any level of education in the researched regions. For formal schooling, the programme is proposed as an advanced Peace Certificate to be earned concurrently with a secondary school or undergraduate degree. This programme reflects some integral themes in the organization of content and form in peace education and the review of peace education programmes. First, peace education programmes are designed to comprehensively counter the fragmentation of knowledge and narrow perspectives of teaching and learning that occur in a traditional classroom. The content and form of education are presented holistically, through trans-disciplinary courses that combine knowledge from diverse disciplines. Other alternative, i.e. informal ways of teaching is also important, and must include the main five domains of peace education which are: the international system, peace, development, human rights, and the environment.
As earlier established, conflict is inevitable in our day-to-day interactions as social beings. Considering our different backgrounds, and cultural, racial, and religious affiliations, everyone should be equipped with the skills of conflict resolution, communication, and peaceful negotiation. Apart from those soft skills to navigate every facet of life, it is important to have some understanding of peaceful coexistence in order to achieve the desired peaceful societies. If education is expensive, ignorance is costlier. Many are innocently ignorant of the outcome of their actions. In this light, peace education should be made available for all and sundry. Regardless of age, status, and qualification; learning is a life-long process.

In an attempt to evaluate peace education, Ian Harris suggests to educators to focus on changes that are feasible for a programme of study. Primarily, educators should be attentive to changes and transformations, especially in individuals, that they can influence, rather than have grand notions of dealing with the political class that support violence and inhibits peace (Ian Harris, 2007). In a country like Nigeria where structural violence has eaten deep into nearly all fabrics of the society, we must focus on the changes that occur in learners who are children, adolescents, and youths rather than adults who are already assimilated into the norms of violence.

**United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 and Peace Education**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace, and security is that with a peacebuilding focus, as it recognizes the importance of youth participation in peacebuilding across the globe. The resolution has served as a great platform to showcase the immense work young people are doing across the globe by translating policies into actions. This policy document puts
the youth at the centre of processes and policies dealing with peace and security.

Knowing the role of youths in violent conflict and the way many youths have been used as foot soldiers to engage in nefarious activities, which span several contexts, the resolution pointed at some key areas such as, participation of young people in the decision-making processes; protection of civilians, specifically young people during armed conflict; prevention of violence, which is the main stake of peace education programmes; understanding best ways for the partnership to increase political, financial, technical and logistical support from UN agencies and other related bodies, and long term strategies of disconnecting young people from armed conflict, with the follow-up plan by the Secretary-General to conduct a progress study of the young’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution.

According to Alimba,

“Peace Education is a holistic education, its slippery and flexible nature described it to be a multifaceted educational programme that encompasses different approaches capable of transforming the behavioral patterns of people through the inculcation of desired knowledge, attitudes, and skills for effective contribution to the cultural, social, economic and political development of their countries”.

The above quote emphatically shows the need for close-range analysis of the tactical ‘P’s strategically placed in the policy framework of UNSCR 2250. It is indeed a question of relationship and ways this has helped in fostering the course of peace education and conflict transformation among young people.

The policy framework, UNSCR 2250, has however given us a wider course to re-evaluate the involvement of youths in the process of change which includes; changed attitude, increased

**PEPNET’s Peace Education Interventions:**

1. **Secondary School Sensitization Project (SSSP)**

Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET), an international nongovernmental organization operating at Agbowo/Bodija, Ibadan North, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria implemented a **Secondary School Sensitization Project (SSSP)** at De Graceland College, and Omolola College, Agbowo, Ibadan, from February to March 2019. The project’s vision was to impact knowledge of peace, human security, and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in the selected students. A Needs Assessment was first carried out in several schools around Agbowo and Bodija communities in Ibadan, Nigeria. The project coordinator paid a courtesy visit to five selected schools at Agbowo and Bodija, to determine if there is a need for peace education in the schools, three weeks before the implementation date. During the planning stage, some schools like Hillcrest, informed us their school integrated peace education in the teaching-related concepts in their civic education which led us to exclude them from the project to avoid duplication of efforts.

The project was implemented at De Graceland College, with about 25 students selected. The school administrators ensured adequate representation of all classes in the school, which were purposefully selected based on proximity, logistics, and acceptance.
The educational outing started with a motivating reception, where teachers and the management expressed their gratitude for our intervention and showed their interest in partnering with us to make more impact. A pre-assessment form was given out to students to identify their level of peace understanding. Messrs. Abolade Moses and Jatto Emmanuel had interactive sessions with them, teaching them peace topics such as non-violence, tolerance, etc.

The programme educated the students to see themselves as national and global leaders that need capacity to be better citizens and active change-makers. In the interactive sessions at De Graceland, students were trained as young mediators after introducing them to diverse methods of managing conflict. Role plays by the students were used to portray conflict management while Peace Clubs were also established.

At Omolola College, the project team paid a courtesy visit to the principal, to schedule a meeting date for the secondary school sensitization project. 150 students were selected as participants for the programme. The sensitization covered areas of peace education and alternative dispute resolution. The interactive session lasted for about 45 minutes, with a Question and Answer session on how to adopt peaceful means in their relations with students and teachers. A Peace Club was established to continue an educational transformative process. This process is important to the post context assessment and monitoring. Sequel to these interventions, Girl Child Development Hub, headed by Miss Gloria Oladeji, partnered with PEPNET to engage secondary school girls on discovering their potentials. This was done concurrently with Secondary School Sensitization Project (SSSP) albeit, in the context of a partnership.
2. Peace Media

Another project implemented by the team of peacebuilders at Peace Education and Practice Network is “Peace Media”. The project aimed at using traditional media channels such as radio and television to reach out-of-school students and adults on peace education campaigns. According to the Needs Assessment done by the peacebuilders, more than 65% of Ibadan dwellers rely on information received through radio and television, while about 25% of the population complement the traditional media with newspapers and social media. Recognising the huge size of Ibadan population, estimated at over 3 million, it was important to adopt such creative means for peace education.

The first PEPNET Radio show was recorded live at JAMZ 100.1 FM, Felele, Ibadan, featuring Messr. Jatto Emmanuel Adavize and Moses Abolade. PEPNET Ambassadors spoke extensively on the need for alternative approaches to political violence. The theme was strategic as it spoke to issues relating to mitigation of violence predicted during the 2019 General Election. The intervention programme also extensively discussed issues that revolved around the concept of peace, and the activities of PEPNET towards reducing the political tension among political gladiators. Maximum impact was reached as the audience that phoned in to the programme expressed hope of the effectiveness and timeliness of the peace promotion event and how the programme can be very useful in de-escalating the building up of violence before the general elections. The huge audience participation in the programme shows how non-formal forms of education can help youths and the general populace become change and peace agents, and not weapons of destruction.

Also, the project spectrum extended to media appearances on the International Zero Discrimination Day. This media event featured PEPNET on the Impact Business Radio (Amutajero) 92.9fm
and Impact Africa Television. The two activities addressed the need to end various forms of discrimination in human society.

The Executive Director of PEPNET, Mr. Moses Abolade, during the Television interview, discussed the need for a proper understanding of the concept by all stakeholders and why it is most needed to achieve the goal of the United Nations of “Not Leaving Anyone Behind”. The Radio session practically gave room for Messr. Jatto Adavize Emmanuel and Moses Abolade, to communicate extensively to the public about different kinds of discrimination, and conflict-sensitive approaches to avoiding discrimination-based conflicts.

The project, however, continued as PEPNET Ambassador Moses Abolade featured on Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS), to speak on the topic, Nigerian Highways; the Human Security Perspective. The engagement gave PEPNET a wider platform to contribute to how to improve national security in Nigeria.

Project Outcomes

a. Secondary School Sensitization Project (SSSP)

After a month of sensitizing the students on peace, the principal of De Graceland College, Agbowo/Bodija, called to inform the Executive Director, Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET) that participating students were exhibiting peaceful traits and mediation skills. More than 25 students were reported to have used the justice system (the quality of being just, fair, equitable, and morally righteous), which they were taught in the sensitization classes. Most of them are already working on how to manage their anger as well as improve their respect for others. The outcome of the project has been relatively positive as students have been directly informing others about the benefits of living a life of peace.
Peace education project has developed in the project beneficiaries a concrete sense of self-awareness, engagement for reflection, meditation, and introspection to live peacefully with themselves, others, and the society. The students have been able to learn and identify some peace heroes, like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, etc. which must have positively impacted their lives.

b. Peace Media

The outcome of the Peace Media projects started during the Needs Assessment, as most market women, artisans, and farmers we interviewed, found the idea very necessary in the society. The presentation in five radio and Television channels helped in reducing tension and tendency of youth violence before, during, and after the Nigerian 2019 general election. From the various contributory calls and commentaries received during these events from different parts of the world, it is clear that the Peace Media project had a significant impact at that time. For each engagement on the radio and television, over 10 members of the audience called to express their views and commented on why the project was timely and most needed. A youth attested to the fact that the sensitization helped to change him from a political thug to an advocate for peace. The outcome of these events became more evident as older people announced their support for non-violence during the election and after.

The outcome of the projects gave rise to several partnerships, such as a Walk against Political Violence during elections with the mantra “Vote not Fight, Election no be War”. These events witnessed the involvement of the Nigerian Police Force, Oyo State Government, and director of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, in engaging the participants, mostly youths, on how to create awareness for a better Nigeria.
Challenges faced by PEPNET

1. **Denial of Training Requests**: Schools are formal places; access to them is based on the decisions of their authorities. Some private schools did not grant requests to our training arguing that “We already have peace education in civic education”, “There is no need for the training, our students are well behaved”, among others reasons. Even if the students are well behaved or the already taught peace education as part of curriculum, efforts from NGOs such as PEPNET should be seen as complementary, not competitive. Also, authorities in some public schools requested letters/permits from the state government or ministries of education before granting the organization’s requests. This bureaucracy and bottleneck system are discouraging and suggest that youth-led organizations are not considered as important stakeholders by the education authorities.

2. **Inadequate funding**: It is noteworthy that the main factors for any major sustainable development and impact lies are manpower and financial strength of the organization. At the moment, the organization generates most of its resources through internal means, such as membership registration and annual dues, donation, and so on. Meanwhile, carrying out the project without sufficient funds hinders, to a great extent, the scope, impact and outcome of the project. Volunteers often make financial contributions to make most of the project successful. Notably, the higher the human and financial resources available in an organization, the better the impacts and outcomes.

3. **Dearth of Volunteers**: The subject of peace is relatively new to some persons. As an organization that believes peace is for all, we encourage people from all spheres of life to join the moving train. However, the volunteers have to undergo training too.
Sometimes, when the expert members are not physically available to go for training, new volunteers might not be sufficiently equipped with the necessary skills set to manage the training sessions. Also, as an organization starting with little funding, available volunteers find it difficult to commit their time and energy to a course that does not yield financial benefit.

**Opportunities for Expansion**

It is obvious that the Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET) have a plan to engage children and youths in training and sensitizations that will enable them to become peace ambassadors. However, there is a need for funding of these planned programmes. The project manual needs to be funded and prepared for mass production. Having good content is not enough, but branding it to meet the understanding and interest of the intended beneficiaries will go a long way to achieving long-lasting impact. Considering the logistics and resources committed to achieving success in the initial projects implemented, it is important to get access to more funding to encourage PEPNET youth-led volunteers working to build up peace ambassadors on different fronts, to do more.

There is also a need to increase the capacity building programmes for volunteers, management teams and other stakeholders in the organization, while we work towards making a better impact on prospective beneficiaries. Capacity building programmes can go a long way to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of PEPNET. This will also help our organization focus on furthering the course of new and dynamic approaches to peacebuilding. Improved access to capacity-building opportunities will give PEPNET the ability utilize internal resource persons rather than heavily relying on outside resource experts, as is presently the case. We, therefore, believe that more of these support will foster a
sense of ownership and empowerment among partners and other stakeholders in the future. This enablement will also strengthen confidence, skills, knowledge and resources that will enhance more professional and social connections for PEPNET.

PEPNET is very capable of managing members and other stakeholders in the project, as we work more on connecting older mentors and partners. As we increase the prospects so will the number of experienced educators, who will serve voluntarily as counsellors, consultants or cheerleaders, who give constructive feedback providing support and guidance on project management and impacts.

**Conclusion**

With an increase in the rise of violent conflicts, peace education is presented as an effective tool in curbing this menace. As understood, conflict is inevitable and its benefits are best maximized if properly managed. Therein lies the beauty of our differences, and this has to be embraced to bring about unity, tolerance, development, and growth.

Knowledge is potent enough to transform while ignorance should not be an excuse. It, therefore, becomes imperative to make available this knowledge. More bodies must get involved in preaching the gospel of peace education; this should go beyond the four walls of the formal school system.

Peace education should be extended to unconventional places as town hall meetings, markets, village squares, etc. Therefore, it demands deliberate efforts on the part of the government and other responsible actors to ensure this. It is quite exciting to know there is an increasing concern of NGOs in Peace Education. One of such is Peace Education Practice and Network (PEPNET). Adequate support should be given to such organizations by the government to attend to such an urgent assignment. As
structural issues are being attended to, peace education will serve as an effective tool in violence prevention.

**Recommendations**

i. To prevent and manage conflicts, peace education as a subject should be included in the curriculum as one of the basic required subjects at every level of education.

ii. Adequate provisions should be made to take peace education to informal channels, where there should be inclusivity of those who do not have access to the conventional school system.

iii. Government ministries and agencies, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions and peace-related institutions should be encouraged to invest and make peace education available.

iv. Religious and traditional leaders should be considered as key actors in sensitizing their adherents and subjects on peace education.
AUTHORS’ PROFILE

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CHAPTER 9

HOW TAMEB USES INTER-RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND YOUTH CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMMES TO PROMOTE PEACE IN NIGERIA

Omoyemi Oni and Oborakpororo Ofuya
Taking All Men Brother (TAMEB)

Introduction

Religion is the entire collection of beliefs, values, and practices that a group holds to be the truth and sacred. In Nigeria, religious practices and beliefs are a significant part of the larger society. These have always served a social function in different regions within Nigeria. Religion could serve, and has indeed served, as an instrument of social harmony in many climes, including Nigeria. On the other hand, it has also served as a motivation for violence, hence its indication in some literature as a ‘double-edged sword’ (Maregere 2011; Obasi 2009; Samuel and Ekeng 2013).

We, therefore, can see religious conflict as a disagreement caused by inter or intra religious differences. However, in Nigeria, religious conflicts do not only carry religious motives but are also politically inclined. Some pundits in Nigeria have argued that conflicts in Nigeria have nothing to do intrinsically with religion but that it is only used as an excuse by politicians to manipulate the people (Marshall 2013).

Furthermore, no religious conflict in the nation is purely religious without ethnicity playing a key role in it. Nigeria, as a nation, is bound by various ethnicities or ethnic groups (Higazi 2011). As regards the political end for which religion is used as a means, the recurring violence in Jos, Nigeria presents a good illustration. It should be noted that violence in Jos, is as a result of, “...discrimination and bias in government, as well as the narrow
ethnic and religious politics among both Christians and Muslims, causing increased tension and polarization along communal lines” (Higazi 2011). The fact that religion and politics are deeply interwoven in Nigeria simply explains that most issues of religious crisis can also be traced to our ethnic differences.

Furthermore, high level of poverty has been implicated in the promotion of religious violence. Poverty remains a primary cause of terrorism and insurgency in the northeastern region of Nigeria (Uzuegbu-Wilson 2019). The high level of poverty in the Niger-Delta region, where inhabitants live in conditions of squalor, has allowed for an environment where social and civil unrest could thrive, and perhaps, even influenced violence.

Historically, religious fundamentalists have attempted to legitimize violence in the name of God. The era of 1970s-1980s witnessed the rise of Mohammed Marwa, who inspired thousands (known as the Yan Tatsine) to rise against the existing political and religious order in Nigeria. The group's mission under Maitatsine was the "purification" of Islam which, according to them, was corrupted by the West, and its modernization (Wojtanik 2014). Contemporary acts of extreme violence such as terrorist attacks are often justified as ‘holy warfare’. In the past two decades, religion has been at the centre of most violent conflicts in Nigeria. According to Reynal-Querol (2002), a study conducted in Spain found that societies that are divided along religious lines are more prone to intense and prolonged conflict than those divided by political, territorial and ethnic differences. Perhaps this reality explains the prime position that religious violence occupies on Nigeria’s security pyramid. As it is a known fact that religiously motivated violence has plagued the country more than any other security challenge. (Samuel and Ekeng 2013).

Religious violence in Nigeria refers to Christian-Muslim strife in modern Nigeria which can be traced back to the era of
Maitasine in the 1970s-1980s (Albert and Uzoigwe 1999). In recent times, there has been a tremendous increase in religious violence across the six geopolitical zones in the country, which has resulted in the loss of life and properties, especially in places like Adamawa, Borno, Kaduna and Plateau States. A report by Samuel (2005) highlighted that the lack of adequate statistical data has made it extremely difficult to estimate the exact number of religious conflicts in Nigeria and their resultant fatalities (Salawu 2010). The general assumption is that the incidence of religious violence has grown exponentially since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Available statistics on religious crises across the country, however, show that at least 95 percent of them occurred in the northern part of the country (Ezeanokwasa 2009).

Interreligious violence in Nigeria is dominated by the Boko Haram insurgency, which aims to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. Boko Haram – loosely translated from northern region's Hausa language means, "Western education is forbidden" (BBC News, November 24, 2016) – seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria. It opposes the westernization of Nigerian society and the concentration of the wealth of the country among members of small a political elite, mainly in the Christian south of the country (Bartolotta 2011). Since the current insurgency started in 2009, Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands and displaced over 2.3 million from their homes (New York Times; 2015), and was at one time, the world's deadliest terrorist group according to the Global Terrorism Index (Pisa and Hume, 2015; Global Terrorism Index; 2015). Since then, there have been other insurgency groups such as the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) which currently has over 3,500 – 5,000 fighters (Obaji Jnr. 2019).

Away from north-east Nigeria, herdsmen bandits, as well as radical religious movements and cults that are also springing up across the country. Furthermore, religious intolerance has taken on
the form of alienation, intimidation, harassment, physical assault, internment, arbitrary killings and outright warfare. The Christian-Muslim killings in Kaduna, as well as the continuous exclusion of practitioners of African Traditional Religions in official religious affairs, are examples of religious violence and intolerance in Nigeria.

Across the country, young people, particularly school-age children have been the victims of religious violence. According to UNICEF, in the ongoing armed conflict in north-east Nigeria, more than 3,500 children, most of whom are between the ages of 13 and 17, were recruited and used by non-state armed groups between 2013 and 2017. According to the same UN agency, 432 children were killed and maimed, 180 were abducted, and 43 girls were sexually abused in north-east Nigeria in the year 2018. Many have become orphaned and have also had to deal with the emotional and mental trauma that comes with the loss of loved ones.

Given the perennial religious tensions among the different religious groups in Nigeria, there is a sustained culture of mutual suspicion and unhealthy rivalry among them. Religious leaders are often criticized for not doing enough to stem religious violence. By not publicly condemning every act of extremism, entire faith communities are presumed to be somehow complicit. Some religious leaders have also been regularly accused of fanning the flames of segregation and sectarian violence. Despite the role of some religious leaders and communities in promoting intolerance and violence, many others are actively involved in helping the poor and marginalized, and fostering reconciliation in the aftermath.

We at Taking All Men Brother (TAMEB) have taken it upon ourselves to challenge religious intolerance and violence in Nigeria. We believe that at the core of every Nigerian religion is a message of peace and coexistence. Therefore, no religion deliberately sends out its adherents to perpetrate evil on others. TAMEB has thus established programmes that enlighten the people on religious
tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Also, we have taken it upon ourselves to empower the young population with knowledge and skills that will offer them better quality of life, and promote peace. To this end, TAMEB has created and organized interfaith dialogues, conferences, workshops, skill acquisition training, including the Freedom of Religion Conferences and the Youth Counseling and Mentorship Programme.

TAMEB aligns its activities with the UNSCR 2250 which recognizes that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”. Notably, the TAMEB programmes highlighted in this chapter aligns with three of the UNSCR 2250 pillars, namely: Participation, Prevention and Partnership.

**Interventions carried out by TAMEB**

This chapter focuses on two programmes undertaken by TAMEB in 2019 which are: *Freedom of Religion Conference* and *Youth Counselling and Mentorship programme*, as well as their impact in propagating religious tolerance and public enlightenment and empowerment in Nigeria.

1. **Freedom of Religion Conference: A Panacea for Peace and Harmony in Nigeria**

   The conference tagged *Freedom of Religion: A Panacea for Peace and Harmony in Nigeria* (FoR 2019) was designed by Taking All Men Brother (TAMEB) to address, and proffer solutions to various forms of unfriendly relationships among religions in Nigeria. Although freedom of religion and belief is enshrined in the constitution, it is hardly practised by the adherents of the different religions. This has therefore led to bigotry, fanaticism, extremism, violence and terrorism in their various shades in the country. As a multi-religious country, there is a need to address these issues by
engaging stakeholders that are key to establishing national peace and harmony. The event which took place at the Institute of Church and Society, Christian Council of Nigeria, Samonda, Ibadan on the 26th and 27th of June 2019 had in attendance, 146 participants, including clerics and other adherents of the main religions in Nigeria (that is African Traditional Religions, Christianity and Islam). This wide distribution represented people from all walks of life, ranging from the religious and sociological scholars and students to executives in public and private sectors, and civil society advocates.

At the two-day event, there were eight papers presented by experts on the triadic religions (African Traditional Religions, Christianity and Islam), sociology, law, youth, economics and interfaith advocacy. Thereafter, participants were divided into seven focus groups, namely: family, educational institutions, community, parliamentary, religious leaders, mass media and public/private sector focus groups, to discuss roles of the different stakeholders in the promotion and implementation of Freedom of Religion in Nigeria. TAMEB has subsequently adopted the
resolutions of this conference as part of its advocacy tool for fostering Freedom of Religion in Nigeria.

**Outcomes of the Conference**

At the end of the Freedom of Religion 2019 conference, the conclusions of the participants are as follow:

a. They agreed that all human beings are from God and that religion serves the same God in various ways. Based on this, the Omniscience of God and the brotherhood of humankind were strongly affirmed. Consequently, the participants agreed that we should accord everybody the right to adopt any religion of their choice and practice it without any infringement on freedom of religion and belief of others, or social hostilities. They affirmed that everybody has the right to his/her views on matters of religion within the ambit of the law and that we should respect other people’s religion or faith perspective. We should not interfere, unlawfully and unduly, in other people’s religion.

b. We should desist from castigating or destructively criticizing other people’s religion. Participants also resolved that they would uphold the secularity of the Nigerian state by letting everyone know that they have the right to practice their religion in their ways. They condemned the acts of pressurizing or persecuting anyone based on religion. Believing that no religion allows anyone to shed another person’s blood based on religious differences, they resolved to lead by example in the promotion of Freedom of Religion in their respective domain, starting with their immediate family to the larger society. They further agreed to carry on the message of Freedom of Religion to their various constituencies, and to implement what they had learnt at the grassroots level. Since
the conference, beneficiaries have gone ahead to organise step down training in their communities and organisations, and have continued to forward reports on their community awareness engagements such as outreach programmes and social media campaigns to us.

**Opportunities for expansion**

It was widely recommended that more conferences, seminars and workshops should be organized to educate the masses on the concept of freedom of religion. It was suggested that everyone should begin the practice of Freedom of Religion from his/her immediate family by leading by example. TAMEB was urged to organize more dialogues on the concept of freedom of religion, as well as partner with similar interfaith and peacebuilding organizations.

2. **Taking All Men Brother (TAMEB) Counseling and Mentorship Programme**

The programme was designed to stem teenage delinquency and deviance among inner-city teenagers, and to help reform them from delinquent teenagers to responsible adults. The programme worked in collaboration with secondary schools’ guidance and counselling units. Its activities include guiding students towards making better choices away from violence, cultism and other anti-social activities, as well as providing them with life skills that make them start thinking about future career opportunities and becoming role models among their peers. The programme’s goal was to engage the teeming youth population between the ages of 11 and 19, in activities that will transform their restiveness and involvement in illicit activities into more productive uses, which will be beneficial for their personal and career development, and the development of their community (Agege Local Government Area,
Lagos State). In addition to helping deviant youths, the programme also mentored students who have displayed exceptional academic excellence and focus, to ensure that they make the right choices and do not derail from their aspirations and goals.

Background of the Beneficiary Community (Agege Local Government Area)

Agege is arguably the most pluralistic low-income community in Lagos. Culturally speaking, it has large populations of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa who call Agege their home. Religiously speaking, it also has a large population of Christians, Muslims and Traditionalists co-existing within the community. The population of Agege is estimated at 461,123 people, 80% of whom are children and youths.

The diversity and youthful energy flourishing within the community, which should make it a model for inclusion and youth development, has proved to become one of the community's undoing. Like the rest of the country, indigenes are subjected to the low quality of life. The unemployment rate is high and skyrocketing, which means the community is teeming with youths filled with lots of restive energy. Therefore, many children, teenagers and young adults find themselves homeless and in the streets fending for themselves.

This has led to many of them engaging in petty theft, transactional sex, armed robbery, rape, gang-related activities, cultism and other forms of social vices. Teenage pregnancies, drug abuse, statutory rape, among others are also very common in the community.

Therefore, Taking All Men Brother (TAMEB) identified the need for an intervention in Agege, and has therefore taken action by designing a youth reformation project targeted at secondary school students.
The Counseling and Mentorship Programme, launched in Agege in September 2018, was organised in two public secondary schools: Iloro Junior Grammar School and Agege Junior College, Lagos. In the year 2019, the number of beneficiaries of the programme rose to 144 teenagers from both schools. The beneficiaries covered different gender identities, religions, tribes and backgrounds. Below is a graphical representation of the demographics.

**Outcomes of the TAMEB’s Counseling and Mentorship Programme**

The counselling and mentorship programme has recorded some positive impacts, among which is building a sense of belonging and trust between the beneficiaries and the TAMEB team. This has made the students more receptive to the programme and more willing to discuss their personal and educational challenges. Quoting one of the programme beneficiaries,

“The counselling programme has helped me to understand the dangers of juvenile delinquencies, most especially after my friend was killed in a gang fight. Also, the
sessions have allowed me to open up to people who can counsel me about my choices and the effects they can have on my future”.

Also, the school administrators have observed positive changes in some of the deviant students in their attitude towards their education and other members of the school community. Mr. Olasupo, a school administrator of the Agege Junior College, stated that since the inception of the programme in the school, some of the students who are still in the junior school have changed for the better as they are now more receptive to correction and guidance. The students who were formerly under the programme, but are now in the senior section of the school, have displayed signs of responsibility and cool-headedness.

Challenges faced by TAMEB

Like every youth-led non-governmental organisation, the main challenge faced by the organization is funding. Thus far, the organization has been successful in securing private funding from the members of the Board and well-wishers. However, we have had challenges with securing consistent and sufficient funding from institutional and donor organizations for our organization's operations outside of specific project objectives. This has therefore limited our capacity to either expand our ongoing projects and programmes or get our projects that are in the pipeline, take off. This ongoing challenge is one that we are looking forward to permanently surmount so that our organization can grow according to our vision.

Another challenge the organization often encounters is potential repentant religious fundamentalists, who even after interactions and engagements with TAMEB, are adamant about their beliefs, inherent stereotypes and distrust of others. They are not willing to engage in dialogue or build tolerance for adherents of
other religions. This trend is often more prominent among followers of Christianity and Islam, who tend to discriminate among themselves and against other minority religions. Moreover, with constant engagements and continuous orientation through our community engagements such as interfaith dialogues, the Freedom of Religion Conference and capacity building workshop, we have been able to change some stereotypes over time, but a lot still needs to be done.

**Opportunities for Expansion**

Several expansion opportunities abound in the implementation of the two programmes discussed in this chapter, if the right financial and technical resources are available. We seek to hold several forms of meetings including workshops, conferences and seminars across Nigeria that will bring stakeholders in the religious communities and other stakeholders, including religious leaders, faith-based organizations, scholars, youth groups and community leaders, together to chart a common path of religious tolerance in order to enhance peace and security in the country. This is particularly crucial in the northern part of the country, especially the North-Central states of Kaduna and Plateau, amongst others, where inter-religious conflict is a recurring theme.

Furthermore, we would like to scale up the Counseling and Mentorship programme beyond the Agege community in Lagos State to accommodate more local governments, so we can contribute to turning youths away from violent extremism and setting the right examples for their peers. On the 13th of November 2019, the Ministry of Education of Lagos State officially awarded a letter of recognition to the TAMEB *Youth Counselling and Mentorship Programme*. The state government, in the letter, appreciated the efforts and contribution of TAMEB towards the development of education in the state, and also gave their approval...
for the continuation of the programme. With this recognition by the Lagos State Government, we plan to expand the programme to accommodate more beneficiaries across different schools and local government areas in Lagos State.

TAMEB could be supported through enhanced funding from local and international donors, capacity-building training and partnerships with relevant stakeholders in the religious communities, peacebuilding advocacy, as well as conflict resolution.

**Conclusion**

From our activities, we have come to the understanding of the importance of public awareness on the dangers of religious intolerance and violence and the need to tackle poverty and insecurity. Therefore, to build socio-economic development in Nigeria, there is a need for public enlightenment on religions, religious tolerance and peace education, with a few to curbing religious fanaticism, segregation, extremism, terrorism etc. that are plaguing modern-day Nigeria. Furthermore, we have learnt the importance of educating young minds and equipping them with ample knowledge and skills that will give them hope for a better life for themselves, for their immediate environment, and a better Nigeria.

On this occasion of the 5th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, TAMEB confesses to the critical role of this resolution which provides the needed reference point for us. We have therefore engaged, and will continue to engage with government agencies and policymakers in Lagos State in achieving the objectives of the resolution.
AUTHORS’ PROFILE

Mr. Omoyemi Oni has served as the Executive Director for Talking All Men Brother (TAMEB) since September 2016. Under his leadership, TAMEB has effectively created dynamic programmes and collaborations that have seen the organization record tremendous success since the organization began activities in 2017.

Mr. Oborakpororo Ofuya is the Research and Financial officer of Talking All Men Brother (TAMEB). He is a graduate from the prestigious Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State where he studied Environmental Science. He is a co-author of several published research articles in both local and international journals.
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CHAPTER 10

PROMOTING PEACEBUILDING THROUGH THE PROVISION OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT IN NIGERIA

Mojisola Ogundiran

United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy (UNYPD)

Introduction

The United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy (UNYPD) was formed against the backdrop of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth Peace and Security, and Sustainable Development Goals. The organization evolved from a peer meet-up group known as SDGs Thursday. In 2018, two young women of like minds came together to localize the global vision of the SDGs and UNSCR 2250 by founding a youth organization that would promote the role of youth in building peace.

The mission of United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy (UNYPD) clearly reflects the proposition of Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda of the UNSCR 2250. UNYPD seeks to promote the culture of peace in young people, change the negative stereotype associated with youth as being only violent, and empower young people to become peace leaders, while also protecting youth particularly, young women from inequality, conflict and violent environment.

Violent extremism is a grave security challenge facing young people. The threat and impact of violent extremism are felt by young people across the board. The increasing number of young people falling victim of extremist narratives and also bearing the brunt of violent extremist attacks is alarming. Research shows that young women and men are targeted by extremists, either to use them as mercenaries (if they are young men) or to sexually exploit them (if they are young women) – although there exist a few
examples of young men and boys who were sexually exploited in conflict situation and large number of young girls who are used as suicide bombers by Boko Haram. The situations in North-east of Nigeria reflect this scenario clearly.

United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy finds it important to put every effort in building the resilience of youth against extremism either by preventing them from succumbing to extremist narratives or preventing them from becoming victims of violent attacks. UNYPD works through its dedicated team to transform minds, attitudes and behaviour, in order to address inequality, prevent violence and build peace in local communities.

**United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) and UNYPD’s Work**

Our programmes at UNYPD have direct connections to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) on Youth Peace and Security (YPS) which advocates for youth inclusion and participation in peace and security. We focus on building the capacity of young people, particularly young women and men in conflict and underprivileged areas to become social agents of change in their communities. We promote active engagement of young people in civic activities for peace and development. The UNSCR 2250 on YPS has five pillars, which include Prevention, Protection, Participation, Partnership, De-radicalization, Dis-engagement and Re-integration. At the United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy, we focus on promoting the Prevention and Participation pillars of the UNSCR 2250. The reason being that we want more young people to actively participate in peacebuilding by using their creativity to build peace as well as, to deter young people from finding violence and conflict attractive.

Our programme such as the *Young Women Teaching Peace* is helping us to increase young women engagement in civic
activities for peace at the community level in Nigeria. Young women are now able to get the support they need to build their capacity and knowledge on peacebuilding and development. We provide capacity building programmes in collaboration with other organizations to provide personal development to young women in conflict and underprivileged areas. In Nigeria, women and young women make up to 60% of the entire population. At UNYPD, we believe that including and meaningfully engaging young women in civic activities for peace will help to build a large work force of peacebuilders in Nigeria.

Beyond participation, we also give priority to promoting active non-violent behaviour among young men and women. Through peace education that focuses on conflict transformation and prevention and countering of violent extremism (PCVE), we have been able to reduce youth violence at the community level. One of our successes is increasing knowledge on conflict resolution and creating behavioural change on how young people settle disputes. By increasing peaceful settlement of conflicts among young people, we have been able to reduce inter-personal conflict, particularly brawling, which is a common violent conflict in some of the local communities where we work.

At UNYPD, we are very passionate about the pillars of the UNSCR 2250, particularly the Participation and Prevention. We intend to deepen our work on it and ensure the realization of Agenda 2250.

**Intervention**

United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy (UNYPD) is a youth initiative with the goal of creating a violence-free society. As part of our objectives, we prevent and counter extremism and support young people who are survivors of violent extremism and terrorism, by providing them psycho-social
counselling and care. Working in Abuja (a city where the rich and poor live on the opposite side of the spectrum), UNYPD’s intervention is directed at local communities within the city.

UNYPD is structured as a community-based non-profit organization that uses education and creative approaches as a tool to prevent and counter extremism. According to the founder, Miss Mojisola Ogundiran,

“Education for us at UNYPD, is teaching for and about human rights, gender equality, non-violence and sustainable development. In Nigeria, class-room teaching is far too traditional such that it barely emphasizes social and emotional learning and values of social justice. With increasing number of youth growing up in conflict environment, and many young people succumbing to radicalization and extremism, teaching young people how to relate to one another without being aggressive, violent, disrespectful or showing prejudice is important. Our goal is to promote education that opens the eyes of young people to similarities rather than differences; an education that
makes youth critically think on how to build trust, dialogue, collaboration and reconciliation”.

UNYPD is working in local communities in Abuja. Reaching more than 700 young people annually, UNYPD is standing as a youth movement on the frontline of preventing and countering extremism. By spreading peace education among indigent young people in conflict areas, UNYPD has successfully brought diverse groups of youths from different faiths, cultures, genders and backgrounds together through workshops and interactive activities. It has organized more than thirty youth-centered community programmes that addressed the root causes and drivers of hate speech; promoted intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and increased mutual understanding among young people in the local communities. The organization has empowered local youths in communities with peace activism skills, to enable them take individual and collective action against violent extremism.

One of the community-led peacebuilding programmes of United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy aims to promote appropriate quality education for peace that equips youths, particularly underprivileged youths, with the ability to engage in conflict resolution, prevent and counter violent extremism, and build peace; a major plank of the UNSCR 2250 on Youth Peace and Security. One of the local approaches UNYPD uses to promote peace education among young women and men in conflict prone communities is establishment of youth groups of like-minds as peer-mentors in their community. The Peer-mentors bring together their peers to learn about and discuss peacebuilding values and how to practice them. The peer-mentors are small groups of youth volunteers passionate about building peace from the youth standpoint. UNYPD supports peer-mentors with tailored mentorship and resources to enhance the community organizing programme.
Importantly, the use of peer-mentor groups to promote community peace education programmes led us to form the ‘Young Women Teaching Peace’ community. We recognized the indispensable role that young women play in peacebuilding and their strategic position within the community. We leveraged on this to create a network of young women promoting peace education and the values of the UNSCR 2250 Youth Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda. More often than not, Young women are subject to double marginalization – as women, and as youth. Young women do not have a voice, and only speak when spoken to. With little or no education, many young women are relegated to the domestic sphere and unpaid labour within their own community. Young women, especially those in conflict and underprivileged communities, do not have opportunity to access information at the same rate as men, due to security threats as well as educational and cultural limitations. This consequently affects the quality of participation of women in peacebuilding and development in their local communities.

The Young Women Teaching Peace programme is aimed at empowering young women from conflict-affected communities to be leaders and agents of peace. We train and mentor a small group of young women on how to facilitate training with peace education curriculum in schools and communities, using non-formal methodology, as well as teaching them how to start community activism and engagement, so that they can localize the YPS Agenda. We also provide resources that help young women put their ideas to practice. The Young Women Teaching Peace group is addressing the low engagement of young women in community peacebuilding and the lack of access to information on peacebuilding by young women. Currently 20 young women belong to the Young Women Teaching Peace community.
In addition, under the *Young Women Teaching Peace* programme, we organize capacity-building programmes for young women leaders in conflict and underprivileged areas. A major part of the capacity building training is focused on community organizing. We recognized that young women need to develop their skills to mobilize for change and to promote solidarity among one another, therefore, we organize ‘*training the trainers*’ programme where we teach young women important skills in community organizing, such as how to do advocacy, dialogue and organize meet-ups. The skill-building training helped some of the young women to hold campaign and peer meet-ups where they discussed salient issues like gender-based violence and community volunteering for the first time.

Through the *Young Women Teaching Peace* programme we connect young women in conflict and underprivileged areas virtually to young women mentors who provide words of
encouragement through experience sharing, to boost the confidence of the young women to defy stereotypes. Currently we have the *Global Exchange* programme that we run in partnership with different organizations, to develop the global competencies of young women and connect young women in conflict and underprivileged areas to global mentors. Our aim is to increase access to resources, mentorship and peer-support for young women to boost their abilities and interest in peacebuilding. Some of the members of *Young Women Teaching Peace* have experienced a shift in attitude and knowledge after joining the *Young Women Teaching Peace* community.

Another intervention United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy UNYPD is leading in the area of community-led peacebuilding is supporting young people who are survivors of violent extremism and terrorism. We do this by providing psycho-social counselling and activities to help them overcome conflict trauma. In Abuja, more than 2,000 Internally Displaced Persons IDPs live in shelter camps with little or no care. The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in 2009 when the jihadist group started an armed rebellion against the government of Nigeria, has caused deaths of more than 10,000 people and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people across four states in Nigeria. Sadly, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Abuja lack not only humanitarian assistance but also proper medical care within the IDP camp. The demography of the displaced people shows they are mostly women, children and youth. The colossal effect of the Boko Haram violent attack on children is that “it robbed them of their childhood”. Many of the children are destabilized and are living without adequate shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. The war also affected their education and psychological well-being.
As a youth organization on the frontline of community peacebuilding, United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy (UNYPD) intervenes in supporting the children and youth survivors of the Boko Haram insurgency living in the IDP camp in Abuja. Recognizing that many of them have experienced horrific killings, loss, and emotional and physical damage, we initiated *Social and Emotional Learning and Mindfulness* project to help the traumatized internally displaced teens and youths cast off sense of dehumanization, overcome pain and reconnect back to society. The intervention focused on helping the children and youth learn ways to control their emotions, and cultivate the spirit of discipline, self-love and inner peace. The UNYPD team worked as adult facilitators and engaged the children and youths in small group discussions, role plays, lectures and skill building exercises to provoke their critical thinking and self-reflection.

Our Mindfulness programme for children and youth who are survivors of the Boko Haram insurgency, is a critical community intervention for peace, as it provides a circle of support to children and youth who are war traumatized. The children and youth in the internally displaced camp already have visible signs of trauma on their faces, some even expressed their dying passion for the future because they felt they had lost everything. The psycho-social support continues to provide safe space for young people to express themselves, find their voices, develop a sense of belonging and recover from the wounds of loss. Indirectly, the programme helps to prevent the vulnerable children and youth from being drawn to gangs or lured by violent groups as they are consciously developing a new sense of belonging. Currently, the programme has reached more than 100 children and youth living in the Kuchingoro and Durumi Internally Displaced Camps, in Abuja.
Outcome (Impact)

Our interventions in preventing and reducing the effect of violent extremism on children and youth in local communities in Nigeria have contributed to strengthening communities and building youth’s resilience against crime and violence. Through peace education messages, we have interrupted the spread of bias and discriminatory narratives conducive to violence and extremism among young people. For instance, under our Peace Education programmes for youth, we organise skill-building workshop and dialogue that empowers young people to critically think of their roles in starting and/or stopping violence, as well as in driving and/or building bridges among individuals and communities. Our educational programmes on peace have created a shift in knowledge and change in behaviour among young people in local communities.

United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy further increased the inclusion of young women in local peacebuilding through its programmes. The Young Women Teaching Peace community for instance, has provided opportunity for young women in conflict and unprivileged areas to gain both local and global supports as well as resources; an opportunity that was hitherto unavailable. More than 20 young women now use their voices and skills to contribute to community peace and development. The Young Women Teaching Peace programme empowers young women to receive training and mentorship on peacebuilding that would be useful for their community peace advocacy.

More so, UNYPD has increased access of underprivileged children and youth to mental health. Through the Social and Emotional Learning and Mindfulness programme in the internally displaced camps, young survivors of terrorism were able to open up on their emotional pains and inner struggle. The Mindfulness
programme brought them sense of hope and taught them forgiveness. It also expedite their healing from the wound of loss and displacement.

**Challenges**

It is quite unbelievable but the truth is that most of our initiatives are self-funded. The team of United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy fundraise almost all the money used to implement our ideas. We are yet to get any grant despite applying for several grants. The funding of our Peace Education project directed towards preventing violent extremism, and Mindfulness project, which focused on helping children and youth traumatized by conflict and violence were solely from money realized from our crowd-funding and donations. We believed strongly that the project would have had more far-reaching impact if there was enough funding. For instance, during the Mindfulness project, we could only work with 100 children and youth in two IDP camps despite the fact that a large number of children and youth showed interest.

In addition, we are affected by a shortage of manpower. UNYPD has been carrying out programmes since 2018 in schools and local communities. However, we heavily depend on volunteers to carry out our projects. Sometimes, due to lack of funds, we could not sustain paying our volunteers stipends, and this invariably affected our organization staff strength.

Another major challenge we face is the reluctance of local leaders in offering support to our work. The stereotype of seeing youth as overly ambitious and incapable of leading still constrain us from achieving our vision of creating a violence free nation. For instance, a local chief once asserted, during our courtesy visit that, while he appreciated our work, he did not see how our activities would achieve much change because the peace work was bigger than us. There is still need for local communities to see young
people as capable of making change and that no matter how small the change is, it is a step forward.

**Opportunities for expansion**

We seriously want to expand our work to reach more people and local communities. For instance, our *Young Women Teaching Peace* programme is one we look forward to expanding to more local communities across Nigeria. In Nigeria, there are so many women who can be good resource for peace work. Unfortunately, the strength and knowledge of women are untapped. The *Young Women Teaching Peace* programme provides a solution to how we can include young women in peace and security. The *Young Women Teaching Peace* is a community of practice that shapes the knowledge and attitude of young women to become peacebuilders in their local communities.

More so, we want to complement our peace education message with economic empowerment to strengthen our effort against violent extremism and terrorism. We evaluated our *Peace Education* programme and realized that it would be more sustainable if we could provide our beneficiaries with economic empowerment to reduce their susceptibility to violence and extremism. While we already have ideas on different economic empowerment programmes, we presently cannot fund it. We hope that through support from partners, we would be able to expand our community-led peacebuilding programmes.
AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Mojisola Ogundiran is a graduate of History and Strategic Studies, and a Youth for Peace advocate, promoting the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth Peace and Security. She founded the non-profit, United Network of Youth for Peace and Diplomacy (UNYPD). Mojisola manages a Youth4Peace Club in 2 unity schools and internally displaced camp in Abuja. Mojisola Ogundiran is a fellow of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Open Minds Young Voices (OMYV) ‘Young Activists’ programme. She is also part of UNOY’s Pool of Trainers representing West and Central Africa. Through the global peacebuilding platforms, Mojisola Ogundiran delivers conflict transformation and peacebuilding training to young people to strengthen their capacity to engage in grassroots peacebuilding.
CHAPTER 11

STRENGTHENING YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AND RAISING A GENERATION OF YOUTH LEADERS IN NIGERIA

Olasupo Abideen

Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative

Introduction

Young people of the world who gathered at the 67th United Nations session, to add their voices and efforts towards upholding the value of collective humanity. They also committed themselves to seeking global intervention to the problems limiting the achievement of the targets outlined in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Globally, the impact of youths in achieving the unthinkable in every society is one that cannot be understated. With their unique energy, tenacity and vibrancy, youths remain a strong pillar that propels humanity towards a future that is better. Today, in many societies, millions of households are still struggling to live above extreme poverty, get quality education and standby healthcare and, overcome the effects of extra-judicial killings. Sad enough, a large portion of youths in our society lives in the shadow of violent conflicts, with every passing day becoming tough with no end in sight. This has worsened poverty rates, made inaccessible essential social services like affordable functional education and healthcare, while also denying them peaceful environment to fulfill their dreams.

In a similar vein, the United Nations 2016 statistics estimates that there are 1.3 billion young people within the age range of 5 to 24 years in the world, with nearly one billion of them living in developing countries where conflict is more likely to have taken
place. Despite all the positive indices indicating the huge potential of young people towards development of the society, it is disheartening that majority of the young people are being made redundant. Our governments that are supposed to drive policies towards achieving these potentials and provide basis for the birth of new global multilateral structures have not been forthcoming.

The existing limitations to youth participation in sustainable development are a disservice to the society and humanity at large. Unwanted as it seems to the policy makers, the limited contribution of young minds in governance made its mark in the society. If all hands are on deck in mobilising the energy, creativity and tenacity of the young people, a lot can be achieved.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 is a landmark for youth peacebuilding as it reflects a shift in the negative narrative of young people as menaces or troublemakers, to them being recognised as peacebuilders and positive assets in their societies. Before the adoption of the UNSCR 2250, discourse around young people’s role in peace and security were of two major perspectives: the first saw them as victims of violence while the second regarded youths as perpetrators of violence. However, with the adoption of the Resolution 2250 in December 2015, young people’s role in preventing and resolving conflicts, and in building sustainable peace is now been acknowledged both in the local society and international community. The five pillars of the UNSCR 2250 (prevention, protection, participation, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration) also play positive role in the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda, especially as it encompasses the major interventions that young people need. It also offers an upgrade in the way we think about youth, peace and security, providing an opportunity and platform for youth’s voices to be heard worldwide.
Intervention

Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBYDI), with registration number CAC/IT/NO 119116 (https://www.thebrainbuilders.org), is a youth-based non-profit and non-governmental organization founded in 2014 to promote digital engagement, youth participation in community development, public health, education development programme, human rights and good governance; thereby empowering marginalised communities in Nigeria. The organization is structured as an institutional and collaborative entity, with a large volunteer base across the country, which was developed during our SDG localization project. BBYDI has an organizational structure that enables the team to work flexibly and take on specific roles that fit their career growth and development. BBYDI has viable policies on human resources, procurement and financial organization, which guide operations of the organization and enables it to manage its grants effectively.

The activities of the BBYDI have been greatly enhanced by the first pillar of the UNSCR 2250: participation. The participation pillar calls on UN member states to look for ways to ensure an inclusive representation of young people in the decision-making processes at all levels of government. It also implores relevant actors to take into account the views and participation of young people when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, while acknowledging that the exclusion of youths is detrimental to building sustainable peace in all societies. The pillar also stresses the importance of the United Nations Security Council missions, taking into account youth-related considerations through consultations with local and international youth groups.

In Nigeria, youths are often involved as actors in violent conflicts but remain neglected when it comes to the decision-making process. The participation pillar of UNSCR 2250, therefore,
provides an instrument to ensure that youth’s participation in peace talks and policy processes are not regarded as an afterthought but is seen as an integral part of the peace design. It urges the Nigerian government as a UN member state to start seeing young people as peace partners who deserve a seat at the decision-making table. Through this pillar, there is now the realisation that youths can play a role in shaping political decision and seeking accountability from the government. BBYDI, therefore, carry out activities that are geared towards advocating for the formulation of policies that will give room for youth participation in politics and decision-making, while enhancing the quality of democratic governance.

BBYDI uses creative technology to simplify public information, thereby stimulating a community of active citizens and enabling their right to demand accountability, institutional reforms, efficient service delivery and equitable society. We also try to strengthen local communities by enabling informed debates, creating platforms for dialogue, and building the capacity of citizens on how to hold their government accountable. In the recent past, BBYDI has organized the North-Central Youth Peace Summit in collaboration with Passion for Peace Initiative, and Junior Chambers International, JCI. Also, the leadership of the organization are peacebuilding advocates, who are working or serving at different levels to improve dialogue, projects and initiatives around peace, most especially, in Northern Nigeria. The Executive Director is a Board Member at Nigeria Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, a foremost peacebuilding coalition in Nigeria. More so, 70% of the team working on this project are products of America-trained programmes like the Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI) fellowships, United States Institute of Peace (USIP) course programmes, among others.

At BBYDI, we utilize the UNESCO Model of Quality Education to design our intervention projects and welfare programmes. We
have recorded success stories and made an impact through training and helping youths to develop attitudes and values to grow and participate actively in addressing core challenges in their local communities. Since its inception in 2012, we have worked directly with over 500,000 students in Nigeria. We employ best practices of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) to introduce real-time connectivity that improves the way we innovate for better teaching and learning.

The adoption of UNSCR 2250 has also brought increased partnership for our work. As at the time of writing this essay, BBYDI is been sponsored by the United States Embassy to counter fake news on coronavirus in Northern Nigeria, while also working with International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) on “Interfaith Awareness on COVID-19 Prevention at Places of Worship in North Central Nigeria”. Through after-school mentoring sessions and supplementary learning classes, we have been able to groom young people to be responsible citizens who can actively participate in, and communicate with the world with spirit of compassion and sharing. We have, at different times, organised digital skills training for teachers, students and civil servants in the North Central owing to our age-long partnership with the state governments.

Very spectacular to Nigeria, the rising young generation is now waking up to the reality that our government is doing little to address manifold of challenges they face. Apparently, young people believe that the government has failed them; it has bitten more than it could chew, and now, it is up to them – the youth – to proffer solutions to the problems that seem to wanting to consume us. Amidst this situation, a group of young Nigerians are teaming up to recognize that, regardless of nationality, ethnicity and religion, we are all part of each other; not just interconnected but interdependent. They believe that our collective future rests on ensuring that youths in the society have a role to play, and as well
re-imagine systems that prioritize collective interests, which can build a promising and fulfilling future in for all.

We, in the BBYDI, are taking the lead and making concerted efforts towards inspiring a generation of leaders. This is aimed towards attaining sustainability and drive growth and development, and building an ecosystem of leaders striving to attain excellence in governance, sustainable development, democratic dividends, and entrepreneurship. In this light, we have been able to embark on some projects that keep drawing us nearer to our set vision. Some of these projects are discussed below:

**Our Projects**

To change the narrative of these manifolds of challenges faced by young people, there is a need for a change in governance. To that effect, BBYDI launched a campaign that advocates for more youths' participation in politics. With this campaign, we want to ensure that we have a larger population of youths contesting elections into various political offices; orientate them on the need for popular participation in politics, and stand as backbones when the need arises.

As an organization, we are taking the lead and hoping to use this campaign to contribute our quota towards carving out a better Nigeria. We believe if the youths are involved in governance and decision-making, we are going to be united in our vision for the better Nigeria we have always envisaged.

Sequel to this, in partnership with #Onedotall, we spearhead a campaign tagged ‘#VoteYourFuture’ and ‘Make Naija Stronger’ in the last general election. Our core aim was advocating for one percent of Nigeria’s Consolidated Revenue for youth development, which if granted, would help our advocacy to be stronger. Also, pre-election, we championed a campaign with the tag #YourPVCIsYourRight, mobilizing support for people to get their
voters’ card. We sensitized them on why voting in elections matters and the need to serve as change agents, towards birthing a better Nigeria. By this token, we monitored elections, held government accountable, and trained youths on digital skills.

**Outcome**

In the process of striving to establish these projects, we have been able to achieve some milestones. Though we are still counting, but even with the level of implementation, we are sure that more success awaits us. Top on the list of our success is that, since the launch of the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign, we have mobilized supports from various local government areas through designated local coordinators, and met with state parliaments. Nationally, Kwara State parliament was the first to pass the bill.

At the national level, we met with various parliamentarians to lobby the national assembly to have the bill passed into law. Furthermore, as a result of our advocacy, Kwara State has witnessed an upsurge in the number of young people that contested for political posts during the last general election. Kwara State governor appointed the youngest commissioner in the country, while 50 percent of his cabinet are youths.

Moreover, our #VoteYourFuture and ‘Make Naija Stronger’ Campaign has borne positive fruits. Amazingly, barely 24 hours after our executive director was interviewed, as a result of an open letter he wrote, which got attention of national and international media including the CNN and BBC, the Nigerian President accented to the 1% Consolidated Revenue Fund for youth development.

**Challenges**

As an NGO striving for a better society, we are faced with several challenges that keep undermining how far we can go. Some of the challenges include:
Funding: Like most youth-led peacebuilding organisations operating at the grassroots level, we need financial resources to be able to effectively carry out our activities. However, getting funding continues to pose a challenge to the continued success of our operations. Donations gotten from members of the BBYDI constitute the major source of funding used in the execution of most of our projects. Although, we try to seek grants and funds from local and international donor organisations, the outcome is not always favourable. Hence, we have had to halt some of our activities at the grassroots levels due to the lack of adequate funding to complete the project.

Lack of Support from the Government: The UNSCR 2250 promotes young people’s participation and representation in the decision-making process, and calls on UN members states to take youths’ needs and perspectives into consideration at all levels of the peace process. Despite this call for action, the Nigerian government, at various levels, does not support young people, thus making their voices unheard in politics. Young people are regarded as leaders of tomorrow and not of today, which acts as an impediment to the efforts to promote peace. The government of Nigeria has also not been supportive, especially on the aspect of transparency and accountability. Although we keep using the instrument of the law, which is the freedom of information act, to demand accountability, it has not yielded serious outcome.

Dedicated Team Members: The BBYDI is a volunteer-based organisation, with no form of financial remuneration for members due to lack of adequate funding. As a result, it is not usually easy to get committed and dedicated team members to stay with us for a long period. Although most of our volunteers are passionate about promoting and building sustainable peace, they also need money to meet their socio-economic needs. Hence, we are always short of
devoted volunteers which impinge on our ability to reach a wider layer of youths.

Opportunities for Expansion

The UNSCR 2250 acts as a ground-breaking resolution for young people, especially in promoting the YPS agenda. Through the resolution, young people are now speaking the same language on issues relating to sustainable peace and development. The resolution affirms that young people have their powerful voices and should be allowed to speak for themselves on issues that concern them. Through this resolution and the subsequent resolutions on youth, peace and security, the activities of the BBYDI have improved significantly and are now gaining recognition both in the local and international space.

One of the major opportunities for expansion for BBYDI is the mobilization of more resources for the implementation of projects at the grassroots level. In the partnership pillar of the Resolution 2250, the UN Security Council urges member states to increase their political, technological, logistics and financial supports, taking accounts the needs and participation of youths in peace efforts, in conflict and post-conflict societies. The BBYDI can leverage on this pillar to call on local and international donor agencies and governmental organisations to fund some of her projects. In line with this is the need to strengthen partnership and collaboration with other youth-led organisations in Nigeria, which have been made easier by the resolution UNSCR 2250 that gave young people one voice on issues relating to peace and security.

Another opportunity for expansion is the use of an interdisciplinary approach in the promotion of peace within our community. In recent years, we have realised that everybody has a role to play in building sustainable peace and development in Nigeria, irrespective of the type of work that we do. One of the
ways we can work towards achieving this is through citizenship enlightenment, using various social media platforms to engage in peace education campaigns. There is also the need to get a larger physical office, which will go a long way in enhancing our sustainable plan. In line with this, we will also like to recruit more state volunteers to help in promoting civic engagement and peaceful political participation across Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

From the foregoing, we are led to the logical conclusion that there has come a time when we need to pledge support for young population playing important role in governance. The youth need strive towards contributing their quota to national development. But the governments and other stakeholders, including social and development partners, national and international donor organizations must see to the need to overcome the challenges faced by the youths in playing their role in governance. The UNSCR 2250 provides us with the skills and knowledge that we need to mobilise for active youth participation in the decision-making and peace processes in Nigeria.

As much as we remain optimistic about "raising a generation of youths leaders", the truth is that this lofty dream can only be achieved when we jettison politics with bitterness, acrobatic religiosity, and embrace the collective efforts of the human race. Just like the two longest Nigerian rivers, Niger and Benue, flow peacefully into each other, despite originating from different sources, our fate also lies in our unity with purpose. Young people need to work together. We need to think, plan, act positively, and stop speaking with disjointed voice. After all, for the world to be stable, there has to be peaceful co-existence and social cohesion.
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CHAPTER 12
THE TALANOA OF MAI-SUYA APPROACH FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Mahmood Mohammed Maishanu and Kenneth Offor
Ecologistics Integrated Service

Introduction
Ecologistics Integrated Services Limited (EISL) maps out key thematic areas of operations, and plots out strategic areas that need sustainable intervention as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a social enterprise. 2019 was the year for actionable initiatives to support public schools and IDPs, while addressing the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation in Nigeria. We desire to seize every opportunity to re-enact good memories for this vulnerable group.

In recent times, we have implemented several activities for public schools and the internally displaced persons, such as climate change sensitization, psychotherapy, capacity building, awareness, fun activities, sporting activities, talent hunt, sharing of toys and clothing, food drive and so on. With an estimated 2,500 participants spread across Lagos and Edo States, the task was enormous but achievable, especially with supportive patrons who contributed and partnered.

We understand climate change is a complex and often misunderstood concept, and insecurity can be found at many different societal levels. One has to differentiate between security at the level of the individual and security at the level of states. At the level of the individual, security encompasses a wide range of spheres (notably food, water, and energy) of which physical security is only one element. The concept of “human security” encompasses these various components of an individual’s wellbeing, and this
need not be so readily equated to conflict, even if it poses a developmental challenge in itself.

At Ecologistics, we are a climate change investment and sustainable development firm; reframing environmental-social challenges to opportunities for sustainable development for nations, sub-national entities, organizations and communities by using sustainable innovations as tools for reframing and transformation. We use approaches like Mai-Suya, which is an idea of Dr. Paul Abolo, The President of Ecologistics Integrated Service.

Mai-suya is the name given to meat skewer

“Suya or tsire in the native language Hausa, is a spicy meat skewer, which is a popular food item in West Africa. It is also eaten in Sudan, referred to as "Agashe". Suya is generally made with skewered beef, ram, or chicken. Innards, such as kidney, liver and tripe are also used. The thinly sliced meat is marinated in various spices which include peanut cake, salt, vegetable oil and other flavourings, and then barbecued. Suya is served with extra helpings of dried pepper mixed with spices and sliced onions”.

The notion behind the Mai Suya strategy is to give a cute cut from the most delicious part of the meat to influence the person buying. As such, Mai suya is an Appreciative Intelligence approach to problem-solving given the test of the solution for sustainability and behavioural change. What better ways to narrate this odyssey than using the grand “Talanoa”.

"Talanoa is a traditional word used in Fiji and across the Pacific to reflect a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue. The purpose of Talanoa is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good. The process of Talanoa involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experience through storytelling.”
According to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, Talanoa fosters stability and inclusiveness in dialogue, by creating a safe space that embraces mutual respect for a platform for decision making for a greater good. As a climate change and sustainable development firm, we make sure we go in line with all the government instruments in engagements and association. We therefore adopt the concept of using the Talanoa Dialogue, which is a process designed to help countries implement and enhance their Nationally Determined Contributions. This Dialogue was mandated by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, to enable countries to take stock of the collective local and global efforts to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement, which commits signatories to limit the rise in average global temperature to 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

**UNSCR 2250 and Climate Change**

The five years of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 2250) marks a historic moment for the youth. No doubt, Resolution 2250, which the United Nations Security Council adopted unanimously, on 9 December 2015, is a ground-breaking resolution on Youth, Peace and Security that recognises that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”. This historic moment has put youths in the centre of processes and policies for the sustainable development of peace and security as well as climate change action. Climate Change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment in which without peace and security, we cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030. This resolution has come in handy as it is a unique and unprecedented resolution for different reasons. To achieve
climate action and global security goals, the role of young people in their ability to promote peace, transform conflicts and prevent violence is important.

The UNSCR 2250 five key pillars for action i.e. participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration, support climate change action in building resilience in vulnerable communities. The landmark resolution correlates with climate actions in the sense that youths should be given a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels and to consider setting up a mechanism that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in the peace processes and climate action.

The Grand Narrative

Looking at the context of Nigeria, no doubt there is truth to the grand narrative of climate change as the root cause of, and factor leading to, resurgence of violent conflict in recent years, causing immense human suffering, at an enormous social and economic cost. Violent insurgency like the Boko-haram today has become complex and protracted, often becoming interlinked to global challenges such as climate change. Due to the drying-off of Lake Chad, conflict, insurgency and insecurity have become intertwined with the reality of climate change. It is increasingly recognized as an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. To understand ‘what works,’ we review the experience of different countries and institutions to highlight elements that have contributed to peace and security.

The UNSCR 2250 is very critical at this point. States hold the primary responsibility for livelihood and prevention, but to be effective, civil society, the private sector, regional and international organizations must be involved. Enhancing the meaningful participation of youths in decision making, as well as long-term
policies to address the aspirations of young people are fundamental to sustaining peace; and the best place to start from is the public schools and Internally Displaced Persons camps, which are key linkages to the grassroots and persons of concern.

**Intervention**

The current global pandemic, drought, desertification, flooding, excessive rainfalls and the many climatic change conditions have shown the thin line between peace and violence. As these grow severe, millions of people, particularly in Nigeria, will have no choice than to migrate due to the hazards. This climate-induced relocation, or “climigration,” will have significant consequences on socio-economy, security, health, food security and livelihood of so many people.

As such, we embarked on two major actionable projects that have the component of climate change mitigation, adaptation and peace steadfastness. The mitigation and adaptation project was carried out at Opebi Grammar School, a public school in Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria. The school and its environment was facing untold hardship whenever there was downpour. The situation is partly a product of anthropogenic vulnerability in the community, a result of excessive and indiscriminate use of sachet water (pure water) and plastics by students leading to blockage of drains and drainage channels. As such, during the rainy season, the school, some roads and houses get submerged in flood.

Eco-logistics came to the rescue with the Mai-Suya mitigation approach pilot project by installing a central hygiene water system with the provision of water bottles for students, capacity building on climate change and environmental hygiene, and a smart waste disposal system to solve the problem of indiscriminate use of sachet and plastic water, while also initiating recycling. Approaches such as Mai-Suya are a central hallmark of
mitigation and adaptation in building capacity for not only managing risks, but also for taking advantage of beneficial opportunities, through sustainable solutions for people to adopt and see it work practically and effectively. However, climate mitigation and adaptation is a community development tool that fosters change and can be used to resolve conflicts and bring peaceful coexistence. They are uniquely aligned in their capacity to build a central tenet of community development services, while they stand as a tool to drive sustainable development goals.

**Mai Suya Approach**

The second actionable project is the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) project. Most of the survivors are children and women as their fathers and husbands were the first targets of the onslaught; while the young women and young men ranked next in onslaught priority. The displaced persons are sheltered in IDP camps where less-than-basic shelter, food and emergency care are provided for them. After the insurgency has been defeated, they would be relocated back to their communities. This sounds like an open-and-close case which does not make provision for their need in terms of intensive psychological healing and psychotherapy.

To begin to address the challenges, we had to come up with the methodology of combining the “Healing and Making Markets Work for the IDPs”. This is a Sustainable Enterprise approach which uses psychotropic healing and teaching climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy training and skill acquisition. We also organise eco-enterprise villages where we taught how to have farmer field schools, where people learn about innovative way to settle in one place, grazing grounds cultivation methods, as well as ways to reduce post-harvest losses, while also not losing track of their mental health and trauma healing.
We also taught techniques for local seed multiplication, provided vaccination, trained local animal health workers and restored watering places for cattle on grazing grounds. We also improved the supply of drinking water for the population by rehabilitating and deploying contemporary technologies for sourcing clean water like local phytoremediation technologies. This was tailored towards increasing agricultural production and encouraging IDPs to grow a variety of vegetables and staple foods that comes with ready off-takers on a built virtual market to support the programme.

The predominant voices in the IDP story are the voices of what is read in the newsprint or brief commentary in the news media. Sometimes some gruesome accounts are exposed to the social media; circulated briefly and shortly deleted due to the high rate of information on social media. It has served its purpose – an emotional shot. No effort is made at unearthing the nitty-gritty of this grand narrative by identifying the incoherencies, discontinuity and ruptures that surround this story.

The Mai Suya notion here is using phenomenology as evidence and case studies from peer-reviewed needs assessment, evaluations and grey literature to embed sustainability in concerned persons. It primarily focuses on livelihood support initiatives of those within the IDP camps, but also draws some examples of intervention tools by selfless association that looked into the urgency to capture the real-life situation that takes place in small groups, which are not captured in the main story or downplayed because of excluded narratives of the little people in the group. No one seems to care about their story; but without these small stories, the real story and lessons learned are lost. We have also lost the balance and credible information for preventing and dealing with future monsters – even greater than the Boko Haram sect.
Outcome

We provided a sustainable livelihood by teaching them about climate-smart agriculture, hydroponics and aquaponics precisely, which is enterprising, and tackles climate change as an adaptation method. This skill would support their reintegration to communities. We tried to change the narrative by providing a new way of looking at IDPs livelihoods that combines an enterprising and sustainable system approach (Mai Suya) with more traditional livelihood interventions.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to concerned person livelihoods. Interventions must be adapted to the local context. There is a need for a programmatic example of how to build the nexus between humanitarian and development actions in order to pave the way for more enterprise-oriented approaches to livelihood initiatives which ultimately will contribute to the development of the comprehensive response approach. Such an approach is one that both heals psychological trauma and builds capacity in concerned persons, the global compact for resettlement, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 13 on Climate Change, and Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and other goals.

Most approaches used for concerned persons usually focus on IDPs resettlement camps and sharing of relief materials. But these kinds of approach often end up missing strengthening the supply side of the labour market and psychotherapy, i.e. improving the employability, skill sets, traumatic healing therapy and know-how of concerned persons. The idea is that entrepreneurship training, psychotherapy, financial education and vocational training will enable concerned persons to heal from traumatic experiences and start micro-enterprises or small income-generating activities that will provide a means of livelihood and lead to self-reliance.
Results and Impacts

**Sustainable Economic Inclusion:** Sustainable livelihoods were based on a sound and comprehensive understanding of existing markets and the private business sectors within which concerned persons are making a living.

**Sustainable and Smart Integration:** Both concerned persons and host communities who are themselves suffering from unemployment and poverty were integrated into the initiative to avoid being perceived as discriminatory by host communities, a situation that can create or exacerbate tensions.

**Push and Pull Factors:** "Push" factors aimed at building the capacities of the target group to engage with the market, for instance, through skills development and network; while "pull" factors focus on developing market systems in such a way as to expand and diversify the market opportunities available to both the target group and the host community.

Challenges and Lessons

Multidimensional peacebuilding effort is undermined by the fact that climate change is already affecting key elements of the peacebuilding mandate. To better prepare for and adequately respond to what is an increasingly complex peacebuilding context, efforts must become more climate-sensitive. Three aspects will be particularly important in this regard:

1. **Properly assess climate-related security risks**

   Given the increasingly complex impacts of climate change on the prospects for peace, peacebuilding actors need to know more, not only about the background to a particular conflict but also of the climate-related issues in the contexts in which they are operating. This is not just an add-on to core knowledge about conflict and peacebuilding, but an essential part. This will involve assessing: (a) the risks climate change poses for peacekeeping,
peacebuilding, and conflict prevention activities; (b) the risks that climate adaptation projects pose to the prospects for peace; and (c) the risks that arise from climate-insensitive peacebuilding and development interventions. Further, this requires funding and the development of training programmes before deployment that will inform personnel of how climate-related security risks affect their work.

2. Increase cross-agency knowledge exchange and learning

The multifaceted impact of climate change on social, economic, and political processes has implications for all peacebuilding actors. To generate greater coordination and better information on the ground, enhanced exchanges of knowledge will be needed between various agencies and organizations. A systematic collection of “lessons learned” and best practices in peace operations should be put in place to increase cross-agency dialogue and encourage the development of joint responses and training. This should also lead to specific recommendations on revising and adjusting existing funding streams that inhibit collaboration and fosters unhealthy competition.

3. Maximize synergies (Partnerships and Collaborations)

Peacebuilding today is often caught in a dilemma between the need for immediate response to the threat of impending violence and to meet the need for long-term development. Actors need to identify better ways to navigate between these competing demands using integrated response strategies such as Mai Suya. Instead of being purely guided by possible risks, peacebuilding actors should proactively identify climate action as an opportunity to build sustainable peace.

Projects that aim for both climate action and development can help to bring about both short-term adaptation and long-term resilience. A key aim should be to recast the role of youth as agents of positive change, rather than victims of climate impacts. This way,
they will be better placed to contribute to peacebuilding by engaging with communities, strengthening the state’s ability to provide services and enabling climate-sensitive development. Such approaches, moreover, will aid conflict prevention as they mitigate local grievances and reduce marginalization, which is becoming increasingly prevalent root causes of conflict.

Conclusion

In summary, climate change is not just an issue of human security; it is transforming the security landscape. To be able to deliver on the key mandate of guaranteeing peace and security, strengthen governance and justice systems and ensure broader social and economic development. Youth peacebuilding efforts need to become more climate-sensitive. Less is known about the exact mechanisms through which climate change affects violent conflict. Climate Change Action addresses this lacuna in the light of Mai Suya approach. We evaluate to what extent the reality and needs assessment provide coherent explanations that identify relevant mechanisms, actors, and outcomes. Also, we found what the expected temporal and spatial distribution of violence and the confounding political factors implied.
AUTHORS’ PROFILE

Mahmood Mohammed Maishanu is the Vice President of Ecologistics with extensive experience in the integration of ICT, sustainability, and innovation applications to government organizations, business organizations, entrepreneurship, franchise and NGOs.

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CHAPTER 13

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND BUILDING PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES: RAISING VALUE-DRIVEN AND ETHICAL YOUTH

Joy Godwin

Programmes Director, Leadworld Leadership Initiative

Introduction

Leadworld Leadership Initiative is a youth-led and youth-focused initiative with a mission to raise a generation of young people with the heart of leadership excellence. Our programmes are designed to address the challenges young people are faced with, ranging from poor quality education, unemployment and poverty. These issues are addressed through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), particularly: No Poverty (SDG 1), Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16), with the long term goal of bridging the leadership gap and building peaceful communities. Through our programmes, we have had a traction reach of over 2,000 beneficiaries.

This chapter reports on Leadworld’s Lead Young Project with a vision to develop models to curb violence and cultism in schools and communities; equipping young people from their teens with the knowledge and skills to facilitate and sustain peace in their communities, and securing them opportunities that guarantee their transition post-secondary school into higher education or decent work, thus reducing the population of young people that are neither in education, employment and training.

This chapter also assesses the contribution made by Leadworld’s Lead Young Project in promoting the agenda of the

Problem Statement

The Nigerian youth is faced with myriads of challenges ranging from poverty, poor quality education, identity crisis, lack of self-awareness, unemployment, lack of life skills, media diet, a sense of hopelessness, to mention a few. These challenges have presented young people with social and economic pressure that have forced them to respond by seeking affluence, esteem and recognition through illegal and violent means. Of special mention is the high rate and spread of cultism in institutions of learning, which has become worrisome to the Nigerian society as young people, involved usually turn out to be criminals.

Over 40 different cult groups, with a total of over 12,000 chapters, operate in school campuses across Nigeria. These gangs have killed at least 10,000 people between 1996 and 2019. Hundreds of thousands of people have been injured, harassed, raped, arrested, detained, suspended and expelled as a result of cultism. Evidence further shows that cult gangs are recruiting members from primary and secondary schools and violence is becoming a norm in Nigeria’s primary and secondary schools. Anecdotes show that there are a growing number of young people living in broken homes. Some have been rejected by estranged parents. Others have become disillusioned by the poverty-stricken environment they are growing up in. The offers by secret cults have thus become alluring to them; giving them false hope of euphoria.

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a (Adedokun, 2014)
b (Ambition, 2016)
c (Report A., 2019)
d (Lawal, 2019)
and an illusion of freedom and invincibility – along with a sense of belonging to a true family.\(^e\)

Narrowing this down to the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, report\(^f\) shows that gang violence was one of the top three most lethal conflict issues in the region between 2016 and 2017. Gang-related violence resulted in 185 fatalities in 48 reported incidents. It was mainly driven by rival cult clashes and supremacy battles among the numerous cult groups in the region, as well as general criminality. According to data\(^g\), the most violent states in the Niger Delta between 2016 and 2017, based on the number of reported conflict fatalities, were Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Rivers.

This presents the need to provide young people in the Niger Delta with better alternatives. Research shows that this decadence can be curbed through education, specifically peace education.\(^h\) Peace education is the teaching and learning about the values, attitudes and forms of behavior that reflect respect for human beings, human life and dignity, and all human rights; the rejection of violence in all forms, and commitment to freedom, justice, tolerance and understanding among people, and between groups and individuals.\(^i\) Peace education promotes understanding of the need for peaceful coexistence, while discouraging violence.

**UNSCR 2250 and the Lead Young Project**

Prior to the recognition and identification to the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, young people and youth-led organizations interested in peacebuilding were left in a quandary, as it was difficult to strategically channel resources into

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\(^e\) Ibid
\(^f\) (PINDFoundation, 2018)
\(^g\) Ibid
\(^h\) (Ambition, 2016)
\(^i\) (Report H. A., Perspective of Peace Education, 2004)
an aspect of peacebuilding in communities. This is because the concept of peace and conflict is generally broad. Asides this, young people were usually termed as perpetrators of conflict, and their growing population was easily viewed as a threat rather than an opportunity to invest into the future of communities and nation.

The UNSCR 2250 recognizes that young people are most impacted by conflict and are largely vulnerable as a result of the challenges they are faced with, that leaves lifelong effects, such as political, social and economic exclusion, and on the long run jeopardizes the possibility of durable peace. And most importantly, it recognized and embraced the place of young people as stakeholders in building peace in communities, and how their vibrancy and population can be tapped into in ensuring sustainable peace.

The resolution made its findings more adaptable and practicable by simplifying the concept of peace and conflict, and further defining the roles of multi-level stakeholders in addressing peace. This was essential for youth-led organizations like Leadworld as it provided us a platform to amplify our voices and become a compass that guides needs assessment across communities through programme design, which further strengthened our work and presence, and gave value for our resources.

From the lens of UNSCR 2250, the Lead Young Project was formulated to aid the prevention of conflict, particularly cultism and gang violence in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. It was a life skill programme featuring anti-violent activities such as games, quizzes, and competition, as well as peace education, which develop competences, thus contributing to nonviolent conflict transformation and respect for human rights, and along with this, providing opportunity for access to higher education and decent jobs.

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Project Overview

Initially started in 2016 as Leaders’ Read Initiative with the goal of enabling young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds between the ages of 13 and 18 take responsibility for their lives and communities, it was able to facilitate peaceful coexistence through the provision of personal development books with key themes on leading-self-leading-others, values, peace and patriotism. Based on findings from the first 2 years of project implementation, below are some lessons drawn:

i. Provision of resources on ethics and leadership alone, is not an effective way to drive peaceful living in communities.

ii. Creation of safe spaces for young people will enable learning and sharing, which translates to higher likelihood for young people to apply lessons from resources.

iii. While safe spaces can be created to aid learning and sharing amongst young people, they also require mentorship support from older youths in their communities who can model the right values, and

iv. A need to mainstream decent livelihoods of young people post-secondary school, in building peaceful communities is essential to peacebuilding among youths.

With these lessons, it was essential to remodel the programme design in order to aid richer and more sustainable project outcomes. In 2018, it was remodeled and launched as “Lead Young Project”.

The Lead Young Project is designed to equip select students from public secondary schools ages 13 - 18 from low socioeconomic backgrounds in Akwa Ibom State with conflict management skills, in order to promote peace in communities in Akwa Ibom State, and empower them with life and leadership skills, which will aid their successful transition to higher education or decent work. It is also designed to present students with positive influencers by leveraging
on experiences of older youth (youth mentors) within their communities.

The project is a year-long project that is implemented in one school per year. Youth Mentors are volunteers drawn from the community who have demonstrated leadership competence and are of good reputation. They provide trainings and mentorship support to students weekly in their schools. Select students are drawn from SS1 classes based on interest, which is usually expressed through essay writing. Also, students set up the Young Leaders’ Club and appoint club leaders amongst themselves to aid programme sustainability.

### Project Model

![Lead Young Project Model](image)

### Project Objectives

The Lead Young Project has the following objectives:

- To equip secondary school students with life and leadership skills to aid their successful transition to higher education and decent work
- To equip secondary school students with conflict management skills to promote peace in their schools and communities
To provide secondary school students value-driven role models using youth mentors

**Project Curriculum**

The USAID Life skills and leadership curriculum\(^k\) is used as teaching guide and manual to the students. The curriculum covers a range of topics which include:

1) **Personal Development**
   a. Self-Awareness
   b. Self-Confidence
   c. Choosing Positive Values
   d. Managing Tough Times

2) **Interpersonal Development**
   a. Positive Communication
   b. Decision Making
   c. Problem Solving
   d. Managing Conflict
   e. Team work and Collaboration

3) **Goals and Actions**
   a. Visioning
   b. Goal Setting
   c. Time Management

4) **Leadership**
   a. What is Leadership?
   b. Team Leadership
   c. My Role as a leader

\(^k\) (USAID)
Project Components

1. Youth Mentors Training
Youth mentors are trained on the project curriculum and are equipped with facilitation and mentorship skills

2. Students’ Mentorship and Training
Students are provided weekly trainings on leadership, life and conflict-managements skills by youth leaders in their schools and provided psychosocial support through mentorship

3. Students’ Book Review
Students hold chapter review sessions monthly from the book specified for the cohort with guidance from youth mentors

4. Graduation
Students who successfully go through the project graduate and, are encouraged to do a peer training.
Project Timeline

School & Students’ Selection

Students’ training, mentorship and book reviews

Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar April May

Youth Mentors’ Selection & Training

Club Set-up

Students

The project, since its remodeling in 2018, has reached 100 students across 2 public secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, and has successfully graduated 35 students from its first cohort.

1st Cohort

Community Secondary Commercial School, Ikot Okubo, Uyo

2nd Cohort

Uyo High School, Uyo
Project Outcome

Programme was evaluated using baseline surveys conducted at the beginning of the programme with 60 students and exit survey at the close of the programme for the first cohort with 35 students from Uyo High School. This evaluation leveraged the use of questionnaires and focus group discussions. It also used interview with School Principal, and Guidance & Counselling Staff of Uyo High School, Uyo.

Objective 1: To equip secondary school students with life and leadership skills to aid their successful transition to higher education and decent work

Students underwent 30 weeks of training spread across the academic calendar excluding examinations and holidays. Students were trained for 30-60 minutes weekly by youth mentors. The trainings were infused with activities, games, competitions and quizzes. These made learning more participatory and experiential. Students attested to the fact that they found training sessions more interactive than their regular classes, hence they were able to assimilate lessons and practice.

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<tr>
<th>Expected Outcomes</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Actual Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To change students’ mindsets and perspective about leadership and their role to influence their communities positively</strong></td>
<td>Percentage of students who see themselves as leaders</td>
<td>Feedbacks received from students showed that 94% of them have more confidence in their ability to lead compared to their initial belief that only people with positions are</td>
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<td>Percentage of students who believe they can positively influence their communities</td>
<td>At baseline, students felt incapacitated and felt unable to make change, but at end line, 85% of the students said they could positively influence their school and communities. Some shared instances in school, where their opinion was sought and even utilised.</td>
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<td>Percentage of students with heightened career aspirations and are enthusiastic about their future</td>
<td>At baseline, 60% of the students said their career choices were either imposed on them by their parents or they were influenced by their siblings or friends. At baseline, 85% of the students were more enthusiastic about</td>
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</table>
Objective 2: To equip secondary school students with conflict management skills to promote peace in their schools and communities

Students’ curriculum was designed to infuse modules on conflict management. This was addressed in the sub-theme of Interpersonal Development covering modules such as Positive Communication, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Managing Conflict and Team-work and Collaboration.

At the end of the programme, we observed that there is a connection with student’s ability to make personal decisions and violence, as students are less vulnerable to be initiated into cultism or vandalism when they can make informed personal decisions. There is also evidence that with healthy interpersonal skills, peace can be promoted and sustained.

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<tr>
<td>To increase students skills on decision making, improve their understanding on working with others and managing misunderstandings or conflicts, and fostering</td>
<td>Percentage of students who are able to own their decisions</td>
<td>Prior to the programme, 60% of the students said they made choices based on the interests or choices of their friends. At end line, 75% of the</td>
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<td>Peaceful Living</td>
<td>Students Spoke More Confidently About Their Ability to Make Their Own Choices Regardless of Their Peers’</td>
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<td>Percentage of students who appreciate the value of working with others</td>
<td>At the initial stage, 80% of the students would rather work on a task alone or with their closest circle of friends. At end line, 75% of the students appreciated being placed in teams with other students, as they not only made new friends; they realized that their earlier perception of their colleagues was wrong.</td>
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<td>Percentage of students who see themselves as peace builders</td>
<td>At baseline, students thought they were too young to resolve conflict in school or their homes. At the end line, students had heightened...</td>
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Objective 3: To provide secondary school students with value-driven role models, using youth mentors

The programme was designed to have older youth as role models. This further strengthened the benefits of peer mentoring as both groups of (younger and older) youths had relatable experiences; hence, the younger youth were more receptive to learning and were more hopeful about their future aspirations being realistic.

The model provided evidence of youth role models as effective tool in raising younger youths to be value-driven and vision-focused, translating into them being less vulnerable to peer pressure, cultism and violence of any kind.

Findings from the project revealed that a large percentage of the students were not only from low socioeconomic backgrounds, but some were domestic servants and some young girls were at the mercy of male relatives who accommodated them. Evidence also showed that students faced with psychosocial issues, and who lacked access to counseling, were more likely to instigate violence of any kind ranging from physical, verbal or sexual violence, cultism and indulge in drugs and alcohol as a way of expressing anger.
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<tr>
<td>For Students to have role models within their community, who they can look up to, thus making them less vulnerable to being instigators of violence. Students are able to thrive amidst psychosocial issues or traumatic situations</td>
<td>Percentage of students who aspire to be like their youth mentors</td>
<td>80% of the students, at baseline said they did not have role models within their community they could look up to. At end line, 68% of the students hoped to provide mentorship for younger people just like their youth mentors. The School Principal and Guidance &amp; Counselling (G&amp;C) Staff also mentioned that students on the programme were of good conduct and were role models to younger students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of students who made right decisions as a result of the mentorship sessions</td>
<td>At baseline, only 25% of the students felt comfortable discussing with their school counselor on their personal issues. At end line, 70% of the students found the one-on-one mentorship session</td>
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they had with youth mentors useful as they felt more comfortable discussing traumatic issues with their youth mentors because they were closer in age. Some said they found the mentorship session relieving and they always seemed to be more positive about life after every session.

Lessons Learned

Challenges on the programme have served as points of learning to further strengthen programme design, ensure effective programme implementation, and provided opportunities to scale impact and reach. Lessons learned in the past 2 years of implementation include:

1. **A more effective and robust stakeholder engagement**

   Stakeholders across all levels were not adequately engaged. While the programme engaged school principals and school guidance & counselling staff, we were unable to engage the State Ministry of Education, the State Secondary School Board and even parents & guardians of programme beneficiaries. This gap hampered severally on the project timelines, students’ attendance and in some cases, the disposition of the school management.
Going forward, it is crucial that we engage stakeholders on all levels, asides the school management, in order to ensure a more effective programme implementation.

2. **Attrition rate amongst programme beneficiaries and programme actors**

   The programme suffered high attrition rate of both students and youth mentors. In both schools, 70 students were initially selected at the commencement of the programme, however, few weeks into the programme we had only about 40-50% of the students still actively involved, as their parents or guardians had instructed them not to be a part of extracurricular activities, especially as their caregivers could not connect the relevance of the programme to students’ academic outcomes. This meant that we had to constantly keep inducting in new students into the programme even after a number of modules had been covered. This further strengthened the need for parents & guardians engagement.

   The programme also suffered attrition rate amongst youth mentors; youth mentors had been signed up as volunteers hence they had no remuneration, yet they moved on to job opportunities that arose. This translated to constant change of mentors on the programme and students had to adapt to the changes. Going forward, the programme design would likely incorporate youth corps members who would be on a compulsory 1 year service within the state as interns on the programme, hence availing them the opportunity to gain work-readiness skills and experience, while also transforming communities through the students.

3. **Incorporate Work Readiness Skills to the Curriculum**

   As much as students had heightened perception on their leadership potentials and higher career aspirations, this has not sufficiently translated to job provision, employability or entrepreneurship skills; and coming from low socioeconomic
backgrounds, they are still likely to be vulnerable to societal or economic pressure which could translate to engaging in violence, cultism, thuggery and other social vices.

To ensure effective transitions for students to minimize their vulnerability to violence, the programme would need to infuse provisions for students to gain work readiness skills through apprenticeships, internships and seed funding to startup businesses.

4. **Incorporate Innovative sustainable plans to ensure long term project outcomes**

The programme also suffered financial constraints, hence our inability to implement in more schools and reach more students, which also contributed to the attrition rate of youth mentors. Also, after the graduation of a cohort, there is no evidence for mindset sustainability on the long run if there are no ways to keep up positive engagement with and amongst beneficiaries.

The programme can likely be extended to incorporate a learning hub for students, post-secondary school, where programme beneficiaries interact, learn and share resources amongst themselves, while also encouraged to train out of school youth in their communities. The learning hub can be designed to refer beneficiaries to job, scholarship and apprenticeship opportunities.

The learning hub can also serve as a consultancy outfit that provides trainings on leadership, life, conflict management, employability and entrepreneurship skills for students and teenagers from wealthy socioeconomic backgrounds, and revenue generated can be used to reach more young people from underserved communities.
5. **Incorporating digital skills and tools to curriculum and programme design**

The COVID-19 pandemic had major effects on programme implementation and delivery, as activities with the 2nd cohort of students at Community Secondary Commercial School, Ikot Okubo, Uyo were stalled, hence the project lost touch with programme beneficiaries and could not continue training and mentoring.

This has posed an opportunity to train beneficiaries with digital skills and also empower them with tools to access the internet such as smart phones, laptops and data. Provisions such as these would have aided programme continuity and even fostered peaceful co-existence in a period that disallowed physical social interaction. This would have also fostered learning amongst students in the time when academic activities were put on hold. Tools such as these could have also provided opportunities for scale meeting the needs of young people across communities not yet limited by distance.

**Conclusion**

The growing population of young people in Nigeria provides us an opportunity to invest in them to be guaranteed of durable peace across communities, which translate to economic growth across diverse sectors.

The UNSCR 2250 provides a unique opportunity and a compass for young people and stakeholders across all levels to channel resources in areas where greater impact and sustained outcomes can be achieved. This was the case for **Leadworld** in the **Lead Young Project**.

Some of the most remarkable findings on the programme include: (i) Young people now have positive perception of themselves and their potential to make a difference. The students were hungry for, and eager to transfer knowledge to younger
siblings and younger students without being instructed by their youth mentors. Hence, they were able to raise more students outside of the programme to be peacebuilders. (ii) The magnitude of impact and influence the youth mentors had on the students. Some students preferred them to their teachers and older siblings, while a good percentage aspire to be like their mentors. This further strengthened the fact that young people have great influence over their peers and younger ones. This can be leveraged for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in communities.

A key learning from the programme is the place of livelihood in building sustainable peace in communities. Young people need to be provided not just with the knowledge on ways to transition to peaceful coexistence; but they also need to be provided with tools and transition opportunities such as scholarships, apprenticeship and internship programmes.
AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Joy Godwin is the Programmes Director at Leadworld Leadership Initiative, where she provides oversight on diverse programmes implemented in communities in Akwa Ibom State. She also provides leadership on strategic partnerships for the organization. She works as South-South Programmes Coordinator at LEAP Africa, where she sees to the implementation and expansion of LEAP Africa’s efforts in the south-south region of Nigeria, through partnerships.

She holds a non-profit Leadership and Management Certificate from the Lagos Business School, and a Master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, where she focused her research on youth development and nation building. She also holds a Bachelor’s degree in History from the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

With over 6 years of experience in the social sector, she is successfully working her way up. Prior to her current roles, she volunteered with organizations such as Sexual Offences Awareness and Victims Rehabilitation (SOAR) Initiative and Building Blocks for Peace Foundation. She is also an alumnus of International Citizens Service (ICS). She has interest in Youth Development, Gender and Peace Building programmes.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 14
OLD ENOUGH TO VOTE, NOT TOO YOUNG TO RUN: STRENGTHENING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA’S POLITICAL PROCESS

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Introduction
Political participation is usually driven by a desire to seek control of power, acquisition of power and dispensing power to organize society, harness and distribute resources to influence decision making, in line with organized or individual interests. Participation in electoral processes however involves much more than just voting. It derives its legitimacy from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. Elections are acceptable means of electing leaders and act as an important process that strengthens democratic institutions and facilitates peaceful transition of power (Ugbaigbe, 2010). However, in most African countries, including Nigeria, elections are usually characterized by widespread violence, intimidation, bribery, and corruption. Burchard (2016) asserts that between 1990 and 2015, about 60 percent of elections in Africa experienced some form of electoral violence. The prevalent occurrence of electoral violence not only poses a threat to peace and security on the continent, but also undermines the gains achieved through the democratisation processes of these countries. The major objective of electoral violence is to influence the electoral process with the sole aim of winning political competition or power through violence or
subverting the ends of the electoral and democratic process through intimidation and disempowerment of political opponents.

According to Sesay (2014), there is an implicit assumption that youth did not effectively engage in politics and governance processes in Africa before and after independence. However, a closer examination of governance and political systems in the two eras reveal that such a perception is incorrect. Starting from the nascent consciousness that led to the formation of the Pan African Movement in the early twentieth century, and the landmark Manchester Conference in 1945, “radical” African youths were actively involved in the struggle to liberate the continent and its people from colonialism and in the push for their self-determination. Young people also played decisive roles in determining the future of the continent and its people during the penultimate days of colonial rule. Even today, there is increasing evidence that young people’s contribution towards the dismantling of exploitative power structures in Africa is on the rise. From the recent uprising that led to the burning down of the Gabonese parliament, the coup that brought down Blaise Compoare’s government in Burkina Faso, to the famous Arab Spring in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, there is a clear signal that young people have undoubtedly been actively involved in Africa’s governance landscape.

Additionally, although most young people are neither violent nor interested in violence, there has been a general stereotypical perception that young people are often mobilized to initiate or escalate violent actions to support their own or their godfathers’ political objectives. Muhammed (2010) reports that the prevalence of one political violence or the other has been the mainstay of elections in Nigeria, with youths as the major actors in the theatre of electoral violence, and that such violence has assumed a dire dimension. As one of the most important
stakeholders in this violence space, young people need to be actively involved in politics and decision-making both at the policy and grassroots levels so as to greatly reduce youth’s tendency to engage in election violence. Furthermore, to preserve the integrity of elections and prevent the eruption of election-related violence, there must be aggressive efforts to increase youth participation in political and peace processes, because excluding youths from these processes can also act as threat to peace and development.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security plays a major role in highlighting and echoing the positive role played by youths in maintaining peace, and the need for active youth engagement and participation in all processes of politics, societal transition, and decision-making. Adopted in 2015 by all UN member states, this resolution calls for action and inclusivity of young people in advancing the peacebuilding processes through active participation to ensure that the needs of every member of society is considered. The UNSCR 2250 recognises that political exclusion often act as driving force for young people’s involvement in violent activities and urges UN member states to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict. Furthermore, according to the Progress Study on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, “Young people are frustrated by the tendency of their Governments and international actors to treat youth as a problem to be solved, instead of as partners for peace.”

A large percentage of Nigeria’s population is below the age of 35 years, making the political participation of young people imperative. To build youth network and social movement for the promotion of democratic governance, civic society, and human
rights, Yiaga Africa emerged in 2007 as a non-profit civic hub of change-makers. From its early beginnings as a student organisation at the University of Jos, Yiaga has grown to become one of the leading civil society organisations in Africa, with leadership structures and members in all the 36 states, federal capital city and the 774 local government areas in Nigeria. Yiaga Africa is committed to harnessing the potentials of Africa's largest demographic block for democratic development and social change. The organization firmly believes young people possess the creativity, intellect, energy, and resilience required to solve Africa's governance and development challenges, hence its investment in mobilizing and empowering young people with the requisite skills and knowledge that make them agents of change in their community. Yiaga Africa views youth as a heterogeneous group with diverse needs and priorities. The youth programme of the organisation targets female and male youths, youths with disabilities, rural youths, out-of-school youths, unemployed youths, youth in conflict, illiterate youth, and youths in diaspora. Yiaga’s approach to youth development is anchored on three major pillars: youth policy development; youth leadership, and youth political participation.
Recognising that Africa is young but plagued with old leaders, Yiaga’s mission is to build and support sustainable democracy that is anchored on the principle of inclusion, justice and accountability through research, capacity development and advocacy. Yiaga focuses on providing in-depth research on key democratic and governance issues, crafting practical solutions, training, and empowering citizens to lead change in their community. We have also been actively involved in implementing several innovative programmes that are aimed at promoting human rights, stimulating active citizenship, and deepening democratic governance.

**Intervention**

All over the world, there has been commitment by government leaders to support young people’s participation in elections as well as action plans to make them active citizens. Despite this, there is persistently low representation of youths in political leadership and elected positions. More than half of the global population are below the ages of 35 years, yet only 1.9 percent of parliamentarians worldwide are under 30 (IPU, 2016). Furthermore, there is wide gap between the minimum age of voting and the minimum age of running as political candidates. Like in most African countries, the average age gap between political leaders and the members of the electorate is very alarming, with the president of the country older than independent Nigeria itself. The age restriction on young people has had several negative consequences on their participation in the electoral processes, including feelings of disempowerment and political apathy. The unfriendly electoral legal framework has also contributed to the low representation of youth in public office.

According to Yiaga Africa (2019), Nigeria has conducted five general elections since the return to civil rule; 1999, 2003, 2007,
2011 and 2015. These elections were signposted by exclusion and marginalization of young people as party candidates, despite the positive roles they played as voters, election administrators and campaign merchants. The under-representation of youths in politics and decision-making process led Yiaga Africa to conceive the ‘Age Reduction Bill’, known commonly as the ‘Not too Young to Run Bill’. The ‘Not too Young to Run’ bill sought for constitutional amendment with regards to reducing the age limits to run for elected political positions in Nigeria. In calling for the reduction of the minimum age for candidacy, Yiaga emphasised that lowering the age limit will lead to greater youth political participation, greater diversity of political choices for voters, and equal representation rights for young people. We stressed that young people should be allowed to sit on the table so they can have a say on issues that concern them.

Opponents of this bill believe that young people are inexperienced and immature for political leadership. They see youths as belligerent and irresponsible, hence unqualified to hold elective offices. Some of them also assert that the beneficiaries of the amendment, if passed, will be children of the high and mighty, thereby institutionalizing family political dynasties. The most frivolous argument is the one justifying youth exclusion because they are economically deficient and disempowered.

The ‘Not too Young to Run’ movement was therefore started in Nigeria in 2016 by Yiaga Africa under the coordination of its Executive Director, Samson Itodo, as a campaign to facilitate the process of sponsoring a constitutional amendment bill to remove age restriction for running for political office, and promote youth candidacy, so as to mainstream young people into electoral politics. Although the idea was conceived by Yiaga Africa to promote youth inclusion in politics, transformative leadership, and democratic rights, the campaign soon grew and encompassed more than 100
youth organizations and became known by its hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun. The ‘Not too Young to Run’ bill sought an alteration to sections 65, 106, 131, and 177 of the Nigerian constitution and call for a reduction of the eligibility age criteria of the office of the President from 40 to 35 years, the Senate and Governorship from 35 to 30 and the State House of Assembly and House of Representatives from 30 to 25.

A major hallmark in the campaign came with its adoption by the United Nations, the African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States. Sponsored by allies in the House of Representatives and the Senate, the ‘Not too Young to Run’ bill passed both houses of parliament in July 2017. Following this achievement, the proposed amendment was presented to the Houses of Assembly of the Nigeria’s 36 states, with approval gotten from 33 of these states, surpassing the number required for passage. In April 2018, the Senate sent the bill to the President for approval. The Bill was signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari on May 31, 2018 after further lobbying by youth organizations. The final version reduced the age to run for President, the House of Representatives, and the State Houses of Assembly, but retained the existing age qualifications for Governors and Senators.

The signing of the bill marked a major feat for young people because it meant that they had more opportunities for representation which was previously not possible. It also serves as an avenue to reduce political violence and instability, promote democratic development, enhance competitive politics, and deepen intergenerational dialogue and learning. The passage of the bill also helps in demonstrating “unparalleled belief in youth leadership and inclusive politics” and “putting Nigeria on the global map as a country fully invested in meeting the needs of its youth”. The signing of this bill into law thereby facilitated the implementation of
the “participation” pillar of the UNSCR 2250 which called for increase participation of young people at all levels of the decision making and peace processes.

**Impact**

Yiaga’s ‘Not too Young to Run’ movement remains a historical milestone in Nigeria’s socio-political milestone as it led to pathways for increased youth representation in politics. The outcome of YIAGA’s advocacy campaign ‘Not too Young to Run’ has had positive impacts on young people’s active participation in politics and decision-making in Nigeria. In 2017, Nigerian lawmakers approved a bill lowering the age of eligibility for parliamentary representatives to 25 years. The ‘Not too Young to Run’ campaign yielded another positive result in 2018 when President Muhammadu passed the bill into law, reducing the age limits of aspirants for Presidency position from 40 to 35, Senate and Governorship from 35 to 30, and House of Representatives and State House of Assemblies from 30 to 25.
The ‘Not too Young to Run’ legislation addressed a major impediment to youth participation in politics. It was a positive action towards closing the representation gap and signalled a shift towards inclusive politics. As a result of the reduction of age limits, Nigeria witnessed a new wave of competent and credible young women and men who aspired to run for office in 2019 Elections. For the first time in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, young people between the ages of 25-30 were legally empowered to contest for seats in the House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly. The movement led to an increase in the number of young people holding various political positions in the country. Out of the 991 seats in the 36 State Houses of Assembly, 68 are for members below the age of 40. There are also 20 direct beneficiaries of the ‘Not too Young to Run’ Act in the State Houses of Assembly between the ages of 25-30 (when they won their elections in 2019). This is a direct result of the age reduction legislation (Not too Young to Run Bill) that was passed by the National Assembly and assented to by the President on 31 May 2018.

Another impact of the movement is that it led to a wave of youth-led advocacy worldwide, with youths demanding for socio-political change and youth representation. Yiaga’s ‘Not too Young to Run’ Campaign also inspired the UN Youth Envoy to launch a global ‘Not Too Young to Run’ campaign in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the IPU, Yiaga Africa, and the European Youth Forum. It has been launched in several countries in Africa like Kenya, Gambia, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Cameroun and Sierra Leone. Other countries are also making efforts to launch the campaign as a strategy for mobilizing youth to reclaim Africa. Members of the ‘Not too Young to Run’ coalition also recognize that simply signing the bill into law is not a guarantee that youth representation will increase and so in 2018, YIAGA Africa launched a
new campaign, "Ready to Run" to identify and support young political aspirants.

Challenges

A number of challenges abound in YIAGA’s drive to empower youth for political participation in Nigeria. First is the community perception of youth and their ability to lead. The society is a very traditional African one that considers leadership, such as wielding political power, to be the exclusive preserve of elders. Young people are thought to be naive and inexperienced in running for political offices. This community perception still persists despite the success of our ‘Not too Young to Run’ movement, and requires concerted effort of community and religious leaders, politicians, civil society organisations, business leaders and youths to correct this wrong perception of young people as being incapable of leadership.

Another challenge is mainstreaming youth participation into the practice of political parties. Although the ‘Not too Young to Run’ Movement succeeded in eliminating the constitutional barriers of young people to run for political offices, several hurdles still remained to be crossed in reality for them to join the political class. The high cost of the nomination forms is a constraining factor for those interested in taking advantage of the law to run for politics. The movement succeeded in bringing down the cost of the nomination forms of the incumbent political party, All Progressives Congress from fifty five million naira (N55 million) to Forty-Five million naira (N45 million). However, this is still way beyond the reach of the average young person, in a country where the national minimum wage is just thirty thousand naira (N30,000). Other institutional constraints to youth within the political parties include lack of youth-friendly policies and development of youth capacity to vie for positions within the parties.
Opportunities for Expansion

YIAGA is at the forefront of promoting youth participation in politics in Nigeria and Africa. The ‘Not too Young to Run’ Movement has been very successful in reducing the age limits for political offices, thereby enabling young people to vie for political offices. A major opportunity for expansion is the second phase of the movement called the ‘Ready to Run’ Movement that seeks to build the capacity of youth to run for political office and deliver the dividends of democracy when elected. This phase consists of training youth aspirants, mobilising for their candidacy and coaching them intensely in managing successful political campaigns.

Local and international partners have the opportunity to work with YIAGA to directly empower youth political aspirants so as to improve their chances of electoral success and promote good governance. Such partnership could take the form of funding the ‘Ready to Run’ movement, providing capacity building trainings or organising joint projects with YIAGA to achieve the aim of preparing the Nigerian youth for political power.

Another window of opportunity to expand youth participation in politics is the grassroots sensitisation of young Nigerians on the political rights they have – right to vote and be voted for; and to organise them into political associations. YIAGA can take the political sensitisation of youth to the rural areas across the country, to create a grassroots movement capable of putting an end to Nigeria’s political woes. This will be a bottom-up extension of the ‘Not Too Young to Run’ movement that targets vulnerable youth including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees rather than the high-level advocacy approach towards the Nigeria legislators and President that resulted in the signing of the Not Too Young to Run bill into law.
Conclusion

This chapter has chronicled the monumental impact that the ‘Not Too Young to Run’ bill has made in enhancing the participation of Nigerian youth in politics. The landmark law ended the age restrictions on major political offices including the President, Governor, Senator, House of Representatives members and State House of Assembly members. Its impact has allowed young people between the ages of 25 to 30 to contest for the political positions in the country, which has led to record numbers of youth clinching political offices in the 2019 Nigerian general elections. The first pillar of Participation in the UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security is the cornerstone of this project undertaken by YIAGA in ensuring that Nigerian youth receive all the support they require to participate actively in politics and decision-making.

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CHAPTER 15

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ON RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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Education & Sustainable Livelihood Youth Initiative (ESLYI)

Introduction

In many societies around the world, religion plays an increasingly significant role in public life with impact on political, social, economic and institutional matters; for good and for bad. These dynamics influence conflict analysis and resolution, and sustainable development. In Nigeria, violence, discrimination, and segregation between the country’s Christian and Muslim communities are at fever-pitch levels. Out of the estimated population of more than 203 million, 53.5 percent of Nigerians identify themselves as Muslims, 45.9 percent as Christian, while 0.6 percent hold other beliefs; with longstanding ethno-religious divides shaping politics and culture.

Even though a lot of the conflicts in Nigeria are resource-based, it is often coloured as a religious conflict with religion being manipulated or politicized to foster perceived division and promote religious violence. Religion is a major source of soft power as a number of adherents find it easy to use it as a tool for either access or suppression. It has been used or misused by governmental organisations to pursue their interests, to a greater extent; yet religion’s ability to inspire violence also presents it as an impressive power and resource for peace. It is a double-edged sword, in that it has the capacity to cause conflict and abate it. Nevertheless, it remains a tremendous resource for the creation of a just and egalitarian society that the world seeks to achieve. This provides an opportunity for development professionals to explore partnerships,
engage and deepen relationships with religious leaders and faith communities as they carry out their peacebuilding interventions and civil society engagements around the world, to advance shared development goals.

Young people’s involvement in violence and criminality is met with increasing concern. The *Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* highlighted some stereotypes and policy myths regarding youths, which include that the bulging youth population presents an increased risk of violence, and many young men and women would be tempted to join violent extremist groups. Widespread stereotypes associate young people with violence. The vast majority of young people are not involved, or in danger of participating, in violence despite having about 1 in 4 youth (408 million youth aged 15-29) living in settings affected by armed conflict or organized violence in 2016.

**The Centrality of UNSCR 2250 to ESLYI’s Mandate**

Today more than even before, we have the largest global youth population with 42 percent of people under the age of 25. Young people are one of the most crucial, yet most vulnerable populations of the world. In Nigeria, many young people face unemployment, violence, exploitation and exclusion from decision-making. Today's global issues need intergenerational collaboration more than ever before. Youth involvement not only provides a space for young people to have a say on issues which affect their lives, but also to make a direct impact in their local communities. ESLYI strongly believes that youths are the most capable category of persons to implement sustainable development; hence young people need to be given the space and opportunity to channel their energies into positive roles, so they can create a lasting change in the world. Capacity building of youths is a very important investment to empower youths and to realize sustainable
development. It is for this reason that ESLYI is very keen about supporting, training and raising a generation of young people who are able to tackle societal problems with ingenuity.

Youth play a mutually supportive role, as captured in the *World Youth Report on “Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*, of examining the new agenda and current youth development efforts. The report provides insight into the role of young people in sustainable development in the context of the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and related frameworks; and in particular, the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development*, and the *World Programme of Action for Youth*. The report considered the role that 2030 Agenda can play in enhancing youth development efforts, and examined how evidence-based youth policies can help accelerate youth-related objectives. It explores the critical role young people have in the implementation of sustainable development efforts at all levels.

Far from being mere beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, young people have been active architects in its development and continue to be engaged in the frameworks and processes that support its implementation, follow-up and review. Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population. The active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and migration. While all the Sustainable Development Goals are critical to youth development, issues related to reducing inequality, and violent conflicts need more attention.
The UN Security Council Resolution 2250 On Youth, Peace & Security document is a global policy framework that expatiates an “age perspective” on issues related to peace and security, including peace processes; dispute resolutions; rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. That means that the specific needs of young people and their views will be taken into account in policies, programmes, fund distribution, etc. It stipulates the important role youths play in conflict prevention and resolution, and that their participation is a key element for the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacebuilding efforts. It is in line with this resolution that ESLYI is leveraging on its provisions to promote intergenerational and interreligious dialogue; unearth the needs of youth, and weigh in on the unifying force of religion to foster bridge-building and social coexistence for the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Northern Nigeria.

A Synopsis on Education and Sustainable Livelihood Youth Initiative (ESLYI)

Education and Sustainable Livelihood Youth Initiative (ESLYI) is a youth-led non-profit organization founded by committed young people in 2007 with its operational base in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. The organization’s mission is to build capacity and social capital for participatory development. Its vision is for a vibrant and empowered civil society, for communities and social institutions that are involved in putting and keeping Nigeria on the path of sustainable livelihoods and development. ESLYI works in areas of capacity building, conflict prevention, interreligious dialogue, research, peacebuilding media programmes, and community development initiatives with community organizations across the north central and north eastern states of Nigeria. Through its work, ESLYI has built strong relationships with community members and local leadership, including traditional leaders, religious leaders, and
local government officials. The UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace & Security has served as an instrument to advance youth participation in the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives in Northern Nigeria.

Interventions

A major driver of the violent conflicts in Northern Nigeria is the negative exploitation of religious differences by disputing parties, especially where the groups involved belong to different faiths. Religion and religious beliefs are at the core of the negative perceptions and prejudice that characterize relationships between groups particularly in Northern Nigeria. ESLYI utilizes two major intervention approaches to address the issues: i) Enhancing Youth Engagement in Interreligious Dialogue and the SDGs; and ii) Interreligious Dialogue and Youth-led Research on the SDGs.

1. The Enhancing Interreligious Dialogue and SDGs Youth Engagement project (October 2019 – June 2020) trained 10 Muslim and Christian youth social media influencers, photographers and videographers on inter-religious dialogue and SDG advocacy, to enable them document emerging linkages between interfaith peacebuilding and the SDGs through 20 picture narratives and a documentary film for social media engagements and awareness creation. The project sought to tell stories of interfaith peacebuilding while advocating for the SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; SDG 4: Quality Education, and SDG 5: Gender Equality at Community Level, to jointly counter violent rhetoric through positive public messages of religious pluralism and respect for human rights. The expected results were improved and positive collaboration and interfaith tolerance at the community level, creating an increased platform and media coverage, available conversations that challenge violent narratives but promote
tolerance and positive perception of other faiths while addressing the SDGs.

2. The Strengthening Inter Religious Dialogue and Youth-led Research on SDGs, aimed at increasing youth agency in community development (May 2019 –) in Plateau and Borno States of Nigeria, is an online and offline project designed to build the capacity of young people, (4 youths; 2 pairs of gender and religiously balanced researchers) trained and provided with seed grants to carry out community research and interreligious dialogue sessions, while at the same time critically exploring issues related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, using empirical research to proffer solutions that endure change. This project explores the challenges young people are facing in: i) Goal 4: Quality Education ii) Goal 5: Gender Equality iii) Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, through an interreligious lens, while at the same time, seeking solutions to these challenges.

ESLYI will be sharing findings of the research with organizations involved in Inter-Religious Dialogue (IRD) programming to serve as a learning material and to share experience by collecting data that young people could use to initiate meaningful dialogue with decision-makers around accountability tasks. The project is engaging youths in capacity building and training on research methodology, trauma awareness and analysis, photography and digital storytelling, social media advocacy, enhancing interreligious dialogue, while training them on technical skills for both research and advocacy, to provide them with the capacity base to lead the programmes. The youth-led researchers identified key issues along with the perspectives of community leaders to ensure their support for the process. ESLYI sought to analyse the role of youth-led solutions to the SDGs, addressing the question from the following four key angles, in order
to ascertain young people’s bespoke support needs, whilst recognizing and celebrating their unique contributions:

1. The motivations for youth-led innovation for sustainable development from an interreligious perspective;
2. The common barriers that youth solutions face when being implemented or scaled;
3. The support needs of young innovators;
4. And the key benefits of youth-led innovation for the SDGs in Jos and Maiduguri.

Outcome: The Impact of IRD and Youth interventions in Northern Nigeria

Youth-led research provides a powerful tool for youth empowerment and engagement, and for inquiry, contributing to improved understanding of community issues. It is a programmatic approach that can engage young people in peacebuilding, strengthen their leadership skills, and help them build stronger relationships with members of their community. The findings generated by youth-led research provide valuable insight into the issues, and the act of conducting research itself has had a positive impact on the youth and their relationships in their community, as they play a leadership role in all stages of design, data collection, data analysis, and results sharing. This is helpful in highlighting key dimensions in how young people experience—and respond to—issues and contexts, filling the gap in understanding that comes with young people being meaningfully engaged in the process of investigating the issues that affect them. This will help them to share those findings to inform needs-responsive programme design and to advocate for evidence-based solutions for policy formulation and resource allocation.

- More specifically, ESLYI engaged youth as co-designers and critical partners of IRD programming, to increase youth
collaborative efforts and share lessons with each other and other key stakeholders working to proffer solutions to Sustainable Development Goals that sustain change to drivers of conflict through inter-religious dialogue (IRD).

- Positive examples of youth efforts on IRD and contributions to peacebuilding were showcased while amplifying and elevating positive narratives of youth involvement in peacebuilding.
- Increased youth learning opportunities that will result in competencies that can be translated to other spheres in their lives.
- Improved meaningful opportunities for youths to engage in dialogue among themselves and with adults about their perceptions of their social reality. This dialogue can result in new understandings pertaining to issues and possible solutions; it also can generate enthusiasm for the process of research by highlighting its worth and potential contribution to positive social change.
- Improve intergenerational communication, respect and collaboration.
- Enhance mentoring relationships with professional researchers, evaluators, and community leaders.
- Build social capital through a new generation with civic responsibility, analytical skills, organizing skills, and empowerment to address the challenges of the community.
- Increase capacity to support intergenerational partnerships and youth leadership.
- Increase synergies among youth networks and initiatives to contribute towards a more coherent, inclusive and effective international agenda on religion and development.
Current Challenges

Youth-led and youth focused organizations are still yet to gain the much needed recognition and space to occupy peacebuilding processes across all levels, this may be as a result of the misconceptions harboured regarding the role that youth play or ought to play; thus, youths must continue to work together and intensify efforts towards ensuring that the peaceful future they yearn for becomes a reality, and that they are key architects in the process. Some of the challenges ESLYI has encountered include the following:

- **Access to beneficiary communities:** Most of the locations ESLYI operates in have been riddle with issues of insecurity such as banditry, kidnap, ethno-political and armed opposition groups, without proper systems for security checks. ESLYI has had to postpone activities until it was fully convinced that it is safe to commute. This situation, in themselves, drive back already established peace processes, as community trust and relationships keep dwindling.

- **Use of technology:** While the effective use of technology can assist NGOs in staying abreast of important regional, national and global developments, the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic and the government’s restrictions for public gathering has forced a new reality on us at ESLYI, shifting most peacebuilding physical engagements online. This could disenfranchise communities with limited internet devices and access from being part of the process.

- **Accessing resources and funding:** Gaining access to appropriate donors and funding cycle, which often comes in the form of (short-term) project funding, is slow; and this usually leads to interventions that are one-off and barely sustainable without stipulated resources for follow up. ESLYI has, over the years, been supported by Peace Direct (formerly
the Nexus Fund), The International Dialogue Centre – KAICIID, and Search for Common Ground.

**Opportunities for Expansion**

Considering the limited space occupied by youth in the area of peacebuilding research and the critical contributions they can make at local, national, regional and global levels, ESLYI intends to continue engaging more young people in youth-led research on peace and security in order to expand their expertise, establish the culture of evidence-based advocacy and community development that will endure change.

So far, ESLYI has conducted the Interreligious Dialogue and peacebuilding programming in the Northern region of Nigeria; there is a need to expand engagement to the Southern region to encourage cross learning, bridge building and understanding among youths.

ESLYI believes that with the right type of partnership and investment in youth development, peacebuilding, human rights and security efforts, communities will be better positioned to attain sustainable peace. We seek to keep advancing our engagements in collaboration with other development partners to achieve this. We strongly believe that they are attainable.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

As the international community celebrates the 5th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and moves towards achieving agenda 2030, there is a need for a relevant policy, better guidance, more research, as well as resources and training on effective collaboration with religious communities and youth.

Through ESLYI’s engagements, youths have evidently exhibited the potential to move beyond being the largest statistic to
being the key players in ensuring peace and security at different levels of society. The following recommendations are key. Stakeholders should help to:

- Provide greater and flexible funding for young people, their initiatives and their organizations, while including young people in the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of programmes related to Youth, Peace and Security.
- Engage youth in the development of evidence-based principles, tools, training, and a potential policy, to provide them with guidance that they need.
- Transform the systems that reinforce exclusion to address the structural barriers limiting youth participation in peace and security by capitalising on the role of education as a tool for peace, and protecting educational institutions from violence.
- Establish partnerships and collaborative actions, where youths are viewed as equal and essential partners for peace at the national, regional and global levels.
- Form YPS coalitions that consult and actively include young people to define indicators and national objectives for the implementation of UNSCR 2250.
- Support qualitative and quantitative research and data collection on Youth, Peace and Security.

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CHAPTER 16
BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE IN NIGERIA THROUGH ‘TEACH PEACE EARLY’ AND ‘COMMUNITY PEACE TALKS’

Precious Ajunwa
Galaxy for Peace and Integrity Initiative

Introduction

Nigeria is often referred to as the giant of Africa largely because of her huge population and due to the presence of vast natural resources. Despite these seemingly rich features, the country still battles with various challenges such as political tensions, insecurities, corruption, ethno-religious/violent conflicts, socio-economic inequalities etc. Furthermore, as a result of these multiple incidences of ethno-religious, resource-based and politic-inspired conflicts, there is constant tension and low social cohesion amongst the citizens of the country. The inability of the Nigerian government to manage these conflicts and diversities constitute factors that have negatively influenced the attainment of sustainable peace and development in the country.

Youths, constituting more than half of Nigeria’s population, are the most adversely affected demographic group by violent conflicts, both as refugees and internally displaced persons. Yet, in Nigeria, they are often seen as perpetrators of violence and as problems that need to be solved. In order to build an inclusive and sustainable peace, there is, therefore, the need to formulate ways of combating and changing such stereotypical narratives so as to ensure that the peacebuilding capacities of young people are widely acknowledged and showcased. It is for this purpose that Galaxy4Peace was established.

**Galaxy4Peace** is a youth-led non-governmental organisation with the commitment to champion peace by “catching the children young”, through the use of peace education, and redirecting youth with programmes that empower them with knowledge and skills needed in peacebuilding and leadership development. Galaxy4Peace also work towards empowering women and girls in taking the front seat in building community peace. Through the vision of making peace a practical and sustainable reality in communities, and sustaining an environment built on peaceful co-existence among persons, tribes and communities, Galaxy4Peace hopes to achieve a goal of championing comprehensive sustainable peace by creating a platform where young people develop and strengthen their skills and capacity for peace.

As a youth-focused and youth-led peacebuilding organization, Galaxy4Peace is grounded in the belief that global challenges like violent extremism demand an active response to the root cause using: education, women, and a community-based approach. Using peace education as a vital tool in mobilising children to find peaceful solutions to problems, and in raising a new generation committed to creating a culture of peace; thousands of "peace-vibers" have been raised to create this life-changing story.

**Our Work and UNSCR 2250**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security makes a historic accomplishment by recognising the important and positive role young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. With the adoption of this resolution, both at the global and national level, our projects at the grassroots level become more important in deepening the role of youths in peace and security. Galaxy4Peace has also leveraged on the UNSCR 2250 and its pillars in providing platforms to showcase
the capacity of young people towards active engagement and participation in shaping lasting peace, and contributing to justice and reconciliation systems, through series of programmes at community level intervention and policies.

The UNSCR 2250 urges member states to support, as appropriate, quality education for peace that equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes. In line with this, Galaxy4Peace adopted ‘Teach Peace Early’ as a tool to inculcate culture of peace, tolerance, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue among youths. This is done through empowering youths with knowledge and skills that discourage their participation in acts of violent extremism, and all forms of discrimination.

With ‘Community Peace Talks’, we designed a programme that facilitates an inclusive and enabling environment, recognizing youth as actors of peace, regardless of their backgrounds, by providing them with adequate support to implement violence-prevention activities in three communities in Lagos State. The UNSCR 2250 has become a crucial resolution that we have used to drive home the important work that we have been doing in advocating for structural inclusion of youth in all levels of peacebuilding and decision-making.

Our Interventions

Peace education is a vital necessity because conflict is a reality of life, which can happen any time due to conflicting need or conflict of interests, and as a result of varied opinions, ideas, values, political orientations, scarce or limited resources, a gap in communication, economic systems, etc. (Francis, 2006). Unfortunately, violence is often utilized as a way of resolving conflict in our society. This approach to conflict resolution only extends the cycles of violence, leading to escalation of the issues
which may result in destructive situation. To eradicate the use of violence as a means of resolving conflicts among others, it is imperative to include Peace Education in the national education curriculum so as to empower the future generation with the necessary peaceful skills to resolve social issues. **Peace Education** has to do with training on the avoidance and management of violent conflict, better human relationship, unity, and internal cooperation among various tribes, aimed at the elimination of group prejudice, stereotypes, and animosity, which make some group to prefer war to peace.

Therefore, the form of education that coaches young people on ways to manage conflicts, learn positive values that shapes adult life and understand the importance of peace, will play a crucial role in ending cycles of conflicts. This underlining fact gave birth to ‘**Teach Peace Early**’ Peace Education programme. On realizing the power that lies in teaching children peace early, and the absence of Peace Education in the national curriculum, we adopted the primary approach of teaching peace education in schools through a well-structured programme. With an education that teaches peace as a vital tool in facilitating children to find peaceful solutions to
problems, and in raising a new generation committed to creating a
culture of peace; we began to champion peace through the ‘Teach
Peace Early’ Peace Education Intervention Programme in Nigerian
schools.

This intervention initiative began as a school-focused
programme, designed as lessons with the goal of teaching and
promoting peace values that impact the lives of children from early
stage. The idea is to create a “catch them young” concept where
children learn positive values that shape their adult life. Given that
Peace Education is not a subject in the Nigerian school curriculum,
we started adopting schools where students are empowered, using
lessons designed by United Nations Institute of Peace’s Education
Curriculum where we teach peace education for 45 minutes in
classrooms referred to as ‘Peace Lab’ in every school. Each student
goes through the 12-lesson plan. Consequently, our experiences
with over 18,795 Teach Peace Early learners, who have been taught
various topics such as the cost of violence, constructive ways of
resolving conflicts, empathy, tolerance, non-violence
communication, human rights, forgiveness, etc. in the various
‘Peace Labs’ have been interesting and inspiring.

Teach Peace Early activities include: structured classroom
teaching, games, movies, role play, and cooking & football
competitions; all of which take place in the “Peace Labs”, sport
fields and playgrounds. With the Teach Peace Early project, which
runs a minimum of three months of seed planting in schools, we
have come to the realization that with open minds and receptive
hearts, peace can be taught and learned. Teaching peace should be
a way of life, and there is no better time to start teaching this
education that helps structure positive narratives than early.

Through this initiative, which is focused on inspiring
children, adolescents, and young people, tomorrow’s global citizens
are being made. They learn how to heal the world they are
inheriting, and they learn peace values that help shape a world of non-violence. With ‘Teach Peace Early’ programme executed in Nigerian schools, Galaxy4Peace, in the past five years, have been able to build the passion of young people to uphold harmony in their schools or any environment they find themselves through activities like tolerance, love, forgiveness, unity, empathy, peace, respect, integrity, respectful communication, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence and so much more.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent closure of school, we started exploring ways to transition this physical classroom programme to an online digital tool. Also, our goal of involving parents at homes, which primarily is every child’s first point of peace call, we started creating lesson plans that can be used digitally by both parents and teachers. In the process of transitioning the physical class to a digital one, our team of volunteers designed a comprehensive easy-to-use 18 lesson plans in two sections to serve children between (5-10 years) and (11-18years) categories, involving over 18 activities. This ready-to-download lessons are designed to focus on thematic areas such as diversity and inclusion, tolerance, emotional intelligence, positive ways to resolve conflict, affirmations, human rights, gender equality, consent, empathy, nonviolence communication etc.

We are excited to have expanded this life-moulding programme that started in one “Peace Lab” in Queen Elizabeth College in Kwara State to a virtual programme not only for teachers in schools, but also for parents and guardians, who support us, in making homes citadel of peace. The aim is to build a resource bank to achieve peace by providing pupils with the necessary knowledge, skills, and peaceful models of life, so that peace becomes not just a goal but also a process to be followed. Our effort seeks to neutralize violence and build a harmonious life for all. In other words, peace education motivates an individual’s effort to continuously seek
peace, initiate reconciliation, and promote justice without degrading human dignity, self-worth and rights.

The hope of ending violence, oppression, discrimination and injustice in various aspects of life that impede individuals and society can be achieved through the realization of the meaning and essence of peace. The actualization of these values is essential for children to mature. Such discourse empowers children with peace perspectives leading to mutual respect, the eagerness to help, the ability to negotiate and communicate utilizing emotion, reason and logic. All of these form the essence of peace education, including formal education in schools. The impact of the ‘Teach Peace Early’ programme which has covered ten (10) schools in three states in Nigeria, with the direct impact on 18,795 students, who became peace influencers, thus facilitating sustainable peace and countering violent extremism, cannot be overemphasized.

Galaxy4Peace has also intervened through her ‘Community Peace Talk’ Project. As an organization, we understand that Family peacebuilding is the foundation to world peace. The ‘Community Peace Talk’ initiative has two parts. The first is to empower women, who are major stakeholders in the peace process, with skills that help them make informed decisions in building a better home and leading peace process in communities. The second part is to identify young conflict actors, lobby them over to the side of peace through community dialogues, and empowering them to be part of the peace process in their communities. We understand that there is no better way to end structural, psychosocial, and physical violence in communities without engaging women who are stakeholders of peace.

Against the background of heightened concerns over radicalization across Bariga community, Galaxy4Peace’s Community Peace Talk designed activities on grassroots capacity building, empowering dialogue, counselling, and one-to-one coaching that
unlock and activate the potential of mothers, and leave them as an informed and empowered leading women in preventing violent conflict in their homes and communities. Through a three-phase approach of the programme, together with stakeholders in communities such as traditional rulers, Community Development Associations (CDAs) and women groups, ‘Community Peace Talk’ employs developmental psychology, dialogue & peace value training and theoretical sessions that make a difference in ending all forms of violence (gender-based violence inclusive) at personal, family and community levels.

The sessions engaged women in a learning exercise that accelerates dialogue; exchange of knowledge in breakout sessions; analysis of real-life context situations that affect people at the grassroots level, and how they can take part in building sustainable communities where development prospers. Mothers undergo a process of gradual awareness and leadership building in three successive stages: starting with the self, moving on to the family and community, and finally arriving at their women’s role in peacebuilding. By encouraging and empowering women as stakeholders of peace, we have succeeded in empowering 101
women in Bariga community in Lagos from the inception of the programme in 2018. These women are left empowered with the knowledge of facilitating peace process in their communities.

**Project Impact**

The impacts of these projects are broadly in two forms: behaviour change and skill acquisition. In the course of monitoring and evaluating our programmes, we saw evidences of increased youth participation in peacebuilding, reduction in school violence/bullying, active volunteerism in peacebuilding activities in schools, greater tolerance, and growing culture of peaceful coexistence especially amongst Christians and Muslims; among other evidences.

1. **Behavioural Change**

One of the influences of ‘Teach Peace Early’ is the behavioural changes in students in curbing aggressiveness, violence, and conflicts in schools. During one of our post-programme monitoring and evaluation in a school, we observed, while interacting with the students, that a particular student, who used to be a bully prior to the introduction of the programme, has dramatically changed for better. According to him,

“Attending ‘Teach Peace Early’ programme in “Peace Lab” have strongly influenced my mind. I was enlightened on how bullying is not the best way to live, but rather to show empathy, live a conflict-free life, not only in my school but in all environments, cooperate with people around, engage in dialogue and make more friends as against enemies”.

Indeed, raising young leaders of impeccable character, devoid of vices as well as making our environment a bastion of peaceful co-existence would require us raising succeeding generations of leaders whose behavioural changes are positive.
Another direct impact of the programme in schools from the feedbacks we have received, is the new generation of students who now peacefully handle critical issues that used to lead to conflicts. We found out that the level of social adaptation and skills of the children in the ‘Peace Lab’ was higher when compared to the children who have not engaged in the Teach Peace Early programme. Feedbacks from Parents also showed that they agree that peace education at the early stage in school helped in developing a positive character, helping the child discover and achieve positive character traits. For instance, a parent shared how her 5-year-old child who used to fight with her siblings when they are not in the mood to play, fails to share her belonging such as toys, changed her attitude. With the introduction of TPE in her school, she ended up learning behaviour that demonstrate the strong influence of peace education such as voluntary interaction with others. In the TPE programme, these skills and behaviour were specifically targeted, and the programme aimed the children to acquire the skills they can use throughout their lives.

While interacting with students after PeaceLab, several of them revealed how they are more tolerant, use respectful communication, and resolve conflicts in a more constructive approach. Also, our success story is incomplete without sharing how school management and teachers appreciate Galaxy4Peace for bringing the ‘Teach Peace Early’ programme to their school through which a good number of their students who are used to bullying are now peace actors through positive modification of attitude.

It is always fulfilling each time students who have graduated or relocated to another school write us inquiring the possibility of bringing the programme to their new school on identifying signs of conflict situation or bullying in the new school. In one of the several emails we received, a previous participant stated,
“I am delighted to be part of your student in Prudence City College ‘Peace Lab’, which equipped me with better ways to manage issues in conflict situations. Through your programme, I was able to use my skill to mediate among my friends in my new school and have set up a mediation corner in my school to help address subsequent conflict situations. Please does Galaxy4Peace has an office in Abuja? Can the programme be introduced to my new school because it will help a lot of students in this school?”

Another striking success story was when a mother called Galaxy4Peace to encourage our efforts in catching them young through the ‘Teach Peace Early’ Peace Education project in the child’s school. From the conversation the parent had with our team member, she was excited not only in the son’s change in character, but also the son’s attitude of teaching his siblings what he gained from “Peace Lab”. She requested that Galaxy4Peace should spread the programme into more schools. Over time, the monitoring and evaluation feedbacks after TPE in any school has demonstrated that the aggression tendency of the students decreased, and their empathy levels increased. It was also found that children are now aware of the concept of peace, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution skills, their relationships with their peers, family, and teachers were improved and a positive atmosphere became prevalent in the classroom and school environment. Furthermore, the Teach Peace Early programme has been used in healing children who have experienced violent conflicts after going through a trauma healing recovery programme in IDP camps.

2. **Skill Acquisition**

The **Community Peace Talk** programme has empowered one hundred and one (101) community women who have
demonstrated their capacity and understanding of peace, while making positive difference in their communities. On realization of the positive development that comes with their participation in growing and leading peace in their communities after engaging in the three-phase programme, women begin to demonstrate their participation in building community peace.

More impacts have been recorded in a drastic reduction in the circulation of violent activities in the Bariga community, resolving societal problems of social, political, and religious unrest that often leads to property damage, injuries and even death. With activities on dialogues, mediation, and negotiation, families begin to build trust amongst families of different religion by becoming more religiously tolerant, speak up against gender-based violence, address community challenges in a nonviolent way without sentiments, and increase shared economic interests. The ability of women to organize cross-conflicts dialogue and mediation meetings at grassroots levels to promote the use of non-violence means, has improved.

From the inception of the Community Peace Talk project till date, the women we have worked with have constantly engaged in promoting the Teach Peace Early programme in their homes, collaborated with one community school managements who share the visions and goals of expanding and strengthening schools and homes as frontals of peace. After the success of certain projects, every organisation would want to expand the projects to other communities for continuous progress and to reach a larger impact at different levels of society. To do so, organizations need a constant flow of funds to maintain the progress of the programme.

**Challenges faced and Opportunities for Expansion**

For us at Galaxy4Peace, one of the challenges we face is the issue of funds, just like most organizations. Severally, we have been
constrained by limited funds and resources, which limit the extent to which the peacebuilding programmes we design can go. Not having enough funds not only pose difficulties in accomplishing projects, but it also put organizations at risk, given that there are also many operational costs involved in running a non-profit.

Another challenge we have as an organization is the difficulty in hiring the right candidate as a result of lack of fund, which serves as a major motivation for employees, who see the small non-profit organisation as a stopgap. Also, we are currently facing limited capacity not only in staff strength but in organizational and technical capacity to achieve our objectives. As a result of inadequate funds, the staff strength is limited and leaving the organization unable to invest in capacity building for the team. As a result of this weak capacity, it has been difficult to mobilize funds, develop networks from conferences, and uphold lasting senior leadership management. Finally, the issue of authentication and trust is another challenge.

**Opportunity for Expansion**

Having discussed the challenges Galaxy4Peace confront, let us use the same recourse to highlight expansion opportunities. The first will be in the area of capacity building through training, which will improve the skills of members of the team in ‘scaling up’ the operational expansion of the peacebuilding programmes and initiatives the organization run.

Secondly, an increasing influence via co-operation with the government that will influence the introduction of Peace Education into Nigeria school curriculum and as a community service project for young people under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Nigeria. With the right relationships between governments and Galaxy4Peace’s vision, the goal of institutionalizing Peace Education in the Nigerian school curriculum will be achieved. Also, the
Community Peace Talk model can be applied at the grass root level as a sustainable peacebuilding community-led approach that will raise children that stand for peace and help in addressing the incidence of violence head-on.

Conclusion

Nigeria faces many challenges that curtail her ability to build sustainable peace and development. Such challenges include, but not limited to, insecurity, poverty, socio-economic inequality, youth unemployment, gender inequality, absence of inclusive growth and weak institutional capacities. The failure of the Nigerian government to meet the socio-economic demands of its citizens has led several civil society and non-governmental organisations to take up the mandate of filling these gaps. Understanding the need for a non-violent method of resolving conflict situation and tensions, Galaxy4Peace has tried to fill the gap left by the government in providing the peace education, by establishing the ‘Teach Peace Early’ and ‘Community Peace Talk’ projects across communities in Nigeria. Through the implementation of these projects at the grassroots level, the organisation has been able to shift the mind of young people from a “culture of war” to a “culture of peace”. The successes recorded from these projects have shown that building and creating an environment of peaceful coexistence are more fruitful when we teach children peace education that helps shape their adult life positively, and empower women in building community peace.
AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Precious Ajunwa is on an assignment to transform toxic workplace culture into positive change, using Conflict Resolution & Emotional Intelligence skills through Pacific Practice Consults – a Conflict Resolution firm. She is the founder of Galaxy of Peace and Integrity Initiative (Galaxy4Peace), a women-led organisation championing peace by catching children young using peace education, redirecting youth with programmes that empower them, and empowering women. Precious has successfully helped individuals, brands and companies improve performance and resolve challenges with best-practice tools, such as the Conflict Dynamics Profile (CDP), the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI), the Thomas-Kilmann model and many more. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in English Language and a Master’s degree in Peace and Development Studies from the University of Ilorin. Her multi-sector career has covered various walks of life including public, private and non-profit organizations.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 17

THE ROLE OF CEPASD AFRICA IN COMBATING GENDER-BASED BASED VIOLENCE

Augustine Igweshi
Centre for Peace Advocacy and Development Africa

Introduction

Gender-based violence is a violation of universal human rights protected by international conventions. These rights include the right to security of person, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to freedom.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

It is well documented that GBV is a widespread international public health and human rights issue that affects both male and female. It has been reported that 1 in 3 females and 1 in 10 males have suffered sexual gender-based violence at the hands of their current or former partner in their lifetime. Gender-based violence is also a global issue that concerns us all. Therefore, it is not about women or girls, as it affects both male and female. Hence, it requires concerted efforts and urgent action of all. There has been an increase in gender-based violence such as incessant rape cases, child molestation, physical abuse and domestic violence in Nigeria. This has been especially heightened during the lockdowns imposed by the Nigerian government from March 2020, in response to the ravaging novel coronavirus disease. During the lockdowns, South Africa recorded the highest number of sexual and domestic violence
in the world with 1 woman killed every 8 hours and 60 children raped daily. It is against this background that Global Youth Movement Against Gender-Based Violence was initiated by Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD Africa) to raise youth ambassadors against GBV with a view of increasing global awareness on the alarming rate of GBV, thereby calling global action to end Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) and GBV.

The UNSCR 2250 and CEPASD Africa
The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 is a game-changer in the field of youth peacebuilding. For the first time, the crucial role played by young people in peacebuilding was acknowledged, with the need for the international community to recognize and empower young people being emphasized. Young people certainly make up the majority of the population in conflict-ridden countries. Globally, youth have also been misrepresented as perpetrators and victims of violence. In reality, this is a one-sided story, as the majority of young people are peaceful and law-abiding citizens who contribute to the development of their immediate communities. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and UN member states, through the passage of the UNSC Resolution 2250, have finally brought this reality home by identifying 5 pillars of youth peacebuilding efforts.

The pillars are participation, prevention, protection, partnerships and, disengagement and reintegration. These pillars encapsulate the wide range of work carried out by young people driving sustainable peace around the world. The participation pillar specifically relates to the peacebuilding work of the Centre for Advocacy and Sustainable Development. Participation is an important principle for the team at CEPASD Africa. This pillar informs that young persons should be fully involved in promoting peace and development in their societies. Youths are a crucial
demographic, and are best placed to drive peacebuilding processes, as they are often at the receiving end of violent conflict. Most importantly, young people can serve as peer educators and spread the peacebuilding message in both the means and language they understand, while appealing to their self-interests.

Without meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding, whatever gains emanate from such an exclusive process may not be sustainable due to inadequate consideration of youth concerns and insufficient youth engagement. This pillar (participation) inspired the Centre for Advocacy and Sustainable Development Africa (CEPASD Africa) to emerge in 2018 as a youth-led organization to educate and promote attitudinal change among their peers on conflict issues relating to violent extremism and gender-based violence, while fostering leadership and a drive for social justice. Since 2018, the UNSCR 2250 has been key to sensitizing more young people to buy into CEPASD Africa’s vision as well as strike key partnerships with local and international stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations and local communities.

Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development is a youth-focused non-governmental organization registered in Nigeria with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 2018 with thematic focus on Peacebuilding, Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Leadership, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Social Justice. We work to engage, inspire and build the resilience of young people on peacebuilding activities, undertake advocacy against gender-based violence, promote and foster sustainable development across Africa. We also build youth capacity for peacebuilding through promoting peace ambassadors and champions of peaceful coexistence. We also mentor them on nation-building, leadership, entrepreneurship, innovation, development and sustainability. CEPASD Africa
promotes and fosters the international *Youth, Peace and Security* agenda of UNSCR 2250, UNSCR 2535, and the AU Peace and Security agenda. It is our firm belief that young people possess the creativity, tenacity, capacity and innovative ideas to create a better society; thus we build their resilience in the fight against gender-based violence and violent extremism.

CEPASD Africa pushes to redefine the narratives and rekindle the passion for peacebuilding and sustainable development, while taking holistic measures in addressing the root causes of violent extremism, gender-based violence and violent conflict towards achieving sustainable peace and social justice. We are making indelible marks to ensure that youths discover and utilize their latent potentials for sustainable development through peacebuilding actions and innovations. Our priorities are youth development, women empowerment and child education as well as leading advocacy campaigns against violence, conflict, terrorism, climate change, drought, poverty and unemployment in Africa.

**Interventions**

CEPASD Africa, over the years, has carried out various intervention projects, both virtually and physically, thus impacting about five thousand young people across Africa. Our interventions include the following:

**Global Youth Movement Against Gender-Based Violence**

Global Youth Movement Against Gender-Based Violence is a movement of youth activists, advocates, young professionals, practitioners and youth ambassadors with special interest in fighting against gender-based violence. It seeks to build a broad-based multi-stakeholder coalition that will champion local, national and global campaigns and advocacy to end gender-based violence and promote behavioural and attitudinal change among boys and men, increase institutional capacity, facilitate policy
implementation and create global awareness on the incessant rise in GBV cases to enable global action. The movement hopes to raise one million Youth Ambassadors against GBV in five years, who will serve as i-reporters in their various communities, reporting cases of gender-based violence to the designated authorities in their communities.

More so, we advocate for the abolition of harmful traditional practices and social norms at local community level that prevent women and girls from education, while mobilising resilient youths, and traditional and religious leaders to support the fight against GBV. We also facilitate policy enhancements while providing psychosocial support and empowerment for the victims and survivors of GBV. The movement is a landmark project of CEPASD Africa under its gender equality focus.

The first activity of the movement was a two-day webinar conference which was held on the 24th and 25th of July, 2020, with the theme: *Mobilizing Youth in the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence*, organised via the Zoom App. The webinar event marked the beginning of 20 days of activism against gender-based violence by the movement. The webinar conference, which brought together 120 participants from about 30 countries and 10 organizations, facilitated exchange of ideas, practices, experiences, data collection strategies, policy actions and prevention strategy towards ending Gender-Based Violence. The webinar also featured discussions on conventions, charters and actions towards ending gender-based violence; policies framework and guidelines in responding to the challenges of gender-based, and the need for data collection. The webinar conference was held in partnership with the Federation of International Gender and Human Rights USA, Rotary Club, Voice of the Girl Child and Vulnerable People Foundation (VGCVPF).
Day 1

The Welcome Address was delivered by Augustine Igweshi. He delivered a very detailed address, which highlighted the necessity of the movement, while sharing the objectives of the campaign. Augustine Igweshi address discussed how GBV affect men, women and key populations. He shared the staggering statistics on GBV issues including rape and murder. Mr. Igweshi called upon the youth around the world to join the movement so as to raise one million ambassadors by 2025. He recognized the collaboration with all partners who came together to make the conference possible. He then proceeded to launch the 20 days of activism against GBV social media campaign and invited participants to sign and share the petition on GBV. He reiterated the call to raise all voices against GBV through partnership and participation by the youth.

Conference Chairperson, Dr. Ameena Ali officially launched the movement from New York. Noting that the UN Women had mandated the global assignment to end GBV. She maintained that GBV was a global issue and included rape, sexual mutilation, female genital mutilation, murder, physical violence, sexual assault and attempted murder. The emphasis of the female victims of GBV and the focus on tribal, cultural and negative practices was brought to the attention of the audience. Dr. Ameena pleaded with the international community and victims to stand up, even against their clans or tribes, in advocating against GBV. She asked everyone to end ignorance which allows GBV to prevail. Dr. Ameena who spoke in her capacity as a UN representative, called for policy implementation that makes women feel safe and free from GBV. She made a personal pledge to end GBV and invited participants to reach out to her.

Dr. Ameena Ali’s main presentation dwelt on Global Epidemiology of Leading Roles of GBV. She argued for the
intentional inclusion of local communities in the fight against GBV through educating the public in local languages and creating safe spaces for victims. Also, she called for increased community and stakeholder engagement in training Anti-GBV champions in the local communities to ensure peer education. Moreover, such community sensitization on GBV, she maintained, should be free and accessible to everyone in rural areas. Finally, she argued for the enhancement of social protection by making sustainable finance available, even in tough religious and ethnic context. Dr. Ameena pledged help through the Federation of International Gender and Human Rights (FIGHR) in the form of training and crisis care plans, which will be made available to people worldwide through a fellowship of inclusion.

The keynote speaker, Lord Mayor of Banjul, The Gambia, Madam Rohey Malick Lowe addressed the conference on Dynamics of Confronting GBV, Conventions, Charters and Actions. She immediately brought attention to how GBV knows no boundaries and is the most prevalent human rights violation.

She touched on how GBV undermines health while also bringing into focus the consequences, which include sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unwanted pregnancies and abortions. Madam Rohey brought to the fore how intimate partner violence is the main contributor to GBV and also the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). She bemoaned the insufficient laws and lack of implementation and enforcement to deal with it. However, she brought hope by highlighting the international charters that have been signed by those who aim to address the issue. Social, cultural and religious beliefs were singled out for their contribution to GBV, which she called a global pandemic. She spoke about consulting women in all decisions which affect them.

Madam Rohey bemoaned discrimination and policies which exclude women. She noted that, “it is our responsibility to address
issues of GBV” while making the clarion call “Be your Sisters’ Keeper”. Madam Rohey made the case for the inclusion of marginalized people in the decision-making process. Her parting call was to “break the culture of silence” as “silence allows violence”.

Aisha Bello, co-host of the conference, powerfully brought attention to GBV as a long-time struggle and clarified that it was not a feminist agenda. She called for the mobilization of youth in the fight against GBV, noting that the importance of the large youth population could never be overemphasized. She connected how GBV is easily a part of the UN SDGs and the youth are a key stakeholder. She also showed how the youth can influence policy-making while giving them a sense of responsibility.

Professor Jude Ediae took us through his presentation on *Psychosocial Support and Management of GBV Survivors* by showing the link between mental health and GBV, and why psychosocial support is vital to survivors. While Prof. Jude provided extensive statistics, he also gave a very detailed analysis of the consequences and survival strategies of GBV on children. The audience learned that among other benefits, psychosocial support helps survivors to cope better and empowers the victims. He also lectured on the different forms of psychosocial support mechanisms available. He showed the importance of respect in all approaches and encouraged victims to reach out for help because help is available.

The final speaker for the first day was Abiodun Esset who spoke about *Overcoming Domestic and Sexual Violence*. She addressed the approaches on cultural norms and beliefs around GBV by citing cultural norms and gender roles as some of the root causes which have limited women’s development so far, particularly in Africa. She decried the second class citizenship culturally ascribed to the girl child in society and the family in particular, and called for a change in the way we socialize our youth, while emphasising respect for the values of humanity. Mrs. Esset asked
that we give boys and girls the same rights and privileges especially in education. Enraged by the sexualisation of girls, she called for the respect of women’s rights for empowerment. Her message sought a change in cultural approaches as well as creating awareness. She hoped to see women occupy leadership positions throughout society. Mrs. Abiodun Esset also believed in creating safe spaces for women to access help. She called for an end to bad cultural practices like FGM and appealed to cultural and religious leaders to join in the fight against GBV by using their religious platforms to campaign against GBV. She also suggested the maintenance of the GBV offenders registers to dissuade others from following suit.

**Day 2**

Dr. Ghazala Khan’s presentation on *Understanding Violence against Women: Myth’s and Facts* evoked an emotional response. She unpacked 16 unfounded shocking myths circulating in society around the issue of GBV including the myth that FGM occur only in the developing world, and that slavery no longer exist. She also touched on the vulnerability of transgender and disabled people to GBV. She called for unity of purpose to eradicate GBV from the roots through funding women’s full participation in society, developing programmes for professionals who are experiencing second-hand trauma and also scaling up professional effort.

Cynthia Mbamalu addressed the conference on *The Role of Youth in the Fight against GBV*. She pointed out that this call for concerted efforts should not be a one-time affair but ought to continue consistently towards targeted action to achieve results. The youth must understand what it is they want to do, how they can engage in the cause, and their generational responsibility. The youth are in transition to adulthood and are biologically structured to be hopeful. The young people tend to wanting to be heroic and they can achieve social impact by addressing social threats and
negative social norms. She asked for the identification of like minds to, build a movement for connected actions, understand the issues to address and streamline the issues to define necessary actions.

She called on the youth to take guidance from past experiences and leaders that will inform present-day actions. She deplored the culture of silence around GBV, while calling on youths to speak out through social media. The reality of intimate-partner violence was once again hammered home and the importance of taking action in the absence of effective systems to respond and mete out justice. She noted that structured engagement would make it possible to achieve the goals, while social reorientation and education must be a priority.

She advised the youth to remain consistent in achieving results. Her parting words was to reiterate the fact that the youth voice is powerful. *Youthquake* is the power of the youth voice to make a change. With 60% of the African population being young, the youth voice cannot be silenced. Governments must be consistently engaged to end GBV.

Barrister Bukola Ajao delivered an address on *Gender-Based Violence as a Human Right Violation*. Her passion for human rights advocacy was easily felt during her presentation. She spoke about how minors are abused sexually and in other ways. She took the audience through some of the human rights violated by GBV. She detailed the link between human rights and the various sectors of society and economy. Pedophilia is the topic she drew attention to repeatedly, which without a doubt, drew an emotional response. She then raised the heavier topic of negative cultural practices like an economic violation in the form of taking away the right to inheritance or work, FGM and domestic violence or torture, and forced labour in a form of servitude/slavery of children. Ajao called for youths to take the movement to the grassroots where there is little or no access to social media. She called for the engagement of
religious leaders while challenging victims and survivors to speak out and seek help. She called for citizens to stop stigmatizing survivors.

Dr Ameena Ali joined in briefly to impart key messages related to the conference. Her powerful call to join the campaign was reinforced by statistics and the reality of knowing someone who is affected. She called on us all to stop being afraid, and challenged everybody to take action by joining a 12-week programme for training on GBV. Dr. Ameena again pledged to reduce the horrible statistics on GBV by half while inviting participants to sign up.

Elfas Mcloud Shangwa had a novel idea on How Art Therapy Can Be Used to Prevent and Respond to GBV. He spoke about how art influence people’s lives and broke down the various forms of art and the expression of art. He highlighted how artists can challenge cultural narratives and drive social change. His idea of using art as an effective communication tool is a useful mechanism as an entrance strategy to implement the programmes needed at the grassroots level, especially where literacy level is low. He also showed how victims can use art to tell their stories and get help on the road to healing. He portrayed art therapy as an effective tool in mental health treatment. He also spoke on how art therapy can be utilized as a creative process to help people better express themselves.

Dr. Fawad Ali Langah concluded the speaker session with his presentation on The Role of Men in the Fight against GBV. He spoke about how men and boys are also victims of SGBV, especially in conflict zones. He bemoaned the lack of accurate statistics because of the stigma around reporting. He called on students to become agents of awareness, while also advocating for field campaigns in the army, police forces and security forces to join in the sharing of messages against GBV. He spoke about incorporating targeted /
elective training on gender issues and GBV into education and workplace ethics. He noted that the lack of education on GBV had led people to be perpetrators. Fawad Ali called for peer educators and social influencers to take up the call. He spoke about how men are the majority in decision making roles and must be the leaders in ending GBV. He was passionate about the creation of study cells to work on Research & Development, with an emphasis on data collection and research, so that we can streamline solutions and programmes which must include mental health care.

He also spoke about the transgender community and how they must not be left out of the strategies. He asked for a mindset change in communities, perpetrators and victims. Fawad concluded with strategy implementation through creation of think tanks and neighbourhood groups to identify issues that must be addressed, so that appropriate methodology can be implemented.

Concluding remarks by Augustine Igweshi included an expression of appreciation to all partners involved in putting the conference together, including speakers and participants. He reiterated that this is a time for collective action and called for unity. He called on everyone to commit themselves to, and participate in activities to achieve the goal of ending GBV. He asked all to sign the petition.

Outcomes

CEPASD Africa projects and programmes have created real impacts in about five thousands young people across Africa.

The Global Youth Movement Against Gender-Based Violence has raised over 400 youth ambassadors against gender-based violence to carry out advocacy and report cases of gender-based violence to the nearest authority in their communities. It also trained and built the capacity of over 100 youth ambassadors on
sexual and gender-based violence, human rights, leadership and team-building. Some youth ambassadors for the movement are currently training local community women and girls to empower them with skills for self-reliance.

The movement has reported over 10 cases of rape to the appropriate authorities, and pursued justice for the victims. The movement has created attitudinal change among boys and men, which has contributed significantly in reducing violence against women. The movement within just one month of inception, created global awareness on the rising cases of gender-based violence. This awareness is mobilising global action, and has established partnership with Federation of International Gender and Human Rights (FIGHR) USA, which has trained more than 50 youths on gender-based violence. CEPASD Africa has built partnership with both local and international organizations in working together for peace.

**Challenges**

1. Lack of Collaboration with stakeholders and government due to many bureaucracies.
2. Challenges managing volunteers as most volunteers usually request stipends.
3. Lack of access to funding and grants.

**Opportunities for Expansion**

CEPASD Africa programmes and projects have presented opportunities for expansion. With needed supports, expansion will be possible in the following areas:

1. Scaling up the GBV movement across Nigeria.
2. Getting capacity-building training from international donors.
3. Carrying out GBV projects in local communities.
4. Scaling up peacebuilding actions at the community level.
5. Engaging with stakeholders and actors in peacebuilding and GBV

Conclusion
Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD Africa) has created real values and made a significant impact over the years. We have impacted over five thousand lives, advocated for peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, Africa and the world at large and impacted communities and the youths since inception. CEPASD Africa, as a youth organization, engages youths in peacebuilding actions, violent extremism prevention, and advocacy against gender-based violence. Our work has helped to foster sustainable peace and development. CEPASD Africa will continue to contribute to the achievement of SDGs and Youth for Peace Agenda of the AU through our various programmes and projects.

AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Igweshi Augustine is a pragmatic and resilient youth, global peace advocate, human rights defender, youth organizer, programme manager, social entrepreneur, development and humanitarian worker with over 5 years’ experience in the non-profit sector. He is the Executive Director/President Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD Africa). He is the representative of American International Education Federation for Nigeria. He is also the Convener, Global Dialogue on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); Convener, Global Youth Movement against Gender Based Violence (GYMGBV). GYMGBV is the largest youth movement against Gender-Based Violence.
Introduction

On the 22 August 2015, over eleven thousand young men and women gathered in Amman, Jordan to participate at the first Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security. For the very first time, young people, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other international actors came together to x-ray the various challenges facing young people and peacebuilders across communities worldwide. The forum provided an important platform for young people to voice their desire to live and continue to work for a peaceful society. The Amman Declaration, which is a product of extensive consultation by young people across the world, provides a clear vision and road map for strengthening the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda. It was also in Amman that young people charged the United Nations Security Council to adopt a global framework on Youth, Peace, and Security before 2017 so as to provide the needed political weight, normative guidance and sustaining pipe for the work of young peacebuilders.

Four months after the Amman Declaration, on the 9th December 2015, the United Nations (UN) responded with the adoption of the first UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security. This resolution identifies five critical pillars, which are: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and, disengagement and reintegration as already elaborated in previous chapters by the various authors. The UN has
also gone ahead to adopt subsequent resolutions such as the UNSCR 2419 (2018) which advocates for youth inclusion in negotiation and mediation processes, and UNSCR 2535 (2020) which argues for youth protection among member states, all aimed at strengthening the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

Since the adoption of the UNSCR 2250 in 2015, there have been several milestones and achievements for young people, both locally and globally. On the 2nd March 2020, the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, presented the first report on Youth, Peace and Security to the United Nations Security Council, highlighting the level of implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 and subsequent resolution 2419 by member states across the world. The UN Secretary General also used the opportunity to call on member states and all stakeholders to accelerate the implementation of the youth, peace, and security resolutions.

**Domesticating the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 in Africa and Nigeria**

Africa is often referred to as a youthful continent because more than sixty percent of its population falls below the age of 35 years, with over thirty percent of this group between the ages of 15 and 35. These statistics make it necessary to understand youth dynamics, their role in conflict, as well as their capacity for promoting conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In September 2018, the African Union’s (AU) inaugurated the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Programme in Lagos, Nigeria as part of efforts at concretely mainstreaming the youth into Africa’s peace and security issues and begin the domestication of the UNSCR 2250 in Africa. Although there were already existing youth frameworks within the continent e.g. the Africa Union Youth Charter (2006), which recognises the critical role of young people in promoting peace and
security. Despite the African Youth Charter clearly charting a road map for facilitating youth participation in politics; decision making and development processes at national, regional and continental levels, and creating the space for intergenerational dialogue and opportunity for exchange on youth development issues, it has however, continued to receive little attention from member States of the AU with over 10 countries yet to ratify the charter as at October 2020.

On the 9th of November 2018, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) dedicated its 807th meeting to Youth, Peace and Security. At this meeting, a young peacebuilder, Achaleke Christian, from the Local Youth Corner Cameroon, on behalf of youth peace organisations, was invited to brief the PSC on the existing youth interventions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Among the resolutions from that meeting was the need to continuously carry out annual sessions on the theme. It mandated the conduct of a study on the role and contributions of young people to peace and security in Africa (which has already been published), the selection of five regional African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAP) to work with the AU Youth Envoy in the promotion of peace and security, and called for an urgent need to finalise the drafting of a continental framework on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa. The AU has subsequently adopted a ‘Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security’ which comes with a 10-year implementation plan.

In Nigeria, there are ongoing efforts, direct and indirect, aimed at strengthening the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda locally and nationally. There has also been agreement by youth working groups and organisations to support the implementation of the UNSCR 2250 in Nigeria, some of which include the development of a national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 2250 in Nigeria. These are reflected in the various works undertaken by
youth-led organizations that contributed to this book. For instance, while the BBforPeace Foundation has carried out various projects through its CARE model, other organizations like WANEP-Nigeria, Yiaga Africa, Angel Support Foundation and Shannah Initiative for Human Development-Nigeria have also undertaken important projects on youth empowerment, youth’s political rights, youth skill training/empowerment and media advocacy respectively, to advance the cause of youth peacebuilding.

Another worthy step towards the national implementation of UNSCR 2250 and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Nigeria, is the establishment of the Nigeria Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, a multi-sectorial platform for youth and non-youth groups working on peace and security.

**Going Forward: Translating the UNSCR 2250 into Practice**

Despite the numerous achievements recorded in the first five years of the adoption of the UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, challenges still abound especially with regards to the successful implementation of the provisions of the resolution at local and national levels. In Nigeria, young people remain relegated in the peace and security sectors, and are commonly regarded as problem and threat to societal development. There are limited opportunities for leadership and active participation in decision-making and peace processes due to the negative stereotypical labelling of Nigerian youths as inexperienced, violent, rebellious, hoodlums, irresponsible and even "high on drugs". Rather than seeing young people as agents of destruction and threat to peace, they should be regarded as positive agents of peace and advocates for social cohesion and intercultural unity in their communities. Evidences from youth peacebuilding organisations captured in this book reveal that young people play a crucial role in sustainable peacebuilding and development in the various communities where
they operate. To ensure the successful implementation of the UNSCR 2250 and actively engage Nigerian youths for active participation and involvement in the decision-making and peace processes, this book makes the following recommendations:

A. Address the negative stereotypes of youths as threat to peace

It is important for leaders, stakeholders, community members and individuals to permanently move from the deficit-based perception of young people as perpetrators of violence and troublemakers to an asset-based perception of seeing young people as critical and positive agents for peacebuilding and sustainable development. With the end of the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria (a movement of young people who marched against police brutality and human rights violation across Nigeria and demanded youth protection) in October 2020, we have witnessed an attempt by government officials and security agents to criminalise and demonise youth as troublemakers and threats to democratic sustainability. This negative perception is grossly inaccurate as evidences from youth-led organisations captured in this book have shown that youths play an active role in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, electoral participation, citizenship education, leadership development, and sustainable development in Nigeria. The implication of these negative stereotypes is that they contribute to the marginalization and stigmatization of youth by framing young people as a problem to be solved and a threat to be contained, making young people less motivated to participate in building peace. This book asserts that young people remained an untapped resource that must be leveraged upon to ensure sustainable peace and development.
B. Transform the exclusionary realities limiting meaningful youth participation

Young people have a voice and must be allowed to use it. The Nigerian government must also ensure that youth’s voices are heard loud and clear through increased inclusion of young people in the decision-making and peace processes at local and national levels. Recognising that young people play an active role in conflict and violence should also lead to their inclusion in the peacebuilding processes. There is need to transform the exclusionary realities and structural barriers that reinforce youth exclusion and limit meaningful youth participation in peace, security and development. The government should invest in building young people’s capacity for leadership through capacity strengthening, providing financial support for youth activities and youth-led organisations, mentorship, and network building. Young people’s capacity for promoting peace can also be facilitated through peace education, civic and human rights education and youth empowerment, through skills and knowledge development programme. The works captured in this book have shown that creating enhanced structures and an enabling environment can promote and enhance youth peacebuilding efforts and initiatives.

C. Increase funding and support for youth projects

There is low institutional support for youth peacebuilding in Nigeria, with most youth-led peacebuilding organisations dependent solely on volunteerism or limited grants from international donor agencies for the execution of their projects. In all the work submitted by authors and youth organisations, funding was a cross-cutting challenge. According to Angel Support Foundation, one of youth organisation documented, “community members scampered to be part of our training workshops given the impact of the capacity (as testified by former participants) but could
not be admitted, given the limited budget provided for by the project”. In a similar report titled ‘Mapping a Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth Driven Peacebuilding’ published by UNOY Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground (2017), it noted that a majority of the youth-led organizations working in local communities operate with limited funding, with 49% operating with less than $5000 annually. As echoed by the UN Secretary General in his report, inadequate funding remains a central challenge to the implementation of Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018). According to him, ‘meeting the funding challenge requires the mobilization of additional and new resources, as well as a shift in focus towards preventive interventions tackling both the drivers of violence and the root causes of conflict’.

Young people therefore request for improved access and flexible funding opportunities both at the local, national, regional, and international levels. We therefore call on UN member states, donors, financial institutions, and international organizations to allocate $1.8 billion, representing $1 per young person by 2025, when we will be marking the 10th anniversary of UNSCR 2250. We recommend that Nigerian government create a dedicate fund for Youth, Peace and Security interventions accessible to youth peacebuilding organisations.

D. Foster youth partnership and collaborative action

The Nigerian political system is largely unrepresentative of the youth population, thereby creating a gap between young people and their leaders. To build sustainable peace and development, there is need for stakeholders to foster youth partnership and collaborative relationship among young people, youth organisations and the decision makers, both at the local and national levels. This collaborative action can also help to break the intergenerational divide that necessitates the exclusion of youth,
thus making young people feel a sense of involvement in the society. Promoting open dialogues between youths and political leaders can provide a learning platform for young people, leading to a more coordinated approach at supporting peace processes. This open dialogue can also help to tackle distrust, prejudices and, change the perception and narratives of youths as hoodlums and perpetrators of violence. Leaders and stakeholders should acknowledge that there is an added value to youth’s involvement in peacebuilding and so should engage, include and consult them in peace forums.

The best way to foster inclusive peace and development is to build and develop the capacity of young people. Young people need to get support, encouragement, and recognition for their peacebuilding efforts. The recent #EndSARS movement also shows that young people can form youth-led organisations and work collectively to spearhead peace. There is therefore the need for the government to strengthen youth’s ability to engage in organised collective actions for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Furthermore, to enhance youth peace efforts in Nigeria, and achieve young people’s vision for peace, there is need for unity, coordination and collaboration among young people, and among youth-led organisations.

**E. Address socio-economic inequalities facing young people**

Youth grow up with a lot of resentment and anger towards the government because of the glaring socio-economic inequalities that have become their reality. Most Nigerian youths are leaving the country daily, with some of them taking dangerous routes, because they feel there are fewer economic opportunities and little hope for better future for them. The high rate of youth unemployment and poverty is alarming, with Nigeria often cited as the poverty capital of the world because a large percent of its
population live on less than $1.50 daily. There is, therefore, the need to support and facilitate dignified livelihood for Nigerian youths. Contrary to the view held by some Nigerian political elites, unemployment, poverty, deep hopelessness, and low socio-economic prospects for the future often act as strong motivating factors driving young people to participate in violent conflicts or other activities and actions that act as threat to security and development.

Therefore, there is the need for the Nigerian government to create greater socio-economic opportunities for young people to motivate them to engage in peacebuilding activities. Most Nigerian youths are hardworking and just need an enabling environment to learn and develop their skills and entrepreneurial capacities. Furthermore, it is not just enough to say that youth should engage in entrepreneurship as an alternative to formal jobs. There must be a holistic support for youth’s engagement in entrepreneurship through capital injection and support for youth businesses, and creation of entrepreneurship grants and access to finance and loans. It is also important for the Nigerian government to equip youths with business development skills, coaching and mentoring opportunities, technical skills, and connect young entrepreneurs to domestic and international markets. The reality is that peace cannot be preached on an empty stomach and as such, youths can only be interested in peacebuilding if they are sure of their source of livelihood, daily wellbeing and future.

F. Considering gender issues

Women and girls often face additional challenges when it comes to exclusion from public spaces and in promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. Thus, sustainable peacebuilding requires that these challenges and inequalities need to be considered at all levels of the decision-making and peace processes.
In fostering socio-economic equality, a gender-sensitive approach needs to be taken to ensure that women and girls have access to these opportunities. Evidences from female peacebuilders captured in this book have shown that women can be well positioned to serve as peacebuilders and leaders. Young women and girls should therefore be encouraged and motivated to participate in peacebuilding engagements and initiatives.

G. Reforming the security and justice sector

To promote and foster sustainable peace, there is need for young people to adopt the use of non-violence in addressing their grievances. However, for them to do that, they must be assured of the presence of justice in the society. Most Nigerian youths feel that the various security agencies unfairly target them and blame them for various acts of violence and criminalities, thereby creating uncertainties and fears in their lives. The activities of the now-defunct Special Anti-Corruption Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police Force lend credence to these fears because several young people have been arrested, harassed, and even killed by this unit for simply being young or because they are suspected of being violent. The recent #EndSARS protests by youths across many states in Nigeria represent young people’s attempt to demand security and police reform, and call for the creation of security agencies that do not regard young people as fatal enemies that need to be killed or violated. Security and justice reform are therefore needed to ensure youth protection, which constitute one of the major provisions and pillars of the UNSCR 2250.

Conclusion

While some continue to argue about the level of youth participation in violence, resulting in negative labels, stereotypes and problematic programming responses, which ultimately limit
young people’s agency, there is growing evidence to show that young people have been involved and remain an untapped resource for sustainable peace and development. The adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security in 2015, and the subsequent Resolutions 2419 and 2535 now give legitimacy and recognition to the significant role and work of young people in promoting global peace and security. Nevertheless, there remains a critical gap in information on the activities young people are implementing across communities especially in Nigeria. The significance of these efforts needs to be emphasised as they continue to work for peace using innovative ways that are far beyond imagination with huge impacts.

This work ‘Connecting and Amplifying Voices of Youth Building Peace in Nigeria’ is an attempt at documenting the works and contributions of selected youth peace organisations drawn from communities in Nigeria to peacebuilding, which have hitherto received limited recognition, by giving them a space to tell the world their success stories, challenges and how they are overcoming these challenges in the midst of glaring socio-economic and political realities. It is my sincere hope that it has done justice in very significant ways by filling the evidence gap, especially on the contributions of young people to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Nigeria.
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‘Connecting and Amplifying Voices of Youth Building Peace in Nigeria’ seeks to profile and highlight the works and contributions of selected youth peace organisations, drawn from communities in Nigeria to peacebuilding, which have hitherto received limited recognition by giving them a space to tell the world their success stories, challenges and how they are overcoming these challenges in the midst of glaring socio-economic and political realities.

Building Blocks for Peace Foundation is an incorporated youth-led non-governmental organization working on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, accountability governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. The organization aims to achieve a society where there is peace, equality, justice and human rights, with youth actively engaged in the progress through advocacy, peer to peer training, workshops, radio programming, community sensitization, research and entrepreneurial skills development.