

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS’ (CSOS) PEACEBUILDING STRATEGIES

in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This article explores the pivotal role of Civil Society Organization (CSOs) in peacebuilding in Kaduna State, Nigeria. It examines the strategies employed by CSOs to mitigate conflict and enhance social cohesion in Kaduna State characterized by ethnic and religious tensions. This paper adopted Lederach’s conflict transformation theory to provide theoretical orientation to the paper. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews and case studies. The paper relied on four major population groups namely the Civil Society Organizations and staff that have been involved in peacebuilding activities, beneficiaries of CSOs interventions, Officials of government institutions that partnered/collaborated with the CSOs in Kaduna State in peacebuilding and security agents. A purposive sampling technique was utilized in the selection of CSOs, respondents from the CSOs, beneficiaries of CSOs intervention at the conflict-affected communities security agents and peace practitioners. the paper highlights the successes, challenges, and potential pathways for enhancing the impact of CSOs in peacebuilding. It was found that, CSO over-relied on external donors for financing their activities and where such is not available, it hampers their peacebuilding activities. It is therefore recommended that, the government of Kaduna State must recognize the vital role that CSOs play in encouraging grassroots participation in peacebuilding initiatives and provide them with the same level of support and recognition as other organizations, given the international community's recognition of the importance of CSOs in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and in order to lessen their reliance on external donors, civil society organizations (CSOs) should investigate alternate funding options, such as neighborhood contributions, crowdsourcing, and social entrepreneurship models.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of civil society remains elusive, complex and contested. There are different meanings and interpretations and, overtime, different schools of thought have influenced theoretical debates and empirical research. CSOs are the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or other, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. The term CSO goes beyond the narrower (and to many donors, more familiar) category of development-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and depicts a broad range of organizations. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements and advocacy groups. Ekeada, Ovuoh and Onah (2024) observed that, CSOs involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interest, passion and ideas, exchange ideas and information, achieve mutual goals; make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. They stressed further that, civil society is considered as an intermediary entity between the private sphere and the state with the aim of improving lives in the community.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have been identified as key stakeholders playing pivotal roles. The efforts of CSOs in the global democratization process, poverty reduction, advancement of human rights, good governance, debt relief and good aid have been widely acknowledged (Ateng and Abazaami, 2016). One major area that has featured prominently in the visibility of civil society organization is peacebuilding, and this, a number of factors have been advanced for this increasing visibility of the activities of CSOs. Most notably, conflict prevents progress from thriving since it cannot occur in the presence of conflict. In fact, during times of conflict, the government and civil society organizations (CSOs) shift their attention from their primary areas and work to find ways to bring peace and normalcy back to the warring communities by giving aid, either in kind or in cash, to those who are affected, especially the weaker members of society like women, children, and others who have been uprooted or have lost their means of support.

Kaduna, North-Western Nigeria has a rich history distinguished by a varied social and political environment. More than sixty distinct ethnic groups, including the Hausa, Fulani, Gbagyi, Adara, and Atyap, amongst others. Although, diversity adds to a rich cultural tapestry, it also creates problems with regard to tensions between different ethnic and religious groups. With a sizable Muslim population in the north and a sizable Christian population in the south, the state is religiously diverse. Conflicts between the various communities, ethnic and religious groups, and residents of the State are frequently brought on by this diversity. In truth, the State has experienced a great deal of ethnic and religious conflicts among various populations at various

periods since the well-known Zango/Kataf crisis in the 1980s, (Adepelumi, 2018).

Aside the ethnic and cleavages, the state has also recorded incidence of famers-Herders' conflict, land dispute, political dispute, chieftaincy title, as well as the conflicts of ideology among sects within the same religion. Some of these conflicts include, the Kasuwa magari in Kajuru, Sabon Tasha, Rigasa in Igabi, Yarkasuwa in Lere, Kaduna town and environs, Ungwa Barde/Dogin Noma and farmers/Herders in Brinin Gwari, religious and ethnic conflicts in Kafanchan, Hausa/Fulani and Kataf in Zangon Kataf and several clashes in the State, with its attendant consequences. It is believed that; one of the apparent causes of conflict is perpetrated by man's nature to exert certain aggression, envy, ambition, poor governance and frustration (Baba, 2022). Consequently, the aftermath of these conflicts is the loss of lives and property, displacement of people from their homeland, forced migration, and traumatic experiences which lingers for too long, economic and social inequality, including poverty, lack of access to education, unemployment, lack of access to health care facility, and abuse of human rights.

There exists plethora of literature (Ghaus-Pasha, 2005; Ekiyor, 2008; Kilroy and Kilroy, 2015; Ateng and Abazaami, 2016; Namongo, 2017) on the role of CSOs in peacebuilding both at the national and international levels, however, few of these studies documented the strategies deployed by CSOs in engendering peace among the warring parties and the challenges confronting CSOs in the peace building activities. Thus, it is the neglect of this nuanced aspect of scholarship that this paper addresses to cover the gaps. Specifically, the paper focused on the role of CSOs, with focus on the *modus operandi* and peacebuilding strategies in Kaduna State known for recurring conflicts over primordial sentiment that has beclouded the sense of reasoning of the conflict entrepreneurs for decades. In view of the character and dynamics of these conflicts, the government alone do not have the capacity to restore peace without the efforts of the civil society organization, with local base in some of the conflicting communities, who understand the terrain with a capacity to identify the predisposing factors responsible for these conflicts and the possible means of restoring peace. Despite the government initiatives, mechanisms and efforts of CSOs towards peacebuilding through the Kaduna Peace Agreement and Kaduna State Peace Commission, several conflicts have since been recorded after the peace agreement. Thus, the peacebuilding process is replete with complexities, consequently, the mainstream peacebuilding approaches to date include efforts to tackle the complexities of preventive and post-conflict peacebuilding to curb the menace and prevent some of the skirmishes from degenerating in to a full-scale conflict. Hence, the conception of the topic of this paper to understand the CSOs strategies to enhance peacebuilding and the challenges confronting CSOs in their peacebuilding efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since CSOs are now regarded as significant players supporting and advancing development goals, there has been a rise in interest in CSO activities on a global scale. Dissatisfaction with the public sector's service performance is the cause of this expanding trend. Given the significant roles that CSOs play, particularly in relation to key social issues like the ongoing ethno-religious conflicts, government, both at the state and federal levels, increasingly acknowledges CSOs as essential components of government institutions (Dele and Odoma, 2024). This is demonstrated by the fact that, most governments in both developed and developing countries have action plans focused on solving issues where the importance of CSOs is not disregarded.

In recent decades, the importance of civil society's role in peacebuilding has grown as a means of advancing long-term peace and conflict settlement. From grassroots movements to professional associations and religious institutions, civil society organizations have the power to heal divisions, promote communication, and have an impact on the peace process on many fronts. One of the core strategies adopted by civil society organizations is advocacy, which is identifying issues that people continue to face, like intergroup strife, and bringing them to the public's attention in order to defend fundamental human rights and to give weight to a wide range of political, environmental, social, and community interests and concerns. Beyond issues of politics and policy, civil society also serves as a medium for the expression of sentiments related to art, spirituality, culture, ethnicity, occupation, social life, and leisure (Ghaus-Pasha, 2005).

As noted by Adepelumi (2018), the role of civil of civil society groups in conflict management include, providing relief materials to people in complex emergencies, human rights monitoring, negotiation, informal mediation, peace agreement, demilitarization, demobilization and rehabilitation projects. As a neutral party to conflicts, CSOs can bring the warring factions together based on their identities, set the platform for negotiation, dialogue and reconciliation on issues that divided them. They can also reach to groups for dialogue, compromise and agreements in the managements of conflicts. CSOs can bring together political leaders, educationists, trade unions, media, youths and women groups, drawn from both sides of the divides. Through this platform, CSOs can come in to contacts, network together to raise awareness on the need for dialogue on the issues among their constituencies and larger audience. In addition, through monitoring of actors in conflicts, CSOs can provide reliable, comprehensive and unbiased information based on conflict. CSOs can monitor the conduct of law enforcement agencies and other state actors in conflict management activities and human rights abuses. Above all, CSOs educate the public about peace and the importance of dialogue for the good of politics and the state. Participants in this education plan are mostly drawn from the youth, women, media, the general public, and community members. Workshops, conferences, and in-person visits are some of the methods used to carry out this strategy. This is due to the fact that, as Kilroy (2014) pointed out, higher

results can come from reintegrating ex-combatants using a more participative method that frequently involves civil society organizations. By doing this, CSOs may lobby for inclusive policies, gather support from the community, and offer local knowledge, all of which help to strengthen the legitimacy and longevity of peace agreements.

In a study conducted by Atteng and Abazaami (2017) on Civil Society Organizations and peacebuilding in Northern Ghana, understanding the factors that have facilitated the successful entry of Civil Society Organizations in conflict zones, using qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the study revealed that, the neutrality and impartiality of CSOs have made conflicting parties to trust their work. Again, the capacity of CSOs, the methods of delivery and visibility has made their work more acceptable by all. They argued further that, this character and approach has made the work of the CSOs legitimate and acceptable to parties and communities in conflict. In the case of the 1994 ethnic conflicts that engulfed the entire Northern Region, it was the factor of neutrality and impartiality exhibited by the Inter Non-governmental Organization Consortium (Inter NGO Consortium) that facilitated the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Civil society and peacebuilding have a complicated and multidimensional interaction. The efficiency of civil society engagement can be affected by various factors, including but not limited to power dynamics, communication, trust, and divergence of interests (Kilroy, 2014). Avalanche of studies have shown that civil society organizations promote inclusive discourse, establish trust across separated communities, and work with stakeholders which is more likely to have a positive impact on the peace process. Moreover, civil society organizations have a greater chance of enduring their influence over time if they can modify their strategies to fit shifting political and social environments while still retaining their independence and legitimacy.

Ultimately, literature suggests that the integration of civil society into peacebuilding effort is crucial for ensuring the success and sustainability of peace. By amplifying the voices of marginalized groups, promoting gender equality, and fostering local ownership of the peace process, civil society can play a vital role in transforming conflict and building lasting peace.

Notwithstanding the essential role played by civil society organizations towards conflict resolution, they still face a multitude of challenges. This is as the involvement of CSOs in conflict management have come with mixed feelings with CSOs perceived as being corrupt, lacks of legitimacy, low recognition by government, poor skills of handling peacebuilding, and are largely funded by donors to which their activities are tailored to meet their objectives. As noted by Ghaus-Pasha (2005), an important factor hindering the growth of the civil society sector is the scarcity of financial resources. Funding constraints limit the scale and functioning of CSOs, significantly impairing their ability to deliver and maintain services. In case of large NGOs, in particular, heavy reliance is frequently placed on funding from foreign donors. Corroborating, Tripp-Aili (1998) also observed that, CSOs in Uganda are highly dependent on external

sources of funding for their programs/agendas and activities. Invariably this undermines their independence and the sustainability of their programs making CSOs to remain a tool to drive the goals of their funders rather than the interest of their communities or the target groups. In addition, this problem contributes to further weaken any social bases CSOs may have and results in the fact that CSOs are not accountable to the communities they aim to serve, or to their domestic constituencies, but to their pay masters. The relatively easy availability of foreign funding may also result in CSOs approaching donors rather than trying to engage in local and popular mobilization in support of a cause.

Despite the challenges that undermines the role of civil society organizations in peacebuilding, peace practitioners have agreed that civil society can make unique and distinctive contributions to conflict resolutions and conflict management through waging conflict non-violently, building capacity, reducing direct violence and transforming relationships.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION THEORY

The major proponent of “conflict transformation theory” is John Paul Lederach in 1997. In the study of civil society intervention in conflict settings, the conflict transformation theory is well recognized and as such, this paper adopted the theory. The conflict transformation theory is a relatively recent addition to the discipline of peace and conflict studies, specifically within the realm of conflict resolution.

This theory posits that, conflict is an inevitable occurrence in any given scenario (Dele and Doma, 2024). Conflict transformation can be seen as the process of addressing the alteration of interpersonal connections and the discourses that encompass the potential and capacity for societal cohesion in situations where conflict persists (Lambroschini, 2011). The conflict transformation theory noted that, the elite should not be the only ones responsible for mitigating conflict. Rather, it makes the case that everyone involved in the dispute, including outside resources like Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that are linked to the impacted community, ought to actively engage in the process (Dele and Odoma, 2024). Achieving lasting peace is said to be greatly aided by this inclusive strategy. As noted by Galtung (2000), the theory of conflict transformation recognizes conflict as a dynamic process involving several actors and stakeholders, all of whom play a critical role in bringing about lasting peace. Moreover, conflict resolution is emphasized heavily by the conflict transformation theory as an all-encompassing and inclusive process involving parties in conflict towards achieving peacebuilding.

This paper adopted conflict transformation theory due to its relevance to understanding and analyzing the strategies of CSOs in peacebuilding. The

conflict transformation theory offers useful insights to understanding the complex and interrelated web of actors involved in peacebuilding, their strategies and impact in Kaduna State. Besides, the conflict transformation theory is most suitable for this because of its direct emphasis on the strategies executed by civil society organizations in peacebuilding which is necessary for societal development. This paper focuses on the peacebuilding techniques implemented by CSOs for the benefit of society as a whole and their own survival. This paper adopted this theoretical framework to illustrate which peacebuilding tactics used by CSOs in Kaduna state either foster peace or provoke conflict. In light of the state's current precarious position, this will help guide decisions about how best to advance peacebuilding within the state and prevent acts of violence orchestrated by various parties.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted the qualitative method of data collection and analysis. Qualitative data were elicited through structured and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The choice of qualitative method is informed by its potentials in understanding of human experiences and ideas in their settings. The approach is based on gathering data that can be described in words. The qualitative method is found to be more suitable for the study given the nature of the issue investigated. The paper is anchored on four major population groups namely the Civil Society Organizations and staff that have been involved in peacebuilding activities, beneficiaries of CSOs interventions, officials of government institutions that partnered/collaborated with the CSOs in Kaduna State in peacebuilding and security agents. Purposively, CSOs operating in Kaduna whose thematic area is conflict, respondents from the CSOs, beneficiaries of CSOs intervention at the conflict-affected communities security agents and peace practitioners. The adoption of this method was informed by its import to the selection of respondents with verse knowledge of the subject matter. Four communities were selected purposively. These communities were chosen for two reasons: first: they represent the areas with the largest interventions of CSOs peacebuilding interventions because of the devastating consequences of conflicts. Second, they constitute the areas with long-history of intercommunal, inter-ethnic and religious conflicts especially since the 1990s.

Thus, five (5) Civil Society Organizations were sampled from the list Civil Society Organizations using purposive sampling techniques. Although, all these organizations were identified as having activities relating to peacebuilding in Kaduna State, the time frame/duration of the activity and location, were the parameters for using the purposive sampling techniques to sample twelve (12) Civil Society Organizations for the paper. The paper utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was collected from the field and included responses from representatives of CSOs, beneficiaries of CSOs interventions, security agents and heads of government institutions that

partnered with the CSOs, through in-depth interviews conducted. Secondary data, on the other hand, was obtained from reports of the CSOs on their activities, as well as bulletins from state institutions.

Furthermore, the paper adopted content analysis for the audio tape-recorded and transcribed interviews, as well as secondary documents to generate themes and patterns of the responses and make meanings and understanding from the responses.

FINDINGS

CSOs STRATEGIES FOR PEACEBUILDING

The results showed that in Kaduna State, CSOs use a variety of strategies to carry out peacebuilding initiatives and facilitate the peace process. In order to proffer solution to the predisposing factors responsible for conflict and advance social cohesion and reconciliation, CSOs actively interact with opposing communities through grassroots projects, stakeholder engagement and participation, advocacy campaigns, and capacity-building programs. These groups aim to bring about lasting peace in Kaduna State while negotiating challenging political environments with agility, responsiveness, and flexibility.

Speaking on the strategies deployed by CSOs in peacebuilding, one of the interviewees said that, the critical role played by these organizations in promoting peace in Kaduna State is peacebuilding. An NGO staff observed that; The Conflict Management and Mitigation Regional Council (CMMRC) is the first structure; it functions at the state level and functions more like an early warning system and response call. They are tasked with keeping an eye out for conflict tendencies that are just beginning to emerge and, if not dealt with, have the potential to turn violent. The "community peace observers" work like the early warning system and early reaction hub at the community level, keeping an eye out for new patterns or indications that could lead to armed conflict. They attempt to deal with it on their terms. However, when things spiral out of control and get beyond their capacity, they involve Nigeria Civil Defence, the government organization for civic involvement, and the crisis response team known as "operation fire for fire." The monthly forum with media on peace journalism makes up the third layer. The goal is to examine how the media may cover social issues through the lens of peace as part of a comprehensive effort to build peace in partnership with the state government and the Kaduna Peace Commission, which has just established a situation room. There are visibly three stages of collaboration (collaboration within each of the CSOs and the stakeholders and organizations where their programs are situated, collaboration among the CSOs who may want to complement each other and the CSOs operating within Kaduna State and collaboration of all the CSOs with the Kaduna state Peace Commission) which is also considered from the lens of structures as one of the respondent revealed the multi-layered kind of engagements - which are collaborating with Kaduna State government, of which

there's Kaduna Peace commission and the situation room which has just been established. Their modus operandi is: they obtain report on early warning and they act on it promptly.

Supporting the above, another interviewee reported that:

"What it implies is that we carry out programs and, prior to the programme, findings as to the reasons for violent crisis and violence in communities in Kaduna state will be made. We also address the fundamental causes of conflicts in Kaduna State. Then, strategies will be developed to deal and address the core issues responsible for those conflict".

The CSOs in their peacebuilding efforts provide platforms and equally leverages dialogues, organize seminars, symposiums, workshops, public lectures, drama and theatre, comedy, radio and television sponsored programs and football competition. This is in a bid to bring the various conflicting parties together so as to engender peaceful and harmonious relations.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in the promotion of peace through dialogue using various strategies. One common approach employed by CSOs is to facilitate structured dialogues between conflicting parties. This helps address grievances and find common ground. By creating safe spaces for dialogue, CSOs encourage open communication and mutual understanding, leading to peaceful conflict resolution. Additionally, CSOs often engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts to influence policy decisions and promote peaceful conflict resolution on a broader scale. Through research, education, and grassroots mobilization, CSOs raise awareness about the root causes of conflicts and advocate for sustainable peacebuilding practices. These strategies empower communities to engage in constructive dialogues and hold governments and stakeholders accountable for their actions. Ultimately, CSOs contribute to a more peaceful and inclusive society by taking a multi-faceted approach to promoting dialogue for peace. To lend credence to this, a Program Officer of one of the NGOs operating in Kaduna reported as thus:

"The many civil society Organizations operating in Kaduna state have, in most cases, visited villages to organize things like community dialogues possibly, mediate amongst groups, as well as some of them go as far as developing an early warning response system".

A community leader interviewed corroborated the above as thus:

"We liaise with the chairmen of local government, traditional rulers and the community leaders and the rest," supporting their peace plan. That is how we have been functioning. To achieve our goals, we also go through churches and mosques. We contact the pastors or imams in charge of these institutions and inform them of our intentions. You will hear religious leaders advocating for peace, tolerance, forgiveness, and other virtues. So, these are a few of the tactics we have been deploying".

CSOs are instrumental in lending support to peace building efforts in the warring communities. Since these CSOs live and operate in close proximity to

local and grassroots communities, they enjoy comparative advantages in terms of understanding the context under which conflicts occur more than governments and international organizations who are interested in championing the course of normalcy in the warring communities. It is also believed that they have a better understanding of the socio-cultural context that enables them to determine which viable means and feasible mechanisms could be applied for entrenching peacebuilding. Cultivating trust among conflicting parties, undertaking monitoring and advocacy in human rights, developing action programs to support the livelihood of conflict victims, and creating access to justice and peace education as part of their *modus operandi*. A Youth Leader who benefited from CSO intervention revealed to support this as thus:

“We have adopted a lot of strategies particularly when we were inaugurated in February 2021 and trained same February. We were inaugurated by Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), on how to go about early warning and early response in our community. So, all these strategies that we have been taught, we implemented it, almost three to four times within the year. We also had in August of that same year a trust building program in Corinthians International School, Kaduna in which we invited 50 women, and also 50 youth both men and women. So, we talked about trust building, a lot of enlightenment took place. And also, another strategy we adopted was to also give out, wheelbarrows, rake, shovel and many other farming tools just to bring all the communities together. And after that, we organize a football match between the Muslims and Christians to merge them together to show that we are not that different in regards religion. Invariably, we mixed everybody together to have that match. And it was successful”.

Early warning response is also another strategy adopted by CSOs in Kaduna State to engender in sustainable peace. This strategy helps to identify potential conflicts in a timely manner, where there are visible signs and clear evidence of human rights violations, increased reports of propaganda, discrimination, repression of certain groups, frequent changes in leadership and lack of effective governance or contested elections. The prevention of all these assist CSOs in addressing the underlying issues and promoting peace in the warring communities by helping further degeneration of conflict. This, the CSOs does in collaboration with the government through the officials in Kaduna Peace Agreement. One of the Officers interviewed noted that:

Early warning, response served as the foundation for their peace plan. He noted that whenever they learn that a disagreement is about to occur and if not checked, it will cause a crisis in the entire local community or state; they make sure they intervene, and meet vital stakeholders, traditional rulers, and religious leaders, who lead them in the society. Considering they may not have noticed it, thus engage them in conversation or negotiations, so that they can manage or handle the situation before it goes out of hand. They also summon elders of both parties involve in the conflict to discuss and determine why the crisis is happening before deciding what course of action to pursue. In addition,

a different tactic used is negotiating a solution to the situation with religious leaders by hosting town hall meetings and seminars. Another tactic is something that resembles a neighborhood watch but religious based i.e. the Muslim Community Peace Observers (CPO) and the Christian Community Peace Observers (CPO), carefully watch conflict situations. The community leader then engages in discussion with them to determine how the issues can be handled.

The above was also supported by a staff of an NGO in charge of Monitoring and Evaluation that:

“We do a lot of data gathering, which focuses on early warning signs, so we can identify the issues and try to intervene before it escalates. Because the problem most times is when maybe looking at it, very little components can actually result to, you know, bigger components in peacebuilding. So, you are able to identify those issues no matter how little they are”.

Drawing from the above, it is expedient to say that, early warning signs can help anticipate and prevent conflicts. This action is necessary where they are increased political tensions between different groups or communities, hate speech and propaganda and social unrest. This kind of advocacy if it becomes consistent suggest that, those involved must have gotten information about imminence of crisis.

The use of a “town hall meeting” technique to bring together the main strategic stakeholders and disputing parties for discussion is also deemed vital by civil society Organizations. CSOs adoption of town hall meeting promote inclusivity and local ownership of peacebuilding initiatives since community members are directly involved in decision-making processes. The media can be used to involve critical stakeholders in this as well. This tactic was thought to reduce the conflict in the Kaduna state communities of Ungwan Yero and Ungwan Rimi, predominantly, the Muslim and Christian fragile communities where their peace is in a flux. There’s a deliberate use of a lot of media engagement and scheduled meetings with strategist stakeholders to form a common front.

Town hall meetings have become an essential tool for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) worldwide in their efforts to build peace. These meetings provide a platform for open dialogue, consensus building, and participatory decision-making processes. They bring together diverse stakeholders to voice their opinions on important issues. By promoting communication and understanding among different groups, town hall meetings can address underlying grievances, build trust, and facilitate conflict resolution. CSOs can use these gatherings to actively engage with local communities, promoting peace, social cohesion, and reconciliation. Additionally, town hall meetings allow CSOs to gather valuable feedback, assess community needs, and tailor their initiatives to better serve the population. Overall, these grassroots efforts

play a vital role in fostering sustainable peace and promoting dialogue at the local level.

There has been much discussion regarding the value of strategies for promoting peace such as interfaith or interreligious dialogues, culture of peace trainings, and peace education in shifting people's perspectives (Torres, 2022). In his opinion, one of the respondent managers in IMC noted that:

Peacebuilding Organizations like the Kukah centre, Zamani Foundation and a lot of others that are into peacebuilding adopt interfaith approach while others do not. Their focus and core values is interfaith. Because when you are talking about peacebuilding as you talk to people from different religious constituencies and you apply spiritual tests, it resonates with them because most people are religious. Here, our major focus is in adopting interfaith approach for the foundation of peacebuilding.

The dynamics of interreligious engagement dialogues as a means of promoting peace education are of utmost importance in conflict zones like Maluku in eastern Indonesia. As highlighted by Al Qurtuby (2013), the conflict between Christian and Muslim communities in Ambon has historical roots in religious tensions and competition, underscoring the need for positive and constructive interfaith interactions similar to that of Kaduna state. By fostering understanding, empathy, and cooperation, civil society organizations (CSOs) operating in conflict-affected communities can make significant contributions to post-conflict peace and the development of responsible citizenship.

CSOs collaboration with Kaduna State government in conflict-affected communities in the state birthed the establishment of Kaduna Peace Commission, which was a forum for state representatives and civil society organizations to champion peacebuilding in the affected communities. This commission has, in turn, assisted civil society gain enough traction to form a Civil Society coalition which is responsible for guiding Kaduna State government and provide recommendations, where necessary, for resolution and maintenance of peace in the hitherto contending communities/parties. The peace agreement outlines a variety of tasks that civil society could do to contribute to the implementation process. CSOs were encouraged to participate in the monitoring and delivery of services. CSOs are well recognized by the government of Kaduna State as stakeholders whose inputs in peacebuilding and other government policies are well-documented.

Trauma counselling was also another crucial strategy for peacebuilding efforts by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in conflict-affected in Kaduna. The significant impact of trauma healing on individuals, communities, and societies recovering from violence and instability is evident in Kaduna state. CSOs in Kaduna State provides psychosocial support, promotes healing, and fostering resilience, to address the deep-rooted trauma that often perpetuates cycles of conflict in the State. This is done through specialized interventions like group therapy, individual counselling, and skills-building workshops, with a view to empower survivors overcome their past experiences and work toward a more peaceful future.

THE CHALLENGES CONFRONTING CSOS IN PEACEBUILDING

When it comes to the obstacles impeding CSOs' efforts to promote peace, the interviewees cited administrative constraints as one of the main issues that prevents them from reaching areas affected by conflict. These included the latitude that government and military personnel have to impose restrictions on their movements within combat zones. For instance, getting security clearance from security agents to do tasks can occasionally be difficult, which is a persistent difficulty for the majority of CSOs. Even more so, local authorities can prevent CSOs from entering conflict-affected areas, particularly isolated ones. This makes it more difficult for CSOs to respond to the needs of impacted, vulnerable people during times of conflict. CSOs were frequently subject to monitoring and control, even when they were allowed entry. A CSO actor noted during interview that:

✓ The security personnel obstruct CSOs' attempts to deliver humanitarian aid by occasionally wishing to go with them, putting their employees' lives in jeopardy through interactions with conflict entrepreneurs.

It was also discovered that CSOs are occasionally prohibited from disseminating information regarding the predicament of victims in the impacted communities. One of the CSOs' program managers who participated in the interview stated that one of the organizations' "communication challenges" is that when they visit conflict communities, they are not permitted to bring pertinent material from the field. This may be an attempt by the state to maintain its exclusive narrative about the conflict in the State, thereby stifling the opinions of actors from civil society. The CSO may be banned from operations as a result of breaking such official censorship.

It was also found that, the growth of CSOs specializing in humanitarian work and peace initiatives has caused them to divert their attention from the fundamental components of peacebuilding, which are grassroots civic involvement and peace movements. The results of the CSO interviews also revealed that the majority of donor funding goes through INGOs to national, primarily metropolitan, elite-based NGOs that are present in Kaduna. This is due to the fact that donors frequently see these CSOs as the State's gatekeepers to the competing communities. As a result, both domestic and international NGOs have begun to "colonize space" (Egbejule, 2018).

Many of these national urban NGOs that get funding from foreign donors are connected to the political establishment through familial ties, have a small membership base, and lack balanced political or ethnic representation across the nation. Because of this, the majority of CSOs in Kaduna are not transparent and accountable to the communities in which they operate; instead, they answer to their funders, which undermines the idea that civic involvement should be at the center of peace initiatives.

Another challenge faced by CSOs is the government's use of curfews as a security measure, which restricted people's freedom of movement in communities at odds and severely harmed community-based organizations (CSOs) in the region. When there is a direct threat to life and property which might come from both warring parties such challenges are intensified. As revealed by CSO representatives interviewed, these risks are greatest when "the military and mobile police on their part consider everybody as an enemy and they shoot indiscriminately at sight and do not seem to protect members of civil society." Since these risks clearly impact peacebuilding, CSO staff are prevented from taking the risk of traveling to conflict-affected communities for advocacy and stakeholder engagement which formed the central focus of peacebuilding, as such risks clearly impact on CSOs' ability to effectively carry out their activities towards conflict resolution, corroborating evidence from other studies that a threat to basic security for CSO staff makes it 'difficult for them to engage in and support peacebuilding.

It was also discovered that obtaining sufficient, appropriate, and reliable funding to support operations is a problem Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Kaduna State. Reaching out to prospective donors poses challenges similar to those faced when negotiating funding requirements. The civil society organizations believed that certain cartels control how donor funds are distributed. This is achieved by demonstrating a limited ability to mobilize resources and a propensity to give preference to external/international donors over local funding opportunities. In other words, the preference is to wait for external financial support from international organizations like the United Nations and other external donors who support peaceful coexistence among communities. Thus, subjecting the CSOs to heavy reliance on donors and a proclivity to realign initiatives in accordance with donor preferences so as to appease the conscience of these international donors.

Furthermore, findings revealed that, a sizable portion of CSOs have the organizational and technical skills necessary to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Because so few CSOs showed that they could or would be prepared to provide funding for the implementation of capacity building projects. Deficits in technological development, fundraising, governance, leadership, and management were found in this study. Indeed, a civil society organization (CSO) voiced the opinion that putting quality standards into place will help them in their endeavors to develop the essential skills for efficient service delivery in communities affected by violence.

Significant rates of poverty and illiteracy are still present in the community. CSOs have an acute awareness of the significant and ever-increasing needs of the destitute, but they also encounter apprehension regarding their ability to adequately attend to these complex demands. Communities are lacking in terms of ownership and sustainability when it comes to development projects

(Francis, 2018). Some of the communities have lost incentive to take charge and become self-sufficient because they have grown accustomed to depending on outside help. One of the biggest challenges we have as programmers is to keep our programs relevant in the face of changing conditions. Another is to combat the prevailing culture of reliance on help.

The lack of a conducive climate for CSOs to operate in Kaduna is another issue they must deal with. Due to unclear power dynamics and networks, CSOs in Kaduna face challenging enabling conditions both during and after conflicts. These conditions include support from state institutions and law enforcement as well as special assistance for civil society initiatives to run smoothly, which limits the effectiveness of CSOs in peacebuilding.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The sampled CSOs in this study cannot be considered representative of all CSOs operating in Kaduna State, so the study's conclusions cannot be applied generally. Nonetheless, the results accurately reflect the viewpoints and experiences of the sampled stakeholders, which include state peace practitioners, representatives of the chosen CSOs, and local leaders of the sampled areas. However, the voices of the study participants must be seen as a window into the ways in which CSOs in Kaduna State are working to bring about peace among the warring communities. The narratives of the individuals are intricate, diverse, and juxtaposed. Nonetheless, the experiences of living and working in a state that has been engulfed in a protracted conflict since the 1980s are shared by all individuals interviewed.

Participating in peace campaigns has been CSOs' most direct means of resolving conflicts and fostering peace in Kaduna State. These efforts have sought to draw attention to ongoing atrocities on a national and international level, as well as to the government and non-state armed organizations. The creation of the Peace Commission gave these movements extra momentum. The study's findings demonstrated the degree of knowledge among beneficiaries' category respondents on the existence and interventions of CSOs in Kaduna State's efforts to promote peace.

Peacebuilding can be challenging due to the trauma caused by conflicts, and CSOs have worked to support trauma sufferers. As revealed by a Head of Program of a CSO that serves young people, "there has been an increase in mental health problems among youths as a result of the conflict," which our research verified. The elderly, those who have been kidnapped, those who have been shot, those whose homes or means of support have been destroyed, those who have been internally displaced, and many more people are all suffering from post-traumatic stress illnesses, according to another CSO leader. Trauma can also arise from the widespread occurrences of gender-based violence and rape. In short, the interviewees, both the beneficiaries, peace practitioners and CSO actors reported the widespread trauma associated with the lived

experiences of the residents of conflict-affected communities in the state. Consequently, CSOs have provided psychological and mental health support to individuals affected by the conflict, especially the vulnerable population of aged, women and children.

Through their efforts, CSOs have helped to safeguard communities to some extent and reminded warring parties of their obligations under human rights legislation. According to a CSO spokesperson, greater understanding of the repercussions of violating international human rights could have prevented further atrocities. Since the beginning of the conflict, CSOs have been instrumental in recording and reporting on crimes against humanity and other horrible acts, as their reporting has brought these breaches to the notice of higher authorities and, on occasion, prompted investigations.

It was found that, CSOs have collaborated with the state's government and religious leaders—both Muslims and Christians— played crucial role in promoting peace. With the aid of community elders, youths, and women, both governments have been fighting for the realization of peaceful coexistence in the competing communities, but it has become clear from this study that the mission and mandate of Civil Society Organizations has been to network for peace mission workshops.

Programs for peace education and sensitization have been created and carried out by CSOs, using the fora to persuade the youth not to react, one organization, for instance, conducted peace education training in the village where a staff member had been burned down by the military. A "seminar to educate the victims and try to make them understand that all hope is not lost" was also arranged by the same organization. CSOs have been teaching adolescents and women community mediation skills so they may approach their siblings and kids in armed groups and suggest different ways to resolve their issues without resorting to violence, according to an actor from the CSO that was interviewed. Corroborating this finding, findings from a study conducted by Awinador-Kanyirige (2014) in northern Ghana, argued that peace education by CSOs helped to de-escalate ethnic-based conflicts. Similarly, Fischer (2011) reported that some CSOs in post-conflict Bosnia became 'active in cross-border peace education, striving to establish norms of tolerance and deal with prejudices and enemy images.

The study also makes it evident that CSOs have influenced Kaduna's peacebuilding efforts by mediating disputes. Given that conflicts frequently have unpredictable escalations and de-escalations, CSOs would be well-suited to focus on development rather than conflict resolution. This is because it is well-known that in certain communities, a lack of access to basic amenities is a major contributing factor to conflict, and that peace can only be achieved through the provision of these amenities.

Ultimately, the study found that CSOs have built bridges of peace and reconciliation by contributing to conflict resolution, making unceasing efforts to promote peace, meeting basic needs, offering health services, constructing and outfitting educational and career-training facilities, and rehabilitating

fighters from both communities. The inhabitants' peace and stability have significantly improved as a result.

CONCLUSION

This paper evaluates the strategies deployed by CSOs in peacebuilding in Kaduna State, with particular focus on conflicting communities. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are engaging in a greater number of peacebuilding activities compared to formal governmental institutions. Apart from CSOs engagement in relief work and mediation, they are in a good position to actively participate in strengthening the local population's capacities and empowering them to take part in different cooperative projects with the other side. CSOs mostly aim to achieve conflict mitigation and/or settlement, in line with governmental authorities' peacebuilding activities. This goal includes fostering concord through steps to create trust between individuals in the communities affected by conflict, in addition to facilitating peaceful interactions between official institutions. CSOs play a crucial role in promoting civic engagement and involvement by giving opposing communities a forum to express their concerns. Typically, community participation, early warning detection, town hall meetings with stakeholders, community visits, advocacy, peace education and other community-based strategies.

By actively engaging with local communities, CSOs can address the root causes of conflict, build social cohesion, and promote dialogue and reconciliation among different groups. The success of community collaboration in CSO peacebuilding strategies depends on its ability to bring together diverse stakeholders and utilize their collective wisdom, resources, and networks to achieve sustainable peace outcomes. By engaging with local communities, CSOs can benefit from their tacit knowledge and lived experiences, leading to more contextually relevant and effective interventions.

Since CSOs cannot compel peace agreements or ensure their implementation by providing the essential resources that could promote adherence to accords and terms and circumstances of settlement, civil society peacebuilding activities may also be vulnerable to ineffectiveness. The role of Civil Society Organizations in the promoting and advocating peace cannot be overemphasized. However, the efforts require collaboration with the State government as such is within the constitutional responsibility of the state. Therefore, it is essential that rather than engaging in excessive competition, both governments and CSOs must support and complement one another.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings above, the paper recommends the following for efficient promotion of CSOs in peacebuilding in Kaduna State, Nigeria;

The government of Kaduna State must recognize the vital role that CSOs play in encouraging grassroots participation in peacebuilding initiatives and provide them with the same level of support and recognition as other organizations, given the international community's recognition of the importance of CSOs in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In order to lessen their reliance on external donors, civil society organizations (CSOs) can investigate alternate funding options such as neighborhood contributions, crowdsourcing, and social entrepreneurship models.

To lessen their reliance on outside donors, CSOs should make investments in strengthening their organizational capability, including financial management, proposal writing, and program evaluation.

CSOs should have a conversation with the administration to learn the reasoning behind curfew implementation and voice any concerns regarding how it may affect efforts to promote peace.

It was found that curfew imposition in conflict-affected communities by government often affects the smooth operation of CSO peacebuilding activities. The paper therefore recommended that, CSOs should have a conversation with the government to learn about the reasons for the curfew's imposition, voice concerns about how it affects peacebuilding efforts, and most likely look into other agreements that could make it easier for peacebuilding activities to take place during curfew hours. To enable access to communities impacted by conflict, CSOs must consistently cultivate relationships and trust with law enforcement agent.

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