

Civil Society Interventions in Peace Education and Conflict Prevention in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The place of civil society in mediating between the state and the citizens as well as relationship among the citizens in the conduct of their daily living is saliently important, particularly in fostering peace and preventing conflict in the society using several mechanisms. This study examined civil society interventions in peace education and conflict prevention in Nigeria, with a focus on identifying the strategies employed by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The study was anchored on Conflict Trap Theory, which explained the persistence and recurrence of conflict due to structural, economic, and institutional factors. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted, utilizing secondary data from books, journals, reports, and CSO documents these was complemented by interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify key themes. The findings revealed that CSOs employed diverse peace education strategies such as school peace clubs, teacher training, youth engagement programmes, and community-based awareness initiatives to reshape attitudes toward non-violence. Additionally, conflict prevention strategies including early warning systems, interfaith mediation, election monitoring, community dialogues, and deradicalization programmes were widely implemented. These interventions were found to reduce tensions, enhance early response to conflicts, and promote peaceful coexistence, particularly in high-risk regions such as the Niger Delta area. The study concluded that CSOs played a critical role in breaking cycles of violence and preventing relapse into conflict by addressing both immediate triggers and underlying structural causes. Their grassroots approaches strengthened community resilience and fostered a culture of peace. However, their effectiveness was constrained by inadequate funding and limited institutional support. The study recommended stronger government-CSO collaboration, increased funding, and expansion of peace education and early warning initiatives to ensure sustainable conflict prevention.

Keywords: Peace Education, Conflict Prevention, Civil Society Organizations, Conflict Trap Theory, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has experienced persistent conflicts and violence, in several parts of the country, which have undermined national security, stability, and development. Conflicts in general are not new to human society. It is as old as human existence because it has been in existence in all sphere of human life since the beginning of history. According to Otti and Albert (1999), conflicts are necessary characteristic of human society. Nigeria as a nation state has had and continues to have its own share of ethno-religious conflicts. The first major violent conflict in post-colonial Nigeria occurred in Kano between December 18th and 29th 1980. Since then the relative peace and harmony in the country has been shattered. After several years of independence, one of the major problems retarding the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria has been the recurrent incidence of ethno-religious crises and the attendant destructive effects. Nigeria has recorded bitter experiences of violent conflict in various forms and ethno-religious conflict in particular. Since the early 1980s, ethnic and religious crisis have become a re-occurring decimal, especially in Northern Nigeria. Some of the conflicts include: Mattatsini in Kano 1980, Zuru 1980, Maiduguri 1982, Ilorin 1984, Bauchi 1984 and Kano 1984. Others are crisis in Kanfanchan 1987, Guru Kuhugu 1982, Birnin Kebbi 1990, Katsina 1991, Tafawa Balewa 1991, Kano 1991, Jaligo 1992, Kaduna 2000, Jos 2001, Kano 2001, Tafawa Balewa (since 2000), Nassarawa 2001, and Jos 2004, 2008, 2010. (Abah E.J, 2009)

Otite (1999) argue that most conflicts in Nigeria are premised on land space and resource competition; disputed jurisdiction of traditional rulers; creation and location of local government council headquarters; scarce political and economic resources; and macro social structures of Nigeria; population growth; and disregard for cultural symbols.

Due to the negative effects of conflicts in the society, including destruction of properties and loss of lives, governments and non-state actors like civil society organizations have been actively involved in conflict resolution and prevention initiatives. Civil societies play a crucial role in conflict prevention by advocate for peaceful resolution of conflicts and lobby governments and other stakeholders to adopt non-violent approaches. They also do so through facilitation of mediation and negotiation between conflicting parties, helping to resolve disputes peacefully. Again, civil societies also engage with local communities, promoting dialogue and understanding to prevent conflicts. Beyond this, they also prevent conflicts by building trust and social cohesion, through the mobilization of communities to promote social cohesion and trust, reducing tensions and conflicts. They also facilitate interfaith dialogue, promoting understanding and tolerance between different religious groups. Further, civil societies empower youth, providing them with skills and opportunities to promote peace and stability. What is more, CSOs also provide Early Warning Systems like conflict monitoring, risk assessment and alert systems. Finally, civil societies promote peace education, teaching conflict resolution skills and promoting a culture of peace.

However, despite these efforts by government and non-state actors, conflicts continue to escalate, resulting in loss of lives, displacement, and destruction of property. The effectiveness of CSOs in promoting peace education and conflict prevention remains unclear. This modest paper sought to investigate the impact of selected CSOs in promoting peace education and conflict prevention in Nigeria, with a focus on identifying the challenges, opportunities, and best practices that can inform policy and practice. The key objective of the study was to; identify the peace education and conflict prevention strategies employed by CSOs in Nigeria. Accordingly, the paper raised the question; what peace education and conflict prevention strategies are employed by CSOs in Nigeria?

Conflict Trap Theory

The exponents of this theory are Paul Collier, V.L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Ankle Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol and Nicholas Sambanis. To them, conflict trap denotes that once a conflict has erupted, it tends to develop a momentum of its own. Peace seemingly becomes elusive and hard to restore. Even when peace is restored it often does not endure (Collier et. al 2003). The exponents of conflict trap ascribed the lengthy pattern of a typical conflict to a number of interlocking factors Conflicts in multiethnic societies are enduring possibly on account of their ready vulnerability to the rallying, massaging and mobilization of ethnic sentiments for both the warring groups and the government. In addition, in a plural society, particularly where the population has significant grievances, conflict usually becomes an effective political strategy for pursuit of their interests and goals. Also, even if the custodians of power and authority in the society are willing to concede to the demands of the groups, they are usually neither trusted nor believed to have credible means of committing the warring factions to agreement. The warring groups might be afraid that once they hold the olive branch the custodians of power and authority would renege on any agreement (Collier et. al 2003). Furthermore, it is also contended that it is even difficult for the custodians of power and authority to concede to demands of the warring groups because such could encourage the flowering, proliferation, mushrooming and radicalization of other groups, which often have opposing objectives. Also, a significant pattern to lengthy conflict is the extremely unequally distributed income and a very low average income, possibly on account of the cost of sustaining conflict is low if there is an expansive layer of economic destitute and possibly significantly weak institutions such as the security agencies, which are unable to deter and apprehend violators of the laws. More so, sustaining conflict has become easier because the warring groups have easy access to armaments for prosecuting conflict (Collier et. al 2003).

Yet, very important to the lengthy pattern of conflict is that once a conflict has occurred a template is raised. It becomes difficult to return to status quo. Presumably, conflict reinforces hatred, and may shift the balance of influential interests in favour of continued conflict. Also, the criminal entrepreneurs that profit from the

conflict would do anything including sabotaging peace process for it to continue. According to Paul Collier et. al. (2003):

“violence entrepreneurs, whether primarily political or primarily commercial, may gain from conflict to such an extent that they cannot credibly be compensated sufficiently to accept peace. Those who see themselves as political leaders benefit from war because they can run their organizations in hierarchical, military style with power concentrated in their own hands, something much more difficult to justify in peacetime. Those who see themselves as extortionists benefit from the absence of the rule of law in the areas they control. However, leaders see themselves as if they will have invested in expensive military equipment that will become redundant once they agree to peace. Asking a rebel leader to accept peace may be a little asking a champion swimmer to empty pool”.

Following from the above assumptions, the conflict trap theory is apt and relevant for the appreciation of the CSOs play in preventing relapse to conflict. It explains why CSO-led peace education and conflict prevention are critical in breaking the cycle of relapse in Nigeria’s South-South. It offers deep insights to the interlocking factors that sustain conflict. It presupposes that once conflict has occurred it lengthens and becomes challenging to restore peace on account of a number of factors such as ethnic pluralism, proliferation of arms, existence of income disparities, existence of expansive republic of hoodlums and the activities of criminal entrepreneurs. CSO interventions are analyzed as counter-measures to the economic, institutional, and psychological mechanisms that Collier identifies as sustaining the trap.

Conflicts/Violent Clashes across Nigeria

Farmers/herders clashes in this region has been a perennial issues since independence. The root causes of the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria lie in climate-induced degradation of pastoral land and Boko Haram incidences in the far north, thereby forcing herders down south⁹. The escalation of this conflict has continued on the increase as a result of lack of available grazing settlements due to farmlands and the groups’ traditional nomadic lifestyle, forcing passages through farms across the various states with severe damages to the crops. The rapid growth of ethnic militias among the Fulanis in Adamawa, bearing illegally acquired weapons and the failure of government to prosecute and punish offenders have combined to give impetus to the destructive activities of these herdsmen.

Another reason according to the International Crisis group is the introduction of anti-grazing laws in November 2017 which the herders in Benue and Taraba protested against as being inimical to their long dated pastoral living. Also, the migration of herders into Moddibo Adama in Yola, Adamawa State sparked off clashes with the farmers in the state. The north eastern Adama has witnessed a number of violent clashes between the Fulani herders and farmers of Bachama ethnic group. The tensions were heightened after the November 20, 2017 introduction of the anti-grazing laws, when the youth militias of the Bachama attacked three Fulani herdsmen, killing at least 55 people, including 48 children. The incident was followed was followed by a reprisal attack suspected herdsman in five villages killing over 100 people. Though there were attempts by the government to stop further attacks but killings continued on a smaller scale (*Britannica, 2021*).

There has been a long existing herders/farmers tension in Taraba State according to ICS report (2019). The conflict experienced in Adamawa led to the deterioration of the farmers/herders relations in the neighbouring Taraba state to ban open grazing by the state government. But between January 4 – 17, 2017, violent clashes erupted between the farmers and herders, killing at least 124 people with many properties and live stocks destroyed and stolen. Scores have been killed since the incidents. Benue and Plateau States have had their share of violent clashes over these periods. Reports by Akerjir (2018), revealed aspects of these conflicts. The Benue State Governor, Ortom signed the Benue State Law banning open grazing in May 2017 which took effect on November 1, 2017 (*BBC News, 2022*).

The law permits livestock to only graze on ranches, people who rear livestock to buy land and establish ranches, prohibits movement of animals within the state by road, rail, not even through farmlands. The laws spelt out punishments for offenders, which includes 5 years jail term or one-million-naira bail. In other words,

it outlaws pastoralization. The reason for this law was to eliminate conflicts that may arise through trespass and destruction of the farmlands by herders and their cattle.

The Tiv, Idoma and Igbo farmers, who constitute over 90% of the Benue population strongly supported this, but the Fulani's and other herders' associations e.g. MACBAN and Miyetti Allah opposed the law for lack of consultations and does not represent the members' interest. Secondly, the law did not give people time to purchase land to purchase land for the establishment ranches, thirdly the law is viewed as being detrimental to their long existing culture of pastoral lifestyle.

Also denies them their constitutional right to free movement and residence in any part of the country. In spite of the effort of the state according to the report to avert crisis by putting appropriate measures, tensions between herders and Tiv farmers degenerated into deadly violence. According to Umukoro (2018), the extent of the attacks has had serious impact on economic human lives with severe political and security implications. From September to June 2018, farmer-herder conflicts have led at least 176,000 dead in Benue state, with so many displaced. Some have fled to other parts of the country, while some are left in IDP camps in school and church premises in very appalling conditions. Noteworthy is the fact since January 2016, not fewer than 10 communities in Agatu Benue State have witnessed violent attacks. The impact on local economies is very significant, with insecurities which have disrupted agricultural activities of a state known for its massive contribution to food production in Nigeria (Zwanbin, 2017).

The Government of Niger is involved in a number of parallel non-international armed conflicts, notably against at least Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). Since January 2015, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has been active in the fight against Boko Haram (*BBC News, 2015*).

Every part of Nigeria has witnessed one form of violence or another. In some communities the violence has reoccurred many times over without any seemingly possible approach to prevent future occurrence.¹⁶ In the Southeast where there has been constant agitation for self-determination there have been violent clashes between the agitators and government security forces. The response of the central federal government has been described as 'ruthless excessive force' by Amnesty international (Owoeye & Afolabi, 2018).

The presence of security forces in communities has always resulted in the abuse of rights of ordinary citizens which in turn results in antagonism leading to more violence, violation and abuse of human rights. It has become a vicious cycle in Nigeria without any possible road map for solution. It is unfortunate that the security forces in Nigeria engage in pure revenge as against their assigned roles. What is even more painful is that in most cases, during the revenge effort, the culprits are usually absent and innocent citizens bear the brunt of the highhandedness of the security forces (Bakiner, 2016).

It is not out of place to hear of security forces in Nigeria setting houses ablaze seemingly because, a soldier was killed. In street language, it has become a 'do me I do you' situation. The crisis in Benue State left trails of destruction and annihilation in its path. The constant attacks on farmers and sometimes whole communities left several communities devastated and disoriented. There has been tension across the State arising from Benue Anti-open Grazing law of 2017 (*Klobucista, 2018*). Beyond the southeastern States, Benue and Plateau States, the 'ENDSARS' protest cuts across Nigeria. It was a wildfire that swept through almost all the States in Nigeria. It culminated in the Lekki toll gate Lagos incident where horror was unleashed on the protesters leaving many dead with several wounded even while the protesters were alleged to be singing the National Anthem. It is pertinent to state that the state actors denied the Lekki massacre, but the Lagos Report of Judicial Panel of Inquiry on Lekki incident investigation of 20th October 2020 affirmed the reality of that nightmare (Onyegbula, 2022).

It was that particular event that awakened the conscience of Nigerian leaders and eventually led to the setting up of the now abandoned End SARS panels in most states of Southern Nigeria. Whether the crisis came through self-determination questions or herder/farmer conflicts or police or other force brutality, it rests within the ambits of government to protect her citizens. It has been said that the federal security and law enforcement agencies have established neither early warning nor rapid response mechanisms; they have not arrested and

prosecuted perpetrators of violence or offered redress to victims (Ejemheare, 2021). Though the report was specific on herders/farmers generated crisis the report is seemingly applicable to other incidents of violent clashes in Nigeria. It is not that there are no laws in Nigeria to deal with these seemingly intractable situations. No, there is a plethora of laws, both civil and criminal, that can handle these issues.

It is rather the political will to deal with it that is lacking in Nigeria due to the ethnic and religious cleavages that have constantly been dealing scattering and tumultuous blows to the country's very foundation. The courts have also held the same view. In *Dosomah V COP, Edo State and Others.*, the court stated that fundamental rights are rights which stand above the ordinary laws of the land. They are in fact antecedents to the political society itself. In *IGP v Ikpila & Anor*, it was stated that fundamental rights procedure was specifically promulgated to protect the Nigerian's fundamental rights from abuse and violation by authorities and persons (Nwaokocha, 2021). The abuse and violations have been persistent to date. These laws have not prevented cases nor have the people been able to access substantial justice from such laws. Accessing justice in the face of abuse of human rights and such massive violations of rights arising from conflicts can only be addressed and redressed through transitional justice (*Iguh et al.*, 2021). If common abuses have not been redressed through these ordinary laws and fundamental rights laws, it is not expected that such laws as well as our justice administration will make any impact in the face of massive human rights violations. Following all violent clashes in Nigeria is the settings up of Panels of Inquiry or Investigation or Commission to ascertain the causes of the crises and make recommendations to the government. Finding the immediate causes of any crisis is a step in the right direction. This approach notwithstanding, 'the character of the Nigeria State is itself a recipe for violent interactions in the country.' This factor ... is accounted for by the forced amalgamation of peoples of disparate entities, cultures and languages and geographical locations

Ethno-religious Conflicts

The fact that an average Nigerian is very religious was observed by some sources (Oluduro 2010; Ekundayo 2013). Religion plays a critical role in Nigerian society and has expressed itself as a potent force in the geo-political development of the country. This force which has been used to unite Nigerians is the same force that has led to numerous conflicts in the country. Ethno-religious conflict is a conflict that combined both religion and ethnicity as the basis of disagreement. As Ikenga Metuh (1994) has noted with particular reference to Nigerias "most inter-religious conflicts usually develop into inter- ethnic conflicts even where they began as a purely religious disagreement. The reverse is the case: namely, some socio-ethnic conflicts are defected and fought out under inter-religious banner" (qtd in Egwu 2001). It is hardly surprising because there is a very strong correlation or overlap between ethnic and religious boundaries in Nigeria's plural setting. According to Egwu: "this tendency for the boundary between the two forms of identity to collapse during moments of conflicts has been captured in the phrase "ethno-religious" violence. Also, ethno-religious conflict can be described as those ethnic conflicts that assume to religious conflicts. This transformation of ethnic conflicts to religious is a result of ethnic groups identification with a particular religion. Nigerians who are in the privilege positions in order to perpetuate themselves in those positions they used ethnic and religious as cover. Obasanjo (2000), remarked that. The elite in the country are most times the brain behind ethnic religious conflicts.

Nigeria has been engulfed in numerous religious crises and/or conflicts between 1980 and 1994(Warner 2012). Due to their tendency to spread into other areas after an early stage in one area, ethno-religious conflicts have gained notoriety as the most violent crises in Nigeria. Most of these conflicts occur in the middle-belt and along the culturally borderline states of the predominantly Muslim North, and also take place between Hausa-Fulani groups and non-Muslim ethnic groups in the South (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). In conflicts of this nature occurring along the convergence of ethnic and religious lines, it is often very difficult to tell the differences between religious and ethnic crises because the dividing line between them is slimmer than thin. Examples of such ethno-religious conflicts are the Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, the Kaduna Sharia riots of 2000 and the Jos riots of 2001 (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). Several hundred lives were lost during the Kaduna crisis of 2000 and the Jos insurrection of 2001.

The crises caused violent ripple effects that spread beyond Kaduna and Jos (Enukora 2005). Other recent ethno-religious conflicts include the July 1999 conflict among the Oro cultists in Sagamu in Ogun state who claimed that the Hausa women had come outside when the cultists were outside with their gnome. The result

were arguments that finally turned into a full-scale crisis. Many Yoruba and Hausa people were killed before a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the Sagamu town. Even as the infamy was being put under check in Sagamu, reprisal attacks continued in Kano, in Hausa city, leading to deaths and destruction of property worth billions of Naira (Kura 2010).

Another ethno-religious conflict that had far reaching impacts on the people of Nigeria was the October 2000 Lagos-Kano (Idi-Araba/Oko-Oba) conflict which was caused by a misperception between the Hausa inhabitants and the Yoruba living in Lagos over the use of a convenience by a man from Hausa. The mayhem resulted in the death of many Yoruba. As a consequence, the O'dua People Congress (a Yoruba militia) was formed and worsened the situation as the violence later spread southwards to Kano (Enukora 2005; Kura 2010). Worse still, in September 2001, ethnic friction between the Tivs and the Iunkuns in the Plateau state reached fever pitch following what came to be referred to as 'mistaken identity'. 'What this means is that some Tivs took some nineteen soldiers to be Iunkuns in fake army uniform.

The Tiv youths captured them and slaughtered them one by one' (Kura 2010). And then the Nigerian army embarked on devastating reprisal attacks in Saki-Biam. According to some controversial numbers at least a hundred people died in the army attacks (Human Rights Watch 2001). Violence spread to Jos plateau especially after a Christian was appointed as a Local Council Chairman. By the time the menace was brought to a standstill, over 160 lives had been lost (Kura 2010).

Religious Conflicts

In September 3, 1980, Members of the young Muslims Association of Nigeria, an offshoot of the Yashau Idris-led Darika Islamic sect, attacked a police patrol team with bows, arrows, machetes, knives, iron rods, etc, killing two policemen and seriously injuring one of them in the process. The clash was instigated by the invitation extended to the police to intervene in the imminent clash between the Darika and the Tijanniya Muslim Sects. The Tijanniya Muslim sect had on several occasions warned the Yashau Idris group, who periodically engaged in provocative and blasphemous preaching about their impression that other Muslims preaching was diabolical, misleading and not designed to instill the spirit of Islam in their followers (*Ministry of Information Plateau State*, September 15, 1980). Dann (1995) reported on an attempted lynching of a Housewife Eucharis Paulinus Ebizoeme and her four year old son, on Tuesday, August 8, 1995, in their Tudun Kwandere area of Lafia, in Plateau State. They narrowly escaped death by the whiskers, but for the police who foiled an attempt to lynch her and her son by some people suspected to be Muslim fundamentalists, for allegedly desecrating a portion of the Holy Qur'an. The housewife, a nursing mother, had asked her four year old son to get her a paper that she would use to clean up the baby's faeces. Her little son, Samuel, went outside the house and innocently picked up a rough sheet which turned out to be a page of the Holy Qur'an and gave to his mother. A Muslim, one Mohammed Abdullahi, who saw little Samuel pick up the piece of paper and gave to his mother, quickly raised an alarm that attracted some fellow Muslims, who without further investigation pounced on Madam Eucharis and were about to lynch her and her children. Only the prompt intervention of the police averted the lynching (*This Day*, August 13, 1995). Mangul (1996) reported another ethno-religious conflict between Christians and Muslims on March 17, 1996.

The conflict started when one Azi Izang Chai, a 35 year old Christian, was attacked and killed when he allegedly challenge some hoodlums engaged in multiple voting in the Muslim-dominated Angwa Rogogo area during the local government elections held nationwide. His brutal assassination aggravated the existing rivalry between the predominantly Christian indigenes and the Hausa community of Angwan Rogogo. The conflict allegedly assumed further religious inclination when the Plateau State branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) decided to take on the burial responsibility of the late Chai. The state government, however, refused to release the corpse of Chai to the CAN authority at that tension-soaked period, and instead went to deposit it at the Jos University Teaching Hospital. The state government had only planned to release the body after the conclusion of the election, fearing that if it had been released earlier; hoodlums might use that opportunity to foment trouble. But the CAN, bent on burying him as planned, sent a one-time commissioner of Education in Plateau State, Williams Ishaya, to assure the government that the burial would be devoid of violence. With his intervention, the corpse was approved to be released to the CAN authorities.

The corpse was supposed to have been promptly released to the mourners at 9.00 AM, mourners and sympathizers, therefore, gathered at the Jos University Teaching Hospital as scheduled. However, due to the protocol of signing approval papers for the release of corpses, the corpse was not released until about 1.30 PM. With the release of the corpse closer to the Muslim Friday worship hour, for a conflict. However, the cortege left the mortuary chanting funeral songs as they headed for the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), located on Sarkin Mangu Street, the same street as the central mosque. But the Muslims preparatory for the Friday Jumaat prayer had barricaded the road for an uninterrupted worship. When the funeral procession got to the barricade, which they must pass to get to the church for the funeral service, the Muslim volunteers manning it refused them access as they and probably other Muslim worshippers had considered the procession provocative, coinciding with the time for their Friday Jumaat prayer.

Despite the refusal, the Christians were determinedly set to use the road to get to their church, which was about a hundred meters from the mosque. As the Christians began to dismantle the barricade, they were pelted with stones and other dangerous missiles by the Muslim volunteers manning the barricade. Several people were injured in the process. The situation was further aggravated by the jittery policemen who fired several canisters of tear gas at the warring group (*New Nigeria*, March 24, 1996). On Friday July 6, 2001, Jos town was thrown into yet another violent religious conflict. The immediate cause of the carnage was a slight misunderstanding between Muslims and a Christian lady who was said to be passing near a mosque at Eto-Baba, a Jos suburb during Jumaat prayer. The lady, ostensibly, was passing through an already barricaded road, preparatory for the Jumaat prayer. For her refusal to turn back, the lady in question was allegedly beaten up by some Muslim people. On hearing the news, her people who were Christians mobilized themselves and set out on a revenge mission. The ensuing skirmish turned out to be a major conflict (*City Watch*, July 12, 2001).

Igoh (2002) reported another violent religious conflict on April 2002, in which hundreds of people were killed and several houses burnt down broke out in Dilimi, Plateau State. A girl had allegedly tried to cross a barricade erected by Muslims during the Friday Jumaat prayer. She was turned back by the Muslim volunteers who were manning the barricade, but she refused and was attacked in the process. This led to a violent ethno-religious conflict that lasted for days. The conflict was said to have been aggravated by the Imam of the mosque. At the height of the mayhem, the Imam was reported to have called for prayers several times at very odd time. When the prayers were called, a large population of young men would rush into the mosque to meet him and to receive instructions spurring them to fight to finish as in the days of the holy Jihad when the Jihadists conquered Mecca and destroyed idolatry (*City Watch*, April 12, 2002) Obadiah (2004) reported another bloody attack in Plateau State on February 15, 2004.

The attack was launched by some unknown armed soldiers on Lyanjit village in Langtang North Local Government Area with the full knowledge of the Emir of Wase, Haruna Adullahi Maikano, who was believed to be strongly behind the attack. The emir was reported to have secured the services of armed soldiers from neighbouring Bauchi State through Yuli Bashar Road to help in training the ethnic militia, most of who were confirmed to have come from the neighbouring Niger and Chad Republics. They were camped in Wase town, in Lamba, Bashar and Maro districts allegedly at the expense of the emirate council. The insurgents invaded Hamele village on February 12, 2004, having displaced the mobile policemen, mounting security in Wase town and border villages like Duwi, Yaudere, Kirin, Hamele and Tsamiya. During the conflict, more than forty-six bicycles and motorcycles were carted away while houses were either torched or demolished. No fewer than 1,500 Gemai people were said to have been killed and 60,000 others displaced in Shendam Local Government Council of Plateau State in the conflict. The current wave of hostility began on February 15, 2004, when some armed militias were noticed around Shimanker and consequently reported to the relevant authorities in Shendam.

The attempt by the police to investigate the allegation led to the killing of four policemen on an attack on Lyanjit village (Tell, March 15, 2004). Andrew (2004) reported another round of religious conflict in Plateau State on Sunday, February 22, 2004. On that faithful day, Yamim village was completely destroyed by Fulani herdsmen who claimed they were chasing cattle rustlers. This resulted in the invasion of the village. After the village was sacked, the Fulani militias allegedly hoisted the portrait of Osama bin Laden in Yelwa-Shendam, which was also declared as part of Zamfara State. Despite moves by the authority of Shendam Local Government Council to impose a night curfew on the area, strong resistance was allegedly made by the

influential Hausa-Fulani resulting in a no curfew scheme. Following their success in stalling the imposition of a curfew, the youths in Yelwa-Shendam mounted loudspeakers of all shapes and sizes chanting all manner of Islamic Slogans calling Christians “Infidel”. In the madness that ensued, the settlement of Nshar, adjacent to Yelwa was completely razed down and many people killed. The Nshar yam market, churches, residential buildings and their four health facilities all went up in flames. This was closely followed by the destruction of Aji Kamel, Lukushim, Tumbi, Tukung, Goedo, Mangoro and Kwapjur. The death toll in this conflict stood at 1,500. Most of the victims were either roasted or slaughtered. A few days later, 48 people were killed in Yelwa town as hostilities within the Southern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State continued to spread and engulf more villages. The victims, this time around, included women and children, who had run into Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) in Yelwa to seek refuge where they were allegedly pursued, and brutally slaughtered and set ablaze. It was gathered that the May 9, attack was a reprisal for the Kano and COCIN attacks. In all, over 200 people were killed in the conflicts (*Tell*, March 15, 2004). Shobayo (2010) reported another deadly religious conflict in Jos Plateau on January 17-19, 2010. The conflict started on Sunday in Nassarawa Gwong, a Suburb of the city of Jos the state capital. Over 26 persons were killed on that day when the conflict broke out between Christians and Muslims. The conflict was brought under control by the state government, which imposed a dusk to dawn curfew. The conflict was however escalated when some armed persons reportedly stormed the city in defiance of the curfew. This action made Ladi. All activities in the city of Jos and its environs were grounded to a halt (*Daily Trust*, January 18, 2010). The conflict further spread on the third day to other camps that include Sabon Gida Kanar, Gyero, Bisichi, Dogon Na Hauwa, Rayfield, Maiadiko and Rafin Bauna. All structures in these camps were razed to the ground. Other areas affected by the conflict were Kuru Karama, Kuru Babba and Kuru Janta. No house was left standing in these areas. The conflict remain an unfolding tragedy as those affected counted their losses in lives at over 1000 and property worth billions of naira. The injured and displaced people are put at about 40,000 (*Daily Trust*, February 3, 2010). As if that was not enough, the mayhem of March 7, 2010 at Dogon na Hauwa where over 500 people mostly women and children were killed (*The Nation*, March 8, 2010 and *Daily trust*, March 8, 2010). The December 24, 2010, Christmas Eve, according to Akowe (2010), witnessed a new and ominous dimension which was added to the lingering religious conflicts in Jos Plateau. That day, bombs exploded in three different parts of Christian domination in the city, killing over 80 people, wounding many more and destroying churches and mosques and property worth millions of naira as a result of the crises that followed it (*The Nation*, December 28, 2010).

Ethnic Conflicts

In 1987, Jos Plateau witnessed the eruption of some ethnic conflicts. First were the Hausa and Berom ethnic conflict in Jos South Local Government Council which was allegedly over the indigene-settler syndrome. Also in the same year, the Mwaghavul and the Pyem communities in Mangu Local Government Area were involved in conflicts allegedly over chieftaincy disputes. These conflicts resulted in the loss lives and millions of Naira worth of property (*Ministry of Information Plateau State*, September 15, 1980). Izang (1997) reported that the Hausa in Jos were engaged on another violent ethnic conflict in April 10, 1997. The conflict sparked up on accusation of theft of farm produce by the Berom people. It was alleged that on Tuesday, April 8, 1997, some Onions were stolen from the farm of one Ibrahim a Hausa man, by some Berom men. So, by Wednesday, Ibrahim and two of his sons left home in the evening to mount sentry at the farm along Rangel Road. At about 8.00 pm, some three Berom, apparently returning from the mining field, were sighted by Ibrahim and his sons. He flashed his torch at them and said “so you are the ones who have been stealing my farm produce, God has caught up with you today.” As he and the three Berom men argued, the population of the Berom increased. When about thirteen others joined them to defend their kin from any attack from the Hausa man, there was a scuffle. The Hausa man said that it was one of the Berom men who first hit one of his sons. In further self defense, Ibrahim was said to have hit one of the Berom men on the forehead with his hoe. The young man fell down. After hitting him, Ibrahim rushed to Gyero town and met with Muhammadu Dula Saleh, the Mai Angwa of Gyero. He explained the situation to their leader, who in turn accompanied him to the police post in Gyero. A Sergeant on duty advised that the case be reported directly to the Police in Bukuru Headquarter of the Jos South Local Government Area. But even before the team from Gyero left Bukuru, the corpse of the Berom man who was hit by Ibrahim arrived the town. It was immediately taken to Jos, while the Mai Angwa was told to return home. He returned to Gyero at 4.00 AM to await the district police officer who promised to visit the town. The story took a gristly turn in the morning when angry Berom allegedly attacked Gyero and razed about

27 houses down. About ten cars were burnt and many other properties worth thousands of naira were destroyed. At the last count, about 17 people were reported killed (*Tell*, May 12, 1997). Ahuwa (2001) reported another communal clash on March 17, 2001, where the Quaana Pan Community was thrown into ethnic conflict following the attack of Tiv compounds in Kundum village of Barkin Chiyawa in Kwande District by some marauders suspected to be Tuaregs ethnic militia. A Kwall man, Anthony Dafaa, and some members of his family were killed. This incident resulted in a reprisal attack by unknown persons suspected to have been hired to avenge the death of the Kwall man (*New Nigeria*, March 19, 2001). Nanchan (2001) reported another ethnic conflict which occurred on March, 30, 2001, in Plateau State when Shendam town fell into the hands of people suspected to be marauders. These marauders mercilessly unleashed terror on the inhabitants of Zendesha compounds of Gidan Zuni village, leaving in its wake burnt houses, animals and food stuff belonging to the Tiv (*This Day*, April 8, 2001). Fombuat (2002) reported that the Hausa-Fulani and Taroh of the Wase Local Government Area were involved in another violent ethnic conflict in July 4, 2002. This was allegedly a spill over of the June 27, 2002 ethno-religious conflict between two ethnic groups in Yelwa town of Shendam Local Government Area, also in the Southern Senatorial Zone more than 20 people were killed and property worth thousands of naira were destroyed. There were different versions of the real reason behind the conflict. According to Solomon Lar, an Elder Statesman of Plateau State and a Taroh man, the conflict in the area had to do with the agitation by the Taroh people in Wase Local Government Council for a separate local government area of their own. The local government, if created, they said, would be known as Kadarko Local Government Council; with headquarters in Kadarko a district in Wase Local Government Council. It was later split into several districts by the state government. Infuriated by the agitation for the creation of the local government, Lar said the Hausa-Fulani organized and attacked the Taroh people resulting in the fight which spread to other Taroh Villages and towns, like Gwiwan-Kogi, Angwan Gere, Takalafiya, Jigwawan Audu, Mer, Sauwe, Tenan, Ruoji, Ungwa Sayawa and Angwan Bala (*The Source*, July 8, 2002). However, another version of the cause of the conflict was the one being touted by the Plateau State Government. Patrick Dakum, the State Commissioner for Information said that the conflict was sparked off by the directives given by the leaders of the Christians and Muslims to their adherents. According to him, the CAN had earlier given an order prohibiting young female Christians from having anything to do with their Male Muslim counterparts. Irrked by this directive, the Muslims also retaliated by prohibiting their adherents from buying foods sold by Christians. "It was this type of directive which precipitated tension that resulted in the conflict we are witnessing today". About 200 people were said to have been killed and over 50,000 people displaced as at July 16, 2002. The number of refugees and displaced people fled the conflict-ridden state and who had took refuge in schools and public places was put at 300, 827 (*The Source*, July 8, 2002).

Otula (2002) reported that in the same 2002, another fresh outbreak of ethnic hostility between the indigenes and Fulani herdsmen in Kassa village of Barkin Ladi Local Government Area in Plateau State occurred. The attack was allegedly masterminded by armed men who invaded the village in the early hours of the morning and attacked several men. Several houses were burnt or damaged in the process. About nine people, including a police sergeant were reportedly killed in the process. The following Berom villages were also attacked by people suspected to be Hausa-Fulani militia: Heipang, Vom, Fan Ropp, and Chistake. (*The Source*, July 22, 2002). Further, hostilities between Fulani herdsmen and Berom in 2002 in Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State spread into villages in Jos South Local Government Area. Report claimed that about 20 deaths were recorded in the raging hostilities and several others were injured. Elisha (2003) reported that youths (bandits), said to be numbering about 3000 and wielding sophisticated weapons, poisonous arrows and bows, invaded Kadarko village; the largest Taroh settlement in Wase Local Government Area in March 20, 2003. Report claimed that between 52 and 63 people were killed in the attack. Less than a week after the attack, another round of invasion of the same village by bandits was recorded. In the attack, thirty people, including a policeman were reported dead, and several houses razed. It was alleged that some of the bandits were dressed in the Nigerian Army uniform. On April 11, 2003, Wase town was also attacked by some people suspected to be Taroh. About 7 people were reportedly killed in the process (*News Watch*, April 15, 2003). Abubakar (2004) reported that in May 18 and 19, 2004, barely 24 hours after a state of emergency was imposed on Plateau State, a fresh violent ethnic conflict was said to have erupted between the Hausa-Fulani and indigenes at Sabon Gada village in the Quaana Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State. The attackers according to the council Chairman, Danjuma Daniel, were armed with guns, bows and arrows and came from the neighbouring villages of Akiri and Azara in Nassarawa State. There were reports of killings in

Yelwa Shendam a day before. The attack was said to be unprecedented in planning and execution as the attackers allegedly had a field day killing and burning. The onslaught lasted till the early hours of the following day. At the end, not less than 350 people were believed to have been killed. For the Quaan Pan conflict, several houses and property worth millions of naira were said to have been burnt in the incident. Farmlands were not spared either. The conflict spread to other villages that include; Bakin Chiyawa, Kurgari, Gidan Sabo, Saminaka and Sabon Gida where unspecified number of casualties was recorded. Following the violent conflict, over 18,000 people were said to have been displaced from their homes while 14,000 went to kara refugee camp in Lafia, Nassarawa state (*Daily Trust*, November 1, 2004). Jos North Local Government witnessed another ethnic conflict in November 28–30, 2008. Mohammed (2009) argued that the conflict was triggered up by political differences surrounding the Jos North Local Government elections, but eventually hijacked by xenophobic and misguided elements to complete the annihilation and extermination of Hausa/Fulani and indeed the Muslim community in Plateau State, a process according to him which began since September, 2001. The conflict according to other sources, started as a result of the state government inability to conduct a peaceful, fair and free local government election. This created an opportunity for political thugs and misguided individuals to unleash violence conflict in Jos (*Daily Trust*, January 30, 2009). Contrary to the above reasons for the 2008 conflict in Jos, the commission of inquiry of prince Bola Ajibola set up by the Plateau State government to find out the causes of frequent eruption of ethno-sectarian conflicts in Jos, the state capital blames it on the former military president General Ibrahim Babangida who created Jos North Local Council. According to the commission's report, the creation of the Jos North Local Council has been a tinderbox. The November 2008 conflict recorded Wanton destruction of lives and property. The commission said that it received as claims of property destroyed, over N43, billion. While 4,815 structures as well as 167 cars were claimed to have been damaged during the unrest, it also said the actual number of persons who lost their lives in the 2008 conflict stands at 312, as it could not verify claims by Human Rights Watch that the Muslim community recorded 632 deaths. However, the commission agreed that the Muslim community "suffered massive casualties" during the conflict, it blamed elements of the Hausa/Fulani Muslim community for initiating acts of violence that led to the conflict. The commission further observed that: Despite the coincidence of time, the local government election of 2008 was not the immediate cause of the unrest, but the feeling that the Hausa/Fulani had lost the election and had, by that token, lost access to one of the major opportunities for economic domination and advancement among their people, pushed them to violence. The commission absolved governor Jang of complicity in the 2008 conflict. It however recommended that the police be made to investigate the activities of some prominent persons in the state, including former Deputy Senate president, Ibrahim Mantu, Saleh Hassan, Yahaya Jengre, Samaila Mohammed and Dasuki Ibrahim Nakande. The commission said that those people utterances before and after the conflict was capable of igniting mor conflicts in the future (*The News*, March 1, 2010). An interesting feature of the 2008 Jos North conflicts has been the sophistication in the weapons used and the recruitment of mercenaries both within and outside the country. Most people interviewed admitted that the conflicts were not only premeditated, but the weapons used pointed to the fact that the conflicts was meticulously planned. There were also allegations that hundreds of armed mercenaries sporting fake police and military uniforms were apprehended by security operatives during the conflicts. The fact that the mercenaries were imported either from neighbouring countries or from states adjoining Plateau State underscored the fact that the crisis was premeditated, pre-planned and dastardly executed with a view to causing mindless mayhem and tainting or influencing the outcome of the election in Jos North Local Government area. There were also serious allegations of complicity on the part of some members of the armed forces and security agencies from the two sides to the conflict. The quantum or arms that was used by both sides also pointed to some measure of planning and stockpiling, which raises national security concerns (Omuora M.A. *The Guardian*, January 12, 2009). These kinds of allegations of complicity against the security agencies in Jos Plateau conflicts made a spokesman of an NGO in (2002) to remark that: Crises in Jos are more difficult to isolate and contain than any other in Nigerian. When armed forces and security operative take side instead of being neutral, there is certainly a tendency towards polarization, which further breeds more violence. A major issue in this conflict is the belief that people were imported from within and outside the country to orchestrate the conflict. While I cannot authoritatively state that mercenaries were brought in, the weapons used here admits to a process of arduous planning. I feel and I also think that this is the position of other civil society organizations, that the Federal Government should investigate this claim.

Political Conflicts

Usman (1994) reported another violent conflict on April 12, 1994, which erupted between the Hausas and the natives over the appointment of an individual that was perceived as a non-indigene by the indigenous tribe. The then military administrator of Plateau State, Mohammed Mana, had announced appointments into the caretaker committee of the twenty-three local government councils in the state. The Appointment of Mato, as Management Committee Chairman of Jos North Local Government Council was, however, considered a miscalculation (*The Guardian*, April 17, 1994). The Anagustas, Beroms and Afizeres, who are natives of Jos North Local Government Council, were quick to register their displeasure and resentment of the appointment. Yet, the military administrator seemed not to be bothered. To him, Mato would be sworn in as management committee chairman of Jos north Local Government.

On the swearing-in day, the police had to disperse the crowd of angry mob with tear gas. Yet, the natives despite the lachrymatory fumes from the exploded tear gas stood their ground firmly. Mato, although sworn in was not allowed into the office to perform the functions of the chairman. This is because, the Jos North Local Government Secretariat was invaded by the natives and had its gates barricaded.

A complication according to Usman (1994), emerged from the situation on ground when the Hausa group to which Mato belongs insisted that having been sworn in, their son must be allowed to occupy the exalted office. The next day witnessed a massive demonstration by Hausa youths as a mark of solidarity and support for their newly sworn in chairman. In the ensuing fracas, several people sustained serious injuries and the Jos Main Market, the best of its kind in the West Coast of Africa, was set ablaze (*The Guardian*, April 17, 1994). Datung (1997) reported the Changel and Panyam ethnic conflict of April 5 and 6, 1997. Changel which has a long-standing history of ethnic conflicts is a border town between Gindiri and Panyam District of Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State. The Gindiri people speak Pyam language, which is also the native tongue of Ibrahim Nasir Mantu, a prominent politician. The Panyam, however, speak the Mwaghavul language. Residents of Changel, naturally feel they belong to Gindiri District. Trouble allegedly reared its head when the district head of Panyam appointed a new Galadima for the Changel people (*Tell*, May 12, 1997). Fitina Kwarshak was appointed by the Panyam leader so that he could collect taxes (Haraji) from Changel for remittance to Panyam. But before that appointment, there had been a Galadima, called Ibrahim Sambo, who had always collected taxes from Changel. Galadima Ibrahim Sambo, had for years sent the amount collected to Gindiri. When Panyam, therefore, appointed a chief in the person of Kwarshak, the people of Changel did not support him, and the elders insisted that the district head of Gindiri should appoint a new head for Changel. Consequently, Adamu Nagarko Ali was named and installed as the "Rit" that is, Sarkin (or district head) of Changel. This infuriated the Panyam people who saw it as an affront. The people of Changel found themselves in between two leaders fighting for control over the land, money and people. Consequently, the Panyam people on Sunday April 6, 1997, attacked the Changel with bows and arrows. About 200 houses were allegedly burnt in Changel and its neighboring villages. The district head of Gindiri and Panyam who were summoned to Jos by the then Military Administrator of the State, Habibu Shaibu, were charged to a magistrate court for allegedly instigating the people to riot (*Tell*, May 12, 1997). Since September 7, 2001, when the Jos major ethno-religious conflicts broke out, leaving many people dead and resulting in the destruction of property worth millions of naira, Plateau State has unfortunately been through one conflict after another. These conflicts which always start in Jos quickly spreads to all the senatorial zones in the state and since then the situation has continued intermittently. Ibrahim (2001) reported another violent conflict which began on Friday September 7, 2001. The conflict emanated when one Muhammed Mukta Usman, a Muslim, was appointed as coordinator and chairman of the Jos North monitoring committee of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). Usman was said to be a non-indigene. His appointment therefore, sparked off debates over who truly owns Jos. The indigenes were said to have vowed that Muktar would be removed, while the Hausa-Fulani, Usman's tribesmen, reportedly insisted that nothing must change the status quo (*New Nigeria*, September 30, 2001). Therefore, immediately after Usman's appointment, the Christian indigenes in the state had protested, insisting that he was not an indigene and that the state had its own slot being occupied by a non-indigene of the state.

Consequently, a press statement was thus issued by Plateau Youth Council (PYC), condemning the appointment because Usman, notwithstanding being born in Jos, was a settler. After the press statement,

posters were pasted around the town with inscriptions like: “Trace your roots before it is too late,” “The devil has no parking space in Jos North,” “You are warned once again not to step in,” “Go and tell them you are not interested anymore because your life is at stake,” and “Run for your life” (*New Nigeria*, September 30, 2001). Apart from the posters, human faeces were dumped in Usman’s office by unknown persons. When these actions to provoke the Hausa community failed, a statement which was purportedly issued by the Hausa-Fulani’s Jasawa Development Association (JDA) emerged, calling on the people of Jos North Local Government Area to vote a Muslim as the council chairman in the next local government election. The PYC’s Chairman, Yakubu Ibrahim Itse, hinged on it to address a press conference in which he told the Hausa-Fulani community in Jos that they had no citizenship right in the state. He further called for the removal of Turakin Jos, Inuwa Ali, from the Jos traditional council and the scrapping of all Hausa-Fulani chieftaincy titles in all traditional councils in the state. A violent conflict between the Hausa-Fulani sympathetic to Usman and the indigenes thus ensued. Properties worth millions of naira were damaged in the process. The areas worst hit according to report include Nassaraw Gwom, Jenta Adamu, Anglo Jos, Angwan Rogo, Apata, Tudun-Wada and Bukuru. A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the city before the situation was brought under control (*New Nigeria*, September 30, 2001). Frank (2002) reported another ugly incident in Jos Plateau where a Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) disagreement in Naraguta ward “B” of Jos North triggered off a conflict on Thursday May 2, 2002, which led to another bloody sectarian violence. The conflict was as a result of the rescheduled ward, local government and state congress primaries of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Violence was sparked by a sharp disagreement between two rival groups within PDP at Eto-Baba and Angwan Rukuba wards of Jos North Local Government Area. As a prelude to a forth-coming election, each of the factions worked towards imposing their candidates as party executives at the ward level. A faction of the party was said to have brought under-aged youths and elderly people from Bauchi and Maiduguri to participate in the congress. This was opposed by the rival group. The conflict started with a trivial argument that later degenerated into a brawl. Several people were stabbed in the process. The violent conflict later spread to Hausa-Fulani-dominated areas like Dogon Dutse, Bauchi Road, and Angwan Rogo, Filling Bell junction at Nassarawa and Zowlo Junction along Bauchi Road. About fifteen people were reportedly killed in the mayhem. The Plateau State Police Command later imposed a dusk to dawn curfew in Jos, Buruku and its environs (*Newswatch*, May 20, 2002:47). A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on some four local government.

areas of Plateau State following another bloody clash in Yelwa town in Shendam Local Government Council which resulted in the death of about twenty people. The towns include Mabudi, Langtang, Kargwi and Wase. Many people sustained injuries in the fracas. Several worship centres, six petrol filling stations and 22 vehicles were burnt or vandalized before the situation was brought under control by a combined team of military and police personnel. The fracas was allegedly sparked off by an illicit love affair between a Hausa youngster and a female indigene in Yelwa town, where the indigenes had for some time frowned at any love affair between their girls and Hausa men. In any case, the local girl was accosted and beaten up. It was further gathered that unable to watch his lover being beaten, the young Romeo ran to the girl’s rescue. It soon became a free-for-all fight (*News Watch*, May 20, 2002) The political conflict of April 18, 2011 was another conflict that took place in Jos the Plateau State capital. According to National Mirror of April 19, 2011, angered Hausa/Fulani community youths were protesting the outcome of the April 16, 2011 presidential election which put President Jonathan ahead of other candidates. One Sabiu Musa reported that the protesting Hausa/Fulani youths were particularly not happy that General Buhari lost the election to President Jonathan. The youths came out in large numbers brandishing dangerous weapons including knives and cutlasses and barricaded major roads around Terminus Area, chanting anti PDP slogans. Soon, the protesting youth resorted to burning of tyres on the roads and blocking motorists. They went further to attacking and burning of some houses belonging to PDP stalwarts and some people perceived to be associates of the party in Jos North Local Government Area. Areas mostly affected by the crises include Nasarawa Gwom, Dilimi area and Duala all in Jos North Local Government Area. As a result, business activities were paralyzed as traders including banks, who earlier opened for business quickly closed shops and scampered for safety. The News of the incident quickly spread to other parts of Jos town, causing commotion. The incident took the serious police intervention to nip the crises in the bud. (*National Mirror*, April 19, 2011)

Land Dispute Conflicts

Sadau (1991) reported another conflict in Gura District of Plateau State in 1991 where two communities took up arms against each other allegedly over parcel of land in Dar'a. The Attal and Attaka communities each of them were claiming the land under dispute. They therefore, chose to resolve the dispute by sacrificing innocent blood (*News Watch*, October 28, 1991). Arago (1995) reported another conflict between the Mwaghavuls of Local Government Area and the Rons of Bokkos Local Government Area in 1995 over boundary disputes. The disagreement between farmers in these respective villages over a piece of land bordering their boundaries had seen them in and out of court. With the passage of time, particularly at the onset of cropping season, there was always a scramble for available pieces of land for farming purposes. This act generated interest by the groups involved in the disputes to acquire more of the available farmland in spite of a subsisting court order. This took its toll on inter-communal relationship as violent conflict between the concerned communities erupted. Property and lives were said to have been lost in the conflict (*City Watch*, September 4, 1995). Eneche (2001) reported another communal clash between the Tiv people and their neighbours in the Quaan pan Local Government Area In March 25, 2001, over farmland. The Tiv people resident in Quaan pan had accused the Asiko, a traditional ruler in the area, of confiscating their land and giving it to his people. It was alleged that the Tiv people, felt aggrieved and a misunderstanding, which led to a violent conflict, ensued. There was extensive destruction of property and reported cases of death of the warring parties involved (*New Nigeria*, March 27, 2001). Idiris (2001) reported another violent incident in plateau State where fighting was said to have occurred between April 11 and 15, 2001, in Wase Local Government Area following a disagreement over who should harvest locust bean tree in Nassarawa village of Wase. A Taroh man was reported to have bought a piece of land from a Burum man. The Burum man who sold the piece of land had long died, but the children were still living. In the tradition of the Burums, they do not sell a piece of land with any economic tree. You may buy the land, but the economic tree remains theirs even if it is on your property. When the children of the late Burum man came to pluck the fruit of the locust bean tree, the Taroh man refused. This led to fight that resulted to the killing of one of the Burum men's children in the process. Sources claim that the fighting would not have escalated but for some religious undertones it escalated. Taroh men were generally regarded as having expansionist instincts by nature and ordinarily feel superior to their neighbours. This attribute understandably makes the Taroh men ready enemies. Besides, the Tarohs are largely Christians while their neighbours in Wase who include Jarawa, Basharawa, Jukuns, Hausas and Fulanis are Muslims. These people did not need any serious prompting to fight the Taroh as they had always had sympathy for the Burums who are predominantly Muslims. The Taroh had come to settle in Wase and were the second largest ethnic group in the area, which has about eight ethnic groups (*The source*, April 18, 2001). As a result of the lands conflict in Wase, a reprisal attack was launched on Muslims in Langtang town. The reasons for the conflict were tied to the disagreement in Langtang involving individual Muslims and the natives. It was also aggravated by spill over of earlier ethnic conflicts in nearby Kanan Local Government Area. This led to the displacement of the Taroh of Wase who fled to become refugees in Langtang North Local Government Area. Consequently, the conflict left many people injured and several properties were either damaged or burnt. Most Muslims in the Christian-dominated Langtang were allegedly thrown into the open fields as refugees (*The source*, April 18, 2001). demolition of houses owned by Christians who were returning to Yaudere village along Wase-Langtang Road. The houses were said to have been demolished by the Waziri allegedly because they were illegal structures. This led to a violent confrontation between the Waziri, his subjects and the aggrieved Christians. No arrest was made (*New Nigeria*, February 10, 2004). These conflicts have turned Plateau State from being "the home of peace and tourism" to "the home of violent conflicts and crises". It is a known fact that, even at the time of putting this work together secret killings are still going on between Christians and Muslims in most parts of the state. This has therefore forced many people to relocate either to neighbouring or their home states to begin life afresh.

The Self Determination Question in the Southeast

The self - determination question is one of the underlying (key) factors in the Nigerian/Biafran Civil War. About 29 years after Nigeria/Biafra war MASSOB was formed in 1999. When it appeared that MASSOB was no longer pursuing her aim and objectives, IPOB was then found in 2012. Both bodies seek to actualize self - determination for indigenous people of Biafra. The formation of these bodies has had impact in the Nigerian polity in diverse ways. The impact of IPOB and her radio network led to the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu. The continued detention of Kanu has also led to the sit-at-home (SAH) order by some group of persons believed to be IPOB loyalists (Nwaokocha, 2021). The initial order was to be complied with every Monday, but it now

seems to be laden with uncertainties. Sit-at-home order is another strategy to the IPOB's self-determination agitation. Public response to the sit-at-home (SAH) has been that of mixed feelings. While the people in the lowest cadre of the society fully support it, the middle class and leading politicians seem not to approve of it albeit secretly. The middle class are divided. However, it cannot be denied that the SAH order usually halts all economic activities in the southeast every Monday or on any other day it is imposed, especially in Anambra State. To this, majority of opinion posits that shutting down the Southeastern economy is counterproductive while others argue that it is a signal that the people are tired of the contract with Nigeria (*Iguh et al., 2021*). Closely associated with this economic shut down is the relocation of certain businesses by wealthy merchants to neighbouring states like Delta and Rivers. The relocated businesses may not be returned soon.

The result will be continued economic hardship for the people of the region. The loss of lives and destruction of properties during sit-at-home (SAH) enforcement conflicts cannot be over-emphasized. People are attacked and killed; properties destroyed especially those who are seen to have flouted the SAH orders (*Onyegbula, 2022*). The SAH order, it appears, has been counterproductive and has not in any way caught the fancy of the federal government. The initial order for sit-at-home (SAH) may have made some impact and signals duly received by the central federal government. It is our considered view that continued sit-at-home (SAH) implementation will be akin to shutting down of the borders against the Biafrans during the civil war which led to unprecedented malnutrition and hardship. Issues of such magnitude of using hunger on a population to wipe them out are matters that are conveniently within the ambits of transitional justice and can best be handled in that arena of truth.

Boko Haram Crisis in the North-East

The group has been known for its brutality, and since the insurgency started in 2009, Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands of people, in frequent attacks against the police, armed forces and civilians. It has resulted in the deaths of more than 300,000 children, displaced 2.3 million from their homes (*Hosenball, 2015*).

Boko Haram, officially known as *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād* 'Group of the People of Sunnah for Dawah and Jihad'), is an Islamist militant organization based in northeastern Nigeria, which is also active in Chad, Niger, northern Cameroon, and Mali. Boko Haram was the world's deadliest terror group during part of the mid-2010s according to the Global Terrorism Index (*Hosenball, 2015*). In 2016, the group split, resulting in the emergence of a hostile faction known as the Islamic State's (*Klobucista, 2018*).

Of the 2.3 million people displaced by the conflict since May 2013, at least 250,000 left Nigeria and fled to Cameroon, Chad or Niger. Boko Haram killed over 6,600 people in 2014. The group has carried out massacres including the killing by fire of 59 schoolboys in February 2014 and mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, in April 2014. Corruption in the security services and human rights abuses committed by them have hampered efforts to counter the unrest (*BBC News, 2015*).

In mid-2014, the militants gained control of swaths of territory in and around their home state of Borno, estimated at 50,000 square kilometres (20,000 sq mi) in January 2015, but did not capture the state capital, Maiduguri, where the group was originally based (*Thurston, 2019*). On 7th March 2015, Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. According to the BBC (2015), due to internal disputes between the two groups, hundreds of terrorists left Boko Haram and formed their own organization, named "Islamic State's West Africa Province. In September 2015, the Director of Information at the Defence Headquarters of Nigeria announced that all Boko Haram camps had been destroyed but attacks from the group continue. In 2019, the president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, claimed that Boko Haram was "technically defeated". Shekau was killed and confirmed to be dead in May 2021 (*Britannica, 2021*).

In March, Catholic Church sources in Cameroon, near the border with Nigeria, claimed that they had been attacked regularly by Boko Haram militants since September 2021. In one attack "they managed to reach Oupai by coming through Douval. They killed two people, burned the houses and carried off clothing and small animals. Since mid-February four of the seven areas of the parish have been paralysed (*Onyegbula,*

2022). According to this priest, who asked not to be named, the attacks seemed to be mostly focused on obtaining supplies (*BBC News (2022)*). In the past they entered villages, ostentatiously yelling war cries, but recently they have come discretely, taking advantage of the full moon, to surprise people in their sleep. They kill the fathers of the family and the teenagers, especially the boys. Then they pillage the family's property and destroy everything they cannot carry off (*Bukarti, 2021*). On 11 August, 5 soldiers were killed during a terrorist attack in Bwari, Abuja. The soldiers were serving with the seven (7) Guards Battalion, Lungi Barracks, Maitama and 176 Guards Battalion, Gwagwalada in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Organisation (*Foucher, 2023*).

Niger Delta Conflicts

Petroleum production and export play a dominant role in Nigeria's economy and account for about 90 percent of her gross earnings. This dominant role has pushed agriculture, the traditional mainstay of the economy since the 1950s and 1960s, to the background (Arbour, 2007).

Over the years, the federal government of Nigeria and various multinational oil corporations have extracted oil from the Niger Delta without giving adequate attention to the welfare of the people of the region. The people of the Niger Delta complain that they have not seen adequate benefits. Instead, oil production has cost them dearly in terms of environmental degradation and under-development. As a result, residents of this region have engaged in various forms of campaigns and protests against the Nigerian government and the oil companies. Without fail, both civilian and military regimes have responded to these protests with military repression and gross human rights violations. For example, military repression in Ogoni and Odi communities of the Niger Delta resulted in thousands of deaths, rape, and illegal detentions. What follows are specific cases of gross human rights violation in the Niger Delta (Okonofua, 2016).

Understanding the Niger Delta conflict as a prerequisite in resolving it has become a challenge and a concern for many scholars. Most work is based on theoretical perspectives. One of the common explanations of the conflict in the region entails the marginalization and frustration thesis. Another explanation is the inequitable distribution of revenue leading to deprivation and the desire for control over the resources. The issue of environmental injustices caused by the stakeholders in the oil industry has also become a common center of focus among scholars. Some scholars have adopted a critical approach in investigating the conflict that shows the interaction of the political, social, environmental, and economic factors in shaping the conflict. However, the declining security in the region has led to the prominence of two competing perspectives in explaining the issue (Nwaokocha, 2021). One side of the argument proposes the marginalization-relative deprivation thesis as an explanation for the increased youth militancy and insurgency. The militancy and insurgency are rooted in inter-group inequalities, historical injustices, as well as socio-economic and political marginalization. On the other side, some consider the conflict from the political economy of war perspective. The perspective considers the conflict as a consequence of greed that has become entrenched in the minds of the stakeholders involved.

Consequently, some scholars have suggested the need to explain the violent conflict from both perspectives based on a comprehensive understanding of the stakeholders involved. Moreover, the tendency to restrict the conflict to a specific timeframe creates challenges in understanding the role of the stakeholders in the emergence and accentuation of the conflict. Considering that conflict is not static but highly dynamic and fluid, the study will seek to understand the conflict from both perspectives while incorporating the role of the stakeholders in the exacerbation of the conflict (Ikelegbe & Onokerhoraye, 2016).

The amnesty and the upshot disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs experienced several economic, political, security, and social challenges that have undermined their efficacy while making the conflict a continuum, despite their considerable benefits. Essentially, the region has not experienced a clear end to violence because insecurity remains an attribute of the daily life. So far, the region has experienced what can be referred to as: peace of the graveyards' where hostility between security agents and militants has subsided but sustainable peace has not been achieved (Louis, 2007).

In 25 June 2009, the then President of Nigeria, Musa Yar'Adua, demonstrated one of the boldest steps towards peace-building in the Niger Delta after granting unconditional amnesty to the militants operating in the region.

The region had been a hotspot of low-intensity violence and conflict as the insurgents composed of militant youths waged against the Nigerian state and the Nigerian security agents engaged the counter-insurgency activities to protect oil resources in the region. The Niger Delta has a population of more than 30 million people and represents more than 75 percent of total oil production in the country with over 600 oilfields, 10 export terminals, and 275 flow stations. The region serves as the take-off point for more than 7,000 kilometers of pipelines traversing the country (Pilar, 2012).

Peace engineering and building in the Niger Delta has a long history and includes a multi-layered conflict involving ethnic, developmental, and governance issues. For instance, the Willink's Commission constituted in 1958 aimed at ascertaining the causes of marginalization and propose remedies for minorities' fear of marginalization. The commission proposed the creation of a Niger Delta Development Board that would ensure peace and minimization the environmental destruction in the region. The amnesty programme implemented in 2009 was applauded as the best option in the protracted conflict because it had significant instrumentality for bringing peace and development to the otherwise volatile Niger Delta. After his election in 2007, the late President Musa Yar'Adua promised to develop a blueprint to stimulate development of the Niger Delta that would bring a permanent solution to the protracted violence in the area. The amnesty program represented the implementation of the policy statement (Simon, 2012).

Method

This paper adopted a qualitative descriptive research design as the guiding framework for data collection and analysis. This design provides a structured plan that enabled the paper to explore complex social phenomena by focusing on participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours. Unlike quantitative approaches, the qualitative method addresses "how" and "why" questions, allowing for deeper insights into issues that are difficult to measure numerically. The study area is Nigeria, a diverse and populous West African country with significant socio-political and cultural complexity, making it suitable for examining civil society activities. The study relied on secondary data sources such as books, journals, reports, and CSO documents, complemented by qualitative techniques including interviews and focus group discussions. Data collection emphasized relevance, authenticity, and comprehensiveness. Reliability of the textual documents was strengthened via expert assessment. Finally, data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, enabling systematic interpretation of textual materials and the identification of patterns and themes relevant to the research objectives.

Data Presentation

Peace Education and Conflict Prevention Strategies Employed by CSOs in Nigeria

Peace education: the aim to change mindsets before violence starts. They do this by introducing such extra-curricular activities as, formation of school peace clubs, training of student mediators. They also lobby government officials to add tolerance themes to Civic Education. For example, WANEP-Ng runs over five hundred (500) peace clubs in Plateau, Kaduna and Benue states. Students are also made to mediate fights in schools instead of teachers flogging students.

Secondly, they train teachers on how to handle ethnic/religious slurs, bullying and extremist ideas in class. For example, JDPC trains Catholic schools teachers nationwide on conflict sensitive teaching.

Thirdly, CSOs establish Youth counter-narratives. This initiative uses drama, sports and radio to teach non-violence and critical thinking. The idea is to search for common ground of meeting between the two dominant religious groups-Christianity and Islam. For example, The Team TV/radio series shows Muslim/Christian youth solving disputes without violence. Fourthly, CSOs also take peace education to Qur'anic schools, street kids, and IDP camps. For instance, the Arewa Youth Trust teaches tolerance and dialogue to almajiri in Kano and Sokoto. Finally, they equally train women as early peace actors in homes and markets before conflict scales. For example, FOMWAN and WEP teach mothers to spot radicalization signs and use dialogue with kids

2. Conflict prevention: This has to do with stopping violence before it erupts. **Firstly, CSO introduce Early warning systems.** Community monitors and report hate speech, rumours, stockpiling arms to national database. For example, WANEP links local monitors to ECOWAS Early Warning System. Flagged Plateau attacks days before 2023 escalations. Secondly, **Interfaith mediation.** This involves pre-emptive dialogue between religious leaders when tension rises. For example, Interfaith Mediation Centre Kaduna, manned by Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa mediate before Ramadan/Christmas clashes. Thirdly, **Election violence prevention.** Under this initiative youths are trained to resist being used as thugs, set up situation rooms. For example, CDD and CLEEN ran election peace campaigns prior to the 2015, 2019 and 2023 elections. They also used SMS crowd-sourcing to defuse rumours. Fourthly, **Community dialogues.** This initiative involves bringing farmers and herders, ethnic groups together to negotiate land and water use. For example **Pastoral Resolve PARE** holds periodic farmer-herder forums in Middle Belt which draws maps, and agrees on grazing routes. Finally, **DDR and countering extremism.** This initiative gives counsel to ex-militants/Boko Haram returnees, and teach communities to reintegrate them. For example, **Neem Foundation and ActionAid** run **“Borno Peace Ambassadors”**, a youth deradicalization and trauma healing programme

Table 1: Showing CSOs involved in Peace Education and Conflict Prevention in the South-south

S/No	Civil Society Organisation(CSO)	Focus Area	Key Work	Beneficiary state
1	Academic Associates PeaceWorks AAPW	Non-violence training, youth engagement.	Trained 5,000+ ex-militants + youth in non-violent conflict resolution post-2009 Amnesty, established Peace clubs, “Managing Conflict in Nigeria” curriculum, early warning in oil communities.	Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa
2	Stakeholder Democracy Network SDN	Oil conflict, elections, and governance	Runs election situation rooms, community monitoring of oil spills Gives Early Warning Early Response(EWER) signals on oil violence, youth dialogues, “Peace Maps” of hotspots, peace radio	Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta
3	Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta PIND	Economic development and peacebuilding	Set up “Peace Building Network” of 1,000+ local monitors Niger Delta Peace Map, conflict trackers, skills-for-peace for youth, farmer-herder mediation	Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Akwa-Ibom and Cross-River
4	Search for Common Ground SFCG	Media, youth, community dialogue	The Team* TV series aired on NTA Asaba, Port Harcourt Peace media, football for peace, community peace committees, radio dramas	Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta

5	Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta PIND	Community resilience, peace education	Works in cultism-prone LGAs School peace clubs, “Alternatives to Violence” AVP workshops in secondary schools	Delta and Edo
6	CLEEN Foundation	Security, justice and elections	Election violence prevention Election security tracking, police-civilian dialogue, early warning situation rooms	Rivers, Delta, Edo and Cross River
7	Niger Delta Peace Coalition NDPC	Security, peace education and community work	Coordinates post-Amnesty peace work Community dialogues, ex-militant reintegration monitoring, youth peace camps Coordinates post-Amnesty peace work Community dialogues, ex-militant reintegration monitoring, youth peace camps	Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta
8	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding WANEP	Early warning, peace education	Part of national EWER system Peace clubs in schools, community monitors, reports to ECOWAS + govt	Delta, Rivers and Cross River
9	Niger Delta Women’s Movement for Peace NDWMP	Women in peace/security	Trains “Mothers for Peace” to detect radicalization, mediate oil community disputes	Rivers and Bayelsa
10	Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement YIAGA	Elections and youth	“Watching The Vote” observers, youth pledges against electoral violence, peace education in schools	Rivers, Edo and Delta
11	Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group NDEBUMOG	Governance and conflict	Tracks budget to oil communities. Prevention: reduces “resource curse” grievances	Delta, Edo, Rivers
12	Community Initiative for Enhanced Peace and Development CIEPD	Communal conflicts	Mediation in Bakassi/Akwa Ibom border disputes, peace clubs in border schools	Akwa-Ibom and Cross River

Source: Researcher’s Compilation, 2026

FINDINGS

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria effectively employed peace education strategies such as school peace clubs, teacher training, youth engagement, and community based awareness programmes to reshape attitudes toward non-violence. They also implemented proactive conflict prevention mechanisms including

early warning systems, interfaith mediation, election monitoring, and community dialogue initiatives. These strategies significantly reduced tensions, enhanced early response to conflicts, and promoted peaceful coexistence across diverse communities, particularly in the Niger Delta region.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that CSOs played a critical role in promoting peace education and conflict prevention through innovative, grassroots-driven strategies. Their interventions addressed both immediate triggers of violence and underlying structural causes such as poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. By engaging youths, women, religious leaders, and community stakeholders, CSOs fostered inclusive participation and strengthened local ownership of peace processes. The integration of early warning systems and dialogue platforms improved timely responses to potential conflicts and minimized escalation. Furthermore, peace education initiatives contributed to long-term behavioral change and the development of a culture of tolerance and non-violence. However, the sustainability of these efforts depended largely on adequate funding, coordination, and collaboration with government institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government should strengthen partnerships with CSOs by providing funding, institutional support, and integrating their strategies into national peace policies. CSOs should expand peace education and early warning programmes to underserved and high-risk communities for broader impact. There is also a need for improved coordination among stakeholders to ensure sustainability and effectiveness of conflict prevention initiatives.

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