TRADITIONAL LEADERS' PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING AND NIGERIAN FARMER-HERDERS' POST-CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

Ifedayo Grace MALACHI[1] and Felix Olukayode AJIBADE[2]

[1] Department of Political Science and International Diplomacy, Faculty of Social and Management Science, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, Email: malachifedayo@gmail.com

[2] Department of Political Science and International Diplomacy, Faculty of Social and Management Science, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, Email: kayjojjo@gmail.com

Abstract: *There is overwhelming evidence of the grassroots advocacy and sensitisation run and led by the traditional leaders bordering on counter-radicalisation and capacity building on peace education. The study aims to provide qualitative based evidence on the traditional leaders' engagements in peacebuilding and social cohesion by analysing the interactions of state and non-state actors and actions for peaceful recovery in the region. By investigating the political and socio-economic factors driving (or impeding) a peaceful recovery from conflicts and resilience building in the region, we aimed to identify traditional leaders as the key enablers of peace by identifying and describing the non-state initiatives tackling the root causes of the vulnerabilities and risks to promoting peaceful recovery in the country. It aimed to map the key initiatives and actors driving the needed change in post-conflict communities. Thus, the study seeks to understand better the dynamic of traditional leaders' engagement, including the prospects and challenges in Nigeria. The study adopts an outcome-based approach of the Theory of Change to focus on the state and non-state initiatives on peacebuilding. Thus, it uses a three-dimensional approach to form its qualitative based analysis. The study theorises that the state and non-state measures without the traditional leaders' input become a product of failure as their importance is more noticeable in peacebuilding than the coalition of the State and Non-State apparatuses. The higher the participation in peacebuilding processes, the better the communities in conflict.*
Keywords: Traditional leaders, peacebuilding, social engagement cohesion, conflict, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional leaders' participation in post-conflict circumstances has received more attention in recent decades, but the scope and drivers of their engagement in post-conflict settings have received less attention (Dunaetz, 2014; Ola et al., 2009; Meyer et al., 2005). However, a recent study has shown that enabling traditional leaders to engage in active civic participation helps decrease the various repercussions of conflict in their communities (Louis et al., 2017). Traditional leaders' participation in peacebuilding processes in Nigeria was investigated by Tonwe & Osa (2013), who found that, contrary to widespread belief, their presence in peacebuilding processes aided community mobilisation and welfare. Similarly, several studies have found conflicting evidence on the benefits and limitations of traditional leaders' participating in regional peacebuilding efforts (Louis et al., 2017; Dietrich, 2015; Tonwe et al., 2013). Despite an increase in studies on traditional leaders' role in peacebuilding in Nigeria, comprehensive data on the nature, locations, and drivers of efforts impacting traditional leaders' participation in post-conflict communities, particularly in Nigeria State, is lacking.

Over a decade of protracted farmer-herders conflicts existed in West Africa (Prah,2004). In Nigeria, the conflict's nature, scale, and complexity have come under intense scrutiny, which is not unconnected to the increasingly growing population and the changing character of crisis management (Amrith, 2017; Crisis Group, 2017; Sanyal, 2016). The farmer herder's conflict, though existing for ages, has taken a new dimension with records of devastating effects on people's livelihood. The gravity of the conflict in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Cameroon, showed over 10,000 violent deaths in 2020, 44% higher than the previous year (Krätli, S. et al., 2021). The nature of the conflict increases the degradation of farming and livestock systems, thereby threatening food security and national sovereignty, as evidenced in the increased military budget in the last five years. (Black et al., 2009; Obioha, 2013). The farmer-herders conflict is continuous and

expanding, and its frequency of incidence is becoming the new normal in almost every part of the country. Initially, it was limited to the rural community dwellers in the northern region, but it has steadily risen and escalated to the southwest region (Moritz, 2010; Blench, 2010; Bello, 2013, Le Billon, 2001). Consequently, the United Nations Habitat highlights the need to bridge regulation and development boundaries to enable the conflicting groups to take responsibility for their own lives (UN-Habitat, 2015).

Among the people greatly affected by the violent conflicts, Traditional leaders have been a significant change agent in encouraging peace and development in their communities. Traditional leaders are products of the culture they live in, and they have proved their aptitude and expertise to engage in social action in difficult conditions. The fact that individuals have specific needs to address because of the long-running disputes demonstrates the possibilities for change in their lives and communities. People affected by the insurgency in the country may need to recover from psychological stress and loss of relevance; they may want to reconnect with their relatives if they have been physically displaced. Although, the lack of consistent data, combined with the lack of a framework for traditional leaders' engagement, makes it difficult to determine what has worked and what areas need improvement in traditional leaders'-led initiatives, limiting the ability to develop a working policy for rapid recovery and stability in post-conflict situations. It is critical to understand how traditional leaders' initiatives serve, engage and motivate community recovery in post-conflict settings.

This research aimed to fill the gaps by mapping existing local structures, as well as the socio-economic and political dynamics shaping (but also influenced by) traditional leaders-led and focused initiatives in the country, to provide baseline data that can be used to develop inclusive-sensitive programming options for grounded advocacy, capacity building, and community mobilisation. The study's findings will help shape policy around state and non-state engagement in post-conflict areas. The research

examines how traditional leaders respond to the chances and obstacles of peaceful recovery in post-crisis communities and the quality of the influence on community well-being because of their actions

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the discussions around the roles of traditional leaders in conflicts have increased in the last decades, the scope, locations and drivers of their engagement in post-conflict situations have been less explored. Nevertheless, recent research has demonstrated that empowering local actors for active civic engagement helped reduce the multiple effects of conflicts (Jon et al., 2013). Agbiboa and Uzo-dike (2015) explored how local actors participated in peacebuilding processes in Nigeria and reported that, contrary to the general perceptions of the locals as inherently violent during the ethnopolitical conflicts in Jos, their inclusion in peacebuilding processes helped facilitate community mobilisation and well-being. Similarly, Ekpon (2015) examined the locally-led and focused initiatives tackling violent extremism through grassroots awareness in the three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Gombe and Borno States and reported that locals adopted hard security measures (such as vigilante supports) and soft security approaches (grassroots awareness creation) to forester peace and social bonds during the violent conflicts in their communities. Other studies have also reported mixed evidence on the opportunities for and challenges of locals' participation in peacebuilding processes in the region.

Despite the rising body of knowledge about local people's involvement in peacebuilding in the region, rigorous data on the scope, locations, and drivers of efforts impacting local actors' participation in post-conflict communities is lacking. The lack of consistent data, combined with the lack of a framework for traditional leaders' engagement, makes it difficult to determine what has worked and what needs to be improved in traditional leaders'-led initiatives, limiting the ability to develop a working policy for rapid recovery and stability in post-conflict situations.

In the last few years, there have been state and non-state initiatives targeting traditional leader engagements to tackle the root causes of violent conflict and foster peaceful coexistence and development in the conflict-affected communities in the country (European Commission, 2018). The theory of change help maps the logical sequence of traditional leaders' initiative from inputs to the outcome. It exposes the deeper reflective process and dialogue of participants as they reflect on their views and values. The suitability of the theory explains the traditional leaders' long-standing development initiatives. These initiatives have followed three pathways: first, rescinding approaches which involve forceful interventions, disengagement of citizens from the conflict arousing activities, and the formation of grassroots vigilante initiatives to bridge the security gaps between the local communities and government (Onapajo et al., 2020). The second approach focuses on the grievances at the community level. This requires negotiations on marginalisation and political bias. For example, operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) is one of the few remarkable state-led initiatives on reintegration, rehabilitation and deradicalisation in the country. It is a multisectoral programme developed by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the State Government and civil society organisations to facilitate the integration of conflict victims. The third approach is development-oriented, a holistic approach to reduce vulnerabilities and risks in conflict-affected communities. Most activities of the non-state actors, such as civil society organisations, follow the third pathway, while a few organisations, such as the International Red Cross, Rescue Mission and the Northeast Regional Initiatives (NERI), adopt both the second and third approach. The three pathways represent the multifaceted approach adopted in this study to explain conflict and post-conflict situations across the country.

However, it is imperative to find out how victims are engaged or empowered to contribute meaningfully to a peaceful transition from community conflicts. More importantly, the traditional leaders' engagements in counter-radicalisation processes in post-conflict

communities need to be well understood. Therefore, using the three-dimensional approach as a framework for analysis, we explored the youth-led and youth-focused initiatives in seven Nigerian states and the pull and push factors driving the quality of impact of these initiatives.

In 2015, the United Nations acknowledged the contributions of the traditional leaders in conflict situations through the UN Agenda 2030: first, by disposing the negative stereotypes associated with the roles of traditional leaders as the reinforcement of conflict, and second, by proposing the mechanisms to recognise the positive contributions of traditional leaders in peacebuilding and social cohesion in both conflict and post-conflict environments. The UN agenda 2030 focuses on five pathways for effective traditional leaders' engagement in peacebuilding: participation, protection, prevention and partnership, and disengagement and integration. Recently, the five pillars or pathways have been developed further to strengthen the capacity of traditional leaders to act in conflict situations. For this study, traditional leaders' engagement is explained as "the rights of inclusion of traditional leaders in areas that affect their lives and their communities, including dialogue, decisions, processes, mechanisms, events, actions and programs."

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative multi-case study design based on the interpretative paradigm to answer and assess the research objectives. The study approach was deemed acceptable for

Sample Area

The sample for the study is carefully selected (see Appendix I). Ten towns in four of the six geopolitical zones were chosen for the study using a snowball sampling procedure. We discovered that a snowball sampling strategy was appropriate for investigating hard-to-reach populations such as informal and formal grassroots initiatives, organisations, people, or groups of individuals in the target communities. Our goal was to reach out to traditional leaders

gathering in-depth insights into the breadth, location, and structure of the state- and non-state programs encouraging (or limiting) traditional leaders' participation in peacebuilding in Nigeria. The use of qualitative design enables the collection of robust data on the depth, richness, and complexity of the structure and processes that underpin informal and formal grassroots efforts in affected areas (Osas et al., 2017).

The qualitative methods used were desk reviews, key informant interviews (KIIs), focused group discussions (FDGs), and personal observations on the field. The desk review synthesised the current literature, reports, and local structure of Nigeria's official and non-state initiatives on peacebuilding. It gave background information about the study context, such as refining objectives, thereby creating appropriate research tools. Traditional leaders-led and traditional leaders-focused organisations/social groups, CSOs and INGOs, religious and traditional leaders, and state-led programs.

Thematic analysis was used as a data analysis method, which entailed extracting themes from patterns appearing from data collected in the seven states. Patterns on actors, initiatives, interactions, opportunities, and obstacles are all included. To ensure that the analysis was gender sensitive, we used an intersectional approach to investigate participants' experience of traditional leaders' peacebuilding mechanisms. All data from key informant interviews, focus groups and observations were triangulated.

as well as the elderly, who would not normally have been recognised through a formal channel, to share their experiences with civic involvement and services aimed at peaceful recovery and social cohesion in their communities. Interviews with formal community-based organisations, state-led efforts, and civil society initiatives supplemented this.

The study covers 398 interviews with the state and non-state actors (individuals, groups of individuals and organisations) in Gombe (42),

Osun (86), Ekiti (82), Taraba (14), Edo (41), Kogi (62) and Kwara (65). The interviews involved interactions with individuals and organisations at three levels: the State, Local Government Area and community level. Except for Taraba LGAs, where limited numbers of participants were recruited due to security concerns, the sample size of all states was selectively drawn from the numbers of communities recruited in each LGAs. The percentage of women's participation was minimal. Only 52 of the respondents were female, making up 13% of the participant. Most local leaders and representatives were male, making up 87 % of the participant. 19% of the respondents are below age 35, while 58% are between 36 and 65. Only 23% were aged 65 years and above. The statistic shows that 52% of respondents do not have any formal education, while 27% have obtained a primary level, indicated as standard six. 14 % had a secondary school certificate, and only 7% had tertiary education. This helps understand how respondents are aware of the conflict situation and how, as an actor, they play a crucial role in its shaping. Similarly, 15% were single, 67% claimed to be married, 8% agreed to be divorced, and 10% were widowed.

The representatives of CSOs, NGOs/INGOs, government agencies (Nigeria State Traditional Leaders, Social Welfare and Community Development, and three LGA Secretariats) and traditional leaders/women community development associations/groups were questioned. Even though governmental activities on peacebuilding are centred on traditional leaders, they are not directed by traditional leaders. Perhaps the coordinating functions of state agencies on peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria accounted for the fact that most of its actions are not headed by conventional state authorities. The non-state efforts are led by traditional leaders and aimed at rural communities.

The study was conducted in 2020 and was limited to a qualitative study. It reflects the participants' experiences and impressions of efforts fostering traditional leaders' engagement in peaceful conflict resolution in the study sites.

KEY FINDINGS

The study investigates the political and socio-economic elements influencing peaceful conflict resolution and resilience development in seven Nigerian states. It begins by examining the primary enablers of peace in post-conflict communities, as well as the vulnerabilities and possible threats that stymie stability and recovery. Second, it mapped the state and non-state activities in the selected LGAs that address the root causes of these vulnerabilities and dangers. Third, it investigates how state and non-state actors collaborated in post-conflict areas to promote peace.

Monarchs as the enablers of peaceful recovery in post-conflict communities

We looked at the indicators and enablers of stability and recovery in each of the seven states. The participants were asked what they liked about their communities after the herders/farmers' violent confrontations and what they wanted to see changed. participants defined peace as the absence of violent herder/farmer confrontations in their communities (KII 36-41; FDG 5, FDG 16), whilst others felt that a peaceful recovery could only occur when the community's well-being has improved and there is no longer a fear of further forced displacement (KII 17; FDG 3). "There is no peace when people can't afford to feed themselves, when our young people can't find respectable work, and our ladies sit at home doing nothing" (KII 3). Other factors for peaceful recuperation were connected to their past and present experiences in terms of livelihoods, social and economic integration, collective actions, neighbourhoods, and favourable attitudes toward other community members.

The absence or low incidence of herder/farmer violent confrontations in post-conflict communities aided in the consolidation of peaceful recovery.

Except in Nigeria's northeast states, where interviewees expressed concern about herders'

periodic attacks, and other areas face fewer violent disputes. The absence of physical threats to life was regarded as a marker of peaceful recovery in post-conflict communities that had experienced protracted conflicts. As a result, their previous experiences with forced relocation and the gradual return to regular activity in conflict-affected areas inspired their theories for peaceful rehabilitation. "Our community is quiet because there is little violence; our farmers are always busy; some go to the farm, while others do daily chores like marketing" (Gombe, traditional leader, KII 4).

> *"My experiences in the Tinda community are well because people live in peace and harmony. Traditional leaders respect community members; most traditional leaders engage in business except for them. Thefts are very minimal. When you divide our traditional leaders into two, more than half have a booming business."*

Other explanations for a peaceful recovery in the post-conflict communities included *the involvement of traditional leaders* in routine security checks (house to house search) and community vigilante groups. Okeku Community Traditional Leaders Forum focused on tackling criminality through grassroots advocacy as well as information exchanges with the community youths and the state security operatives. "We take all actions to educate our people on the dangers of harbouring criminals or being sympathetic with violent extremists. We are connected to police, and we developed an effective way of punishing members who engage in anti-social behaviours" (FDG 4).

> *"When the military started coming to our community for a house-to-house search, youths would run from their homes to another community because of the fear of misrepresentation. We had to stay firm and talk to our governor in the state, who connected us to the police. We were able to work together because they were losing their personnel to the violence too, but immediately they changed their perspective about our youths; we helped them with information and sometimes background check."*

Strong collaboration between community leaders and governments aided in closing knowledge gaps on security and development issues.

Community leaders promoted community interactions with local and state governments on security and development problems in all seven states. "We collaborate with the government on critical security and health issues that directly affect our community, as well as sharing our experiences with other communities on similar concerns." The Lawan of the Bakin Kwata village stated, "We conveyed information from the people to the government and from the government to the people" (KII 78). Other community leaders indicated that the government enlisted the help of community leaders in times of crisis, such as potential pandemic breakouts. A Gangku community leader explained more about the situation.:

> *"Yes, we work with the government; whenever they want to pass information to the community, they engage us, and we pass on information from the people and the community in general. We also collaborate with them in the area of security, so they let us know if there is anything concerning security, and we let them know if there isn't. When it comes to health issues, we also engage them (FDG 19)."*

Due to limited livelihood options, traditional leaders are progressively recovering from the shocks and stress generated by the herders/farmers' violent clashes.

In all seven states, there is a clear correlation between livelihoods and peaceful rehabilitation. In post-conflict contexts, interviewees saw livelihood rebuilding (the ability to engage in a productive activity that produces a good living) as a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence. In most communities, traditional leaders' participation in economic activity is considered a source of stability and healing. "We are old men with limited strength to change the situation," community leaders in Gangku stated. "However, we normally try our best to function

as mediators and counsellors; we still have the agility to make the communities a better place to live in" (FDG 11). When asked what was more important for community stability, the interviewees said traditional leaders needed to be more engaged in income-generating activities; "the more idle our traditional leaders are, the more trouble we may have in the community because they have the experience to make and unmake peace," they said (FDG 7). A traditional community elder expounded on the Ukhun community's enabler of stability:

> *We have traditional leaders who engage in farming. Still, without government support in terms of fertiliser, pesticides, seeds, and other basic materials for farming, it is a major challenge for men and women. We all know that there is no peace without a livelihood, so the Ukhun community requires assistance with government employment and farming support (KII 56).*

Most traditional monarchs functioned as mediators and reconcilers in most family disputes.

Other community ties focused on the traditional rulers' function as mediators in family conflicts and religious crises. Community leaders are well-liked and respected throughout the community, and their rulings on family issues are final (KII 36). They were instrumental in bringing two warring sides together and facilitating peace. Community leaders helped mediate marital issues and supported the adjudication process in post-conflict communities around the country. Due to the increased number of widows and orphans from the families of exiled violent extremists, community leaders emphasised the importance of conducting background checks for potential marriages, claiming that "this has helped reduce cases of divorce, domestic violence, and prevented our women from marrying bandits" (KII 38). In most areas, community leaders' mediation responsibilities were aided by grassroots campaigning and sensitisation by civil society groups (NGOs and INGOs) and community traditional leaders' forums. One of the community leaders in Egbeda Oko explained

how the community's relationships and bridges were strengthened:

> *"If there is a quarrel between husband and wife, I aim to bring them closer together and resolve family disputes without escalating to the parties' wider families. If some families are running background checks on someone in preparation for a marriage, it's over because they respect me and our tradition when they come to me. I am the initial point of contact if there is a problem with mosques or other religious problems."*

Forums for traditional community leaders foster peaceful discussion between state security and traditional fractional leaders.

The relevance of amicable relationships between state security and local populations has been demonstrated in some research on reconciliation in post-conflict situations. The community-based traditional leaders' forums in two Nigerian villages assisted in bridging information gaps between security officers fighting insurgency and community residents (KII 3). "When the military arrived at our neighbourhoods for the first time to conduct a house search, everyone fled since the security forces were targeting our young guys. We had to step in, collaborate with the security agency to apprehend offenders, and restore faith in our community" (KII 4). A traditional leader from the Okeku village explained further:

> *"Our young people have been misrepresented as part of Herder's extreme group; my involvement in this community is important. The security service detained persons. Then I had to reach out to them and ask if they wanted to collaborate with us to secure the neighbourhood. I made sure that the two had a good relationship by informing the public about the security agency's aims and how they might collaborate with them (FDG 9)."*

Mapping key initiatives on peaceful recovery in post-conflict communities

We further studied the emergent themes from which the key targets led by traditional leaders on peaceful recovery were discovered and categorised based on the vulnerability and hazards analysis and the mapping of key facilitators of peace in post-conflict communities. This assisted us in redefining the scope and placement of the projects in each of the seven states. Traditional leaders' livelihood alternatives for improving their well-being and communities were quite limited. As a result, the interviewees concentrated on livelihood recovery measures, which were seen as a significant indicator and enabler of peaceful recovery and resilience building. As a result, we investigated state and non-state efforts that promote the stability and recovery of traditional leaders and those led by them.

Most community traditional leaders' forums use a self-organisation technique for grassroots mobilisation and advocacy in their communities, although they are not recognised as an official network.

Traditional leaders' forums played a key role in supporting peaceful rehabilitation in communities across the seven states. Traditional leaders were mobilised through self-organisation to conduct ordinary community tasks (such as repairing dilapidated schools, roads, and public toilets) as well as grassroots advocacy and sensitisation on major topics affecting the community's well-being and security (such as participation in security initiatives known as a vigilante). Traditional leaders' forums formed organically in response to the changing issues in their communities. Even though institutions for leadership responsibilities (such as secretary and president) were in existence, none of the conventional leaders' forums had any strategic or long-term plans. They took part in activities organised by NGOs/INGOs and CSOs as well as state and local government initiatives. "We've recently been working on emergency situations, particularly the covid19 disease outbreak, but the issue is that we haven't been recognised as an official network" (KII 7).

Registered traditional leaders run and lead initiatives that effectively engage governments and civil society organisations in peacebuilding than the unregistered ones.

Although most counter-terrorism, deradicalisation, and livelihood restoration projects in the seven states were executed by the government and INGOs/NGOs, traditional leaders also contributed through formal and informal initiatives. Participants were requested to discuss their experiences working with post-conflict communities on conflict prevention and livelihood rehabilitation. According to one of the leaders of the Traditional Leaders Awareness Foundation (TAF) on drug abuses, the traditional leaders-led group could not engage governments and CSOs since it was not yet registered, but once it was, governments and other CSOs recognised the TAF (KII 65).

Limited access to funds and poor organisation skills hindered the contributions of the traditional leaders' forums to peaceful recovery in post-conflict communities

Due to complicated registration requirements, a lack of funding, and inadequate organisational abilities, we discovered that most community traditional leaders' forums were not registered with the Nigerian state governments. As a result, they were not recognised as community-based organisations (CBOs) and could not reap the benefits that would have been available if they had been registered. This limited their operations and collaboration with NGOs/INGOs/CSOs and governments: they had to rely on well-known individuals or politicians to connect them to the relevant institutions to address development concerns in their areas (KII 7). This had a negative impact on how they dealt with critical situations. One of the Ukhun community's traditional chiefs expounded on this:

> *"We are not a registered organisation, thus, we cannot investigate certain crimes, such as kidnapping and armed robbery, unless we are connected to a prominent figure or politician in the community. The police did not always*

address the conflicting case like we would have liked (KII 14)."

While community traditional leaders' forums were allowed to attend official functions, they were only recognised as individuals, not as formal forums. "Being a forum is different from being an individual; there are limitations to what an individual can accomplish, and this impacts how other community members see our impact, as well as their faith in us" (KII 31). Due to registration obstacles, the traditional leader of the Tinda community stated that working with NGOs/INGOs as a forum was challenging because the requirements included audited accounts, bank accounts, and previous financial dealings, which the traditional leader's forum lacked" (KII 16). During the meetings with the Mayo-Kam Community Traditional Leaders Forum, the issue of constructing the traditional leader's forum around strong people was also raised:

> *"You understand what it's like to have to look up to a few people to express community concerns. We lose our significance when community interests diverge from those of political leaders. We must be self-sufficient and collaborate with political leaders rather than reliant on them" (FDG 19)."*

Nonetheless, the villages' traditional leaders' forums played a critical role in promoting the peaceful conversation and coexistence required for community stability and recovery. "During the rainy season, we participated in community security (vigilante groups), school renovations, and temporary road construction; we normally encourage people to clean up dumping areas and burial grounds, but we could do more if we were registered" (KII 33).

Most traditional leaders-led programs focused more on preventing conflict (negative peace) than on restoring livelihoods (positive peace)

Most traditional leaders-led programs, except those that obtained finance from other civil society organisations (such as INGOs) and governments, concentrated on deradicalisation and peace education. Even though livelihood recovery was one of their goals, interviewees

said they relied on lobbying and sensitisation to avoid violent conflicts from reoccurring (KII, 73, KII 78; KII 25; KII 35). "There were times when they needed to go beyond sensitisation and advocacy to finding jobs for the victims of conflicts after they might have recovered from the damage caused by drug addictions, but this requires a lot of resources," the focal point of the Nigeria Peace and Community Development Initiative acknowledged. Organisations could only do that with sufficient funds" (KII 79). As a result, the extent of traditional leaders-led efforts across the seven states was determined by resources (both people and material capital).

Other explanations centred on mental impoverishment. The interviewees claimed that the extremists preyed on people's fragile minds, not just their terrible economic circumstances. "Traditional leaders must be taught about bandit methods; their mentality must be altered before economic empowerment can occur." As a result, lobbying and sensitisation are crucial methods for reaching out to local traditional leaders" (KII 75; KII 78).

Traditional leaders' advocacy and sensitisation campaigns for peace education have a greater community reach but fewer resources for follow-up programs.

To fulfil their goals, traditional leaders-led and focused initiatives tapped into existing local networks to reach out to friends and colleagues. "Our strength is our community reach - because we are also traditional leaders, traditional leaders can freely communicate with us." We must live with them. We can quickly discern the communities' potential and problems, as we have done throughout the insurgency and since" (KII 8). The Traditional Leaders Awareness Foundation, a traditional leaders-led project, commented on how the group acquired access to communities and the impacts on communities in Nigeria:

> *"We have a focal person in each community, for example. In Kwara, I have a colleague. He deals with whatever issues arise from that side, but with our permission. We educate him on the best approach to take to raise*

community awareness. We occasionally hold a lecture for ourselves to learn about the best strategies to deal with drug usage. We were able to target bordering citizens in danger of illegal migration at the start of this year. I am glad to say that victims of such have obtained government aid because of our initiative (KII 79)."

Other participants said that reaching out to people who were already familiar with their work and had built confidence in them over time was simple (KII 76). While trust and confidence made it easier to reach out to traditional leaders in the community, most traditional leaders-led initiatives could not keep in touch with a broad audience due to insufficient resources. "Every time we visit the community, we record our presence. This will take time and resources. We, too, must work to make ends meet, so we devote time to lobbying and public awareness, and the rest to earning a living" (KII 78). Because most traditional leaders-led efforts are self-funded, dedicating full time to advocacy and sanitisation proved impossible (KII 17; KII 31).

Collaboration with and support for traditional leaders-led projects improved the quality of traditional leaders' contributions to stability and recovery.

Traditional leaders' partnership with governments and other civil society organisations, which have a wealth of knowledge and resources to support their aims, improved the quality of traditional leaders-led and targeted projects in post-conflict communities. Participants in the interview provided their opinions on how the British Council, the Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Action Against Hunger helped address gaps in traditional leadership training and capacity building in Nigeria (KII 38).

Interactions between traditional leaders-led organisations, governments, and other civil society organisations (CSOs) aided in the coordination of responses in the most crucial areas. Participants in the interviews said that a coalition of civil society organisations provided venues that facilitated interactions and the

transmission of critical information and aided in identifying opportunities for cooperation (KII 26). "By collaborating with well-known CSOs, we gain more recognition, and our team has received training on how to encourage peaceful conversation and counter-radicalisation" (KII 68). Traditional leaders' partnership with governments and other civil society organisations, which have a wealth of knowledge and resources to support their objectives, improved the quality of traditional leaders-led and targeted projects in post-conflict communities. Participants in the interview provided their opinions on how the British Council, the Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Action Against Hunger helped address gaps in traditional leadership training and capacity building in Nigeria (KII 38).

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Policy and programming
Traditional leaders led programs for disabled victims.

Persons with disabilities require help during and after conflicts to restore their lives, which the violence has shattered. We looked at 16 traditional leaders-led and traditional leaders-focused projects that foster peaceful rehabilitation in the seven states. Only one effort, however, focused solely on people with impairments. Dealing with disabled people necessitated a significant investment of resources, which most traditional leaders' organisations could not afford (KII 20). "During conflicts, people with disabilities are the ones

who suffer the most." As a result, our goal is to ensure that they have a respectable existence, just like any other community member. We gathered resources to supply wheelchairs for them, even though providing wheelchairs for them is often difficult due to their enormous numbers" (KII 80). Other participants, on the other hand, believed that the issue was not one of financing; "there are trainings and soft skills that could increase the well-being of persons with disabilities without incurring much cost," they said (KII 50). Traditional leaders' projects focused on the well-being of people with disabilities could be a good method to promote further initiatives in this area if funded.

Regime change may limit the possibility of a long-term collaboration with the government on specific peace projects, with the grave implications for impact assessments

Every four years, a new government is installed in Nigeria State and at the local government level, just as it is in every other state in Nigeria. Interviewed participants were asked to explain their experiences working with local and state governments and the issues they experienced. We discovered that the change of government had an impact on existing government collaborations on specific projects (KII 68; KII 79). "Every new government has its policy, which impacts our interactions with them." Participants stated that the change of players as a result of the cabinet change had an impact on collaboration on specific projects requiring financial or other commitments (KII 37; KII 23). On the topic of peace education and capacity building, one of the panellists elaborated:

> *"The changes of political actors impact our collaboration on a particular project. When a governor's term ends, the entire cabinet is replaced; therefore, you must reintroduce your project: what you do and how you want the new actors to participate. Even after the person has left, you must return and repeat the process." (KII 78)*

Non-representation of government in significant public campaigns and programs

The presence of the government at important public events reflects public acceptance of any initiatives or programs. This has an impact on public beliefs of conventional leaders' initiatives as well as popular trust in them (KII 34). On the other hand, government representatives found it difficult to attend most public campaigns and lobbying events organised by grassroots leaders (KII 68; KII 55). Participants in the interviews said they had to follow up times before finally getting government representatives to attend conflict prevention and counter-radicalisation campaigns and programs around the state. A traditional leaders-led initiative's primary focus elaborated:

> *"One issue we confront is that of getting government officials to attend our events; it is particularly challenging. As a result, we'll have to follow up multiple times. They also send representatives who may or may not be able to express the actor's mind and provide feedback to the real actors (KII 59)."*

Government approval of public events takes a longer time than necessary

Most conflict-sensitive programs and activities, such as peace walks, public rallies, or those involving government properties, need the organisers to submit a request to the government for approval (KII 78). Traditional leaders who are leading peacebuilding initiatives, on the other hand, report experiencing difficulties in getting approval for their projects (KII 40; KII 63; KII 37). "Getting gov't approval took us a very long time to establish the peace and unity clubs," one of the interviewed participants said. It took roughly three weeks to complete. We had to resend a duplicate of a previously despatched letter on occasion since the authority claimed they were unaware" (KII 68).

Traditional leaders-led and focused groups that were just getting started have difficulty getting money to achieve their mission.

Grants to fund peacebuilding efforts require laborious application procedures and the fulfilment of certain standards that project managers can only meet with experience. Most awards necessitate previous financial stability and the completion of similar initiatives (KII 79). Newly founded conventional leaders-led organisations, on the other hand, have difficulty achieving these needs. Their prior community activism and campaigns were self-funded and conducted freely with little or no monetary compensation (KII 34; KII 45). As a result, conventional leaders-led programs have had difficulty obtaining funding to increase their scope and areas of activity in communities.

Most traditional leaders-led and centred projects at the grassroots level have few women in leadership roles.

Traditional leaders' equal participation in decision-making that affects them and their communities is a key feature of an inclusive society. Women held leadership positions in traditional leaders-led and traditional leaders-focused activities on peacebuilding in Nigeria. Apart from fully sponsored traditional leaders' initiatives, where donors required gender balance in the beneficiary companies' structure, most traditional leaders-led projects included men in top-leadership roles as directors, founders, and co-founders. Only four of the 16 conventional leaders-led ventures we questioned featured women as founders, co-founders, or directors. Due to the cultural sensitivity and nature of the lobbying and sensitisation, the interviewed participants stated that it was difficult to bring women on board. "It's not easy to persuade women to participate in peaceful coexistence campaigning and sensitisation when most of our targets are men" (KII 27). Except for women's community associations at the community level, where the reverence for elders dictates how women engage in crucial decisions, women rarely contribute to community decision-making (FGD 9; FGD 14). The current cultural norms that encourage institutional and gender inequity should be changed through grassroots campaigning and sensitisation that targets key community influencers of various ages, genders, ethnicities, and religions.

DISCUSSIONS

This study maps the traditional leaders'-led and locally focused initiatives on peaceful recovery and resilience building in post-conflict communities in Nigeria. It examined how the initiatives have been impacted by the state- and non-state supports. Some key findings emerged from analysing the key markers and enablers of peaceful recovery and the vulnerabilities and potential risks in the post-conflict communities.

Traditional leaders' financially constrained

Based on the study findings, the support of traditional rulers, community leaders, governments and civil society organisations for the peace projects led and run by the traditional leaders has led to more active citizenship, deepened social and economic integration and increased support for vulnerable persons. There is overwhelming evidence of the grassroots advocacy and sensitisation run and led by traditional leaders bordering on counter-radicalisation, sexual and drug abuse and capacity building on peace education. As a result of the initiatives, many citizens feel integrated into the community. Nevertheless, there is a huge gender gap in most Traditional leaders'-focused initiatives. This is because such initiatives are self-funded. The prevailing economic inequalities limit the leaders' capacity to lead the initiatives that affect them and their communities independently. Programming should focus on the incentives to boost traditional-led initiatives supporting advocacy and capacity building for locals to increase their contributions to peacebuilding processes

Productive collaboration enables the peaceful post-conflict environment

Strong collaboration among traditional leaders, community members, and governments facilitates collective action against security concerns and fosters peaceful discussion and social and economic integration in post-conflict

communities. Traditional leaders' forums in the community enabled them to unite as a potent force to combat radicalism and facilitate effective coordination with state security agencies. Community traditional leaders' forums in Nigeria collaborated with traditional leaders to access state activities and voice concerns about community development issues. This raises how traditional leaders might independently contribute to community wellness decision-making without relying on strong personalities. Although networks with strong personalities assisted traditional leaders in raising their voices about the various changes confronting their communities, they remain vulnerable to political players using them for personal gain. This could lead to a lack of faith and confidence in traditional leaders' forums (FGD 9; FGD 14).

Social norms influence peaceful recovery initiatives

While state and non-state assistance for traditional leaders have benefited their advocacy and sensitisation against violence and contributions to Nigeria's peaceful transition, it has not resulted in traditional leaders' equal engagement in peacebuilding efforts. Gender discrimination persists due to established societal norms and economic inequality, limiting women's involvement in various activities (KII 68; KII 79). Traditional leaders' ability to participate in initiatives is limited by entrenched societal conventions (KII 29). Gender-sensitive programs that focus on women and people with disabilities and are led by them should be funded as part of post-conflict rehabilitation programming.

Traditional Leaders' actions influence community peace processes

In post-conflict communities, traditional rulers (Emirs and Lamidos) and community leaders (Ukhunma and Lawan) have been important influencers on projects fostering peacebuilding. They served as the initial point of contact for most efforts aimed toward their community (they led most). In this study, we discovered that community leaders' decisions significantly impact how peace can be reinstated in the community. Their willingness to participate in community development programmes was useful in coordinating activities to combat radicalisation and violent conflict through peace clubs and ambassadorial programs (KII 68; KII 79; KII 38). Therefore, grassroots sensitisation and advocacy can be a programming option to assist community leaders in understanding the effects of their actions on community well-being.

Based on the study's findings, traditional leaders' work on peaceful rebuilding and resilience building in post-conflict communities yielded programming ideas. The government may have to promote a pro-traditional leaders' strategy to increase collaboration with and support traditional leaders-led initiatives and encourage more traditional leaders to participate in peacebuilding efforts. Our findings revealed that including the government in traditional leaders-led peace efforts was challenging, which harmed public opinions of their legitimacy. We discover governments and other stakeholders (civil society organisations and donors) working together to fund innovative projects at the grassroots level, helping strengthen collaboration and providing access to relevant government representatives and development programming. In truth, Traditional leaders are empowered to participate in decision-making processes in their communities by supporting innovative projects run and led at the grassroots resulting in the sense of belonging and inclusion among traditional leaders who were previously viewed as perpetrators in Nigeria's ongoing farmer-herder conflicts. We, therefore, infer that the state and non-state measures without the traditional leaders' input become a product of failure as their importance is more noticeable in peacebuilding than the coalition of the State and Non-State apparatuses. We grasp that the higher the traditional leaders' participation in peacebuilding processes, the better and faster the recovery for a post-conflict community in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study mapped the traditional leaders' led and focused initiatives on peaceful recovery and resilience building in post-conflict communities in Nigeria. It also examined how the initiatives have been impacted by the state- and non-state supports. The study was conducted in seven Nigerian states and 11 Local Government Areas in April 2020. Some key findings emerged from the analysis of the key markers and enablers of peaceful recovery and the vulnerabilities and potential risks in the post-conflict communities. The study results suggested that there is a general agreement that the higher the traditional leaders' participation in peacebuilding processes, the better and faster the recovery for a post-conflict community in Nigeria. The study, however, is limited in that most post-conflict communities are still characterised by widespread poverty, unemployment and limited access to basic services. Hence, further research is needed to investigate Traditional Leadership's relevance in managing such post-conflict community characteristics.

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Appendix 1: Sample Area

Geopolitical zones	States	LGAs	Villages/community
South-west	Osun, Ekiti	Ayedade, Ikole	Egbeda Oko, Oke-Ako
North-central	Kogi, Kwara	Idah, Moro, kaiama	Okeku, Obate, Bani
North-east	Gombe, Taraba	Dukku, Bali	Tinda, Bakin Kwata, Gangku, Mayo-Kam, Maji
South-south	Edo	Esan	Ukhun

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