



**Assessment of the
Utilization of Dialogue and
Mediation in the Response to the
Farmer–Herder Conflict in Plateau
and Kaduna States and the Role
of Women in the Process**



UK Government



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ASSESSMENT OF THE UTILIZATION OF DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION IN THE RESPONSE TO THE FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT IN PLATEAU AND KADUNA STATES AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PROCESS



**NIGERIA COUNTRY OFFICE
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FGD	focus group discussion
KII	key informant interview
LAP	Local Action Plan
LGA	local government area
PPBA	Plateau Peace Building Agency
SAP	State Action Plan
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

FOREWORD

Across the world, in the last two decades since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the peacebuilding space has evolved in ways that recognize and appreciate the role of women. Unlike in the past, when conversations focused more on the impact of conflict on women, there has been a huge transformation in such conversations in ways that now place the issue of women's involvement in peacebuilding on the front burner of policy, academic and programmatic agendas.

In the context of the prevailing conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria, though women have been hugely affected, primarily as victims, the extent to which their capacities have been utilized in dialogue and mediation has not been well documented. Against the backdrop of the foregoing, this report focuses on two states, Kaduna and Plateau, which have witnessed a series of conflicts leading to violence, including gender-based violence, deaths, injuries and the displacement of people from their residences and sources of livelihood on a large scale. The key question raised in the report is the extent to which women have been involved in dialogue and mediation processes, with specific reference to the conflicts between farmers and herders across communities in the focal states.

It is expected that the findings and recommendations of this report will serve as an important guide for the Government of Nigeria, policymakers, the academic community, and practitioners in their individual and collective drives towards understanding the role that women play in dialogue and mediation, as well as the value of enhancing their involvement in peace processes.

As an organization committed to improving women's participation in peace, security, governance and development, the role of UN Women in amplifying the voices of women cannot be overemphasized in this context. The realization of this strategic goal is one that requires stronger partnership between the formal and informal institutions as captured in this report, leveraging the existing and unique capacities that they both possess. UN Women remains committed to supporting government institutions, civil society organizations and other critical actors in Nigeria to advance the women, peace and security agenda, working with government at federal and state levels as partners, as well as with development partners and civil society to achieve this objective.

UN Women is grateful to the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for the partnership to produce this report, which further contributes to promoting and strengthening women's role in formal peace dialogues and mediation processes in Nigeria. This collaboration is indeed timely and builds on previous and ongoing programmes for strengthening women's dialogue and mediation capacities in Nigeria.



Comfort Lamptey

UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS

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This report benefits immensely from the support of key persons and groups. Special thanks to the leadership of the Plateau State Peace Building Agency and the Kaduna State Peace Commission, Mr Joseph Lengmang and Ms Priscilla Ankut, respectively, and their teams, for their insight, support and openness to participating in the process. Our appreciation goes to all the key respondents from government, civil society, women's organizations and groups who actively shared their knowledge and expertise on women, peace and security and the utilization of dialogue and mediation in response to conflict. The extensive consultation with you all made the report possible.

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Olubukola Ademola-Adelehin
Project Coordinator

QUOTES

Women's inclusion in governance is the springboard for their involvement in peace processes.

– *Mr Samuel Aruwan*

The durability of peace processes is defined largely by the extent to which women are involved. They have the numbers and influence to make positive change happen.

– *Mr Nantip Joseph*

There are more informal structures through faith, economic and family groups that are active at the community level. They organize themselves and shape their voices as key catalysts for peace. If you need to engage them, you have to tap these structures.

– *Ms Priscilla Ankut*

The success of peacebuilding rests primarily on a cordial relationship between formal and informal institutions. Above all, the involvement of women in these institutions must be guaranteed, in order to achieve such success.

– *Ms Hassana Ayika*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite evidence that references the back-stage role that women play in broader peace-building efforts in both conflict and post-conflict settings in the past, their place and relevance in current dialogue and mediation has attracted the attention of policymakers, scholars and practitioners alike. While efforts have been made to push for more women's inclusion in peace- and security-related decision-making processes through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – as well as the consequent National Action Plans, State Action Plans (SAPs) and Local Action Plans (LAPs), which represent key formal structures of the state – active women-led initiatives exist across all strata of society. The utility of these voices as key catalysts for peace and social cohesion has not been properly assessed.

It was in the light of the foregoing that UN Women commissioned this study, which sought to assess the utilization of women in the formal and informal processes of

dialogue and mediation with respect to conflicts between farmers and herders in Kaduna and Plateau States. Key findings arising from the assessment are as follows:

- Both formal and informal actors have been very active in the farmer–herder conflict landscapes of the two states studied.
- Despite the abundant skills and value associated with the informal structures for dialogue and mediation in the current conflicts between farmers and herders, they have not been fully harnessed and utilized by the formal structures, which are principally owned and funded by governments at all levels.
- Practices that are linked to patriarchy, religion and culture were identified as some of the major hindrances to effective women's participation in dialogue and mediation that address the farmer–herder conflicts across the states.

INTRODUCTION

The devastating impact of the conflicts between farmers and herders on women and the role of women in dialogue and mediation within the broader agenda of peacebuilding have been underscored by the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent thematic resolutions on women, peace and security. The establishment of UN Women in 2010 to promote gender equality and empowerment also provided an important platform for highlighting issues relating to how women are affected by conflict, as well as their role in its resolution. Resolution 1325 is believed to be dedicated entirely to the link between armed conflict, peacebuilding and gender dimensions, as captured in the National Action Plan, SAPs and LAPs respectively. Unfortunately, while these action plans have been developed and launched at the national level, as well as in the majority of states and in some local governments, not much has been seen regarding their operationalization.

From the standpoint of the prevailing conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria, there is a strong sense that dialogue and mediation are an integral part of broader efforts to transform relationships and promote more collaborative methodologies towards addressing social conflicts. This aspect of peacebuilding is utilized to address varying issues that affect people's identity and agency or threaten their social, economic or political leverage. While mediation and dialogue processes are initiated to resolve people's grievances, it is impossible to address group interests and positions if there is weak communication, refusal to

acknowledge sources of conflicts, weak representation by relevant actors, non-recognition or undermining of group agency, and refusal to make compromises. The culmination of these challenges protracts violent conflicts, as evident in the spate of conflicts between farmers and herders in states such as Kaduna and Plateau, which further escalate tensions to become intractable.¹ Meanwhile, formal and informal approaches to conflict resolution are determined by the nature and dynamics of the tensions, the type of actors involved, and the environments within which the conflicts occur.

In the last two decades, Nigeria has witnessed many violent conflicts, many of which continue to threaten the peaceful coexistence of the nation. The recent upsurge of violent clashes between herders and farmers in some cases has been articulated through the prisms of ethnicity, religion and politics. The recurring conflicts in the rural communities of Kaduna and Plateau States are caused by long-standing tensions between the ethnic and religious groups, disputes over scarce resources, attacks by criminal groups, lack of adequate grazing reserves, and the poor state of existing reserves.² Despite the occupational affinity between the farming and herding communities, the two groups have taken their differences to a disturbing and

1 Laurie Nathan (2013), "The Intelligence Requirement of International Mediation" in *Intelligence and National Security*, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2013.799368; Laurie Nathan (2017), "How to Manage Interorganizational Disputes over Mediation in Africa" in *Global Governance*, 23, 151–162.

2 African Initiative for Peace Building, Advocacy and Advancement (2020), *Community Level Structures of Peacebuilding in Plateau, Kaduna and Kano States*, unpublished policy brief.

intense level, leading to widespread killings, displacement and destruction of property.

Kaduna and Plateau represent two states with similar experiences in relation to conflicts between farmers and herders, the impact of the conflicts on women, women's role in peacebuilding, and the challenges women face belonging to a large population that is marginalized in all spheres of societal life. Over time, the non-inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes has been an issue of concern. Women are rarely involved in peacebuilding mechanisms at the national level. This is chiefly a reflection of the peace architecture, which is largely based on institutions that have limited women's presence and leadership. Women are under-represented at all political and economic levels, and in military and police institutions, which are important institutions of access and control. Traditional institutions, which generally have been recognized as important peacebuilding institutions, are masculine in most parts of the country. The same applies to religious institutions. Although the new national security³ policy provides for the role of women and for mainstreaming gender into security issues, it is not clear on how this will be implemented.⁴

The farmer–herder conflict has become a matter of grave concern to Nigeria's unity, stability and development. Recent data has shown that the conflict is now claiming more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East. About 60,000 deaths resulted from clashes between the two groups from

3 See Federal Government of Nigeria (2015), National Security Policy.

4 Eleanor Ann Nwadinobi with Sarah Maguire (2013), *The Role of Women and Girls in Peace Initiatives in Nigeria*, NSRP, Abuja.

2001 to 2018.⁵ It is estimated that between 2017 and May 2020, in different communities in Nigeria, 654 attacks were carried out by both groups, in which 2,539 people lost their lives and 254 were kidnapped.⁶

To underline the violent nature of the conflict, it is reported that the latest attacks by suspected herders in Riyom Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State and Chikun and Birnin LGAs of Kaduna State led to the injuries and deaths of hundreds of persons and caused farming communities to flee to neighbouring villages.⁷ Such outbreaks have had devastating impacts, with the attacks and counter-attacks leading to heavy humanitarian, economic, security and political consequences. Many women have been widowed, have lost their livelihoods, and have become victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Over the years, the major efforts put in place by the federal and state governments to mitigate the violence have included the deployment of security agencies, the setting up of a probe panel, and the establishment of the Plateau Peace Building Agency.⁸ Also, as a long-term solution, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari unveiled a National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018–2027)

5 N. Cletus, U. Romanus, N. Ayadiuno, A. Ignatius (2020), "Farmer–Herder Conflict: The Politics of Media Discourse in Nigeria", available at <http://www.pontejournal.net/doi/10.21506/j.ponte.2020.1.13>.

6 B. Akinloye (2020), "Report: Fulani Herdsmen Killed 2,539 Nigerians in 654 Attacks", *This Day*, available at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/06/07/report-fulani-herdsmen-killed-2539-nigerians-in-654-attacks/>.

7 International Organization for Migration (October, 2020), *Flash Report#20: Population Displacement North West/North Central Nigeria*, available at <https://displacement.iom.int/nigeria>; <https://dtm.iom.int/nigeria>.

8 J. Krause (2019), "Gender Dimensions of (Non)Violence in Communal Conflict: The Case of Jos, Nigeria", in *Comparative Political Studies*, 52(10), 1466–1499, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019830722>.

through the National Economic Council to create cattle colonies or ranches for the herdsmen. But this is yet to be implemented. These efforts have contributed to a reduction in the violence, but they have not been able to erase the suspicions and hatred and to build social cohesion between the farming and herding communities.⁹ Additionally, with the numerous efforts to address the recurring conflicts, the role of women in the formal and informal mediation processes and in building peace at the grass roots has received little attention, despite consistent evidence that women's involvement improves the likelihood of reaching a lasting peace agreement.¹⁰

The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security recently carried out a study to investigate women's involvement in informal mediation peace processes. The institute discovered that 38 out of 63 post-Cold War peace processes have identifiable informal initiatives, of which almost three-fourths (27) have clear evidence of involvement from recognizable women's peace groups.¹¹ Therefore, this finding shows that more than half of all mediation processes were accompanied by informal efforts, and the majority of informal mediation processes involve resolute efforts by women's groups to forge a peace. Conversely to formal mediation efforts, women are a significant presence in the informal peace-making world.

9 A. R. Mustapha, A. Higazi, J. Lar, and K. Chromy (2018), "Jos: Fear and Violence in Central Nigeria" in A. R. Mustapha and D. Ehrhardt (eds.), *Creed and Grievance: Muslim-Christian Relations and Conflict Resolution in Northern Nigeria*, pp. 225-268, Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787442375.011>.

10 B. Jamille and C. Delphi (2020). "Women Should Be at the Center of Afghan Peace Talks", CNN, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/05/opinions/women-should-be-at-the-center-of-afghan-peace-talks-bigio-cleveland/index.html>.

11 D. Anjali and C. Agathe (2018), *Women's Participation in Informal Peace Processes*, Washington, DC: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

In 2000, a landmark decision was made by the United Nations Security Council, which led to the emergence of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security. In line with the call for member states of the United Nations to ratify and domesticate UNSCR 1325, the National Action Plan, State Action Plans and Local Action Plans were designed. The main focus of the plans was to ensure the following:

- Increased women's involvement in local, national and international efforts in the prevention and management of conflicts
- Increased awareness regarding gender-specific issues in the area of conflict management and peacebuilding
- Increased attention accorded to gender perspectives in the context of women's participation in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements

UNSCR 1325 noted that women and children account for the majority of those unfavourably affected during armed conflict and are increasingly targeted by combatants.¹² Women also suffer from physical, sexual and psychological abuses; sexual slavery; forced pregnancy; and conflict-induced displacement. While the limited involvement of women in formal mediation processes remains a concern, they are actively involved in informal mediation and use various forms of individuals and non-governmental agencies to restore harmonious relations and build peace and social cohesion in post-conflict communities in Kaduna and Plateau States.

12 UN Security Council, S/RES/1325, 31 October 2000.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Studies have been carried out to investigate the historical, security, political economy, environmental and humanitarian dimensions of the farmer–herder conflict, but very little attention has been paid to women’s participation in formal and informal mediation processes in the protracted conflict between farmers and herders. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to fill this gap by providing on-the-ground evidence from Kaduna and Plateau States.

Broadly speaking, the main objective of this report is to highlight the responses to the farmer–herder conflict in the state, with specific reference to security- and non-security-related interventions at both formal and informal levels, in the context of women’s participation. Other specific objectives include the following:

- To assess the utilization of formal and informal dialogue/mediation as a response to the farmer–herder conflict
- To assess women’s participation in formal and informal processes associated with the farmer–herder conflict, as well as to make recommendations on how best to enhance their participation

METHODOLOGY

The report combined an extensive desktop literature review with qualitative field surveys and analyses, using a mixed approach, which provided multiple sources for data collection. The literature review included media reports, academic articles, reports from governmental

and non-governmental agencies, and state security records/reports, among others. The review sought to provide an understanding of the theoretical explanations and to contextualize the analyses within the prevailing policy and academic discourses. The review also served as an important source of secondary data for the analyses.

The field survey was carried out by means of a qualitative method of data gathering and analysis based on semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted with a carefully selected sample population across several local government areas in Plateau and Kaduna States. A total of 40 KIIs and 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted across the states, involving key respondents that were drawn from the following groups:

- Governmental actors at state and local government levels
- Women’s groups at state and local levels
- Traditional leaders
- Civil society, community-based and faith-based organizations at state and local levels

The interviews were conducted using opened semi-structured interview questions. The questions sought to understand the respondents’ knowledge and understanding of the employment of formal and informal structures of dialogue and mediation as conflict management tools. Generally, the interviews sought to ascertain the effectiveness or otherwise of the utilization of dialogue and mediation as a response to conflicts in Kaduna and Plateau States.

The participatory research approach was framed on the logic of the involvement of the respondents in using their experiences to provide insights into how best to deal with the dynamics and consequences of the farmer–herder conflict, as well as the extent to which women were utilized in formal and informal dialogue and mediation processes in relation to the conflict. The research drew heavily on discussions with identified respondents from state and local government levels in ways that enabled them to articulate strategies by which interventions by UN Women will support them to address their needs, as well as the kind of interventions they can undertake in the focal states and communities.

UNDERSTANDING THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONTEXTS OF DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION

Dialogue and mediation have become powerful tools for resolving conflict and building peace. Scholars and researchers see the growing use of these tools as a great step forward. However, empirically, the degree of this progress is still unclear. Relatively few empirical types of research on this phenomenon have been conducted, with a focus on who is involved in dispute resolution activities,¹ rates of compliance,² and levels of satisfaction.³

The growing numbers of models that populate the concept of dialogue and mediation leave little doubt that the phenomenon is increasing and changing. Many factors have contributed to the plurality of definitions of mediation. For example, legal, political, economic and social realities lead scholars and researchers to define mediation from different points of view, in many instances creating competing discourses. In a few examples, practitioners of mediation take a micro perspective and view mediation as a pragmatic

problem-solving process.⁴ Some scholars view mediation as having macro-political functions, considering that it can change the oppressive social structure.⁵

Nevertheless, this report adopts the definition provided by the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation. The international body describes mediation as a voluntary process “whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements”.⁶ Therefore, the role of the mediator is to create an enabling environment for the parties to carry out dialogue sessions leading to the resolution of a pending conflict.

Informal dialogue and mediation processes are usually complementary to formal mediation processes, but are not limited to this function. Over time, women have found solace in some women-specific groups or platforms they were able to establish and control, which are mostly informal in nature.

1 Department of Justice Canada (1995), *Dispute Resolution in Canada: A Survey of Activities and Services*, Ottawa: Department of Justice.

2 M. Umbreit (1995), *Mediation of Criminal Conflict: An Assessment of Programs in Four Canadian Provinces*, Ottawa: Department of Justice.

3 J. McFarlane (1995), *Court-based Mediation for Civil Cases: An Evaluation of the Ontario Court (General Division) ADR Centre*, Ontario Ministry of the Attorney-General.

4 W. Moore (1986), *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

5 P. Wahrhaftig (1982), “An Overview of Community-Oriented Citizen Dispute Resolution Programs in the United States”, in R. Abel, *The Politics of Informal Justice*, Vol. 1, New York: Academic Press.

6 United Nations (2012), *Guidance for Effective Mediation*, p. 4.

Women's involvement in informal mediation processes usually increases during conflict periods and continues into post-conflict stages. Informal institutions that are rooted in the community have been active in the design and implementation of dialogue processes, with women serving as key catalysts. The women are able to collectively design, define, prioritize and implement programmes that address the needs of the communities. In this sense, a collaborative problem-solving approach to conflict becomes the key strategy.

Empirical studies have shown that when women are involved in mediation processes, the agreements are 64 per cent less likely to fail and 35 per cent more likely to last for at least 15 years.⁷ Furthermore, earlier studies have shown that women's contribution is not only limited to formal mediation processes.⁸ Women have a better understanding of conflict situations at the grass roots, and they also have substantial roles in peacebuilding activities through informal activities.

FORMAL APPROACHES TO DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION

From the standpoint of a multitrack approach to dialogue and mediation, the formal mediation processes, which are often referred to as track one, involve states as the principal actors. This process focuses on using state institutions and structures to address the root causes of conflicts. The assumption here is that the presence of the state provides the basis upon which (potentially) conflictive parties resolve their disputes peacefully and

7 Council on Foreign Relations (2019), "Women's Participation in Peace Processes", retrieved 29 February 2020 from <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes>.

8 Ibid.

work to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produced the tensions in the first instance.⁹ These processes are usually facilitated by skilled mediators from state-level actors and multilateral organizations such as the UN, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Southern African Development Community, among others, who facilitate constructive conversations between or among people in conflict. Although these multilateral actors or regional economic communities often have overlapping mandates for peace making, the main goal of formal mediation is to pressure conflict actors to end violent conflicts and their humanitarian impacts on society.¹⁰

In formal mediation, some factors that shape the process and its outcomes are the manner in which a mediation is initiated, the choice of mediator(s), the mediator's first set of actions, the nature of deep-rooted internal conflicts and their enormous social and humanitarian costs, the acceptance of or resistance to external efforts to facilitate negotiations, and the mandates provided to mediators by the institutions that the mediators represent.¹¹ According to Ackerman, formal mediation processes can be categorized into operational and structural prevention. Operational prevention includes short-term measures that explicitly aim towards preventing imminent crises. Examples of these measures include preventive diplomacy, fact-finding missions, negotiated settlements, confidence-building

9 Alice Ackerman (2003), "The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention", *Peace Research*, 40(3), 339–347.

10 G. Yabi (2010), *The Role of ECOWAS in Managing Political Crisis and Conflict: The Cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau*, Peace and Security Series.

11 L. Nathan (2018), "The Mandate Effect: A Typology and Conceptualization of Mediation Mandates", *Peace and Change*, 43(3), 318–343.

actions, and lobbying of conflict actors to create channels for entering into dialogue. Structural prevention, on the other hand, develops and incorporates more long-term measures that facilitate inclusive governance, adherence to and respect for human rights, building of civil society, and ensuring economic, political and societal stability.¹²

Example of high-profile conflicts that utilized formal mediation include “Zimbabwe (2008), Madagascar (2009), Côte d’Ivoire (2011), Darfur (2011), Libya (2011), Guinea-Bissau (2012), Mali (2012), Central African Republic (2013 and 2015), and Burkina Faso (2015)”.¹³ In Nigeria, though it was first conceived as an informal platform, the National Peace Committee plays significant mediatory roles during general elections. For instance, utilizing preventive diplomacy, the committee facilitated the signing of the Abuja Accord by all presidential aspirants of all political parties in 2015. The actions of the National Peace Committee were important following the inflammatory comments and tense political climate that characterized the build-up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The Abuja Accord served as a commitment by all political parties and their aspirants that they would not engage in any form of violence before, during and after the elections.¹⁴

In the context of Kaduna and Plateau States, the establishment of peacebuilding

12 A. Ackerman (2003), “The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention”, *Peace Research*, 40(3), 339–347.

13 L. Nathan (2017), How to Manage Interorganizational Disputes over Mediation in Africa”, *Global Governance*, 23, 151–162.

14 L. Nathan, A. Day, J. Honwana and B. Brubaker (2018), *Policy Paper and Case Studies Capturing UN Preventive Diplomacy Success: How and Why Does It Work?*, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, retrieved from <http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6572/UN-Preventive-Diplomacy-Policy-Paper-and-Case-Studies.pdf>.

institutions represents a deliberate step by the respective state governments to institutionalize the structures and mechanisms for peacebuilding. The mandate of the respective peacebuilding institutions is captured in the enabling laws for their establishment. One major feature of the work of these institutions is the use of mixed approaches, which leverages both the formal and informal mechanisms for dialogue and mediation. The creation of peace committees at the local government level and the establishment of the Peace Architecture Dialogue at the state level are examples of such partnerships between the formal and informal approaches. It is important also to note that the basis for the formation of these platforms was largely due to the conflicts between farmers and herders.¹⁵

INFORMAL (OR COMMUNITY-LEVEL) APPROACHES TO DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION

This method involves leveraging existing local alternative dispute resolution approaches that are institutionalized through local resources and capacities. Informal mediation and dialogue approaches differ from formal ones: while the latter can institute judicial actions to punish violations committed by some conflict actors, particularly crimes against humanity, the former negates retributive systems of administering justice. Instead, it considers conflict parties to be partners that should be supported to make peace.¹⁶ Therefore, to make informal mediation and dialogue processes popular in many environments, the local leadership or the parties to

15 Interview with respondents in Kaduna and Plateau States.

16 H. Zehr (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

the conflict can choose their mediators, the judge and the pre-conditions that guide the dialogue process.¹⁷ These actions are usually rooted in local traditions and institutions, with the aim of promoting the reparation of conflictive relationships, ensuring restorative justice, and rebuilding or strengthening community ties.

While formal mediation seeks to promote conflictive parties' ability to reach a voluntary agreement through written negotiated settlement(s) that they are required to participatorily implement, informal mediation frameworks do not necessarily enforce the development of written contracts. The informal models enforce significant provisions for and recognition of local reconciliation, seeking to improve the everyday dynamics of community relationships (including for conflictive parties) and how conflicts (and peace) shape them, upholding the sanctity and effectiveness of local institutions to administer justice and consolidate localized forms of peace.¹⁸ Example of these informal mediation and dialogue processes include the Gacaca courts in Rwanda, Ubuntu in South Africa, and Family Group Conferencing in New Zealand and Australia.¹⁹

In Ganjuwa community in Bauchi State, the use of the House of Settlement as a localized model for conflict resolution and the

facilitation of community dialogues enables parties to a conflict to address their grievances and pay reparation, if required. In this model, local traditional chiefs and the community heads facilitate the dialogue between conflicting parties and pronounce the offender's penalty and other processes for monitoring the implementation of reparations. The goal of the House of Settlement is to strengthen relationships and community. It also aims to limit the involvement of law enforcement in inter-personal conflicts in Ganjuwa community and avoid the criminalization of minor community disputes.

17 B. Stražišar (2018), *Alternative Dispute Resolution*, Pravo, Zhurnal Vysshey shkoly ekonomiki, 3, 214–233.

18 J. Öjendal, L. Leonardsson and M. Lundqvist (2017), *Local Peacebuilding: Challenges and Opportunities*, The Expert Group for Aid Studies; Katherine V. W. Stone (2004), "Alternative Dispute Resolution" in *Encyclopedia of Legal History*, University of California, Los Angeles School of Law, Public Law and Legal Theory Research Paper Series No. 04-30, retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=631346.

19 S. M. Umbreit (2000), *Family Group Conferencing: Implications for Crime Victims*, retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/reports/restorative_justice/restorative_justice_ascii_pdf/ncj176347.pdf.

WOMEN AND INFORMAL DIALOGUE/MEDIATION IN KADUNA AND PLATEAU STATES

The involvement of women in mediation processes has increased in the past decade, and this has been strengthened by the development of a policy framework on women, peace and security that began with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000. This policy framework has been followed by a further six resolutions that support women's peace and mediation activities. As of 2015, women around the world made up only 2 per cent of mediators, 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories, and 8 per cent of negotiators in formal peace processes.¹ However, as shown in studies carried out on mediation processes, women are not inactive while men make efforts to forge peace. Instead, they are more active in the informal mediation that accompanies formal mediation processes.

There is also ongoing action by community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, religious and traditional institutions, and other informal women-led associations to support the management and resolution of the recurrent farmer–herder conflicts in Kaduna and Plateau States. Some of these

1 D. Anjali (2018), "Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements to Mediators", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, available at <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/connecting-informal-and-formal-peace-talks/>.

organizations include Search for Common Ground, Community Action for Popular Participation, Centre for Peace Initiative and Development, Youth, Adolescent, Reflection and Action Centre, and the League for Human Rights and Youth Adolescence.²

Some of these organizations have received support from international partners such as USAID, the British Council, UN agencies, and international non-governmental organizations to carry out herder–farmer dialogue through local initiatives. For instance, USAID on 27 April 2017 sponsored and hosted a conference on farmer–herder dialogue, involving the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, the Interfaith Mediation Centre, and other relevant stakeholders in the study states and other parts of the country.³

A Search for Common Ground report in 2020 revealed that the organization carried out nine transformative dialogues to prevent and

2 A. M. C. Kwaja (2011), "Government and Civil Society Efforts in Promoting Peace in Plateau State" in Para-Mallam (Ed.), *Finding Durable Peace in Plateau State*, pp.77–88, NIPSS Kuru, Jos: Haytee Press and Publishing Company Nigeria Ltd.

3 International Crisis Group (2017), *Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict*, available at <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/252-nigerias-spreading-herder-farmer-conflict.pdf>.

mitigate farmer–herder conflicts in some communities in the study area.⁴ The report also shows that the organization carried out 11 advocacy and bilateral meetings in Plateau State, which secured stakeholders’ commitment to resolving emerging conflicts.⁵

African Initiative for Peace Building, Advocacy and Advancement (AfriPeace) in 2020 conducted a study on community-level peace-building structures in three states, including Kaduna and Plateau States. Findings from both states reveal that impacted communities within the study area established community initiatives and structures that helped counter existing and emerging violent conflicts and promote peace among rival groups. These structures include Afizere Community and Cultural Development Association, Yoruba Community Forum, Hausa Development Association, Yanshanu Youths Consultative Forum, and vigilante groups.⁶ Some of these community-based initiatives were undertaken by women who engage in informal mediation processes and peacebuilding.

The above informal groups created opportunities for individual women to be involved collectively in carrying out mediation and peacebuilding activities in the study area. While some women facilitated dialogue and built trust in broken communities, others housed and gave relief items to conflict victims.

⁴ Search for Common Ground (2020), *Transforming Farmer–Herder Conflicts and Promoting Freedom of Religions and Belief in Nigeria’s Middle Belt*, Final Report: 1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020, available at [https://aidstream.org/files/documents/Final-Report-\(2018--2020\)--Search-for-Common-ground-20201031-20201207021213.pdf](https://aidstream.org/files/documents/Final-Report-(2018--2020)--Search-for-Common-ground-20201031-20201207021213.pdf).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ African Initiative for Peace Building, Advocacy and Advancement (2020), “Community Level Structures of Peacebuilding in Plateau, Kaduna and Kano States”, unpublished policy brief.

Plateau Women Peace Initiative embarked on one such initiative. This voluntary association promoted dialogue between Christian and Muslim women in several communities in Plateau State. Plateau Women Peace Initiative created a shared space for women across religious divides with the purpose of (a) contributing to the healing process of communities in the state by promoting interpersonal and group dialogue among women; (b) creating a platform for women to participate in building a culture of peace in their communities irrespective of their beliefs and differences; and (c) empowering women through skill acquisition programmes. Findings show that the dialogue initiative carried out by Plateau Women Peace Initiative contributed to the restoration of relations between communities that were divided due to conflict.

Women who engaged in peace processes within the study communities were involved in many roles as mothers, wives or sisters, and sometimes went beyond their homes. Interview responses from a reviewed study revealed that women believe it is their primary responsibility to inculcate values of peace and morality in children. They also extended their work to other communities, where they mediated domestic issues between conflicting groups and in other cases admonished youths, who in most cases carry out the violence.⁷

Some scholars conducted a field study in Bukuru and Gyel communities in Plateau State to identify how women’s agency in the divided communities changes negative stereotypical narratives and builds social

⁷ K. I. Bulus, F. Bhatti and C. Beysoylu (2020), “Women’s Agency in Peacebuilding in Polarized Post-Conflict Communities in Plateau State, Nigeria”, *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 13, No. 2, available at doi:10.5539/jpl.v13n2p189.

cohesion through informal efforts.⁸ Findings from this study show that women's efforts in the study area were either individual or collective, through women-led associations and organizations that aim to facilitate dialogue among women, building trust and empowering women. Individually, one of the ways women see themselves participating in mediation and dialogue is related to their social positioning as mothers and care-givers. The study revealed that after the protracted conflict in the two communities in Plateau State, women were acting individually as mothers and supporters of the victims of the farmer–herder conflict.

⁸ Ibid.

OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONALIZED STRUCTURES FOR DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION IN KADUNA AND PLATEAU STATES

With the coming of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in 2015, only two states have embarked on the path of establishing their own specialized peacebuilding institutions – Kaduna and Plateau. Though the Adamawa State Governor initially signed a legal notice establishing the Adamawa State Agency for Peace, Reconciliation and Reconstruction, while awaiting the legislative approval, not much has been achieved beyond that. Prior to the establishment of these peacebuilding institutions, the deployment of security agencies to enforce peace and the setting up of panels of inquiry to look into the remote and immediate causes of conflicts were the defining features of states' responses to conflict.

KADUNA STATE

Kaduna State, located in Nigeria's North West, has witnessed a series of violent conflicts that have become protracted over the past three decades. Most of these conflicts, which recur

in a cyclical manner, are inter-communal, with identity – religion and ethnicity in particular – playing a key role in mobilization. The state has witnessed some of the most devastating conflicts in the history of Nigeria, and some estimates place the number killed across Kaduna State at 10,000 to 20,000 since 1980. Eruptions of violence occurred in Kafanchan and Zangon Kataf in the 1980s; between the Islamic Movement in Nigeria and the Nigerian Army in 2015; and most recently again in Kafanchan and in Attakar and Zumuruk in Kaura Local Government Area between 2016 and 2017.

In a bid to institutionalize a mechanism for conflict management and to foster inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony in Kaduna State, the Kaduna State House of Assembly passed and Governor Nasir El-Rufai signed the Kaduna State Peace Commission Law in 2017. The law established the Kaduna Peace Commission to function for five years, from 29 May 2017 to 29 May 2022. The

commission is headed by a chairperson, an executive vice-chairperson who serves as the chief executive officer of the commission, two permanent commissioners, and other non-permanent members. The day-to-day management of the Kaduna Peace Commission is under the executive vice-chairperson, currently a woman, with executive powers.

The “primary functions” of the commission, as laid out in the law, are to do the following:

- Monitor and mitigate conflict by meeting regularly with communities, designing and implementing media campaigns advocating for peace, and conducting peace advocacy in schools and public places, including worship centres.
- Serve as “an intellectual base and resource centre to support government in formulating and implementing policies” to promote peace and conflict management, and develop “a strategy for managing residency and citizenship matters”.
- Partner “with other local and international organizations and agencies involved in peace mediation and conflict resolution”.
- Develop “models of conflict prevention and management” focused on conflicts between settlers on grazing reserves and host communities and within herder/pastoralist groups.
- Conduct regular meetings with community leaders and develop initiatives to ease tensions, resolve disputes, and develop understanding and respect among farmers and pastoralists.

The Kaduna Peace Commission Law also established a Local Government Peace Committee in each local government area in the

state. The Kaduna Peace Commission has the authority to appoint members of the local committees after due consultation with local government councils.

In 2013, the Government of Kaduna State set up a peace and reconciliation committee following the conflicts between the Fulani herders and farmers in southern Kaduna. The Kaduna State Peace Commission has proposed several programmes that promote tolerance and the peaceful resolution of the farmer–herder conflict. The programmes initiated by the commission foster cooperation and dialogue among local stakeholders, helping them to elevate community concerns such as access to shrinking land resources and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions rather than turning to violence.¹

PLATEAU STATE

Since 1994, Plateau State has witnessed violent conflicts that are defined along ethnic and religious fault lines. Though limited to Jos North, there has been episodic resurgence across other local government areas within the state. The conflicts have also become protracted, and measures towards their resolution or management have not been designed in ways that would engender sustainable peace and harmony in the state.

The Plateau Peace Building Agency (PPBA) was established in 2016 as part of efforts by the Government of Plateau State to institutionalize its mechanisms for peacebuilding, with specific emphasis on transforming the very

¹ A. Olajumoke (2021), *Confronting Nigeria's Kaduna Crisis*, African Center for Strategic Studies, available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/africacenter.org-Confronting%20Nigerias%20Kaduna%20Crisis_0.pdf.

conditions that endanger peace.² Unlike the peacebuilding agency in Kaduna, which has a woman occupying an executive position, the current leadership of the PPBA is male. However, in the past the PPBA had a woman appointed as director of programmes. Prior to the PPBA, the Office of the Special Adviser on Peacebuilding had been created in 2010.

The convening power of the PPBA has been instrumental in the partnership it entered into with Search for Common Ground, which led to the PPBA hosting the monthly Peace Architecture Dialogue. The United States Institute for Peace is also partnering with the PPBA for a monthly convening of its Justice and Security Dialogue meeting, which brings together communities, security agencies and other law enforcement agencies to discuss issues relating to security in Jos North LGA. Prior to the establishment of the Peace Architecture Dialogue, the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme of the British Council had established the State Conflict Management Alliance to serve as a state-level platform for conflict management in Plateau State.³

One of the recent initiatives of the PPBA is the move towards setting up local structures and mechanisms for peacebuilding across all the zones of conflict that have been mapped by the agency. Such an effort is modelled after the Community Security Architecture Dialogue that was established by Search for Common Ground in Riyom and Bassa LGAs. Between 2004 and 2006, the Interfaith Mediation Centre adopted the same approach of community-level dialogue for resolving the Yelwa-Shendam conflict in Shendam LGA.⁴

² See the Strategic Plan of Plateau Peace Building Agency, 2018.

³ The author of this document was appointed a member of the Plateau State Conflict Management Alliance.

⁴ In 2016, the author of this document was commissioned by

In addition, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue undertook similar peacebuilding efforts in the northern and southern senatorial districts of the state. The primary functions of the PPBA, spelled out in the law, are as follows:

- Promote a culture of harmonious coexistence among the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the state.
- Coordinate and provide viable platforms for civil society organizations, community-based associations, the government and others who want to engage in issues relating to peacebuilding.
- Design a framework for collaboration with international organizations working on issues related to violent conflict.
- Facilitate conflict resolution in specific cases.
- Engage in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, and ensure that government policies advance – and do not hinder – peace and security in the state.
- Develop strategies that empower youth and women to encourage peacebuilding and prevent conflict.
- Assist vulnerable groups to become more self-sufficient and contribute to wider society based on their ability and potential.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND JUDICIAL COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY

Prior to the establishment of the Plateau Peace Building Agency and the Kaduna Peace Commission, administrative and judicial panels of inquiry were a major defining feature

the United States Institute of Peace to assess the impact of the Interfaith Mediation Centre intervention in Yelwa-Shendam.

Table 1: List of Administrative and Judicial Commissions of Inquiry

Kaduna State	Plateau State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission of Inquiry into the Gure/Kahugu Disturbance in Saminaka LGA, 1984 • Committee to Investigate Causes of Riots and Disturbances in Kaduna State (1987) • Justice Dalhatu Ja’afaru Commission of Enquiry set up by Kaduna State Government (1990) • Justice Rahila Kudjoe Commission of Inquiry into Market Riots of Zangon Kataf 1 and 2 (1992) • The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Jema’a Emirate Staff of Office Riots of (1999) • The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Kaduna State Religious (Sharia) Disturbances of February 2000 • The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Crisis between the Bajju and the Ikulu Communities at Kamuru in Ikulu Chiefdom, August 2001 • The Kaduna State Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances of 2 November 2001 in Gwantu Town of Sanga LGA and the Affairs of the Local Government Councils indicted by the Kaduna State House of Assembly Committee, February 2002* • The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Presidential Election Disturbances in Kaduna State, April 2011 • The Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the clashes between Islamic Movement in Nigeria and the Nigerian Army (2016) • The Justice Iliya Aliyu Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Conflicts in Kajuru Local Government Area (2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice Aribiton Fiberisima Commission of Inquiry into riots in Jos (1994) • Justice Niki Tobi Commission of Inquiry into the security crisis in Jos North (2001) • Justice Jummai Sankey Judicial Commission of Inquiry into communal conflicts in Wase LGA (2001) • Justice Suleiman Galadima Commission to investigate the 2001 conflict • Justice Felicia Dusu Judicial Commission of Inquiry into civil disturbance in Shendan, Wase (2002) • Rev. Dr. Padang Yamsat High Powered Committee on Peace and Security in Plateau State (2002) • Mr Musa Izam Administrative Committee to look into conflicts in Quanpan LGA (2005) • Justice Constance Momoh Judicial Commission of Inquiry into conflicts in Quanpan LGA (2005) • Justice Bola Ajibola Commission of Inquiry into the 2008 electoral violence in Jos North (2009)**

* P. Ankut, B. S. Momale, and A. M. C. Kwaja (2019), “Analysis of Inter-group Relations, Conflict and Insecurity: Community and State-level Responses in Kaduna State”, unpublished field report.

** Oosterom and Sha (2019), *Commissions of Inquiry in Plateau State, Nigeria*, available at https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/14640/WP531_online.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

of the states' response to conflict.⁵ By design, these panels are often fact-finding in nature; they were often set up with the mandate to engage all stakeholders in a bid to unravel the remote and immediate causes of the conflicts, as well as to make recommendations to avert recurrence. Though there has not been any concrete document that examined the extent to which women were involved in such panels, the fieldwork arising from this desk review seeks to interrogate the extent to which women are involved, the impact associated with their involvement, and the ways they can effectively participate and make meaningful impact.

One interesting feature of these commissions of inquiry is the near absence of gender consideration by the government. The men continue to dominate these platforms, although a few commissions had women members or a woman as chair. For observers, this reality reinforced the power dynamics of men's dominance of peace processes.⁶

MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS – STATE ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (UNSCR 1325)

In Kaduna State, the Ministry of Human Services and Social Development coordinates all issues related to the women, peace and security agenda, while in Plateau State such a mandate rests with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. These ministries have been the focal points for advocacy, leading to the development of

⁵ A. M. C. Kwaja (2014), *State Response to Conflict in Plateau State*, Jos: Directorate of Research and Planning, Governor's Office, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.
⁶ Ibid.

the State Action Plans (SAC) and Local Action Plan (LAP) relating to the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP), in line with the vision of the UNSCR 1325. Unfortunately, these ministries suffer from inadequate funding from the respective governments towards the operationalisation of the plans, which remain a major set-back.

MULTI-DOOR HIGH COURT FOR ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Governments of Kaduna and Plateau States have established multi-door high courts of justice, otherwise known as alternative dispute resolution courts. This approach to access to justice provides people with conflict resolution alternatives to litigation.⁷ It has been recognized as speedy, effective, fair and easily accessible to citizens in the lower cadre of society. In fact, it is non-adversarial, conciliatory and less expensive; it also preserves relationships.

In January 2018, the National Economic Council constituted a ten-person working committee chaired by Yemi Osinbajo, Nigeria's Vice President. Members of this committee include nine state governors, including those of Kaduna and Plateau States. The subcommittee on dialogue consulted with various stakeholders and recommended the National Livestock Transformation Plan, which establishes a national framework for addressing the conflict between the farming and herding communities, focusing on developing ranching/grazing reserves.

President Buhari has also visited some of the affected states to consult with government

⁷ Interview with a member of the Plateau State Multi-Door Court, Jos, Plateau State.

officials and stakeholders to dispel criticisms from the public and demonstrate his administration's commitment to resolving the conflict.⁸ On the back of the visits, security forces have been deployed to the affected states to neutralize the armed groups perpetrating violent killings and general insecurity. Till now, the deployment of security agencies to the affected states is the primary formal approach the federal government has adopted in engaging the conflicting parties. However, these formal approaches have not stopped the bloodshed.⁹ Often, the deployment of security forces (which state governments have requested the federal government to provide) comes very late, after many people have lost their lives.

Unlike the formal dialogue processes, which are led by well-structured institutions, the informal structures suffer from identity, operational and funding challenges, largely due to the requirements imposed on them by the state. For example, as a precondition for accessing funds from donors, they are required to have the following: a registration certificate from the Corporate Affairs Commission, audited accounts with the Federal Inland Revenue Service, a functional bank account, a board of trustees, a constitution, and a website, among other criteria. Meanwhile, formal institutions and registered civil society and non-governmental organizations are able to access funding directly from the state and donors alike.

In the foregoing analysis, this desk review examined extant literature relating to formal

and informal dialogue and mediation processes, with specific reference to the involvement of women in Kaduna and Plateau States. The review highlighted that there is a clear understanding of the formal and informal dialogue and mediation processes and structures. The extent to which women are involved in these formal and informal processes represents the key research objective that will be examined in the second part of this research, which is field based and captures the voices of formal institutions and women-focused organizations at state and community levels.

8 International Crisis Group (2017), *Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict*, available at <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/252-nigerias-spreading-herder-farmer-conflict.pdf>.

9 Ibid.

Table 2: Interventions by Some International and Civil Society Organizations Relating to Conflicts between Farmers and Pastoralists in Kaduna and Plateau States*

Organization	Focus of Activities
Search for Common Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Architecture Dialogue at the state level • Community Security Architecture Dialogue at the local government level • Training and mediation on conflict sensitivity; policy influencing • Early warning and early response programme
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue	Mediation and dialogue with communities and ethnic and religious organizations
SENSOR	Monitoring and documenting cases of atrocities associated with the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists
Interfaith Mediation Centre	Facilitative interfaith and inter-community mediation between farmers and pastoralists
United States Institute for Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to state peacebuilding agencies/ commissions in Adamawa, Kaduna and Plateau States • Justice and Security Dialogue Programme in Plateau State
Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution	Established by the federal government in 2002 to coordinate all efforts around the government's conflict and peacebuilding initiatives
Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and policy influencing • Monthly meetings between researchers and practitioners working in the area of farmer–pastoralist conflict
Pastoral Resolve	Focus on mitigating conflicts between farmers and pastoralists through research, training and mediation, with strong emphasis on improving the living conditions of the pastoralists

* In all the frontline states, religious and livelihood-based organizations such as Jama'atul Nasril Islam, the Christian Association of Nigeria, All Farmers Association of Nigeria and the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association constitute the primary reference points for most interventions by state and non-state actors working on the farmer–pastoralist conflict. These organizations have their women's wings, which have been active in mediation and dialogue.

CONTEXT AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

The analysis below looks at existing frameworks for formal and informal dialogue/mediation, as well as the effectiveness or otherwise of the utilization of such mediums in response to conflict.

EXISTING FORMAL DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESSES

Though the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Plateau State was established with a mandate to deal with all issues related to women and other vulnerable groups, it has not been active as a frontline institution for peacebuilding. The design of the SAP and LAP in response to UNSCR Resolution 1325 was meant to position the ministry to be a key platform for women's involvement in peace and security matters. In 2015, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development spearheaded the enactment of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Law towards the establishment of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission.¹ One of the most important issues captured in the law was that the commission was to establish conflict resolution and mediation centres. Unfortunately, nothing has been done towards the implementation of the SAP and LAP, as well as

the take-off of the commission in the state.² Despite the huge impact the farmer–herder conflict has had on women, a lack of funds continues to hamper the ministry's efforts. Many development partners prefer dealing with women at the level of civil society rather than directly engaging with the ministry.

The Plateau Peace Building Agency established a gender desk with a desk officer who has the primary responsibility of coordinating all issues related to gender inclusion in advocacy and programming.³ This is in line with the strategic plan of the PPBA, which identified gender and youth as a key pillar. The gender desk was able to facilitate women-related peacebuilding engagements in Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs against the backdrop of violent confrontations between farmers and herders across several communities in the LGAs. Under the Peace Architecture Dialogue and the Community Peace Architecture Dialogue, the PPBA has been able to provide a space for strategic engagements between formal (state/local government) and informal (civil society and community) actors towards a joint or collaborative search for durable peace between the farming and herding communities.

¹ Plateau State Government (2018), *A Law to Make Provision for the Establishment of a Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission and for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Other Matters Connected*, Jos, Government Printer.

² KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

³ Ibid.

PANELS OF INQUIRY ON CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

In August 2015, the Plateau State Government established the Nde John Gobak-led⁴ Panel on Peace and Reconciliation between the Berom and Fulani communities in Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs.⁵ The conflict was largely viewed as Berom peasant farmers versus Fulani herders. Despite the conflict affecting both men and women, the 17-member panel was all male. The recently inaugurated 49-member Plateau State Inter-Religious Council, which Governor Simon Lalong established, also has no female representation. Despite the existence of key faith-based women's groups such as the Women's Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, Zumuntan Mata, and the Catholic Women's Organization of Nigeria, among others, the council is dominated by men, which represents a major area of neglect and a lack of recognition of the role of women in peacebuilding.

INFORMAL STRUCTURES/ PROCESSES OF DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION

Over the last two decades, while significant attention has been given to women's participation in formal peacebuilding processes, there is a dearth of research on the involvement of

⁴ Nde John Gobak is former Secretary to the State Government in Plateau State.

⁵ Plateau State Government (2018), *Government White Paper Report on the Peace and Reconciliation Committee between the Berom and Fulani Communities in Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas, Plateau State*, Jos: Government Printer.

women in mediation processes at the grass-roots levels in post-conflict communities. This report reveals that, while the limited involvement of women in formal mediation processes remains a concern, they are actively involved in informal mediation and use various individual and non-governmental agency efforts to restore harmonious relations and build peace and social cohesion in post-conflict communities in Kaduna and Plateau States.

The establishment of the Women, Peace and Security Network, as well as Women Mediators, which is a consortium of women's groups involved in peacebuilding in Plateau State, represents a major involvement by women in broader dialogue and mediation activities in Plateau State. It was reported that these two structures relate with the PPBA, either through the monthly Peace Architecture Dialogue or through participation in peacebuilding activities with the PPBA. For instance, the two women's groups were involved in the signing of the peace agreement between the Irrigwes and Fulanis in Bassa LGA, as well as the high-level dialogue with traditional rulers on how to effectively address the conflict between farmers and herders.⁶

The Women, Peace and Security Network is active at the state level and in some focal LGAs, such as Jos North, Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Mangu, due to the prevalence of the farmer-herder conflict in several communities in the LGAs. The long-term goal is to have such structures active across the 17 LGAs of the state.

⁶ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

Women’s engagement in dialogue and mediation processes convened and facilitated by traditional institutions has been highly visible in Kaduna and Plateau States. It is important to note that that traditional institutions operate in both the formal and informal realms. As formal entities, they were created, regulated and funded by the state, with considerable influence among their people. Not being constitutionally recognized makes their roles less formal,⁷ despite the fact that

⁷ Ibid.

they are closer to the people and are viewed as the most important actors in peacebuilding at both the community and state level.⁸ Unlike the traditional institutions, religious institutions operate more as informal entities, despite attempts by the government to create a formal structure for them through the Nigerian Inter-Religious Committee, which was co-chaired by His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto and the former Archbishop of Abuja, His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan.

⁸ Ibid.

Table 3: Snapshots of Formal and Informal Dialogue and Mediation Structures in Kaduna and Plateau States

Formal (Kaduna)	Formal (Plateau)	Informal (Kaduna)	Informal (Plateau)
Kaduna State Peace Commission	Peace Architecture Dialogue at the state level	Women in Da’awah	Women, Peace and Security Network
Local Government Peace Committees	Community Security Architecture Dialogue at the local government level	Zumuntan Mata	Women Mediators
	Community Security Architecture Forum at the community level*	Catholic Women’s Organization of Nigeria	Zumuntan Mata
	State Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 under the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development	Women’s Interfaith Council	Catholic Women’s Organization of Nigeria
	Law on the Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission and for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Other Matters Connected	Interfaith Mediation Centre	
	Plateau State Inter- Religious Council		

* This initiative is currently at the planning stage.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

The analysis below represents voices on the ground in Kaduna and Plateau States, using the research questions as a guide.

WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIALOGUES AND MEDIATION PROCESSES WITH REGARD TO THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT IN YOUR STATE?

Generally, there was a good understanding among respondents of what constitutes formal and informal dialogues and mediation processes. As a respondent noted, “Formal ways of dialogue are the ones set up by government or properly established structures to achieve government policies or for other duties...informal for me will be community dialogue platforms where community members are able to engage themselves; they can either set their time or resort to informal mediation.”¹ Similarly, another respondent noted that “the formal is where maybe the government brings part of the concerned parties on both sides and tries to mediate”.

A Kaduna State FGD reported the following: “A formal process of dialogue is the one that the government instituted, while the informal is the one our community instituted. And it is people like our traditional leader that are responsible for mediation and dialogue.”²

1 KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.
2 FGD with respondents in Kaduna State.

According to a key informant, the informal is usually organized at the local level, where the people within the community sit among themselves to deliberate on the causes of conflict and ways to resolve a conflict situation, while the formal setting is where you have external bodies such as the government and other NGOs stepping in to create a platform for dialogue and deliberation on the causes of conflict and ways to resolve it.³

Formal mediation and dialogue are usually well-structured processes – for example, the government organizes or facilitates with a clear mandate, and in most instances the recommendations can be imposed or implemented. As reported by a key informant, “Formal dialogue and mediation is what government ministries, departments and agencies and non-governmental organizations do, while informal dialogue and mediation happens mostly at the community level. Formal processes have been ongoing, but my frustration is that whenever an attack is carried out shortly after formal dialogue sessions, this makes the whole effort look like a waste of time and resources.”⁴

The respondents have an understanding of the differences between formal and informal dialogue and mediation processes. In summary, formal dialogue involves the government, which is an established structure, aimed at propelling solutions for peace in

3 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.
4 Ibid.

times of conflict. It also involves setting up committees that might not include the actual people involved in the conflict, meaning that decisions can be taken on their behalf and might not reflect what they actually need. Informal dialogue on the other hand entails the involvement of community leaders within the community, family or home in efforts to bring about peace; in informal dialogue, everyone can air their views.

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS FOR DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION IN ADDRESSING THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT IN YOUR STATE?

Most of the key informants agreed that informal dialogue is more effective than

formal dialogue. This is reported by a key informant thus: “For me, I will say that the informal dialogue is more effective than the formal because from experience we know that some of these formal dialogues are politically motivated, or they eventually do not achieve the aim that they have set out to achieve because of divergent affiliations. The informal structure focuses on the members of the community; it is owned by the community members. These are the people that are directly affected by the conflict, so for them they do not have a choice other than to make the dialogue work.”⁵

Over time, people have lost trust and confidence in the government and security institutions, which makes informal dialogue

⁵ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

Table 4: Snapshot of Respondents’ Understandings of Dialogue and Mediation

Dialogue and Mediation are...
• ...a process that seeks to build trust between people by encouraging relationship building for continuous engagement.
• ...a process whereby the people in conflict are willing to come together to create space to listen and be listened to...whereby both try to find solutions and resolve the issues in a conversational manner.
• ...an effective way of transforming and deepening understanding, either within one group or between two or more groups. It involves active listening, experience sharing and acceptance, as well as respecting the views of the other. Participants can disagree with one another, but do not suppress others, and everyone has equal power.
• ...a facilitated conflict intervention process that brings conflictive stakeholders together to transform the drivers of the conflict.
• ...a conversation between two people or groups of persons/parties in which they seek to resolve differences over a certain issue for mutual benefit, either through their personal initiatives or a facilitated initiative.
Through dialogue and mediation, we come together as human beings first to find inclusive and collaborative solutions to the challenges we face. It is a process and interaction that takes place between two or more people in their search for solutions to a conflict.

and mediation more preferable.⁶ However, with regard to gender-based violence, formal dialogue is said to be more effective due to religious and cultural issues, which usually result in the withdrawal of cases if managed within a community. The effectiveness of the dialogue in both formal and informal settings in addressing the conflict is limited; often discussions are held, but the outcome is completely different from what was discussed or agreed on, as reported by a key informant in Plateau State: “To a certain level, the effectiveness is rated as average. It can be improved upon; this is by involving the real parties in the conflict.”⁷

At the community level, there has been improvement, because when people face problems, they hold a meeting with all the necessary stakeholders formally (i.e. with the community leaders) to avert the further deterioration of the situation. In addition, informal discussions are held among friends and family members, and this has also been helpful.⁸ Generally the respondents see the informal dialogue setting as more effective than the formal setting because the local people view the formal setting as government controlled and do not trust the process. On the other hand, the informal process is seen as close to them and more trustworthy.

Key informants indicated varying degrees of effectiveness between formal and informal approaches. However, there is unanimity among respondents that there is a missing link in the dialogue and mediation processes, although opinions vary among respondents about what constitutes the missing link.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

⁸ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

To some, the missing link is that both the formal and informal processes do not involve “the real actors in the conflict”.⁹ This respondent may be referring to the politicians, religious leaders and top government officials who do not have practical knowledge of the issues causing the conflict and the scope and dimensions of the conflict. Such meetings do not involve the farmers and nomadic herders, who are not only in the centre of the conflict, but also understand the issues in the conflict. “Real actors” may also refer to individuals in rural communities who suffer social and economic losses, and also lose loved ones, rather than those in urban centres who are more removed from the effects of the conflict and whose knowledge of the conflict is limited to what they see in the media.

For others, the missing link is the limited involvement of women in the dialogue and mediation processes in both formal and informal structures. For instance, out of the 15 women interviewed, only 5 had participated in formal or informal dialogue and mediation processes. Two male respondents noted that women have been involved, but at very low levels. According to one respondent, “The participation of women has been very low generally in Nigeria. In Plateau State, the level is even lower compared to other places. I’ll just give an example: where you have a lot of commissions of inquiry or mediation panels being set up, you will hardly see more than one or two women; maybe you would have 1 or 2 per cent women representation, and in most instances their voices might not be heard because they are not leading the panels but are just members who may not have much to contribute or the opportunity to

⁹ Ibid.

contribute.”¹⁰ In a very concise and straightforward answer, a respondent noted, “We just met with our neighbouring Fulani community once and there was no woman involved in that interface.”¹¹ Others did note that women get involved in the processes, but at a very limited level.

IN TERMS OF WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ADDRESSING THE FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT, HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE CURRENT DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION EFFORTS IN YOUR STATES?

Women are often involved in dialogue because they are a key part of the community. They are part of peacebuilding efforts, according to a key informant. Research has shown that women tend to be more successful in mediation. One key informant answered thus: “Why? Because even when youths are involved in violent conflict, they have mothers there, they have sisters, they have wives; there are women. These are people that play an active role in the lives of people, so if you do not involve them to transfer knowledge to these people, how do you expect to have a systemic solution?”¹² Their involvement in dialogue is important also because most conflict issues affect women, so it is easier for them to understand the feelings of other women. It is possible to analyse and explain to them the ways in which they can help themselves. Another key informant, however, reported that women are not usually involved because they go out and discuss what was said during the

mediation. This is the feedback they get from male members of the mediation task force.

In recent times, there has been a lot of advocacy, enlightenment and sensitization around women’s involvement in mediation. Not just women, but also girls, because when conflict happens, women and girls are usually the ones affected because of their vulnerability. Women are found more in the formal process than the informal process. This is because in the informal process people still hold strong traditional beliefs relating to issues of security and land and believe that women should not be involved. However, the formal process identifies with women and carries them along. Women have been at the forefront, especially with projects implemented by UN Women on peace and reconciliation. This has taken the women to a particular horizon where they have participated actively in the peace process. With these interventions, women have been given the opportunity to participate because in terms of conflicts women and children are the most vulnerable.¹³

Despite women’s vulnerability, some participants reported that “women are not really involved in dialogues because women are being relegated to the background. It is mostly the men that are involved in the dialogue processes.”¹⁴ There has been very low participation of women generally, which is a global phenomenon. But the numbers in Plateau are very low compared to the global statistics. “For example, where you have commissions of inquiry or mediation panels being set up, women’s representation is low – maybe you would have 1 or 2 per cent.”¹⁵

10 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

11 KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

12 Ibid.

13 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

Women are really participating when it comes to mediation processes in the community. A key informant rated women 70 per cent and reported to have “more women engaging in discussions talking about their own experiences. We had women conducting sensitization on conflicts and dangers of conflicts within their social contingencies, in churches, in mosques, in their youth meetings and with all the other little, little engagements that they had.”¹⁶ However, a member of the FGD said participation is on the basis of whether they get refreshments or stipends. Generally, women are said to be involved: the current dialogue and mediation processes have been quite effective by giving women a voice in most of the discussions, even though there is room for the increased participation of women.

Other respondents, mostly from Plateau State, rated women’s participation as low in mediation processes, specifically in the farmer–herder conflict, which has surged in the last couple of years. “We are making progress, although not as effective as we expect it to be; women are the caregivers at home, and they cater for the children and young people who are mostly the perpetrators of these acts. Children listen to their mothers more, so women can give instructions to their children about such. Women’s participation in Plateau has been effective for me; if more women are involved there would be greater results.”¹⁷ Another key informant thinks that if women are really involved in the dialogue process, it will minimize the conflict. She argued that “women are not really involved in these processes, and that is why you find the men

making and taking rash decisions.”¹⁸ One thing the participant understood was that when women are involved in this dialogue, they really think deeply before reaching a conclusion or making decisions. “There would be a better achievement when they are involved. I’d advise that women should be involved in the dialogue.”¹⁹

AS A WOMAN OR TRADITIONAL OR RELIGIOUS LEADER, HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN ANY DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESS ON THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT BEFORE? FORMAL, INFORMAL OR BOTH?

Based on the feedback from participants, there is a sense in which women are adversely affected by the farmer–herder conflict. They own farmland/livestock that is sometimes destroyed, stolen or killed during such conflicts or as a result of deadly attacks.²⁰ Also, in most of the herder communities, milk and butter belong to the women and children, and are sold to meet daily needs. Unfortunately, the incessant conflict situation reduced crops and cattle, as well as the quantity of these dairy products, affecting their overall income. In addition, women experience various forms of sexual and gender-based violence.²¹

The majority of the participants reported being engaged in informal dialogue and mediation at one point, though not necessarily on

¹⁶ KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

¹⁷ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

¹⁸ KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ KII with respondents in Kaduna and Plateau States.

²¹ West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (2020), *Addressing Armed Banditry in the North-West Region of Nigeria: Exploring the Potentials of a Multi-Dimensional Conflict Management Approach*, West Africa Early Warning and Early Response Network.

farmer–herder conflicts. A few participated in both formal and informal processes. According to a key informant: “I have participated actively for many years in promoting the peaceful resolution of the farmer–herder conflict in the Middle Belt and Plateau in particular, and I have participated mostly as a facilitator, trainer and mentor to help these communities have common understanding and common resolutions to those issues.”²² Another participant in Plateau State reported that as a youth he was seen as the backbone of society. As a youth leader, his involvement in the dialogue was critical because they believed that the youths are the perpetrators of violence. As such, their involvement in the quest for peace cannot be overstated, hence the strategic nature of his involvement.²³

AS A WOMAN OR TRADITIONAL OR RELIGIOUS LEADER, WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESS REGARDING THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT – FORMAL AND INFORMAL?

The key informants in the research were mostly involved in dialogue and mediation processes informally. A participant said, “Apart from the little formal dialogue mediation process we usually hold at our community level with all the paramount leaders, where sometimes we represent the women, we also recognize the coming of your organization as formal too, and in that regard I was a floor member, even though I know that sometimes when we speak we voice the concerns of

²² KII with a respondent in Plateau State.
²³ Ibid.

the women.”²⁴ Some of the key informants participated as women, peacebuilders, mediators and facilitators. As quoted above: “I have participated actively for many years in promoting the peaceful resolution of the farmer–herder conflict in the Middle Belt and Plateau in particular, and I have participated mostly as a facilitator, trainer and mentor to help these communities have a common understanding and common resolutions to the issues.”²⁵

Others who were involved as advisers guided people on how to treat issues in the most peaceful manner, especially when encroachment occurs. A participant reported that he was the spiritual leader leading Jama’atu Nasril Islam, where he guided them on peaceful coexistence and shared with them the relevance of peaceful resolution of conflict, stating scriptural references in both the Qur’an and Sunnah. Other key informants were involved in visiting Islamic schools to organize peace talks. There were meetings with youth from the Christian Association of Nigeria, the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria, and the Women’s Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria, with subsequent peace dialogues in one of the local schools in the community to discuss the importance of peace.²⁶

IN WHAT WAYS ARE WOMEN IMPACTED BY THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

There is no doubt that the conflict between farmers and herders has impacted women

²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.
²⁶ Ibid.

in multiple ways. Sometimes women were viewed as serving as actors in the main conflict, bearing and using arms, as well as supplying intelligence. At the peak of the conflict in southern Kaduna State, the wives of herders selling milk and cheese were banned from some villages for allegedly supplying security tips to their husbands. All the women respondents during the KIIs and FGDs denied direct involvement in the conflict.²⁷ Instead, they were of the view that they work more in peace-related activities.²⁸ Women from the farming communities reported that, despite the adverse impact of the conflict on their lives and livelihoods, they have some level of influence on some of their children.²⁹ They often counsel them not to take the law into their own hands.³⁰ However, it was unclear how such influence has shaped the dynamics of the conflict, which has not been effectively contained across the two study states.

AS A WOMAN OR TRADITIONAL OR RELIGIOUS LEADER, WHAT IN YOUR VIEW ARE THE OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESSES IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND STATE – FORMAL AND INFORMAL?

Some obstacles were reported by some of the KII participants, but they indicated that the situation is getting better lately. A key informant reported that “some men still believe that women have no significant value in mediation, but now there is enlightenment

²⁷ Feedback from respondents during KIIs and FGDs in Kaduna and Plateau States.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ FGD with respondents in Plateau State.

³⁰ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

on the fact that even your children might have wisdom, knowledge and skills that will be more advanced and effective than yours in some difficult situations”.³¹ Other obstacles include the patriarchal nature of society and the low-capacity engagement of women, who either are not able to say anything during mediation or are not able to participate effectively. Basically, cultural and traditional norms are the major obstacles to women's participation.

A key informant reiterated, “It hasn't been easy for women, and also because generally we also need to talk about the socio-economic development of the woman; in most instances you have men more educated than women, so women are generally given minimal education. From the home the women are already disadvantaged because they are not being given equal opportunities for self-development to be able to contribute to the development of society.”³²

Men are more recognized than women within patriarchal systems, and interpretations of cultural or religious values or laws often put women at the lower side of the table. In addition, vulnerability can be taken advantage of, with women attacked deliberately to cause harm and to count losses for other parties – for example, those women who are sexually abused on farms.

Women's limited involvement in formal and informal dialogue and mediation may have contributed to the limited successes in managing the farmer–herder conflict, but it also runs counter to UNSCR 1325, which calls for the participation of women in peacebuilding,

³¹ KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

³² KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

their protection from human rights violations, and their access to justice. Specifically, paragraph 12 urges Member States “to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.”

This resolution is premised on the fact that violent conflicts, including the conflict between farmers and herders, have impacted negatively on women and girls and have also exacerbated gender inequality in society. Despite the gendered impact of violent conflicts, there has been a decline in women’s participation in conflict management and peace processes around the world, as women are “too often omitted from peace processes”,³³ have remained “largely excluded from negotiating peace”, and are excluded from leadership positions, especially in conflict zones.³⁴

Respondents identified additional obstacles to women’s participation: male dominance in society and obnoxious and discriminatory cultural practices and customs. As noted by a respondent: “There is this dominance that men have already occupied that is making it difficult for women to penetrate. Sometimes even if you try, there is this kind of ‘no’ you get because our decisions are not regarded. They will be, like, ‘No, she is a woman.’”³⁵

33 United Nations Security Council (2016), “Women Too Often Omitted from Peace Processes, Despite Key Role in Preventing Conflict, Forging Peace, Secretary-General Tells Security Council”, Security Council 7793rd Meeting SC/12561, October 25, available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12561.doc.htm>.

34 United Nations Security Council (2019), *Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/800*, October 9, available at <https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/800>.

35 KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

However, in the few instances where women have participated, especially “in the formal process where they are found more than the informal process”,³⁶ experiences from the field indicate that the women have done well. According to a respondent, “I think it is going well; in my overall assessment we are doing well. Sometimes when you want to initiate a programme or project in a community, you don’t settle for one ethnic group; we try to bring a project and initiative that brings everybody together, having a workshop and discussing a general issue that affects every one of them, irrespective of whatever zone you are coming from.”³⁷

Though women understand and appreciate the value that their involvement in formal and informal dialogue/mediation processes can bring to both them and their society, they also recognize that there are certain barriers to their participation. It was revealed that “religion has been a major factor in the discourse on mainstreaming women’s participation in both formal and informal dialogue/mediation”.³⁸ The submissive role that women play in the two dominant religions, Christianity and Islam, places them at the base in terms of their bargaining power and voice, which in a strong sense “continues to serve as a major drawback to their involvement”.³⁹ Another respondent was of the view that “because illiteracy abounds at the community level and women are the most affected, their participation or role in dialogue and mediation is minimal”.⁴⁰

36 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

37 Ibid.

38 FGD with respondents in Plateau State.

39 FGD with respondents in Kaduna State.

40 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

Cultural practices related to male dominance are another factor. For instance, in most of the communities, women are totally absent in the traditional councils or council of elders where peace-related matters are discussed. Their interests and voices are only captured or heard through the men.⁴¹ A respondent was of the view that these male-dominated traditional institutions control all aspects of social life, thereby reinforcing the exclusion of women in decision making.⁴² Some of the respondents also drew attention to the fact that “though women have been victims of conflicts, the absence of legal assistance continues to be a major impediment to their ability to get justice”.⁴³ For them, “dialogue and mediation has not addressed this aspect of women’s experiences”.⁴⁴

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE SUCCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN FARMER–HERDER DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESSES AT THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEVELS IN YOUR STATE?

Successes have been reported by the different key informants who participated in the research. A participant noted, “Women are participating in the mediation process, and results are coming as expected. People are now trusting the decisions taken by women when it comes to mediation.” Some of the most successful focal persons were women, according to a key informant. “So even before we engaged them, they were so very active...

41 KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

42 Ibid.

43 FGD with respondents in Kaduna State.

44 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

they had Youth Peace Network, Women Peace Network in their community that they were supporting, and so we just came to strengthen what they were already doing, and because of that more women were hearing about the need for them to participate in peace and conflict resolution.” Women have the capacity to facilitate, accompany and also ensure the sustainability of peace processes because “I know, for example, for some of us who are in this work, we still accompany some of these communities that we’ve worked with... to still do some minimal follow-ups, some encouragement and mentoring to sustain the process to ensure that people remain on the [side] of peace”.⁴⁵ Women tend to address conflict peacefully and amicably.

A respondent related one success story: “When I worked with Mercy Corps in Barkin Ladi, there was a success story shared by a Fulani woman who told us that when there was an issue in her community between [local communities] and Fulanis, they would meet at a certain river; since their husbands and children refused to agree and live in peace, as mothers they had to find a way to make that happen. So they invited their husbands to the riverside and aired their views and came to an agreement.”⁴⁶ Such a vivid insight into what women were able to do in Barkin Ladi attests to the power of their collective voices as agency for community peacebuilding, despite the obstacles.

The deliberate decision of the Government of Kaduna State to ensure the inclusion of women in governance was meant to give them a voice in all aspects of human endeavour. By

45 Ibid.

46 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

making them active participants in the governance processes, they are well represented in the search for durable peace in the state. The Kaduna State deputy governor is a woman, and out of the 13 commissioners who are members of the State Executive Council in the state, 5 are women – Human Affairs and Social Development, Justice, Urban Development, Public Works, and Agriculture. The executive vice-chairman of the Kaduna Peace Commission, an institution with the primary mandate for fostering dialogue and mediation in the state, is also a woman. The deputy governor of the state also serves as the deputy chair of the Kaduna State Security Council, which also has the female commissioner for justice as a member. The reality is that, at the level of both the security council and the peace commission, women are effectively represented in Kaduna State.⁴⁷

In the case of Plateau State, the women mediators are currently expanding their activities to the communities by engaging some of the women-led organizations that are involved in mediation and dialogue as part of broader peacebuilding efforts. As pointed out by one of the mediators: “Women do a lot of sensitization and awareness creation. They visit communities and work with them beyond operating ethnic and religious barriers. Unfortunately, this strength has not been properly harnessed and utilized by government.”⁴⁸ This calls for more sustained policy-level advocacy, with a view to opening up the space for greater women’s participation in the broader peacebuilding efforts across the state.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ FGD with respondents in Plateau State.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN SYNERGY BE ENHANCED BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESSES AS A WAY OF FOSTERING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION?

Formal mediation should not operate in isolation from the informal platform. There should be synergy between the formal and informal mediation processes. This can be done when women are empowered and given the capacity, the platform and the support to participate in this process. It also involves a lot of awareness about the importance of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Women can bridge the gap between the formal and informal mediation processes if they are involved in every stage of negotiation. A key informant said “Programmes like intercultural peace events between different conflicting parties and platforms where women come together to talk about their different cultures should be created, to accept each other [despite different religious beliefs]. Peace education should be promoted for women, and even formal education should be encouraged.”⁴⁹ Synergy can be improved a lot between the informal and formal dialogue and mediation processes because we are a community-driven society.

Our communities can benefit a lot from the community-driven approach in the informal mediation and dialogue setting, and then the government can come in to support it formally. That was the original vision, because people trust the communities more and have

⁴⁹ Ibid.

more confidence in them. This approach of bringing the government into the process plays a role in implementing recommendations arising from the dialogue and mediation processes, so it is important to build that synergy. “We have done it and tried it and it has worked in some instances. For example, I can give you a clear instance whereby the Peace Architecture Dialogue, which is currently being managed by the Plateau Peace Building Agency, brought all stakeholders, both formal and informal, to dialogue over a long period of time. For me, this is also an example of a clear success that we have seen in terms of bridging the formal and informal processes in Plateau State, and it has brought about a lot of key results.”⁵⁰

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY TO PROVIDE IN RELATION TO THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT IN YOUR STATE?

The respondents said they expect skills and empowerment programmes, and finance to help in mediation. A key informant from Plateau State said that the support and assistance from the government or any non-governmental organizations should not go only to farmers or herders, “but rather be neutral, because this is what further fuels the conflict”.⁵¹ The government and non-governmental organizations should also help those who lost their property or livelihoods. There is a need for the government to make a commitment to support all mediation processes,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

whether formal or informal, and ensure the implementation of their recommendations.

The government should pledge its political will to implement the mediation process outcomes. It has been very difficult as a people to have recommendations be fully implemented; there is still a long way to go, and the government can improve its response. There is also a need for better participation by the government. The Plateau Peace Building Agency has proven to be really committed in supporting this process, and it is hoped that they continue to get involved in all peace processes, because it is “the best platform” to handle all of these processes. “Of course, we want to see the government funding the activities of this Plateau Peace Building Agency.”

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED AND THE GOOD PRACTICES RELATING TO WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESSES ON THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT IN YOUR STATE?

The following summarizes some responses: respect their cultural background. This is because bringing women and men together might not work in some places. You might have to use different forums for women and men to allow for effective participation. Another lesson learned is to be informal, not professional, and to come down to their level so that they can trust you and not feel intimidated. Showing interest in what they

Table 5: Respondents' Perceptions of the Valued Characteristics of Dialogue and Mediation in Addressing the Farmer–Herder Conflict*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit identification of the concerns of parties to a conflict • Honesty and sharing of the experiences regarding the conflict • Emphasis on “tolerance or accommodation” • Emphasis on “collaboration” • Expressions of “regret, reconciliation and commitment to peace” • How to overcome an argument and bring people together to live in peace through dialogue and mediation • Recognition of the similarity of perceptions of elites and community members towards the resolution of conflict

* This feedback was generated from KIIs and FGDs across the two states.

are doing also makes them have confidence in you and your abilities. Patience is also key, along with honesty, accountability and transparency.

According to one key informant: “For me, the most effective dialogue sessions I have ever had are the sessions where we had room for every person relevant to our discussions; we had women, we had young people, we had everybody participating in the peace process. That is one of the major lessons I have learned – no one should be left behind when engaging in conflict resolution, because conflict affects everyone.”⁵² Another lesson is ensuring that dialogues are community driven, so that even when the funding stops, community members already know how important the forum is and will continue. One key informant stated, “For me, the lesson learned is that the era of saying women have no stake in the quest for peace is gone, and the best practice is to accommodate them and their views at all levels of decision making if the issues also affect them.”⁵³

⁵² KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.
⁵³ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION PROCESSES RELATING TO THE FARMER–HERDER CONFLICT BE ENHANCED?

Based on the feedback from respondents, there is a sense that the challenges faced by women in relation to their involvement in dialogue and mediation can be addressed. Some respondents are of the view that, since women are usually at the receiving end of the conflicts between farmers and herders, they are also in a position to be part of the solution. A key informant reported that “women can only participate and contribute if they are involved”.⁵⁴ The position of women in society starts from when they are born, so any enhancement needs to start from when they are children.⁵⁵

Empowering women can also be achieved by bringing in more women to participate, and by providing an enabling environment for

⁵⁴ KII with a respondent in Plateau State.
⁵⁵ Ibid.

them, thereby breaking all the gender and cultural barriers. A key informant reported, “Women should be encouraged and provided with the necessary support to carry out sensitization and advocacy on peace and peaceful coexistence.”⁵⁶ There should be continuous awareness creation and economic empowerment support for females. Women need to be given more space in the dialogue and mediation processes at all levels, because, apart from being at the receiving end of the conflict, they also have a wealth of experience to bring to the table. There is a need to open more spaces for women to be by themselves, to empower them and give them more confidence, and then later integrate them back into the mainstream dialogue/mediation and leadership space.

There is a need for continuous training of women and men in the dialogue process, not just elites but also those in the rural communities. Women should also be trained to appreciate intercultural and religious differences. They should also have at least basic formal education to be able to contribute to intellectual conversations. Lastly, women should not be seen as weaker vessels, but rather as partners in the peace processes. Talking to their fellow women in their church conferences, at their zonal meetings, and everywhere else they are given the opportunity to talk can enhance women’s participation in formal and informal dialogue and mediation processes.

Apart from increasing the involvement of women, it is important to synergize the formal and informal processes. According to some respondents, one way to achieve this

56 KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

is “creating more awareness and letting the people be aware of existing opportunities that exist for this purpose”.⁵⁷ The synergy can also “be enhanced when we have finances that can help us provide peace and settle such disputes in our community”.⁵⁸

57 KII with a respondent in Kaduna State.

58 KII with a respondent in Plateau State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the backdrop of the findings of this assessment, the following recommendations are meant to ensure the effective utilization of women's voices and platforms in dialogue and mediation at both formal and informal levels.

Support for Sustained Dialogue and Mediation Initiatives: Since dialogue and mediation have proven to be effective tools for peacebuilding, they should not just be one-off activities. They should be comprehensively implemented in ways that guarantee their sustainability. For instances, the Peace Architecture Dialogue that has been active in Plateau State and implemented through the PPBA should serve as a model for replication in Kaduna State. This will ensure the regular interface between the formal and informal structures in the resolution of conflicts. In view of the huge role that UN Women has been playing regarding women-specific programmes relating to peace and security, it is well positioned to support the design of this programme.

Build and Support a Critical Mass of Women Leaders in Governance: UN Women and other actors involved in women-related peacebuilding work should build and support a critical mass of women in leadership, with specific reference to governance at both state and local levels. While women continue to play important roles in peacebuilding, they are not found in strategic governance-related leadership positions where they can effectively influence public policy. Without the activities of a critical mass of women

in leadership, the chances of women's involvement in transforming conflicts into a sustainable peace will remain low. Building critical women peace leadership will involve activities and programmes that will enhance women's participation in politics, increase political representation, and provide strategic presence in governance spaces.

Support the Establishment of Safe Spaces for Women: There are several factors that hinder women's participation, including patriarchal practices built on religion and culture, poor economic opportunities, high illiteracy and lack of exposure, among others. Experiences reveal that women's potential is more easily and effectively built in safe spaces where women feel free to express themselves and share and bond with other women. This is especially true of women who have experienced physical violence in their personal lives, or are survivors of armed conflict. Women who have passed through certain conditions identify strongly with other women in similar situations, and can build their self-worth and confidence as they realize that they have something to offer. The establishment of these safe spaces is needed more at the local level, where women-focused social networks thrive but are weak due to lack of support.

Support Women-Responsive Traditional and Religious Institutions: The traditional and religious institutions have been recognized as the major players in peacebuilding across the two states and at the national level. Despite this overwhelming reality, these institutions have the most limited representation of

women. In fact, as “custodians” of the culture of their communities, the traditional institutions are viewed as the harbingers of some of the patriarchal practices that exclude women. UN Women should support programmes involving sustained advocacy and engagement with traditional and religious institutions, with the goal of bolstering women’s involvement in decision-making processes within these institutions.

Support Programmes that Target the Implementation of SAPs/LAPs on UNSCR 1325:

Kaduna and Plateau States have designed action plans on UNSCR 1325 relating to women, peace and security. In light of this, UN Women should support programmatic interventions that are designed with the goal of ensuring implementation. The implementation of SAPs and LAPs at state and local government levels is crucial to ensure that women’s concerns and gender are properly mainstreamed into peacebuilding and governance; indeed, their involvement in governance has direct implications for their role in dialogue and mediation.

Support Initiatives and Programmes that Provide Legal Assistance for Women:

In both Kaduna and Plateau States, the Legal Aid Council and the Federation of Women Lawyers exist. Unfortunately, their involvement in dialogue and mediation has not been fully optimized. In this context, programming by UN Women and other development and civil society partners should integrate these actors in ways that position them to provide adequate legal support for women who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as other forms of victimization.

Implement Programmes with Sustained Advocacy and Awareness Raising for Traditional and Religious Leaders:

The involvement of women in both formal and informal dialogue and mediation processes requires deeper and sustained engagements with traditional and religious leaders. They represent an influential category within society whose support is needed for the integration and inclusion of women in such processes. UN Women should leverage the success stories in Gombe State, where women were included in traditional councils as a result of the agency’s advocacy.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of women's involvement in dialogue and mediation is to prevent the relapse of violence. This report sought to examine the extent to which women have been utilized in dialogue and mediation in the context of the conflicts between farmers and herders in Kaduna and Plateau States. Through a desk review, the report was able to show that women often participate in informal and formal dialogue and mediation processes. Whether as individuals or as a collective, women who assume such responsibilities have been key voices in building trust and inculcating the principles and values that promote togetherness and tolerance in the communities.

Women's involvement in the formal dialogue and mediation processes has not been optimal. The informal institutions meanwhile have proven to be quite active in peace processes based on the fact that they are socially rooted in the very communities they work in. However, rather than there being a cooperative relationship, there are instances in which one substitutes the other due to trust deficits associated with the way formal actors (persons and institutions) have managed dialogue processes, which has led to conflicting parties viewing the state as a mediator that is not neutral. This report makes a strong case for a complementary or symbiotic relationship between the formal and informal institutions on the basis of a shared vision for the effective participation of women in dialogue and mediation. This is the most assured way of guaranteeing a positive outcome in the design and implementation of dialogue and mediation processes across the states.

Though women continue to play important roles in peacebuilding at both formal and informal levels, this report revealed that they are not found in strategic peacebuilding leadership positions at federal, state and local levels. Kaduna Peace Commission does currently have two women in strategic positions, while Kaduna State has a female deputy governor who is also a member of the state executive and state security council. However, the situation is different in Plateau State, where women are not as visible. The establishment of a gender desk by the Plateau Peace Building Agency is meant to bridge such gaps, with emphasis placed on pushing the women, peace and security agenda in its programming.

Without the activities of a critical mass of women-centred peacebuilding leadership, the chances of women's involvement in transforming conflicts into a sustainable peace will remain low. Peacebuilding leadership is not just about people in authority, but more about people who enjoy a certain level of legitimacy in their communities, which women also represent. There are highly respected women who occupy formal and informal positions of leadership in strategic peace-enhancing sectors such as education, business, religion, agriculture, health and civil society. Strategic engagement with such women, with a specific focus on dialogue and mediation, has the potential of positioning them as key voices for peace and harmony in society.

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