

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA (1999-2025)

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Abstract

The paper examined the roles of Non-Governmental Organisations in post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria under the present democratic experiment. Conflict has gradually become a recurring decimal within the Nigerian society since May 29, 1999, with high devastating effects on all aspects of our national life. Attempts to resolve conflicts through concerned and collaborative efforts of the governments at all levels in Nigeria have not yielded the desired results. This appalling situation has necessitated the intervention of Non-Governmental Organisations in post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria, aimed at bringing a lasting solution to this cankerworm. The specific objectives of the paper are to find out the roles of Non-Governmental Organisations in post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria under the present democratic dispensation and to examine the likely challenges faced by Non-Governmental Organisations in post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria. The paper adopted a qualitative research methodology where data were collected from secondary sources. The paper finds out amongst others that though Non-Governmental Organisations in Nigeria have tried in managing post-conflict issues in the country, the task is still enormous as the majority of the victims are still living in IDPs camps with a low-quality standard of living and no hope of getting back to their ancestral homes as soon as possible. The activities of the genuine Non-Governmental Organisations engaged in post-conflict management in Nigeria have continued to be jeopardised and compounded by the activities of the fake Non-Governmental Organisations, a situation that urgently requires government censorship of the Non-Governmental Organisations operating in the country. It was recommended, amongst others, that NGOs should broaden their efforts to give more permanent rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery, and resettlement of the victims in conflict areas in Nigeria, both rural and urban areas, without any form of discrimination, for a better and sustainable peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Keywords: Conflict, Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, Nigeria, and Non-Governmental Organisations.

Introduction

The conflict phenomenon in contemporary societies, Nigeria inclusive, is constantly evolving and dynamic. Its nature around the globe is currently being explained by the unprecedented level of varying degrees of sub-national conflicts plaguing most countries of the world. Many countries, especially Nigeria, are now witnessing high Intra-State crises, ranging from conflicts between ethnic

groups, religious groups, communities, indigenes/settlers and insurgencies, amongst others.

Africa has faced numerous complex political, economic, environmental, and social upheavals at degrees and intensities never seen on the continent since the turn of the twenty-first century (Cilliers & Mills cited in Galadima, 2006). Due to these difficulties, the continent has seen more catastrophic intra-state conflicts in the past fifteen years than any other continent in the globe. Africa accounted for eight of the fifteen "complex emergencies" that the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs declared. This was captured more succinctly by Galadima (2006) when he asserts thus:

Conflicts erupted into ethnic warfare in Central Africa, Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda. There was an armed uprising in Northern Uganda, a civil war in Sudan and border conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Somalia has remained a collapsed state in spite of attempts to resuscitate it. In southern Africa, Lesotho witnessed an armed uprising. Angola was also in turmoil. In West Africa, Liberia was almost a collapsed state even as rebels battled Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. While Côte d'Ivoire experiences armed rebellion, Sudan is encountering a humanitarian catastrophe arising from a bitter intra-state conflict, almost of a genocidal proportion.

The picture painted above is not different from what is obtainable in Nigeria, as captured by Otite and Albert (1999) when they argued that Nigeria's Social Structure is inherently prone to generate conflicts from diverse ethno-cultural interests and goals, as well as from the political and economic necessities of survival, as individuals and identifiable autonomous social groups struggle for advantages. In support, Mohammed and Yalwa (2018) argued that Nigeria, as a sovereign state, is characterised by the dynamics of crisis, which slow down its development in all ramifications. In the same vein, Chima and Alokpa (2015), corroborate that with the advent of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, violence, civil unrest and ethnic conflicts are unrelenting and the situation is terrible that hardly any month passes without some form of civil disturbances.

In determining the expansion of non-governmental organisations and the history of internally displaced people, it is important to note that since mid-2014, Islamist Boko Haram extremists have significantly expanded their attacks, creating an unprecedented protection problem in Northeastern Nigeria. According to reports, the insurgency has driven 1.5 million people to leave the nation, and at least another 150,000 have sought safety in nearby Cameroon, Niger, and Chad (Cook, 2013;

Abdulazeez, 2016; Lenshie & Henry, 2016, cited in Nwala-Cadger, 2022).

The significance of this discovery stems from the fact that many of Nigeria's interethnic conflicts stem from historical grounds, ethno-philosophies, and even myths involving original and settler claims to lands, water, and grazing resources in the current context (Otite & Albert, 1999). Political crises, ethno-religious conflicts, civil wars, the current indigenous/settler divide, threats of secession by certain parts of the country, and the recent Boko Haram insurgency that devastated nearly all of Northern Nigeria, especially the North-Eastern Nigeria, with a massacre of deaths, are all examples of Nigeria's conflict. (Mohammed & Yalwa, 2018).

The ill political will on the part of the government to address the post-conflict phenomena, particularly in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, became an issue which has drawn the attention of both Local and International Communities. This development had equally drawn the attention of non-governmental organisations in handling humanitarian services and various internally displaced camps of the region (Mohammed & Yalwa, 2018).

The increasing number and activities of NGOs in Nigeria aimed at meeting the rising spate of post-conflict issues in the country have necessitated the need to examine the roles of non-governmental organisations in the post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, finds its relevance in the existing gap in the literature in the area of the roles of Non-Governmental Organisations in post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria, 1999- 2025, which to the best of my knowledge has not captured the attention of researchers, whose interests are rather on the general roles of Non-Governmental Organisations in conflict management in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian state has continued to suffer from a plethora of conflicts, such as identity, political, ethnic, religious, inter-cum, and intra-communal conflicts, since her return to the present democratic rule. The issue of indigene-settler or state of origin syndrome in recent times has equally contributed in fanning the embers of conflict in Nigeria within this period under review.

The country is currently experiencing several conflicts, such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, the Niger Delta militancy in the south-south, the IPOB in the southeast, and disputes between farmers and herders and indigenous people and settlers throughout the country, among others. According to Ogbonna *et al.* (2003), cited in Njoku, *et al* (2025), Nigeria has experienced security threats from the farmer-herder conflict in the North-Central Zone, Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, banditry in the North-West, and marine tensions in the coastal states within the South-South Zone. According to the Economist (2001) cited in Chima and Alokpa (2015), more than 6,000 people have been killed in civil unrest since 1999. The Muslim-Christian divide has defined the combatants. In February 2000, fighting in Kaduna claimed almost 2000 lives, and hundreds more in Aba the following month. Similar conflicts in June 2001 claimed hundreds of lives in Bauchi State and over 500 in Jos.

This situation has adversely affected conflict management strategies adopted in Nigeria to the extent that the efforts of the Nigerian government to eradicate this perennial problem have almost defied all situations. Conflicts have continued to resurface and submerge many parts of the country after a short period of settlement and resolution,

due to poor post-conflict management strategies. According to Chima and Alokpa (2015), the government's attempts to handle disputes in Nigeria have mostly failed since they frequently start with the involvement of the military and police, who occasionally enforce curfews from dark to dawn and/or erect roadblocks for stop and search operations. After the crisis area has calmed down and the refugees have been gathered in a camp, a committee will be established to determine the extent of property and human damage, identify both immediate and distant causes, and provide recommendations through a white paper on how to prevent future recurrence. Most of the time, these suggestions are not carried out. The outcome is that the crisis will recur in the future.

The desire for effective and efficient handling of post-conflict issues to achieve the needed peace and stability in conflict areas in Nigeria has resulted in the engagement of the Non-Governmental Organisations in post-conflict management in the country. Chima and Alokpa (2015), opined that over eighty notable major eruptions of civil disturbances between May 1999 and May 2004 in Nigeria, 17 or 21% of the total number were recorded in Plateau State alone. Despite coordinated attempts by the federal and state administrations to resolve the issues in Plateau State, the outcomes have not been particularly favourable or productive. As a result, on May 18, 2004, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the Federal Republic of Nigeria's president at the time, declared a state of emergency.

In addition to adding to the dearth of literature on non-governmental organisations and post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria, the paper is important because it advances knowledge of the functions and difficulties of non-governmental organisations in Nigeria in order to guarantee that both state and non-state actors, as well as the general public, effectively manage post-conflict situations in the nation.

Justification

Despite extensive literature on conflict management in Nigeria, scholarly attention to the specific contributions of NGOs in post-conflict peacebuilding during the democratic era remains limited. Most existing studies examine either the general roles of NGOs in conflict management or focus narrowly on specific organisations, particular states, or isolated aspects of NGO engagement. There is a notable absence of comprehensive analysis that synthesises evidence across different regions and conflicts, examines the theoretical foundations of NGO interventions, and evaluates both contributions and constraints systematically over the 1999-2025 period.

This study addresses this gap by providing a holistic account of NGO roles in post-conflict peacebuilding across Nigeria's democratic experience. By applying Human Needs Theory as an analytical framework, the research goes beyond descriptive cataloguing to examine how NGO interventions address or fail to address the fundamental needs that underlie violent conflict. This theoretical grounding enables assessment of whether interventions move beyond temporary relief to tackle deeper issues of recognition, participation, and socio-economic justice that determine the sustainability of peace.

Furthermore, the study contributes to policy-relevant knowledge by identifying structural constraints that limit NGO effectiveness and proposing concrete mechanisms for enhanced state-NGO collaboration. In a context where governmental capacity remains strained and conflicts

continue to erupt, understanding how non-state actors can more effectively complement official peacebuilding efforts carries significant practical importance.

Non-Governmental Organisations: Etymological Perspectives

Non-governmental organisations, or simply NGOs, are not as new as many would think. The phenomenon has existed for many decades. This missing link has contributed to misconceptions about the term NGOs, its roles and structures in recent times. According to Amadi cited in Chuku and Ogoloma, (2012), the history of NGOs dates back to 1839. The growth of NGOs was rapid; between 1904 and 1914, when Rotary International was formed, an estimated 1,083 NGOs existed globally. According to the World Bank (cited in Mali & Rinkat, 2021), the term non-governmental organisations came into currency in 1945 because of the need for the UN to differentiate in its charter between participation rights for intergovernmental specialised agencies and those for international private organisations. They equally noted that almost any kind of private organisation can be recognised as an NGO at the UN. They just need to be non-profit, non-criminal, human rights-focused, or autonomous from governments as a political party.

According to Irrera's claim cited in (Isaiah, 2019), NGOs began to function similarly to UN peacekeeping missions in the early 1990s. Since then, they have developed various strategies to maintain their global neutrality and independence, and it is evident that both humanitarian intervention and conflict resolution have been their primary motivation for accomplishing their goal. The distinction between international organisations and NGOs is that, despite having the same place of operation, their principles differ with regard to humanitarian work and participation in the peacebuilding process. Sharma, Sadana, and Kaur (2012) claim that the fiscal crisis—that is, budget cuts—the slow economy, economic recession, the end of the Cold War, the wave of democratic opening, increased use of public bilateral and multilateral resources, privatisation, shifts in ideology or the new policy agenda, and rising demand are all contributing factors to the growth of NGOs.

NGOs have existed in Nigeria since the country's early years of independence, which was brought about by colonial authority. However, a number of post-independence factors, including military rule, authoritarianism, religious violence, ethnicity, and corruption, contributed to the rise of NGOS in Nigeria. (Iheme cited in Chuku & Ogoloma 2012). Consequently, the concept of non-governmental organisation has continued to beg for property situated perspectives. No wonder, Madunagu (2000) stressed that we encounter an unusual problem when we come to defining NGOS. To him still, we see the thing all around us, but we cannot define it. we know what they do or proclaim to be doing, but we cannot say precisely what they are. Nigeria must have at least 250,000 NGOS, with at least 25% of them located in Lagos alone. There are at least 2,000 NGOs in Cross River State. ...the fact that this pervasive phenomenon defies a strict definition is part of this issue. NGOs are a part of civil society that is not represented by the government and engages in employment, empowerment, welfare programmes, and conflict prevention (Onodugo, *et al*, 2021). Seven characteristics typically set non-governmental organisations (NGOs) apart from other civil society organisations. They are self-

serving but focused on humanitarian goals and initiatives; they are voluntary, financially independent, run by an independent volunteer board of directors chosen regularly by the membership; they have a clearly defined constituency and are answerable to that constituency; they have formal legal status; they have a permanent headquarters; and they employ professional or volunteer staff (Ogoloma, 2012).

The World Bank defined non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as numerous organisations with humanitarian or cooperative goals rather than commercial ones that are wholly or mostly independent of the government. These include member groups in villages, indigenous organisations organised on a regional or national level, and private organisations in industrialised nations that promote global development. NGOs include religious and charity organisations that support community organisation, offer food and family planning services, and raise private cash for development. Additionally, they consist of neighbourhood associations, autonomous cooperatives, etc. (Mohammed & Yalwa, 2018).

An organisation that operates independently of governments and their policies is known as an NGO. An independent, adaptable, democratic, secular, non-profit people's organisation that works for and/or supports the empowerment of socially and economically underprivileged groups is known as an NGO. NGOs are also called voluntary agencies or private voluntary agencies. Other terms used interchangeably with NGOS are community Based Organisation (CBO), Non-governmental Development Organisation (NGDOs), Private Development Organisation (PDO), Voluntary Organisations (VO) etc (Sharma, Sandana & Kaur, 2012). NGOs are simply private non-profit volunteer organisations that assist in meeting the development needs of the society through the provision of humanitarian services to vulnerable segments of the population.

Empirical Review and Research Gaps

Scholarly literature on NGOs and post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria has grown substantially over the past decade, reflecting both the intensification of conflicts and the proliferation of humanitarian interventions. However, existing studies remain largely localised, focusing on specific states, particular organisations, or isolated aspects of NGO engagement.

Chima and Alokpa (2015) conducted an important study on non-governmental organisations and conflict management in Plateau State, documenting how NGOs participated in peace education, relief distribution, and the formation of community-based peace teams. Their research revealed that NGOs established Local Emergency Preparedness and Response Teams (LEPRT) in all 17 local government areas of Plateau State, provided assistance to conflict victims, and conducted peace education programmes in affected communities. Despite these efforts, the study noted that conflicts continued to recur, partly because government recommendations were not implemented and partly because NGO interventions remained insufficient in scale and scope.

Mohammed and Yalwa (2018) examined NGO roles in post-conflict peacebuilding, specifically in North-East Nigeria, focusing on interventions in IDP contexts. They identified key roles including provision of relief materials, establishment of schools for displaced children, counterpart funding arrangements with federal and state governments, provision of healthcare services, advocacy

campaigns targeting youth involvement in insurgency, and resettlement programmes for displaced persons. However, their study also documented significant challenges, including diversion of relief materials by corrupt officials, proliferation of fake NGOs without proper accreditation, profit-seeking behaviour under humanitarian guise, urban concentration of activities at the expense of rural areas, sexual violence in camps, and contradictory security reporting that generated tensions between NGOs and military forces.

Mali and Rinkat (2021) investigated peacebuilding strategies employed by NGOs to mitigate the effects of the Boko Haram crisis in North-East Nigeria, with particular focus on Yobe State. Their research catalogued NGO missions including establishing schools for displaced children, assisting vulnerable populations while promoting self-reliance, coordinating with local leadership, facilitating socio-economic progress through cooperative formation, providing health and nutrition services, partnering with rather than opposing government, creating awareness to address social problems, and promoting positive attitudes towards security and integration. Their findings emphasised the scale of humanitarian need and the critical role NGOs played in filling gaps left by insufficient government response.

Nwala-Cadger (2022) examined challenges to effective humanitarian service implementation by NGOs in IDP camps in North-Eastern Nigeria. The study identified three major constraint categories: role conflict among humanitarian interventionists, characterised by duplication of duties and inter-agency competition that slowed progress; inadequate government support despite non-obstruction, resulting in insufficient resources and materials; and communal identity dynamics among IDPs, who aligned themselves with community-based groups in ways that complicated camp organisation and created opportunities for manipulation of shelter assignments.

Onudugo, Odo, and Onudugo (2021) provided a broader continental perspective on NGOs, conflict, and peacebuilding in Africa, noting that NGOs facilitate linkages between global, regional, and organisational structures, thereby addressing trickle-up and trickle-down conflict dynamics. They documented NGO engagement in problem-solving workshops and seminars targeting internal conflicts in Nigeria, including religious crises in Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, and Plateau States, and the Enugu-Ezike crisis in Enugu State. Particularly, women's groups conducted a series of meetings that facilitated dialogue, problem mapping, identification of relationship dynamics, planning of relationship transformation steps, and devising implementation mechanisms. However, the study also identified constraints, including inadequate funding, poor governance, absence of strategic planning, weak networking, and political interference.

Additional empirical work has examined specific organisations' contributions. Studies of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), established in Nigeria in 1963 with mandate derived from the 1949 Geneva Conventions, documented its role during the Nigerian Civil War and subsequent conflicts in providing medical services, training practitioners, war surgery expertise, emergency care, first aid, pharmaceutical supplies, physiotherapy, and orthopedic rehabilitation for war-disabled persons (Chuku & Ogoloma, 2012).

Gaps in Existing Literature

While these empirical studies provide valuable insights into NGO activities in conflict-affected settings in Nigeria, several gaps remain. First, existing research is largely localised, focusing on single states (Plateau, Yobe) or specific conflicts (Boko Haram, Jos crises), without broader synthesis across regions and conflict types. Second, most studies lack explicit theoretical frameworks to guide analysis, resulting in descriptive rather than analytical accounts. Third, temporal scope is limited, with few studies examining trends across the entire democratic era from 1999 to 2025. Fourth, the relationship between the types of interventions NGOs undertake and the underlying needs they address or fail to address has not been systematically explored. Fifth, the proliferation of fake NGOs and the regulatory challenges this creates have been noted but not thoroughly analysed. Finally, the question of whether NGO interventions move beyond temporary relief to address structural causes of conflict and promote durable peace remains inadequately examined.

This study responds to these gaps by providing a comprehensive synthesis of NGO roles and challenges across Nigeria's post-conflict environments over the 1999-2025 period, grounded in Human Needs Theory as an analytical framework. By integrating evidence from different regions and conflicts, applying theoretical analysis to assess the depth and sustainability of interventions, and examining both contributions and constraints systematically, the study aims to advance both scholarly understanding and policy-relevant knowledge regarding NGO-led post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This phenomenon under investigation is underpinned by John Burton's Human Needs Theory (1990). The theory emphasises the importance of addressing the underlying needs of all parties involved in a conflict in order to achieve lasting peace. Understanding the underlying causes of conflicts helps develop effective resolution strategies. Addressing root causes through needs-based approaches prevents future conflicts by removing structural conditions that generate grievances and mobilise violence. The theory equally stresses that identifying which needs remain unmet and how they contribute to regenerating conflicts after settlements helps develop effective post-conflict peacebuilding strategies.

By implication, non-governmental organisations that engage in post-conflict management in Nigeria undertake studies of the parties to a conflict with the intention of understanding the needs of these parties—whether economic, social, political, religious, or psychological—which constitute the underlying causes of their conflicts. After understanding the needs and demands of these parties to conflicts, non-governmental organisations attempt to identify the needs that have been met at the point of peacebuilding and focus on the unmet needs of the parties for sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding.

The provision of unmet needs to the parties in conflict ensures that situations capable of re-igniting conflicts in conflict-prone areas are adequately addressed. With this approach, the chances of any of the parties in conflict reengaging in conflict situations become remote.

Relevance of Human Needs Theory to This Study

Human Needs Theory provides a particularly suitable framework for analysing both the emergence and persistence of conflicts in Nigeria and the nature of post-

conflict peacebuilding interventions undertaken by non-governmental organisations. Many conflicts examined in this study—including the Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta militancy, farmer-herder clashes, indigene-settler disputes, and ethno-religious violence—are fundamentally rooted in perceived denial of security, identity, access to resources, political inclusion, and socio-economic opportunities.

In the North-East, for instance, Boko Haram's origins can be traced partly to systematic marginalisation, poverty, educational deprivation, and exclusion from political processes—all constituting denial of fundamental needs. Similarly, Niger Delta militancy emerged from decades of environmental degradation, economic exploitation, and political marginalisation that denied local communities access to the benefits of resources extracted from their territory. Farmer-herder conflicts reflect competition over access to essential resources (land, water, grazing routes) necessary for economic survival and group identity. Indigene-settler tensions manifest in struggles for recognition, political participation, and access to opportunities in particular localities.

NGOs engaged in post-conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria attempt to address these unmet needs through various interventions: humanitarian relief addresses immediate survival needs; provision of health and educational services tackles developmental needs; livelihood support programmes address economic security needs; psychosocial counselling responds to psychological and dignity needs; community dialogue initiatives facilitate recognition and participation needs; and advocacy for inclusive policies aims at structural transformation to prevent need-denial in the future. By focusing on the basic needs of internally displaced persons and conflict-affected communities, NGOs help reduce grievances that could otherwise fuel renewed violence.

Analytically, Human Needs Theory provides a framework for assessing whether NGO interventions in post-conflict contexts transcend temporary relief to tackle deeper issues of recognition, participation, and socio-economic justice. It enables evaluation of the comprehensiveness and sustainability of interventions: Do they address only immediate survival needs or also developmental and psychological needs? Do they promote inclusion and participation or merely provide material assistance? Are interventions designed to transform structural conditions that deny needs, or do they simply manage symptoms? The theory also guides discussion of the challenges NGOs face in post-conflict peacebuilding. Where funding is short-term and project-based, NGOs can address only immediate survival needs, leaving deeper developmental and structural needs unmet. Where interventions are geographically limited to urban areas, rural populations' needs remain unaddressed, perpetuating grievances. Where political interference undermines NGO work or where fake NGOs divert resources, the basic needs of victims are only partially met, and the risk of relapse into conflict persists.

Thus, Human Needs Theory offers both an explanatory lens for understanding the roots of Nigerian conflicts and a normative benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of NGO-led post-conflict peacebuilding. It highlights that sustainable peace requires not merely ending violence but addressing the fundamental needs whose denial generated violence in the first place.

Roles of Non-Governmental Organisations in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Nigeria

It is a truism that conflict is a fact of life and no society whether developed or developing is free from its devastating effects on the lives and property of its citizens. This is supported by the observation that conflict is a universal and permanent attribute of nature, life, and society, both necessary and unavoidable (Uwaoma, Njoku, & Nkwocha, 2018). Man's nature makes him complain about other people's activities. Social conflict is therefore considered an inevitable phenomenon since man must live among other people and societies must exist alongside one another. What is considered important in human relations studies is finding ways of managing conflict levels and preventing escalation to destructive violence.

No government in the world has all the resources required to meet the requirements of its citizens in terms of development. Non-governmental organisations have historically filled the void in areas where government attention is insufficient because of a lack of resources by supporting their development (Chuku & Ogoloma, 2012). They also contend that a large portion of Africa today relies on NGOs both inside and outside the continent. NGOs actively combat hunger, poverty, illiteracy, disease, and drought.

Chapter 27 of Agenda 21 (Earth Summit 1992) acknowledged the critical role of NGOs and other significant groups in sustainable development, which prompted extensive procedures for a consultative relationship between the UN and non-governmental organisations engaged in humanitarian action.

One of the most significant issues in the conflict resolution genre pertaining to the trickle-up and down impacts of conflicts is resolved by NGOs through their function of establishing a linkage between global, regional, and organisational structures (Henning cited in Onudugo *et al.*, 2021). This is due to the fact that NGOs carry out humanitarian, developmental, human rights, and conflict resolution initiatives that improve the peace-making process (Onudugo, *et al.*, 2021).

The main role of NGOs includes alleviating suffering and humanitarian assistance to the civilians. In different parts of the world today, the NGOs have been involved in a variety of roles which includes; playing an intermediary role, monitoring and providing early warning measures of any emerging violence, provide platform for dialogue between the rival parties, supporting the rule of law and consolidating local institutions in resolving any form of conflict that exists (Arenas, Lozano & Albareda cited in Isaiah, 2019).

Any NGO's primary goal is to improve the lives of the people it serves by giving them access to necessary services that the government finds difficult or unable to offer. NGOs generally function under the tenet that civil society members have the freedom to direct their own lives without interference from the government (Sina cited in Chuku and Ogoloma, 2012).

SINA's view point demonstrates the inevitable role of the NGOs in our contemporary Nigerian society where peace has eluded Nigerians due to the incessant plethora of conflicts ravaging the different parts of the nation. The leadership's lack of dedication or, better still, the government's overall lack of political will to fight the menace of conflict has brought the necessity of the NGOs filling this gap to the fore, just to bring positive changes to the lives of Nigerians particularly those in the conflict prone areas.

In cultures, conflict resolution serves a therapeutic purpose. By facilitating discussions and putting parties in conflict in situations where they can choose alternative positive decisions to resolve differences, it restores normalcy in societies and offers the opportunity to examine alternative payoffs in a situation of positioned disagreements (Otite & Albert, 1999). They believed that, as was the case with the Ife-Modakeke Yoruba, the Tiv-Jukun of Nigeria, and the Hufu-Tutsi of Burundi and Rwanda, failure to settle disputes over access to shared scarce resources and differing perspectives of sociopolitical circumstances has a high potential to turn into genocide. Building consensus, rebuilding social bridges, and reenacting societal order are all facilitated by conflict resolution. Generally, NGOs play crucial roles in post-conflict situations in Nigeria.

Post-conflict situation is described by (Mohammed & Yalwa 2018) as a phenomenon which occurred after the conflict, even though there are pockets of conflicts or insurgents in the area leading to new developments such as IDP camps, humanitarian bodies and other settlement activities. Harris and Lewis (1999) cited in Madu (2015) considered post- conflict situations as an aspect of peace building when they argued that peace building strategies are applicable to pre-conflict, in-conflict and post- conflict situations which include all manner of people -to-people interactions which focus on increasing understanding and cooperation between groups or They further viewed post-conflict Peacebuilding as measures which aimed to solve the structural causes of violence, leading to reduced inequality and injustice in order to ensure that conflicts do not recur. It also entails regenerating peaceful relations between people and communities in order to convert confrontation and enemy images into cooperation and partnership.

Consequently, Non-Governmental Organisations as a body, plays crucial roles in complementing the efforts of the governments in post conflict situations or post-conflict peacebuilding particularly in Nigeria. According to Madu (2015) those who work for peace have to pay much attention to structural violence as underlying cause of conflict, and they must actively engage in peacebuilding to redress inequalities and remove oppressive structures. (Mohammed & Yalwa, 2018) articulated the following as roles of Non- Governmental Organisations in post- conflict peacebuilding in Nigeria: first, the distribution of humanitarian supplies to internally displaced people, as determined by NGOs, in an effort to lessen their suffering. Second, the creation of schools for internally displaced people. because the region has millions of children who are not in school. Third, to help internally displaced people with some of their basic needs, NGOs have partnered with the federal government and the states in the area to provide counterpart funding. The fourth, is offering medical assistance to conflict victims. Fifth, a campaign of advocacy and awareness regarding the implications of youth involvement in insurgency and the necessity of educating people about entrepreneurial skills and careers. Six, internally displaced people are relocated to other camps for appropriate care.

According to Kalagbor cited in (Chuku and Ogoloma, 2012) note that in addition to establishing hospitals, NGOs trained medical practitioners. Numerous NGOs helped the victims of the Nigerian Civil War. The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), which was founded in 1963, was one of the most notable of them. The 1949 Geneva Conventions provided this organisation with its

mandate. One of the parts of the International Red Cross, the ICRC is a humanitarian organisation dedicated to upholding international law that seeks to safeguard victims of armed conflict and suffering. They added that the other two organisations, the League of Red Cross and Red Cross Crescent Societies RCCS, offer knowledge and support in the areas of war, surgery, emergency care during conflicts, First Aid, basic pharmaceutical and medical supplies for emergencies, physiotherapy, and orthopaedic rehabilitation for individuals who have been disabled by war.

According to Mali and Rinkat (2021), non-governmental organisations are established with a variety of goals in post-conflict environments. Divergences in each humanitarian agency's targets and objectives can be seen depending on the region or local difficulties and demands, but everywhere, the primary goal of humanitarian agencies is the much-needed promotion of peace, assistance to those in need, and service to mankind. The humanitarian organisations were founded with the following goals and objectives in order to carry out their activities in Yobe State, Nigeria: firstly, since there are millions of children in that area who are not in school, schools for internally displaced people should be established. Secondly, using one's own resources to exercise self-control while also helping those in need. Thirdly, identifying with local leadership and making sure that welfare and development are used effectively. Fourthly, organising initiatives that will enhance the lives of those who are disadvantaged by forming partnerships and so promoting socioeconomic advancement. Fifthly, nutrition and health services. Sixth, behaving as allies of the government rather than rivals or oppressors. Seventh, raising awareness to overcome unique societal issues and obstacles in addition to taking the required actions to educate the public. Eight, fostering a positive outlook on security, eradicating superstition, and believing in those who are neglected in the mainstream of life.

As stated by Onudugo *et al.* (2021). In order to address internal disputes, like as the religious crises in Kano and Kaduna States, the Bauchi and Plateau States, and the Enugu-Ezike crisis in Enugu State, NGOs hold problem-solving workshops and seminars. Particularly, the women's groups held a number of meetings that led to the following: first choosing to have a conversation to address issues that are unbearable to both parties; second, collaborating to identify the components of the issues and the connections that sustain them; third, identifying the relationships' fundamental dynamics and starting to see how they can be altered, fourth coordinating actions to transform the connection; first, creating strategies to carry out their plans.

More so, the study carried out by Chima and Alokpa (2015) on Non- Governmental Organisations and conflict management in Plateau State, Nigeria, supports the aforesaid by indicating that Non- Governmental Organisations have indeed played important role in the areas of post conflict management through the provision of assistance to victims of conflict, peace education in the affected communities, formation of peace teams like Local Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (LEPRT) in the 17 local government areas of Plateau State. Mani (2002) cited in Madu (2015) identified two objectives of peacebuilding to include avoiding a relapse into conflict and consolidating peace by creating conditions conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery.

Challenges of Non-Governmental Organisations in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Nigeria

Undoubtedly, meeting the goals of restoring permanent peace in conflict-devastating areas particularly in Nigeria has remained a challenging task. The non-governmental organisations that engage in humanitarian services in these conflict-affected areas of Nigeria face various challenges in a bid to realize their set goals and objectives.

Onudugo *et al.* (2021) identified the following as the challenges that non-governmental organisations face in the management of post-conflict situations in the country: insufficient funds, ineffective governance, lack of strategic planning, weak networking, and political meddling.

Mohammed and Yalwa (2018) summarise the challenges faced by NGOs in managing post-conflict crises in Nigeria's affected regions as follows: 1) Some unpatriotic officials entrusted with public resources divert relief materials. 2) Fake NGOs operating without proper accreditation have tarnished the reputation of NGOs in post-conflict zones. 3) Certain NGOs exploit humanitarian aid to increase profits, as resources are allocated for specific projects or missions, hindering effective crisis management. 4) Many NGOS focus their activities in urban centres, neglecting rural areas where needs are greater. 5) Widespread sexual violence presents a significant challenge to NGO efforts in these areas. 6) Conflicting reports by NGOs regarding security conditions in IDP camps have led to clashes and tensions with military forces.

According to Nwala-Cadger (2022), NGOS providing humanitarian aid in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in North-Eastern Nigeria face several challenges. These include role conflicts among interventionists, where overlapping duties and perceived superiority hinder progress toward humanitarian goals. While the government has not actively obstructed NGO efforts, it also has not provided the expected support, resulting in a shortage of relief materials and resources essential for effective aid. Additionally, IDPs are increasingly identifying with their communities, complicating camp organisation efforts. They seek to influence their placement in shelters to stay close to their community members, which adds to the complexity of camp management.

Conclusion

Nigeria has experienced persistent and multifaceted conflicts over the past two and a half decades of democratic governance, with profound humanitarian, social, and economic consequences. Government responses at federal, state, and local levels, while extensive, have proven inadequate to prevent conflict recurrence or to comprehensively address post-conflict recovery needs. The imperative to fill this humanitarian gap attracted the attention of numerous non-governmental organisations to provide alternative positive changes in the lives of the vulnerable segments of the Nigerian population as a remedy to the poor post-conflict management strategies experienced in Nigeria.

These humanitarian, self-serving, and non-profit organisations have been performing tremendously in providing lasting peace and succor to the victims of conflict in Nigeria through the provision of relief materials, workshops, schools, hospitals, and medical personnel, houses, etc. Though the task is still enormous as the majority of the victims are still living in IDP camps with low-quality standards of living and no hope of getting

back to their ancestral homes as soon as possible. The activities of the genuine non-governmental organisations engaged in post-conflict management in Nigeria have continued to be jeopardized and compounded by the activities of the fake non-governmental organisations, a situation which now urgently requires government censorship and regulation of the non-governmental organisations operating in the country.

Recommendations: The paper makes the following recommendations:

- 1) The NGOs should broaden their efforts to give permanent rehabilitation, reconstruction and resettlement to the victims of conflict situations in both rural and urban areas in Nigeria without discrimination for a better sustainable peacebuilding and existence of all victims.
- 2) The governments, federal, state and local governments should stretch their efforts beyond the building of IDPs camps and supply of relief materials to the victims as efforts should include resettlement of the victims permanently in their former localities for better and qualitative post- conflict peaceful existence.
- 3) There should be a strong collaboration and synergy between the government and the Non- Governmental Organisations for a more effective and balance approach towards a lasting post- conflict management in Nigeria.
- 4) The Nigerian governments should endeavour to monitor the activities of the Non- Governmental Organisations that engage in post- conflict peacebuilding programmes by making sure that only registered Non-governmental Organisations are allowed to operate within the ambit of the law for the best interests of the victims.
- 5) The IDPs with the same communal identity and affiliations should be allowed to live together in the IDPs camps for easy organisation and reintegration

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