

An Evaluation of Women's Contributions to Conflict Resolution in Nasarawa State, 1996–2024

Adenibi Adewale Sewedo

Department of History and International Studies, Federal University of Lafia
Email: omobaoru71@gmail.com

Joseph Ezekiel Obuje

Department of History and International Studies, Federal University of Lafia
Email: Ezekielobuje@gmail.com

Kyegh, Thaddeus Aov

Department of History and International Studies, Federal University of Lafia
Email: kyeghaov@gmail.com

Abstract: This study looked at the impact and challenges of women contributions to conflict resolution in Nasarawa State between 1996 and 2024, with emphasis on their roles in promoting peace, reconciliation, mediation, and post-conflict recovery across communities affected by communal, ethnic, religious, and farmer-herder conflicts. Since the creation of Nasarawa State in 1996, recurring conflicts have threatened social cohesion and sustainable development, yet women have remained indispensable actors in both formal and informal peacebuilding processes despite receiving limited scholarly and policy recognition. The study examines the strategies employed by women's groups, traditional female institutions, faith-based organizations, community associations, and civil society organizations in preventing violence, facilitating dialogue, supporting displaced persons, and rebuilding trust among conflicting communities. The research adopts the historical methodology, utilizing primary sources through oral interviews, alongside secondary sources including books, journal articles, government documents, and reports. Findings reveal that women made significant contributions through grassroots mediation, humanitarian assistance, advocacy, early warning mechanisms, and peace education, thereby fostering community resilience and social stability. However, their effectiveness was constrained by patriarchal norms, inadequate representation in formal peace structures, limited funding, insecurity, and weak institutional support. The study concludes that strengthening women's inclusion in conflict resolution mechanisms and public decision-making is essential for achieving sustainable peace and security in Nasarawa State.

Keywords: violence, facilitating dialogue, warning mechanisms, social cohesion

INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in peace-building initiatives has gained increasing recognition as a critical component in promoting internal security and sustainable peace. Women often play significant roles in conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction, yet their contributions have historically been overlooked in formal peace processes [1]. The United Nations

Security Council Resolution 1325 underscored the need for greater inclusion of women in peace and security efforts, emphasising their unique perspectives and abilities in fostering reconciliation and stability [2].

In many conflict-prone states in Africa, women-led peace-building initiatives have proven effective in addressing root causes of instability, fostering social cohesion, and mitigating violent extremism. Women engage in grassroots activism, mediate between conflicting parties, and work to rehabilitate war-affected populations, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and holistic approach to security [3]. Additionally, women's roles in disarmament, reintegration of ex-combatants, and community peace education further highlight their indispensable role in maintaining internal security. In Nasarawa State, Nigeria, women play a vital role in peace-building and internal security by mediating conflicts, countering violent extremism, and fostering community reconciliation. Initiatives such as the Women Peace Forum (WPF) and Nasarawa Women Peace Initiative (NWPI) work to resolve disputes and prevent radicalization [4].

The Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) has also contributed to easing farmer-herder tensions by promoting dialogue and resource-sharing mechanisms. The Nasarawa State government has integrated women into security committees and community policing structures, strengthening their participation in conflict resolution. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has collaborated with security agencies to train women in early warning response systems, while the establishment of Women Peace Brigades has enhanced community security and social cohesion. However, limited access to decision-making roles, inadequate funding for women-led initiatives, and cultural restrictions hinder their full participation [5], [6].

The "concept of woman" refers to the understanding, perception, and representation of the female gender within various cultural, social, historical, and philosophical contexts. It encompasses both biological and sociocultural aspects of femininity. The concept of woman can vary widely across different societies, eras, and belief systems, leading to diverse definitions and expectations of what it means to be a woman [7]. The key elements that contribute to the concept of woman includes: Biological Aspects, Socio-cultural Roles, Gender Identity, Femininity, Social Constructs and Expectations.

The study is anchored on "Feminist Peace Theory", as a theoretical framework in peace and conflict studies which emphasises the importance of gender perspectives in understanding the causes of conflict and the processes of peacebuilding. The theory developed from feminist scholarship in international relations and peace studies during the late twentieth century, particularly through the works of scholars such as Cynthia Enloe, Carol Cohn, and Betty Reardon in the 1980s and 1990s. These scholars challenged the traditional security theories that focused primarily on the state and military power while neglecting the experiences and contributions of women in conflict situations [8]. Feminist Peace Theory argues that women experience the impacts of war and violence differently and therefore bring unique perspectives to peacebuilding processes. The basic argument of the theory is that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations, conflict mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction. It further emphasizes that women often prioritize dialogue, reconciliation, social justice, and community welfare in conflict resolution, which makes their involvement essential for achieving long-term peace and stability [9].

The relevance of Feminist Peace Theory to the study of Women Peace-Building Initiatives and Internal Security in Nasarawa State, 1996–2024 lies in its emphasis on the critical role of women in grassroots peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Since the creation of Nasarawa State in 1996, the state has experienced several communal conflicts, including ethnic clashes and farmer-herder disputes, which have threatened internal security and social stability

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Impact of Women's Mediation and Dialogue Efforts on Security Stability

The impact of women's mediation and dialogue efforts on security stability in Nasarawa State has been significant since the creation of the state in 1996. Nasarawa State, located in Nigeria's Middle Belt region, has experienced several forms of conflict including communal clashes, farmer-herder disputes, political violence, and resource-based conflicts. These conflicts

have occurred in various local government areas such as Toto, Awe, Doma, Keana, Lafia, and Nasarawa. Within this volatile environment, women have played crucial roles in promoting dialogue and reconciliation aimed at restoring peace and stability. Women's mediation efforts often occur at the grassroots level where they interact daily with families, youths, religious groups, and community leaders. Through informal negotiations, peace meetings, and community dialogue platforms, women have contributed to reducing tensions among conflicting groups. Their approaches to mediation typically emphasise persuasion, empathy, and communal responsibility rather than confrontation. As a result, women's peace initiatives have helped to strengthen social cohesion and prevent the escalation of disputes into prolonged violence. Evaluating the impact of these mediation efforts across the various conflicts in Nasarawa State demonstrates that women's involvement has been an important factor in sustaining community security and encouraging peaceful conflict resolution.

Some of the earliest major conflicts in Nasarawa State after its creation occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s involving tensions between farming communities and pastoralist groups in several rural areas. These disputes were largely triggered by competition over land, grazing routes, and water resources. During these conflicts, women from farming and pastoralist communities frequently intervened through dialogue initiatives aimed at preventing violence. Market women associations, which often included members from different ethnic backgrounds, served as informal platforms where grievances were discussed and misunderstandings clarified. Women also appealed to community elders and youth leaders to prioritise peaceful negotiations rather than violent confrontation. The impact of these mediation efforts was particularly evident in communities where women organised meetings between farmers and herders to discuss issues related to crop destruction, cattle grazing, and compensation arrangements. These dialogue efforts helped reduce tensions and encouraged the development of locally negotiated agreements regulating access to farmland and grazing areas. By promoting communication between groups that depended on the same resources for survival, women contributed significantly to maintaining relative stability in rural communities experiencing resource-based conflicts.

Another important example of women's mediation impact can be observed in the communal conflicts that occurred in Toto Local Government Area during the early 2000s. These conflicts often involved disputes between different ethnic groups over political representation, land ownership, and traditional authority. The violence led to displacement and destruction of property in several communities. In response, women's groups from affected communities initiated dialogue meetings aimed at encouraging reconciliation between conflicting groups. Women leaders visited neighboring communities to deliver peace messages and appealed to both sides to end hostilities. Religious women organizations also organized interfaith prayer sessions and community discussions that emphasized forgiveness and coexistence. These mediation efforts played an important role in reducing hostility and encouraging displaced families to return to their homes. The presence of women as mediators often created an atmosphere of neutrality because they were not perceived as direct political competitors. Consequently, their involvement helped reopen channels of communication between conflicting groups and contributed to restoring a degree of stability in communities affected by the Toto conflicts.

Women's mediation and dialogue efforts also played a crucial role during the conflicts between farmers and pastoralists that intensified across Nasarawa State between 2013 and 2018. These conflicts were among the most destructive episodes of violence in the state's recent history, affecting communities in areas such as Doma, Keana, Awe, and parts of Lafia. As violence escalated, women's associations and civil society groups increasingly engaged in peacebuilding initiatives aimed at restoring dialogue between the affected communities. Women organised peace meetings that brought together representatives of farming and pastoralist groups to discuss grievances and explore possible solutions. They also collaborated with local leaders, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations to promote peaceful coexistence. One notable impact of these mediation efforts was the reduction of retaliatory attacks in certain communities where dialogue platforms were successfully established. Women also played important roles in persuading displaced families to participate in reconciliation processes and rebuild relationships with neighboring communities. In addition to mediating disputes directly, women's dialogue

initiatives contributed to strengthening early warning mechanisms for conflict prevention across Nasarawa State. Because women are deeply embedded in social networks within families, markets, and religious institutions, they often receive information about potential conflicts before violence occurs. In several communities, women shared such information with community leaders and security agencies in order to prevent escalation.

Through this role as informal early warning actors, women helped identify emerging tensions related to land disputes, political disagreements, or communal rivalries. Dialogue meetings organised by women's groups often addressed these issues before they could develop into violent confrontations. This preventive approach had a significant impact on security stability because it allowed communities to manage disputes through negotiation rather than violence. Women's mediation efforts therefore contributed not only to conflict resolution but also to conflict prevention across several parts of Nasarawa State.

Women's mediation initiatives also had a major humanitarian impact during periods of violent conflict and displacement. When communities were attacked or forced to flee their homes, women frequently organized support networks to assist victims. These humanitarian activities included providing food, clothing, shelter, and emotional support for displaced families. While providing this assistance, women also facilitated dialogue between displaced populations and host communities in order to prevent further tensions. In many cases, these efforts helped reduce resentment that might have arisen from competition over scarce resources such as land, water, and employment opportunities. Women also encouraged victims of violence to participate in reconciliation initiatives rather than seeking revenge against rival communities. By addressing the social and psychological consequences of violence, women contributed to rebuilding trust and restoring peaceful relations. These humanitarian mediation efforts played a crucial role in stabilising communities recovering from violent conflicts in Nasarawa State.

Women's dialogue initiatives also had a notable impact during periods of political tension and electoral competition in Nasarawa State. Elections in Nigeria's Middle Belt region have sometimes been accompanied by political violence and intimidation. During such periods, women's organisations in Nasarawa State organised peace campaigns and voter education programmes aimed at discouraging violence. These initiatives often involved community meetings, peace marches, and public discussions emphasizing the importance of tolerance and respect for democratic processes. Women leaders encouraged youths to avoid being used as instruments of political violence by rival politicians. Their advocacy also emphasized the social and economic consequences of electoral violence for families and communities. These dialogue efforts helped promote a culture of peaceful political participation and contributed to reducing tensions during election periods. As a result, women's peace campaigns played an important role in strengthening democratic stability and preventing political conflicts from escalating into broader security crises within the state.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaboration between Women and Security Agencies

The collaboration between women and security agencies in Nasarawa State has become an important component of conflict prevention and peacebuilding since the creation of the state in 1996. In response to the challenges, cooperation between community actors and formal security institutions has increasingly been recognised as essential for maintaining peace and stability. Women, who are often deeply embedded within community networks, have played a crucial role in supporting security agencies through information sharing, mediation, and community mobilisation. Their daily interactions within households, markets, farms, and religious institutions enable them to gather valuable information about emerging tensions or suspicious activities. Security agencies such as the police, civil defence corps, and local vigilante groups have gradually acknowledged the importance of women's involvement in maintaining community security. Through dialogue meetings, community policing initiatives, and peace committees, women have collaborated with security personnel to identify potential threats and promote peaceful conflict resolution [10]. This partnership has strengthened early warning mechanisms and improved communication between communities and security authorities. As a result, collaboration between

women and security agencies has contributed significantly to improving security management and fostering stability in various parts of Nasarawa State.

One of the earliest forms of collaboration between women and security agencies in Nasarawa State emerged through community policing initiatives aimed at strengthening local security structures. Community policing emphasises cooperation between residents and law enforcement agencies in identifying and addressing security threats. Women's participation in these initiatives has been particularly valuable because they often possess detailed knowledge about the social dynamics within their communities. Women frequently provide information about emerging disputes, criminal activities, or unusual movements within their neighborhoods. In many rural communities, women have served as intermediaries who communicate community concerns to police officers and local security personnel [11]. Through meetings organized by community leaders and security agencies, women share insights about local tensions that may require intervention. This collaboration helps security agencies respond more effectively to potential conflicts before they escalate into violence. Women also assist in mobilising community members to cooperate with law enforcement authorities during security operations. Their encouragement reporting crimes and support peace initiatives, women strengthen the relationship between communities and security institutions. This partnership has played an important role in enhancing trust between security agencies and local populations across several communities in Nasarawa State.

Another dimension of collaboration between women and security agencies in Nasarawa State can be observed in the management of farmer–herder conflicts that have affected many rural communities. These conflicts often arise from disputes over farmland, grazing routes, and access to water resources [12]. Because women are actively involved in agricultural activities and household livelihoods, they are directly affected by these disputes and therefore play an important role in efforts to manage them. Women's associations often engage security agencies and local authorities when tensions begin to rise between farmers and pastoralists. Through community meetings and mediation forums, women help facilitate dialogue between conflicting groups while security agencies provide the necessary protection to ensure that discussions occur peacefully. Women also share information with security officials regarding movements of armed groups or potential attacks on villages. This collaboration helps security agencies deploy personnel to vulnerable areas and prevent violent confrontations. By working together with security institutions, women contribute to maintaining stability in rural communities that frequently experience resource-based conflicts.

Women's organisations in Nasarawa State have also collaborated with security agencies in addressing issues related to communal violence and ethnic tensions [13]. In communities where historical grievances exist between different ethnic groups tensions can easily escalate into violent clashes. Women's groups often act as peace ambassadors who engage security agencies in promoting dialogue and reconciliation. For example, during periods of communal tension in Agyragu, women leaders worked with police officers, traditional rulers, and local government authorities to organise peace meetings between conflicting communities. This collaborative approach has proven effective in Agyragu and several other communities where dialogue initiatives supported by security agencies helped reduce hostility and restore peaceful relations. The involvement of women in these peacebuilding processes enhances the credibility of security interventions because women are generally perceived as neutral actors who prioritise community welfare over political interests [14].

Another important area of collaboration between women and security agencies in Nasarawa State is the establishment of early warning and early response mechanisms for conflict prevention. Early warning systems rely on timely information about potential threats or tensions within communities. Women play a key role in this process because their social networks allow them to detect signs of conflict at an early stage. For instance, women may notice rising tensions during market interactions, religious gatherings, or community celebrations [15]. When such signs appear, women leaders often communicate with security agencies or local authorities to alert them about possible disturbances. Security agencies can then intervene through mediation, patrols, or dialogue initiatives to prevent violence. This partnership significantly improves the ability of

security institutions to respond proactively rather than reactively to conflicts. The involvement of women in early warning systems therefore strengthens the overall capacity of communities and security agencies to manage security challenges effectively [16].

Collaboration between women and security agencies has also been evident in humanitarian and post-conflict recovery efforts across Nasarawa State. When violent conflicts occur and communities are displaced, women frequently work alongside security agencies and humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to affected populations. Women's groups help identify vulnerable families and ensure that relief materials reach those most in need. Security agencies often rely on women leaders to facilitate communication with displaced persons and host communities. This cooperation helps maintain order within temporary settlements and prevents conflicts from arising among displaced populations [17]. Women also assist security personnel in encouraging displaced families to participate in reconciliation programmes aimed at restoring peaceful coexistence with neighboring communities. Through these activities, women contribute to stabilizing communities recovering from violence and reducing the risk of renewed conflict.

Women have also collaborated with security agencies in peace education and awareness campaigns designed to promote community security. These campaigns often focus on issues such as preventing youth involvement in violence, discouraging the spread of hate speech, and encouraging citizens to report criminal activities. Women's organizations frequently organize community meetings, school outreach programmes, and public discussions where security officials are invited to speak about the importance of cooperation in maintaining peace [18]. Such initiatives create opportunities for community members to interact directly with security personnel and discuss security concerns. Women play an important role in mobilizing participants and facilitating dialogue during these events. This collaboration helps strengthen public understanding of security challenges and encourages communities to take collective responsibility for maintaining peace and stability.

Challenges Confronting Women in Peace-Building

The challenges confronting women in peace-building in Nasarawa State are numerous and deeply rooted in the social, political, and economic structures of society [19]. Since the creation of Nasarawa State in 1996, women have played important roles in mediating conflicts, promoting dialogue, and supporting reconciliation efforts in communities affected by communal clashes, farmer-herder conflicts, and political violence. Despite their contributions, women often face significant obstacles that limit their participation and effectiveness in peacebuilding activities. One of the most prominent challenges is the patriarchal nature of many communities in the state, where decision-making authority is largely dominated by men. Traditional leadership structures, which play a central role in conflict resolution, are usually controlled by male elders and community leaders [20]. As a result, women's voices are often excluded from formal negotiations and decision-making processes related to peace and security. This marginalization reduces the opportunities for women to influence policies or strategies aimed at resolving conflicts. Consequently, although women actively participate in informal mediation and community dialogue, their contributions are not always recognized or integrated into official peacebuilding frameworks within Nasarawa State.

Another major challenge confronting women in peace-building in Nasarawa State is limited access to education and training opportunities related to conflict resolution and leadership. In many rural communities across the state, women have historically faced barriers to formal education due to cultural norms, early marriage, and economic constraints [21]. This educational gap affects their ability to participate effectively in organized peacebuilding initiatives that require skills such as negotiation, mediation, and advocacy. Without adequate training, many women remain confined to informal roles in conflict resolution rather than participating in structured peace processes. Furthermore, limited literacy and communication skills can make it difficult for women to engage with government institutions, security agencies, and civil society organizations involved in peacebuilding programmes. Although some non-governmental organizations have introduced training workshops aimed at empowering women with conflict resolution skills, these programmes often reach only a small number of participants [22]. The lack of widespread educational opportunities therefore continues to hinder the capacity of women in Nasarawa State to contribute

fully to peacebuilding initiatives at both community and institutional levels.

Economic constraints also represent a significant challenge for women involved in peacebuilding in Nasarawa State. Many women in the state depend on subsistence farming, petty trading, or small-scale economic activities for their livelihoods. These economic responsibilities often limit the time and resources available for participation in peacebuilding programmes or dialogue initiatives. Women who wish to engage in mediation activities may lack the financial means to travel to conflict-affected communities, organize meetings, or support reconciliation efforts. Additionally, economic dependency on male household members can reduce women's autonomy and decision-making power within their families and communities [23]. When women lack economic independence, their ability to influence community leaders or participate in public activities related to peacebuilding may be restricted. Poverty also affects women's access to information and communication technologies that could facilitate coordination of peace initiatives. Consequently, economic vulnerability continues to weaken women's capacity to sustain long-term peacebuilding efforts across various communities in Nasarawa State.

Cultural and religious norms within many communities in Nasarawa State also pose significant challenges to women's participation in peace-building activities. In some areas, traditional beliefs and practices emphasize strict gender roles that limit women's involvement in public decision-making. Women are often expected to focus primarily on domestic responsibilities such as childcare, household management, and agricultural labor [24]. These expectations can discourage women from participating in community meetings or public discussions related to conflict resolution. In certain situations, women who attempt to assume leadership roles in peace initiatives may face criticism or social resistance from members of their communities. Religious interpretations that reinforce male dominance in leadership positions can further restrict women's opportunities to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. These cultural barriers create an environment where women's peace initiatives are sometimes undervalued or dismissed despite their potential effectiveness in resolving conflicts [25].

Another important challenge confronting women peacebuilders in Nasarawa State is the lack of institutional support and recognition from government authorities and security institutions. Although women frequently play vital roles in mediating community disputes, their contributions are rarely integrated into formal conflict management structures. Peace committees, traditional councils, and security advisory bodies are often dominated by male representatives, leaving little space for women's participation. This exclusion means that women's insights and experiences are not adequately considered in the development of policies aimed at addressing security challenges. In addition, government programmes designed to promote peace and security sometimes fail to incorporate gender-sensitive approaches that recognize the unique roles women play in conflict prevention and reconciliation. The absence of institutional recognition therefore limits the impact of women's peacebuilding activities and reduces opportunities for collaboration between women's organizations and official conflict management agencies.

Security risks and personal safety concerns also pose serious challenges for women engaged in peace-building activities in Nasarawa State. In communities affected by violent conflicts, women who attempt to mediate disputes or promote reconciliation may expose themselves to potential danger [26]. Armed groups, hostile community members, or individuals benefiting from ongoing conflicts may perceive women peacebuilders as threats to their interests. As a result, women involved in mediation efforts may face intimidation, harassment, or physical violence. The lack of adequate protection for women peace activists can discourage participation in peace initiatives and limit the willingness of women to engage in dialogue activities in conflict-prone areas. Furthermore, the psychological stress associated with operating in insecure environments can affect women's ability to sustain long-term peacebuilding engagement.

Another challenge relates to the limited networking and coordination among women's peacebuilding organizations across Nasarawa State. Although several women's groups exist within different communities, their activities are often fragmented and localized. The absence of strong coordination mechanisms makes it difficult for women's organizations to share experiences, exchange strategies, and collaborate on larger peace initiatives [27]. Without effective networking platforms, many women's peacebuilding efforts remain isolated and lack the collective influence

necessary to impact broader policy discussions on security and conflict management. Strengthening communication and collaboration among women's groups would enable them to amplify their voices and advocate more effectively for gender-inclusive peace policies within the state.

Political marginalization also affects women's ability to contribute effectively to peace-building in Nasarawa State. Women remain underrepresented in political institutions such as local government councils, state assemblies, and policy-making bodies where decisions related to security and conflict management are often made. This underrepresentation limits women's capacity to influence political decisions that affect peacebuilding strategies. Additionally, political competition and patronage systems may discourage women from participating actively in governance processes. When women lack representation in political institutions, their perspectives on community security, social welfare, and reconciliation are often overlooked in official policy discussions. Consequently, political marginalization continues to weaken women's influence in shaping peacebuilding agendas within Nasarawa State.

The challenges confronting women in peace-building in Nasarawa State are complex and multifaceted, involving social, economic, cultural, institutional, and security-related factors. Patriarchal traditions, limited educational opportunities, economic constraints, cultural norms, and political marginalization all contribute to restricting women's participation in conflict resolution processes. Despite these obstacles, women continue to play significant roles in promoting dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation within their communities. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate efforts to promote gender equality, expand educational and economic opportunities for women, and integrate women more effectively into formal peace and security institutions. By strengthening the capacity of women to participate fully in peacebuilding initiatives, Nasarawa State can enhance its ability to manage conflicts and achieve sustainable peace and development.

Case Studies of Successful Women-Led Peace Interventions

Women-led peace interventions in Nasarawa State between 1996 and 2025 provide important examples of grassroots conflict resolution and community reconciliation in Nigeria's Middle Belt region. One of the earliest notable interventions occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s during communal tensions in communities within Lafia and Awe Local Government Areas. During this period, disputes over land ownership and political representation created tensions among several ethnic groups. Women from market associations and church women fellowships organized informal dialogue meetings aimed at preventing escalation into violent confrontation. These women leveraged their positions as traders and community caregivers to bring together elders and youth leaders from opposing groups for discussion. The intervention involved peace visits to affected communities, inter-community prayers, and reconciliation gatherings held in neutral spaces such as markets and religious centres. The impact of this intervention was evident in the reduction of retaliatory attacks and the restoration of peaceful market activities that had been disrupted by tensions.

Another important case study occurred in Toto Local Government Area during the communal conflicts of the early 2000s. The conflicts, which involved tensions between ethnic communities over political and territorial disputes, led to displacement and destruction of property in several villages. Women leaders from the affected communities responded by forming informal peace delegations that visited neighboring communities to encourage reconciliation. These women organized dialogue sessions where representatives from conflicting groups discussed grievances and explored peaceful solutions. Women religious leaders also played an important role by organizing interfaith prayer meetings that emphasized forgiveness and coexistence. One particularly significant initiative involved women from both communities jointly organising community food distribution activities for displaced families, which helped rebuild trust and demonstrate solidarity across ethnic divides.

A third case study can be observed during the farmer-herder conflicts that intensified across Nasarawa State between 2013 and 2018. These conflicts affected several local government areas including Doma, Keana, Awe, and parts of Lafia, resulting in violence, displacement, and economic disruption. Women's associations in affected communities collaborated with civil

society organizations to initiate dialogue forums between farming communities and pastoralist groups. Women mediators played key roles in facilitating discussions focused on compensation for destroyed crops, the regulation of grazing routes, and the prevention of retaliatory attacks. In some communities, women organized joint agricultural activities and cooperative meetings that included both farmers and pastoralist families.

Another successful women-led peace intervention occurred through the activities of women's civil society organizations and faith-based peace networks operating in Nasarawa State during the late 2010s and early 2020s. These organizations trained women as community peace advocates capable of mediating disputes and facilitating dialogue among conflicting groups. Women who participated in these programmes established local peace committees responsible for monitoring tensions and promoting reconciliation initiatives. For instance, women peace advocates in communities within Keana and Doma Local Government Areas organized regular dialogue meetings involving youth leaders, traditional rulers, and religious leaders to address emerging security challenges. These meetings served as early warning platforms where community members discussed potential sources of tension such as land disputes, political disagreements, or youth conflicts. This institutionalised approach to women-led peacebuilding represented an important shift from purely informal mediation to more structured and coordinated interventions across communities in Nasarawa State.

Policy and Institutional Frameworks Supporting Women's Efforts

The assessment of policy and institutional frameworks supporting women's peacebuilding efforts in Nasarawa State reveals gradual progress since the state's creation in 1996, although significant gaps still remain. Women have long played vital roles in conflict mediation, community dialogue, and reconciliation across various communities in the state. However, for many years these contributions remained largely informal and lacked structured support from government policies or institutions. The increasing frequency of communal conflicts, farmer–herder disputes, and political tensions in Nasarawa State highlighted the need for more inclusive peacebuilding approaches that recognize the contributions of women. As a result, both government institutions and civil society organizations began to develop frameworks aimed at strengthening women's participation in peace and security initiatives. These frameworks are influenced by national gender policies and international commitments that promote women's involvement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The assessment of these policies therefore focuses on how effectively they integrate women into peace processes, support women-led initiatives, and address the challenges limiting women's participation in conflict resolution. Understanding these frameworks provides insight into the progress made and the institutional reforms required to enhance women's contributions to sustainable peace in Nasarawa State.

One of the key policy foundations supporting women's peacebuilding efforts in Nasarawa State is Nigeria's national gender policy framework, which encourages the participation of women in governance, security, and development initiatives. This policy framework promotes gender equality and seeks to eliminate discrimination that limits women's access to leadership positions. Within Nasarawa State, the principles of this national policy have influenced several programmes aimed at empowering women and increasing their participation in community development and peace initiatives. Government ministries responsible for women affairs and social development have implemented programmes designed to strengthen women's capacity in leadership and community mobilization. These programmes often include training workshops, advocacy campaigns, and community outreach initiatives that encourage women to participate in conflict prevention activities. Although the national gender policy provides an important foundation for women's participation in peacebuilding, its implementation at the state level has been uneven. Limited resources, bureaucratic constraints, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms have sometimes reduced the effectiveness of these initiatives. Nevertheless, the policy framework remains a crucial reference point for efforts aimed at integrating women into conflict resolution processes in Nasarawa State.

Another important framework supporting women's peacebuilding efforts is the adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda derived from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. This international framework emphasizes the importance of women's

participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction. Nigeria adopted a National Action Plan to implement this resolution, and several states, including Nasarawa, have taken steps to domesticate the agenda at the local level. Through this framework, women's organizations in Nasarawa State have gained greater recognition as stakeholders in peace and security discussions. Workshops and sensitization programmes have been organized to educate community leaders, security agencies, and civil society organizations about the importance of gender inclusion in peacebuilding. The framework also encourages the establishment of gender-sensitive policies that address issues such as violence against women, economic empowerment, and community participation in conflict prevention. The domestication of this agenda has helped create opportunities for women's groups to engage more actively with government institutions and security agencies in promoting peace across the state.

Institutional structures within the Nasarawa State government have also played a role in supporting women's peacebuilding activities. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development is one of the primary institutions responsible for promoting gender equality and empowering women in the state. Through its programmes, the ministry collaborates with civil society organizations, community leaders, and development partners to support women's initiatives aimed at promoting social stability and community development. The ministry also provides platforms where women can discuss issues related to security, economic empowerment, and community welfare. In some cases, women leaders have been invited to participate in consultations and policy discussions related to conflict prevention and social cohesion. These institutional engagements represent important steps toward integrating women's perspectives into governance processes. However, the effectiveness of these institutions in supporting women's peacebuilding efforts often depends on the availability of funding, political commitment, and the level of collaboration between government agencies and grassroots organizations.

Civil society organizations and non-governmental institutions have also contributed significantly to supporting women's peacebuilding efforts in Nasarawa State. Many of these organizations provide training, advocacy support, and financial assistance for women-led peace initiatives. Through workshops and capacity-building programmes, women are trained in mediation, negotiation, and leadership skills necessary for effective participation in conflict resolution. These organizations also help establish community peace committees where women can collaborate with traditional leaders, youth groups, and security agencies to address local conflicts. The presence of civil society actors has helped bridge the gap between government policies and grassroots peacebuilding activities. Their programmes often focus on empowering women economically and socially so that they can participate more effectively in community decision-making processes. As a result, civil society organizations have become important institutional partners in strengthening the policy environment supporting women's peacebuilding roles in Nasarawa State.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that women have played indispensable roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nasarawa State between 1996 and 2024 through mediation, dialogue facilitation, humanitarian interventions, reconciliation initiatives, and grassroots peace advocacy. Despite operating within a predominantly patriarchal society that often limits their participation in formal decision-making processes, women have consistently contributed to preventing the escalation of conflicts and fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups. Their involvement through community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, traditional structures, and civil society organizations has enhanced social cohesion, strengthened community resilience, and promoted post-conflict recovery across the state. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these contributions has been constrained by inadequate institutional support, limited financial resources, insufficient representation in formal peace and security frameworks, and deeply entrenched gender inequalities. The study therefore concludes that sustainable peace in Nasarawa State cannot be achieved without recognizing and institutionalizing women's roles in conflict prevention, management, and resolution. It recommends greater inclusion of women in peace committees, enhanced capacity-building programmes, improved funding for women-led

peace initiatives, and the formulation of gender-responsive peace policies that leverage women's indigenous knowledge and leadership capacities to strengthen long-term peace, security, and sustainable development in Nasarawa State.

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