



International Alert Nigeria Stakeholder Consultations

Final Report July 2021

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1. Introduction

a. Background information

Despite years of learning, increased resources and numerous agendas seeking to bring about sustained peace, most of the world's conflicts remain unresolved. There is an urgent need to address both the political economy of conflict and roots of inequality, as well as improving the design, implementation, and monitoring of peace processes. The Principles for Peace (P4P) is a global participatory initiative intending to re-frame the current way that peace processes are understood and implemented by addressing fundamental deficits and filling significant gaps in the international system's peace and security norms, long identified as barriers to their success.

The P4P initiative seeks to:

- ▶ Establish a much-needed new set of principles, informal norms and guidance for how to structure, sequence and build more inclusive peace processes.
- ▶ Create greater accountability and long-term oversight of peace processes and subsequent implementation actions.
- ▶ Change the incentives of national and international actors engaged in peace-making and peacebuilding interventions and seek to deliver the necessary strategic coherence and long-term oversight required to achieve sustainable peace outcomes.

In support of the P4P initiative, International Alert undertook country consultations in Nigeria and Ukraine. International Alert has been supporting peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Nigeria since 2011. Our programmes run across four states of the federation, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Benue, with an administrative office in the Federal Capital Territory. Our peacebuilding interventions span a range of thematic areas contributing to greater social cohesion and increased capacity to prevent and manage conflict. The Alert Nigerian team facilitated the Principles for Peace (P4P) consultations across three states: Benue (Northcentral), Bauchi and Borno (Northeast) between March – April 2021. A total of 185 people participated in the consultations of 21 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 4 key informant interviews (KIIs). The selection of states was based on International Alert's presence, on-going work, and ability to build on existing relationships to provide in depth feedback.

b. Context

Nigeria

Nigeria is Africa's most populated country located in west Africa with over 250 million people¹ from over 250 different ethnicities with Christianity and Islam as the two major religions followed by traditional worshippers. The states are grouped into six geopolitical zones, the North Central (NC), Northeast (NE), Northwest (NW), Southwest (SW), Southeast (SE) and South South (SS) with majorly Christians in the South and Muslims in the North.

Participatory consultations rationale

1 <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary>

After decades of military rule, Nigeria began its transition to democratic governance in 1999. Despite being Africa's largest country, both demographically and economically with vast human and natural resource wealth and an increasingly active civil society, years of corruption and clientelism has led to infrastructural decay and policies that have left the average citizen behind. Failure to acknowledge community grievances, exploitation of existing intercommunal tensions, rapid demographic growth, climate change and dwindling natural resources have only exacerbated this situation. In the Niger Delta region in the south-south, for example, agitation for increased local ownership of oil resources and social development metamorphosed into armed militancy that has

seen a recent resurgence. In the southwest, recent agitations for secession due to increased feelings and perceptions of marginalization from the central government. In the southeast, the wounds of the 1960s civil war continue to fester and a small but influential secessionist movement has burgeoned, while in the northeast, violence by the insurgent group Boko Haram has led to large-scale death and displacement. And in the impoverished northwest, an increase in banditry is claiming lives and property. Meanwhile the centre of the country has become a hotbed of herder-farmer tensions and conflict. This plethora of conflicts across all regions of the country has contributed to challenges of governance and accountability to its citizens.

c. Number of participants

We undertook consultations with a total of 185 participants: 92 in Borno (55 males and 37 females), 54 in Bauchi (21 female, 26 male), and 46 in Benue (27 males, 19 female), through 21 FGDs and 4 KIIs. Participants were from Government Departments and Ministries (MDAs), private organizations, formal and informal security actors, traditional and religious leaders, youth groups representatives,

women group representatives, conflict-related sexual violence survivors, community members from internally displaced persons (IDPs) camp and host communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) representatives. In each of the three states, we undertook a focus group with people in each of the following seven categories, resulting a total of 21 FGDs.

Groups	Category	Comments
Group 1	Women's organizations	Women-led and women-focused organizations. e.g., the Federation of Muslim Women Associated (FOMWAN), women journalist, women in medicine, Christian Association of Nigerian (CAN) women, Federation of women lawyers, girls brigade, Alamin foundation, Ministry of women affairs representatives,
Group 2	Youth groups	Students Union Government (SUG), football association, boys brigade and agaji ² , girls brigade, Man o War
Group 3	Community/religious leaders	Chief Imam, CAN representatives, JNI ³ representative
Group 4	Security institutions	Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Nigerian Police Forces, Department of State Security, Nigerian military Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps
Group 5	Private sector	National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), market women
Group 6	Women and girls' survivors of Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)	We selected from project beneficiaries. The consultations were conducted in the community.

2 Group of Muslim youths who volunteer to provide security and crowd control during mosques prayer time, they also clean mosques and provide other services as would be required of them.
 3 Jama'atu Nasril Islam, an umbrella under which most Islamic groups in Nigeria are under.

Groups	Category	Comments
Group 7	Children	We selected from both project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The consultation was conducted in the community.

d. Number of facilitators/team members involved.

A total of 10 Alert's team members (4 women and 6 men) facilitated the group discussions across the 3 states (Bauchi, Benue Borno) and are between the ages of 30 and 42. Of the 10 facilitators, 3 were

indigenes of Borno state, 1 Plateau state, 1 from Imo state, 3 from Benue state, 1 from Bauchi state and 1 from Niger state.

2. Methodology

a. Description of activities and related design details

The methodology used across the three states was a qualitative study using FGDs and KIIs in a workshop format. Covid-19 protocols were strictly adhered to. A total of 21 FGDs and 4 KIIs were conducted. Each FGD had a minimum of 7 and maximum of 10 participants and they were categorized as thus: women's organization, youth groups, community leaders, security institutions, private sectors, survivors, and community members. These groups were targeted to ensure that all diverse and relevant insights across all demographics are captured. The participants were selected through their umbrella bodies who in turn nominated them. This ensures no bias on the part of Alert and demonstrates collaboration between Alert and other independent bodies. The approach included a plenary session, at which the objectives of the workshop was explained to participants. This was to clarify their expectations and ensure that they are confident to express themselves during the consultations. This was followed by 2 break-out sessions (the first session to discuss the first two inquiry questions and the second session to discuss the last two inquiry sessions); each session lasted for a maximum of 2 hours. Alert's team facilitated the group discussions and were all supported by consultants who co-facilitated and took notes. Each group had a mix of male and female except for the women and girls' survivors, which were strictly women and the women representative groups. The facilitators were trained to minimize dominating of discussions by a particular gender or individual and to encourage active participation by all.

The FGDs with children were conducted in the community to get intergenerational perspectives as well as to ensure inclusivity. Most of the children engaged were between the ages of 8 and 13; they grew up in an insurgency period, hence the need to capture their perspectives. The children's parents and caregivers gave their consent prior to the children's participation. The aim and objective of the discussions as well as consultation questions were explained to them in a manner they would understand. They were also provided with snacks and drinks during the discussions which is consistent with Alert's practice of engaging with children during peace club activities.

The team ensured a gender- and conflict-sensitive approach which focused on participatory and inclusive structures to ensure a full spectrum of viewpoints are captured. KIIs were conducted remotely and physically based on the convenience of the respondent and facilitated by Alert's staff and consultants. KII participants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, social and political status in the society. These include public office holders and government officials such as Commissioner, Directors, academics from the university and women and girl survivors of Boko Haram-related sexual violence.

The following activities were implemented:

- ▶ A review of key documents shared by InterPeace.
- ▶ Identification of respondents for the study by the team
- ▶ Pre-assessment meetings with the team/local facilitators to review the tools.
- ▶ Consultations with stakeholders
- ▶ Debrief by team to share lessons learnt and assess experience in individual groups.

The target stakeholders in the locations were as follows:

- ▶ Community leaders/religious leaders
- ▶ Local policy makers
- ▶ Women's organizations/leaders
- ▶ Youth organizations/leaders (male and female)
- ▶ Identified community leaders.
- ▶ State security institutions (formal and Informal)
- ▶ Civil society organizations
- ▶ Humanitarian actors.
- ▶ Private sector
- ▶ Academia

Some groups did not provide consent to collect and use their data, especially the civil society organization representatives and some security agencies, and therefore quotations are attributed by location (e.g. Bauchi, Borno or Benue) only, and gender where possible. Due to time constraints and the context in these communities, as well as the prevailing COVID-19 guidelines, a hybrid of cluster and convenience sampling techniques was used. Community representatives (community and religious leaders, children, and women survivors) from targeted communities were selected. Criteria for selecting them was based on the security situation, willingness, and cooperation from the gate keepers. Other formal groups were targeted through their heads of departments and heads of units. The population in the selected locations were divided into groups factoring in demographics of socio-economic status, education, age, and gender (see table above for full details).

b. Context-specific consultation/inquiry questions

The team used the guiding questions from InterPeace throughout the consultations but explained them using context specific examples, for better understanding by participants.

c. Challenges and limitations to design/approach

Facilitating activities during Covid-19 required maximum compliance to Covid-19 protocols (use of face masks, maintaining 2 meters physical distance, and hand sanitizing) to prevent the spread of the virus. Although protective items such as face masks, hand sanitizers were provided as well as large venues to ensure for adequate spacing, some of the participants found it difficult to adhere to the measures. The team ensured that throughout the consultations, protocols were adhered to.

A virtual consultation was earlier planned to target stakeholders at a more strategic level, this includes top government officials and policy makers at the federal level as well as donor agencies. This

was however, not carried out due to limited time. This however, limited the inputs during the consultations.

Feedback from some participants and facilitators of the sessions noted that some of the questions were somewhat repetitive while some were a bit ambiguous. For example, *What are the current challenges facing your community? and What are some of the concerns you see being faced by others; who and what are they?* These questions seem very similar as "others" in the second question could also be referring to members of their communities.

3. Findings by Section

a. Peace in our context.

i. What does peace mean in the context?

Overall, key themes that described peace as enumerated by participants were harmony, tranquility, co-existence, absence of violence, absence of fear and social cohesion and tolerance. Others mentioned included mutual respect, socio-economic development, religion, freedom, justice, and reconciliation. The most common are themes of *co-existence* (24 respondents), *absence of violence* (19 respondents) and *absence of fear* (8 respondents) which were consistent across gender, religion, and class. This shows that though all participants have been impacted by the conflicts differently, the common denominator among them is the need for love and a support system, which calls for co-existence and absence of violence.

The comments from some participants below further buttress the findings above.

"Peace is a process of tranquility and sleeping with both eyes closed without apprehension on what is happening around you".

Female respondent from women's group, Borno state

Most of the responses from participants of this group related to the need for "co-existence", to "tolerate the way of culture and behavior of others to maintain peace" "live with others" The responses suggest that co-existence is the only alternative or option considering that life and fate has brought them together. It is worth noting that Benue has been experiencing conflict between farmers and herders over the years, which often falls within religious divides.

"The community we live is majority of Hausa people, but we have to interact and tolerate one another to maintain the peace."

Male respondent from traditional/religious group, Benue state

"Peace means being able to speak your mind freely without molestation or harassment".

Respondent, Benue state

"Peace means mutual coexistence between family and other groups".

Male traditional leader, Bauchi state

Differences: while most participants' responses demonstrated the soft component of human need for one another irrespective of ethnicity, religion, or gender, approximately five participants (especially from Benue state, an agrarian state, and a Civilian Joint Task Force vigilante group in Borno) focused on the hard component of human need: is the physical need for food, money, and economic development. Similarly, almost all religious leaders who participated saw peace from a religious perspective (Christianity or Islam) While this seemed an abstract theme to other participants, it is perceived by these leaders as the only definition of peace.

"Peace means understanding each other and loving one another despite religious differences, because if there is no love, nothing will be achieved. All should be their brothers' keepers."

Religious leader, Bauchi state

“Islam is peace - Religion is peace.”

Religious Leader, Borno state

“Peace is Jesus Christ Himself because when you believe in Him, you automatically have peace of mind”.

Female participant, Bauchi state

“When you have money in your pocket and food on your table, you are living a peaceful life” “The total wellbeing (shelter, health, education, etc.) of an individual, family and society without peace means nothing meaningful can happen”.

Male adult participant, Benue state

“I see peace as the ability to pay school fees for my children especially women, if they can feed their children, send them to school, pay their school fees.”

Male adult participant, Benue state

ii. What has contributed to peace, what has worked?

It is important to note here that Nigeria is divided into 6 geopolitical as enumerated above and each of the regions has its context specific conflicts. The P4P consultation was conducted in two northeastern states and one northcentral state. Government responses, and approaches, to the conflicts in these contexts has been different and inconsistent. In addition, the Borno context has experienced over a decade of insurgency, and as a result has seen significant humanitarian, developmental, and peacebuilding initiatives. Hence, participants’ responses were context-specific, rather than generalizable to the Nigerian context.

Generally, participants enumerated the following themes as actions that contributed to peace: dialogue, awareness creation among communities on the need for peace, respect for one another’s religion, culture and norm, economic empowerment and education, women and youth inclusion, religious teachings and prayers, peacebuilding efforts, increased security, and peer to peer engagement. Dialogue (10 responses), women and youth inclusion (4 response), economic empowerment and education (8 responses), respect for one another (4 responses) and efforts of

security actors (5 responses), preaching by religious leaders and prayers (6 responses) were the top six.

Dialogue: This theme came out in almost all group discussions. Participants emphasized the need to enhance communication and to bring conflicting, angry, and marginalized parties and listen to them with the view of finding sustainable solutions. This theme came up more in Borno state and could be influenced by the activities of peace building organizations who facilitate dialogues in communities to address conflicts. They reiterated that the dialogues should be inclusive and involve community members.

“Most important factor in peace issues is inclusion and fair play irrespective of religion, tribe or social class status. In addition, there is need for sincerity of purpose by all actors in the peace industry as well as the need for peace building process and efforts across the board.”

Male CSO representative

Participation and engagement of traditional structures: In the Nigerian context, the traditional institutions are the custodians of history, culture, and tradition of their people. They are very influential and held in high esteem. Hence, their words and views are taken very seriously, and are often seen as the final authority. Some participants noted that engagement of traditional structures contributes to peace because of their reputation among the people. The Hakimi⁴ or Emirs⁵ are heavily involved during active conflicts. Most of them positively used their roles to call for peace, tolerance and hope against all hope.

“Community elders play a major role in building peace and maintaining peace within the communities. They engaged conflicting parties in dialogue for conflict resolution.”

Female survivor, Borno state

Local community structures/Zauren Sulhu⁶: Participants noted that the historical peace structures called Zauren Sulhu, where traditional actors adjudicate over conflict issues, have been and are likely to continue to be effective in Borno and Bauchi contexts. These structures comprise of representatives of community stakeholders

4 Hakimi is the title of a traditional ruler in northern Nigeria translated as “Judge”. Among other responsibilities is presiding over issues among his people.

5 An emir refers to a king or an aristocratic or noble title of high office in Northern Nigeria.

6 Zauren Sulhu is a structure put in place locally to help maintain peace. It comprises religious leaders, community leaders, philanthropists, and the elderly. They try to resolve violence as soon as they occur instead of leaving it to escalate. For example, if someone uses a knife on another person, they do not allow the community people to take laws into their hands. They invite the culprit’s mother and ask if the perpetrator of the crime is under the influence of drugs (as is the case with some youths. They try to get to the root cause of that crime to avoid reoccurrence and find out why the culprit did what he did before handing him over to the police.

(including women and youths) who meet regularly to discuss on safety and security challenges and collectively proffer solutions to address the concerns. These structures serve as an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) mechanisms that promote peace and unity. One participant in Benue stated that an Early Warning Early Response (EWER) mechanism that sensitizes people about conflicts targeting youths between 10-24 years should be set up, because the youths help in identifying conflict triggers especially issues surrounding water scarcity. The structures also preside over conflicts involving couples, families, neighbors, and communities; land issues, championing reintegration efforts for women and girls' survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and inter-ethnic rivalries.

Religious teachings and Prayers: Participants across all the locations indicated that prayers contributed significantly to the peace currently being experienced. They also reiterated the initial definition of peace being synonymous with religion. Nigeria is dominated by two religions (Christianity and Islam) followed by traditional worshippers. Any meaningful peace process should involve religious leaders otherwise it would risk acceptance or be viewed as Westernization.

"Prayers and continuous cooperation among people both Muslims and Christians irrespective of religion or ethnic leaning"

Traditional ruler, Borno state

Economic empowerment and education: Many participants indicated that economic empowerment contributed to peace in the respective contexts, and highlighted that some people especially young people, resort to negative coping mechanisms such as criminality, robbery, theft and even joining extremist groups for financial reward. The participants also noted that there is need to enrol children in formal education to reduce their redundancy and to reduce their risk of being recruited into violent extremist groups.

"Provision of financial and food aid can bring relative peace to our community, with the help of CJTF and Army to maintain order".

CJTF member, Borno state.

Role of development partners: Participants from the CSO groups brought a different perspective on what has contributed to peace. They responded by talking about what has hindered peace, which according to them, is tied to activities of international NGOs. One participant said "We are currently far away from any form of substantial or sustainable peace. What is available now is

window dressing and will collapse if nothing significant is done soon".

"Many actors in the humanitarian and government agencies have worked and continue to work towards the peace processes and initiatives. But their attempts have not been and are not sustainable. They are not designed to ensure long term peace. While ordinary citizens and victims of the insurgency are ignored, the extremists are being compensated for the havoc they have caused. These and many other situations such as entrepreneurial corruption are contributing to the slow nature of any or most peace initiative or process. The capacity of local actors is either ignored, not encouraged, or not adequately empowered. The international actors are not genuinely interested in the process of peace. There is no focus on addressing the root cause of the problem; rather more than 70% of the community continues to be frustrated".

CSO representative

The general position of the CSO group was that more needs to be done to ensure sustainable development and sustainable peace. Several expressed concern that INGO resources were being spent on staff salaries and office provisions.

"The existing peace processes are all artificial. None of them is addressing the root cause of the problem. International actors have not added anything to the current situation. Instead, they are just chasing their own agendas and scrambling for resources. The available resources are being redirected to facilitating things that do not concern peace such as large office spaces, accommodations, salaries etc. The resources need to be channeled towards addressing the root cause of the crisis. Also, corruption has continued to strengthen impunity which also continues to encourage the extremists. International actors continue to abuse the situation. What is ongoing is suppression of local actors and heavy corruption within the existing processes."

CSO representative

"The things ongoing within the INGOs and NGOs is very unfortunate. There is syphoning of funds and the redirection of monies meant for the peace initiatives amongst the workers. Before a local actor can move forward, one must bribe or give

part of the acquired funding to the key actors this is disadvantageous to the peace process and is worsen by collaborating government agents/agencies. Even the extremists are aware of this going on and it makes them emboldened”.

CSO representative

Addressing police brutality: Only one participant, a journalist, indicated that the recent efforts by the government to address police brutality had contributed to peace in the country. In his words,

“A classic example is the recent probe of police brutality against the populace. The government had to set up committees in each state to investigate police personnel who have been accused of brutality against some individuals whether politicians or ordinary citizens. This was a very sensitive issue, but I commend the government for initiating such a move and the passion exhibited by some Nigerians in crying out against police brutality. I was also impressed that in some locations, police officers who tendered apologies were forgiven by the masses and were corrected on how to act subsequently.”

Male journalist, Bauchi state

iii. What are the foundations for lasting peace?

From participants’ responses, key themes as foundations for lasting peace were prayers, economic interventions, conflict resolution efforts (dialogue, mediation, and negotiation), women and youth inclusion, and respect for one another and implementation of laws and policies. Other themes mentioned included peace club activities/peace education, good child upbringing, early warning and early response mechanisms, and media programmes.

Worthy of note is that some of the themes such as economic empowerment, dialogue, women, and youth inclusion, respect for one another and religious teachings/prayers were repeated when participants were asked about what they think contributed to peace and what are the foundations for lasting peace. Some groups skipped this question because they felt that it is the same with the earlier question (what they think contributed to peace) even though some of the facilitators tried to rephrase the question. This demonstrates that peace efforts should be addressed holistically and not in isolation, i.e., the root causes should be addressed as remedial solutions.

The above point however, contributed to the overall low levels of response to the question; the

following themes were mentioned by seven to three people, in descending order of frequency. The top themes were presence of formal and informal security actors (people), economic empowerment interventions, women and youth inclusion, preaching and prayers, peace club activities/education, development actors/CSOs interventions (3) and dialogue (3 responses).

Economic empowerment: According to some participants, the foundation for peace lies in addressing the pull and push factors to violence and criminality, one of which is poverty. Boko Haram offered loans and other forms of credit to people who would join or otherwise support the cause. Joining Boko Haram also offers access to income. The participants reiterated that most of the population have lost their sources of income during the conflict, others because of Covid-19, leaving some people with no option than to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as theft, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, child labor/marriage, survival sex (sex for money or food). There is need to address the root causes of violence which means providing sources of livelihood and income.

Unemployed persons, especially youths and women who are often excluded from economic opportunities, need to be supported in trainings on skills acquisitions and provided with economic opportunities. According to a CJTF member:

“Most community members violate peace because they are hungry and would do whatever it takes to get food to eat and to provide for their immediate families.”

“No access to basic amenities such as good sanitation and hygiene, health concerns, inadequate or truncated interventions that are promised but never delivered. Conflict entrepreneurs benefitting more from the peace processes more than the victims.”

Female participant, CSO, Borno state

Education and peace club activities: Some participants identified education as one of the bedrocks for long-term and sustainable peace, as well as the introduction of peace club activities in schools. This was stated by those participants to be necessary due to the decline in cultural values and norms compared to the past; parents do not take care of their children and instead allow them to roam on the streets to fend for themselves without parental guidance. These children, in the participants’ opinion, are potential terrorists, criminals and a ticking time bomb. According to these participants, good upbringing of the child will help peace to reign in families and communities and families should therefore teach their children

from a young age the value of human lives and the importance of respecting others. The role of education as a 'safe space' and peace club activities could go a certain way towards underpinning and strengthening the support provided by families in communicating peaceful values.

"We are not close to the way we were 25 years ago in terms of peace. In the past, people were not selfish as there was trust and brotherliness."

Security actor, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), Borno state

"For some time, parents were not interfering with the process of justice. Rather, they allowed their wards face justice for any crime they commit, and this reduced the rate of youths getting involved in violence, knowing that their parents won't take their sides and protect them".

Male participant, CSO, Bauchi state

Localization/CSO interventions: Increased and direct funding of local CSOs by international donors and UN would contribute to peace in the states where consultations took place. Some participants lamented the time bound interventions of international NGOs which are usually not sufficient for lasting impact. Peacebuilding requires a holistic, long-term approach which often does not yield tangible results for years and the nature of these short-term interventions are rarely conducive to peace outcomes. Funding local CSOs, especially those working in areas of peacebuilding, would contribute to sustainable and long-term peace, both through the direct provision of peacebuilding programmes and working across the triple nexus to provide conflict sensitivity training for humanitarian and development organisations. According to one of the participants who did not wish to be named, local NGOs are sidelined under the guise of them not having the capacity to handle projects and or effectively implement initiatives. They felt this was contrary to the evidence of what works in peacebuilding: locally owned interventions that are designed by community peacebuilders with contextual knowledge and skill⁷

Deployment of formal and informal security actors: Some participants reiterated the need for security actors in violence prone areas. These include the military, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and other informal security actors such as the Civilian Joint Task Force, the hunters and vigilantes. One participant noted that, for there to be positive

development and progress, security outfits must be able to find common ground and work in tune with each other to achieve success. Another participant decried the inadequate equipping of security personnel whose primary responsibility is to protect the lives and properties of citizens. In view of these trends, security personnel must be provided with working tools to be able to confront all challenges and threats head-on, as well as be equipped with the adequate skills to work alongside each other peacefully and jointly problem-solve issues for society to have a secure environment and improved peace.

"Deployment of security personnel to avert conflict or de-escalate tension among parties. For example, a conflict between Gudum Sayawa and Gudum Hausa led to the deployment of security agents to stop the destruction of property".

Male religious/traditional leader, Bauchi state.

Media: Some participants noted that the media, including social media, could be used to pass peace messages and create awareness among communities on the need to embrace peace. These participants noted that most NGOs are maximizing media as a tool to reach larger audiences and hard to reach areas. Though conversely, the extremist groups are also using the same platform to coerce citizens with extremist teachings that promote the superiority of one religion over another. Some participants suggested the use of jingles, short-repeated clips of about one or two minutes, conveying key messages usually in local languages and using local tunes. The use of these jingles has also proven successful in Alert Nigeria's experiences of media and peacebuilding work in Northeastern Nigeria⁸.

Implementation of existing laws and policies: Some participants noted that government has good policies such as the National Action Plan, that has been domesticated in the state, but implementation of those policies was a challenge.

"Implementation of existing laws and policies are challenges faced. Justice must be served, and the law allowed should take its course."

Female Commissioner of Commerce and Industry

"All arms of Government must carry out their jobs and governments shouldn't make some citizens feel like they are more superior citizens than others".

7 ECDPM, 'International funding for peacebuilding: Will COVID-19 change or reinforce existing trends?', 2020 <https://ecdpm.org/publications/international-funding-peacebuilding-covid-19-change-reinforce-existing-trends/>

8 International Alert, 'How do we build peace during a pandemic? Lessons for peacebuilding and health sector organisations', 2021 <https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/COVID-19-Building-Peace-During-Pandemic-EN-2021.pdf>

**Female Commissioner of
Commerce and Industry**

Women and youth inclusion: A small number of participants noted that empowerment initiatives, especially ones led by women community security organizations, need to be revived and further supported in future peacebuilding efforts. This should focus on the areas of capacity building and training for skills and advocacy for women's participation in peace processes. They felt that

women are and can be more impactful if given the right resources. The participants stated that young women need to be brought up through specific and sustainable empowerment schemes and funding initiatives that will encourage them to further empower other community members, both female and men. Both men and women noted the inclusion of youth and women demonstrates changing dynamics their role and contribution to peace.

b. The challenges and obstacles to peace

i. What are the missed opportunities?

Women and other minority groups' exclusion in peace processes. Most participants agreed that women have been disproportionately affected by the conflict due to their gender roles, which often relegate them to a lesser position to that of men in the community. While some have become bread winners overnight, others were subjected to different kinds of repressive experiences including forced adoption, SGBV and loss of livelihoods. Their participation in peace processes has historically been limited and undermined, mostly because of discriminatory patriarchal cultural norms. However, women's participation in peace processes was perceived by most participants as crucial because they have a lot to offer to the development process. The reasoning behind this was often based on women's traditional roles as healers and nurturers within the community. For example, their gender roles require that they nurture the family and are mostly at home with children and young people. They could therefore monitor unusual behaviors of their children and suspicious activities in their communities which could then contribute to intelligence gathering by giving early warning signs of conflicts. A few women had participated in combat against the insurgents in support of their communities; others were involved in Alert's peacebuilding interventions and were active in mediating conflict issues. Participants felt that these women, if encouraged, could serve as mentors to other women and girls and thus, break gender stereotypes.

"Culture may restrict men and women from sitting on the same table but the option of using men and women groups to drive these discussions should exist and work effectively."

Male youth participant, Bauchi state

Similarly, some participants noted that other minority groups such as persons living with

disabilities (PWDs) are not always carried along in peace processes, despite the fact that they are often worst affected during attacks due to being compromised by their physical differences. This not only further deepens their perceptions or feelings of marginalization or resentment, but also comprises a missed opportunity around their participation in the design of effective peacebuilding programming and involvement in peace processes because their knowledge and talents are essentially wasted.

"Minority groups are nearly relegated in governance as well as persons living with Disability (PWD) who are not always included in the peace processes in majorly all the communities".

Male traditional leader, Borno state

"Persons with disability are not given any special consideration especially during distribution and selection for humanitarian aid".

Female survivor, Borno state

Lack of political will: According to some participants, politicians lack the will power to implement their policies and achieve their responsibilities of protecting the lives and properties of citizens. Most FGDs and KIIIs were unanimous that the leaders and politicians use the country's resources for their personal gains. These participants stated that nepotism and sectionalism have further hindered the leaders from carrying out their mandates, and hence failed to secure the lives and properties of citizens and address the yearnings and aspirations of the community members only increases. While the governance structure in the country is divided into local, state and federal level, most participants expressed the view that government structures at all levels are not doing much to contribute to peace and should have tackled the insurgency better to regain the trust of the people.

"This injustice must stop. The governments' safe corridor program⁹ is not working and cannot be successful. Most of our traditional leaders have been left out of the entire process. Most of the people they said they have rehabilitated have no connection with some of the communities. The insurgency has crippled our education system, displaced many and put more youths on the street doing nothing while those that perpetrated crime are being treated by the government."

Male religious leader, Borno state

Lack of effective transitional justice system: The lack of transitional justice system, according to some participants, contributed to the challenges of disunity, conflict, and violence. However, an adequate and fair system could have served as an alternative for people when it comes to out of court settlement, dampening the potential for negotiations to escalate towards violence.

"There is lack of equity in the judiciary system."

Male security actor, Benue state

"A program like the Rwandan peace and reconciliation should be adopted to cater for conflict affected communities, where perpetrators and victims should be brought together to accept faults and apologize and forgive backed by legal framework. This should be decentralized and carried out in communities rather than just in cities and towns".

Female participant from women's group, Borno state

ii. What are the flaws in current approaches by international actors, what could be done better?

In most of the FGDs and KIIs, there was significant acknowledgement of the positive aspects of the role of international actors in mitigating the impact of the violent conflicts especially in providing life-saving support such as food and health. As one of the KII respondents, a journalist in Bauchi, put it:

"If not for the support of some of these international organizations to some NGOs like [International Alert], have you ever seen any state government, probably through the Ministry of Information making bold moves to sponsor programs of this nature? Rather, they prefer to sponsor political spotlight programs that will tell the truth and lie about what they

did or didn't do, so long as it gives them cheap popularity. But anything that has to do with peace, they don't do it. In fact, they handle issues of peace with laxity like I said earlier on; and that is why they allow certain things to happen before they start taking actions and this is not the best strategy, they have to change".

However, the engagement of international actors was not seen as solely positive. Most of the participants were of the opinion that international actors should focus on interventions that are more sustained and longer term, rather than the more common short-term, time-bound initiatives. Participants outlined several concrete suggestions to promote a more sustained support from international actors, such as building the capacity of local structures and governments to address their own issues. Some specifically mentioned that international actors should instead focus more on peacebuilding interventions and address the root causes of the conflict which is rooted in poor governance.

"NGOs should sustain efforts in job creation, peace advocacy and livelihood support."

Male participant, National Association of Road Transport owners, Borno state

Some participants also noted that there is minimal synergy between development actors and government strategies, although according to Nigerian government requirements, all international organizations are required to be registered with the government and align interventions to governments strategies at both the federal and state level. This is, however, was felt to be not always the case, as most of the actors, state and non-state, implement activities independently. This causes duplication in certain areas while other areas of interventions and locations are left unattended to, rather than transcending siloes and taking a holistic approach to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding matters which is more likely contribute to lasting peace.

"We need continuous and sustainable intervention by development partners by keying into government programmes and projects in the area of livelihood support, job creation peace advocacy and peace building and designing and implementing exit plan."

Male participant, Boys Brigade, Borno state

Many participants felt that international actors should focus more on building government systems and institutions to enable them to be more accountable to their citizens and to increase good

⁹ In 2016, the government launched a program to help Boko Haram defectors reintegrate into civilian life.

governance. This was said to be necessary because of the corruption that has eaten deep into the country. Some recommended that interventions should support the monitoring and evaluation of government funds released for community projects and provide feedback on spending to citizens accordingly. Overall, participants felt that each of the three arms of governments should be strengthened and made more accountable, with fairer leaders, particularly with regard to the distribution of wealth.

“The international actors should support the security actors in terms of provision of equipment’s for intelligence gathering,

monitoring, and gathering of information.”

Male security actor, Borno state

“[International actors] should create restrictions for leaders who practice bad governance and deprive the masses of benefiting from participatory governance... If the international community banned Nigeria[ns] from participating in international football competitions because of Boko Haram or activities of Armed Opposition Groups, the fight against insurgency will end in 3 years”.

Male religious leader, Borno state

c. What peace should deliver?

i. What are the hopes and aspirations for the future?

In comparison to the previous consultation question, this question resulted in many more themes. Most participants enumerated their own wish list of things they hope and aspire to see in the future. While some participants did hope for the best, they still did not hesitate to express some feelings of pessimism over the future. This trend was observed by facilitators across most of the groups. It was also observed that some participants pondered a lot over this question and often took a long pause before speaking about their aspirations, while a few appeared to even be anxious to talk about their ideals. The feelings of being pessimistic could perhaps be attributed to survey fatigue, especially for those participants in Borno state, where a lot of NGOs approach them during research, assessments and evaluations. This type of questioning tends to raise their hopes of immediate interventions and support to their communities, only to be disappointed.

Good governance: This theme summarizes participants' views about roles and responsibilities of the government towards their citizens as touched on in prior sections of this report. For some participants, this included access to quality education for children, as most of the schools have been either closed or destroyed because of violent conflict where they are situated, while other participants living in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps do not have education facilities for their children. Education was identified by some of these participants as one of the basic foundations for sustainable peace. Although education interventions by international organizations were identified as a useful part of the efforts to secure a

peaceful future by some participants, the majority felt that it is the government who should be responsible for providing good quality education that should match the private schools' standards and ensure that children will not fear going to school.

“The level of illiteracy is very high within our community and no matter how you sensitize an illiterate person he would understand”.

Security actor, Borno state.

“I personally want to see a society where there is quality and accessible education for my children and other children within the community”.

NSCDC Officer, Borno state

Other aspirations relating to good governance that some of the participants discussed were associated with the provision of basic amenities such as water, electricity, good roads, and healthcare services, all identified as indicators of or aspirations for peace. These participants decried the poor state of basic infrastructure which is currently being further crippled by the insurgency. They felt that government officials should create the opportunities for economic empowerment and ensure that laws are put in place to address human rights violations and injustices in this area.

“One of the participants expressed hope for the future which is to see a community where everyone will be treated equally devoid of stratification, gender bias and favoritism.”

Male security actor, Borno state

Safety and freedom: Some participants expressed a desire to return to normal life where

their safety would be guaranteed. Normal life for these participants refers to the ability to return to their farms without fear of being raped, killed, or kidnapped, with their children being able to return to school. They wanted the freedom to move around at nighttime, and even just to move around their houses at any time of the day without fear of being attacked. Some of the participants expressed their unhappiness with the lack of physical and mental freedom in the IDP camps. For these people, physical unfreedom refers to restriction of their movements and lack of privacy due to shared facilities in the camps.

"I am a member of the CJTF because the farm is no longer safe for me, so I took it upon myself to serve and protect my people. But if our society can be peaceful then I am ready to leave the security job and go back to farming".

Secretary CJTF, Borno state

Social cohesion: Across our consultants, participants noted a deficit in trust across religious and ethnic lines. Some participants expressed that they wanted to see a community where both Muslims and Christians live happily together without fear of intimidation or being attacked. They felt that religious leaders needed to change their attitudes and mindset towards addressing the immediate needs of their people which will in turn pave way for lasting peace. Across the three states, most participants recalled a once cordial relationship and communal way of living which was irrespective of ethnic tribe and religion but

has now been lost. For most participants, there is a deep desire to return to a state of cordial living without thinking about their differences, where people would eschew violence and embrace forgiveness.

"Unity among diverse tribes and religions, living in harmony and tolerance".

Participant from CSO/udiciary group discussion, Bauchi state

ii. 'Who is involved, and how, in realizing peace?'

Considering the complex challenges bewildering the county, participants identified key stakeholders irrespective of their age, gender, religious affiliation, class or educational background as:

- ▶ International actors (INGOs, UN agencies)
- ▶ National actors (NGOs, CSOs, FBOs)
- ▶ Community, religious, youths and women leaders
- ▶ Government ministries, departments, and agencies
- ▶ Academia
- ▶ Formal security actors (Nigerian Military, Civil Defense, Police).
- ▶ Informal security actors such as Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), hunters, vigilantes, kesh-kesh (local security outfit).

d. Recommendations to realize peace.

i. What expectations and demands are there for any particular actors?

Participants' recommendations to specific actors were:

Government at state and federal level

- ▶ Implement policies such as the UNSCR 1325 and related resolution (NAP)¹⁰ to increase opportunities for women's participation in peace processes, especially those at the grassroots local level who have been able to mobilize themselves into groups and are already contributing to social change and national developments. They need to be identified, supported, and encouraged

through more training, skill development, and economic empowerment to increase chances of sustainability.¹¹

- ▶ Ensure inclusion and representation of women at all levels, though especially in participation in peace processes. This will reduce the challenges of marginalization, begin to address sexual and gender-based violence and go some way towards mitigating the influence of institutional patriarchal norms.
- ▶ Partner with INGOs, NGOs, CSO, and traditional leaders to strengthen community mechanisms for addressing conflicts and ensure a coordinated approach across sectors, utilizing nexus ways of working.

¹⁰ National Action Plan

¹¹ This recommendation came from CSO representatives. International Alert has implemented UN Women interventions in two of the three consultation states, and a lot of awareness about UNSCR 1325 have been created among beneficiaries.

- ▶ Provide economic empowerment and employment opportunities to address the issue poverty, in conjunction with peacebuilding programmes and conflict sensitivity training for the local and international actors delivering those programmes.
- ▶ Provide access to education for children and youths who are out of school either as a result of the insurgency or financial resources and reserve funds for the introduction of peace education/peace clubs within the school environment.
- ▶ Ensure security actors are well trained and equipped to protect vulnerable communities from harm and positively collaborate with others in their field, this will help to build community's confidence and trust in governance as well as save lives.
- ▶ Implement peace building interventions whereby the capacity, skills and knowledge of community members is truly acknowledged and built upon to address conflicts situations in their localities and support dialogue, negotiation and mediation as part of peaceful resolution efforts to conflicts, to act upon wishes expressed by the participants in this report.

Community, religious, women and youth leaders

- ▶ Community, traditional and religious leaders are held in high esteem by community members, hence, they should support and facilitate peacebuilding initiatives using the traditional system for conflict resolution, Zaureh Sulhu. This will increase social cohesion among the people and better address conflict triggers by usually locally developed mechanisms.

International actors

- ▶ Begin a renewed drive towards attaining the localization agenda by increasing funding opportunities to local NGOs to foster local ownership, acceptance and sustainability of actions and interventions. The participants noted that most of the international donors shy away from giving grants to local organizations because of perceived capacity gaps, therefore international donors should be willing to invest in the training of these local NGOs for the long-term gains.
- ▶ Key into government programmes and strategies for overarching coordination to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts, which will also serve to reduce the negative perceptions of communities towards international aid organizations.
- ▶ Ensure that relevant community representatives participate in the design phase interventions and an exit plan. This will support in increasing trust of both interventions and international organizations by the communities and work towards a more sustained impact of proposed programmes.
- ▶ Partner with peacebuilding organizations, government and private media stations to build their capacities on conflict sensitive journalism, utilizing and building upon tried and tested methodologies already in place in parts of Nigeria.
- ▶ Advocate to relevant government authorities for synergized and more coordinated security actions.

Traditional Institutions

- ▶ Traditional leaders should maximize the trust granted to them by community members, by ensuring fairness, removing any biases, and ensuring neutrality during mediation efforts, irrespective of class, gender or religion.
- ▶ The traditional leaders should be transparent and accountable in any peace related efforts.

ii. What would the participants or their organization/community need to make their vision of peace successful?

- ▶ Restructuring of most aspects of the government and security sectors such that corrupted leaders can be repatriated.
- ▶ If equality and due process are followed in distribution and registration of beneficiaries to receive aid, it will go a long way in solving root cause of conflict within IDP camps.
- ▶ Gender inclusivity, especially women and youth inclusion, in every aspect of the peace process is crucial because women and the youth have a lot to offer to the development process.
- ▶ Respect for laws and order by citizens including government officials.
- ▶ Corruption should be eradicated.
- ▶ Insurgency should be ended.
- ▶ Good governance.
- ▶ Improved security.
- ▶ Improved trust between the government and the society.

- ▶ All IDPs returning to secured towns and villages of origin.
- ▶ Deployment of positive peace mantras through TV and Radio Jingles to keep people abreast of happenings and to distribute guidance in insecure situations.
- ▶ There is a strong desire to initiate good economic policies that would ensure prices of commodities drop and reduce the high cost of living.
- ▶ The need for Women and Youth to be gainfully employed to tackle youth restiveness, insecurity, and domestic disputes/violence.
- ▶ People living with disabilities to be integrated into all activities to give them a sense of belonging and benefit from their valuable knowledge and talents.
- ▶ Thorough verification of information before it is made public.
- ▶ Building trust between the community and security agencies.

4. Analysis

a. Facilitation team's overarching observations and analysis

Some participants expressed joy at being invited to such an important consultation where their views were being taken into consideration and valued. Overall, the majority of participants agreed that conflict prevention and resolution should be a priority for all, whether for individuals, community leaders, government representatives or members of international bodies, because it has a direct positive impact on people's lives and enables sustainable development and socioeconomic reintegration of displaced persons. Participants generally felt that interventions were required at several levels, with some stressing the importance of community-level conflict management through mediation and nonviolence training and others noting the necessity of micro-scale conflict management (e.g. mediation between a wife and husband).

Even though participants believed that there will not be a community without conflict in the future, they felt that the tolerance people have learnt so far and the existence of civil society organizations have played a critical role in ensuring there is relative peace. About the different stakeholders involved in influencing peace, participants shared the belief that international actors have roles to play but more so, that government structures and parents have often failed in their duties. They also noted that the current security system poses a challenge to citizens. However, most believed that with the right structures in place, the full commitment of all these stakeholders concerned in carrying out their parts diligently is attainable.

The views of CSO participants, who felt in many cases that international actors had hindered peace processes through short-term, time-bound and uncoordinated interventions were particularly prevalent in consultations in Borno state, an area which has experienced over a decade of conflict as well as high influx of INGOs for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions. Their views could perhaps be attributed to their repeated calls for localization, whereby the people that truly understand the context, the communities, and the problem better, should receive the international aid to work directly on the conflict.

Participants' responses seemed to differ by, and potentially be shaped by, their gender roles. For example, female respondents' views on the concept of peace, and most of their responses to all the questions, focused on serenity and harmony at family and community levels. This could be attributed to gender norms where women are expected to be more nurturing and focused on domestic issues. Conversely, their male counterparts' responses were more strategic, focusing on external issues such as engagements with governments at every level. This is irrespective of their age, education, religion or tribe.

5. Summary and conclusion

Each consultation session conducted was very participatory and gave everyone who was present an opportunity to contribute, but also to re-examine their perceptions and contributions to peace.

The most common conceptualizations of peace shared across participants and consistent across gender, religion, and class, were co-existence, absence of violence and absence of fear, all pointing towards a shared desire for a love and support system which nurtures the growth of these ideals. Fewer participants than expected focused on the more tangible components of peace, such as the physical needs of food, money, and economic development, though those that did came from Benue, a mainly agrarian state vulnerable to fluctuations in weather and market forces. The religious leaders involved in consultations often saw peace solely from a religious perspective, perceiving this as the only possible definition in contrary to most other participants who saw it as an abstract theme. However, in light of the role those traditional religious institutions play within communities in each of the states, held in high esteem as a final authority, this view is likely to be highly influential despite being held by a smaller number of participants.

Dialogue, inclusion, economic empowerment and education, respect for one another and efforts of security actors were the top five themes as actions that contributed to peace, also cited by many as comprising the foundations for sustained peace. Inclusive dialogue involving all community members was referenced in almost all group discussions, which is positive for future peacebuilding efforts, particularly in Borno State where several participants saw a role for peacebuilding organisations in influencing dialogue sessions. However, these efforts must be undertaken with the intentional participation and engagement of traditional structures. Some participants noted their high potential in contributing to lasting peace due to their reputation among communities and the historical role of the Hakimi and Emir in promoting peace during times of heavy conflict. Utilizing local community structures by building upon their existing functions as Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) mechanisms and incorporating participants concrete suggestions to improvement will be crucial, especially in consideration of participants' varied opinions on the role of development partners as peace contributors. Where participants from CSO groups often felt that international NGOs have hindered peace opportunities in local areas, this reinforces a need to accelerate the localisation agenda to address grievances and truly acknowledge and incorporate the contextual knowledge, skills and existing mechanisms of local communities. Localisation was also mentioned by several participants as one of the key foundations towards lasting peace, most particularly in the form of increased and direct funding of local CSOs by international donors and the UN.

Many participants cited more traditional contributors to peace, namely economic empowerment, and formal education. All consultations found a certain amount of cross-over between these themes as peace contributors and as factors comprising a foundation for lasting peace. Each was discussed with reference to their capacity to address the push and pull factors of violence, criminality, and extremism, one of which being poverty. As the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue, the need for peacebuilding in conjunction with conflict sensitive economic empowerment programmes increases. A potential role for incorporating peace education within more formal education systems acting as 'safe spaces' to lay the foundations for sustainable peace could also be explored, as complimentary to the support given by families in communicating peaceful values and mutual respect. However, without the protection provided by the different security forces operating in these states, these programmes will be mute. The majority of participants

across all states noted both the lifesaving role that these actors play, but also the need for improved coordination, adequate equipment and training to enable them to do their jobs well.

A more alternative peace contributor, prayer, was cited by almost all participants across all the locations. While not formally acknowledged within technical peacebuilding methods originating in the West, participants felt that prayers had contributed significantly to the peace currently being experienced. Running parallel to a renewed push towards the localisation agenda is the imperative for a truly participatory approach, that acknowledges and elevates what is commonly understood and shared as a positive contribution to peace. Finally, the media, most specifically social media, can be used to pass on peace messages and awareness of the need to create awareness among peace. This has already been highlighted in much of Alert Nigeria's successful work in media and peacebuilding¹². This need is particularly heightened within the pandemic 'age of disinformation', but also because extremist groups are beginning to utilize the same platforms in recruitment efforts and the dissemination of extremist teachings.

In terms of historical missed opportunities and barriers to peace, the majority of participants in each of the consultation locations felt that the lack of inclusion of women, other minority groups and persons with disabilities in peace processes thus far were key missed opportunities to build inclusive peace. Consistent with recent research undertaken by Alert to commemorate the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325¹³, the majority of participants agreed that women's participation in peace processes had been limited and undermined, often due to gender roles and the influence of discriminatory patriarchal norms. However, participants felt they have much to offer in these spaces, proffering several concrete suggestions as to their potential contributions, for instance within community early warning systems or serving as mentors. Lack of political will was noted as a key barrier to the effective implementation of peace processes. There was a general perception by most participants that the government at all levels lacks the will power to implement policies to improve the security situation, as well as the wellbeing of the people, despite the fact that this is their primary responsibility. This view was shared by many different participants, including those

holding political positions. Some of the participants specifically mentioned nepotism and corruption as factors hindering their leaders from implementing policies. Contributing to these issues is the lack of an equitable transitional justice system, but participants felt that an effective system that was fair to all citizens could go some way towards contributing to peace outcomes by limiting the potential for negotiations to turn violent.

Participants across consultation locations enumerated and painted the picture of hopes and aspirations for a peaceful future, resulting in many more themes than other consultation questions. However, it is important to note that this often brought up what appeared to be pessimism, and even anxiety, over whether these would ever materialize. Common themes included safety (securing life and properties of citizens), freedom (to move about without fear and to speak freely), trust and social cohesion (the need for citizens to live together in harmony and unity), good governance (accountable leadership, provision of basic amenities and education), inclusion/equal rights and opportunities (fairness and equity), forgiveness (letting go of the past and hurtful feelings). To achieve these hopes and aspirations for peace in these complex contexts, it was viewed by participants that all parties should and needed to be involved: national actors such as CSOs and faith-based organisations, community and religious representatives, government ministries, departments, and academia. As to the role of international actors, their positive impact was acknowledged, particularly by those participants from Borno state where a plethora of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations operate and provide lifesaving support, most especially for IDPs. However, this role was not perceived as always positive, especially among CSO participants, who again stated the view that international aid should be more sustainable and locally driven by national actors. While these participants acknowledge local and national capacity gaps, there are calls for international actors to invest in building the capacity of the CSOs to be able to implement actions as required by international best practices and standards. In addition, some of these participants expressed concrete displeasure over the level of synergy between international actors and government which has led to duplication of efforts and minimal impact.

12 R. Crozier & S. Mulcahy, 'How do we build peace in a pandemic? Lessons for peacebuilding and health sector organisations.', p. 8. <https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/COVID-19-Building-Peace-During-Pandemic-EN-2021.pdf>, International Alert, 2021

13 N. Sow & G. Nuckhir, 2020 'Twenty years of implementing UNSCR 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda. Lessons from the field', International Alert, 2020

Based on the discussions of participants' perceptions of peace, the challenges associated with achieving sustained peace, and the many actors operating within the context, a number of recommendations were made by participants to respective stakeholders who have a stake in peace. For international actors, these included the need to localize actions, work in synergy with respective governments and traditional institutions to increase acceptance and reduce the risk of duplication, as well as to positively contribute to perceptions among communities, particularly CSOs. For community, traditional and religious leaders, held in high esteem by communities and involved in their day-to-day activities, participants desired them to continue facilitation of peacebuilding initiatives using the traditional system for conflict resolution, Zaureh Sulhu. Traditional institutions in particular should work to maximize the trust

and respect accorded to them by community members and exercise their powers with fairness. Government and political actors, perhaps the most controversial of all those discussed, should work towards implementing policies that increase women and vulnerable groups participation at all levels of peace processes, supporting grassroots level organisations which have already mobilized. Many participants recommended they partner with other key actors, international and national, to strengthen community mechanisms and ensure a coordinated approach, as well as provide economic, employment and education opportunities to address push-pull factors to violence, with the necessary training in conflict sensitivity to support these. Finally, these actors must foster collaboration between security forces, and provide them with the adequate training and equipment to fully protect vulnerable communities from harm. ■