



BASELINE REPORT

**CONFLICT TRIGGERS ASSESSMENT IN
SOKOTO AND KADUNA COMMUNITIES**



APRIL 2023

Community Entry Point Engagement, Mapping and Conflict Triggers Assessment In Sokoto and Kaduna Communities

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List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Sample size and procedures

Table 2: Power ranking of Stakeholders in Gagi and Zonkwa

Table 3: Early Warning response team and action in Gagi and Zonkwa

Figure 1: Trend of Banditry in the North West

Figure 2: North West Conflict Analysis Tree

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Contents

Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
1.0 Introduction	9
1.1 Background and Context:.....	9
1.2 Objective and scope of the exercise.....	11
2.0 Methodology	12
2.1 Method of data collection:.....	12
2.3. Method of Data Analysis.....	13
2.4 Rationale for the Approach.....	13
2.5 Limitations of the Survey.....	13
3.0 Findings:	14
3.1 Stakeholder mapping, power dynamics and interest in Gagi and Zonkwa.....	14
4.0 Potential Triggers for Conflict	17
4.1 The Manifestations of Conflict?.....	20
4.2 Key actors in the conflicts.....	22
5.0 Conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms	24
5.1.1 The existence of early warning and response systems in Gagi and Zonkwa.....	24
5.1.2 The Community Mediation System: Modes of operation.....	27
5.1.3 The effectiveness of existing Community structures in preventing and resolving conflict.....	28
5.1.4 Possible reasons for the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of the existing conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms.....	29
6.0 Women involvement in conflict and peace building processes:	30
6.1 The Effects of violent conflict on Women and girls.....	30
6.2 The Role of Women in Peacebuilding Processes: Opportunities and threats.....	31
7.0 Recommendation: Changing games and building bridges:	34
8.0 References:	35

Northwestern Nigeria is in the grip of an intense, destabilising conflict that has flown under the radar of international policymakers and analysts. Since the mid-2010s, conflict has led to the killing of at least 12,000 people¹ (the actual toll is likely much higher), displaced over a million people, and led to the shuttering of hundreds of schools and colleges across the region.

In Sokoto State, violence has broken out in nine of the 23 local government areas. The security situation is particularly alarming in the eight eastern LGAs of Sokoto state that share a border with Zamfara State. In Kaduna State, the indigene-settler conflict which started in 1992, has now escalated into the widely known Zangon Kataf crisis, spreading beyond Zangon Kataf LGA to other parts of Kaduna State. The activities of these terrorists/bandits/gunmen threaten the security of lives and infrastructure, as well as gains made in the struggle for the advancement of women's rights and peacebuilding efforts by development actors, civic participation, and the fundamental rights of citizens in the region.

With significant hurdles to overcome in advancing women's rights and amplifying their voices, the instability in the North-West threatens to put women's issues on the back burner and erode the gains made over the years. The role of women is increasingly being recognized as crucial to achieving sustainable change and improving state-society relations and would require a more inclusive process both at grassroots levels and in top-level decision-making.

In advancing its work to foster better inclusion of women in peacebuilding initiatives and the civic space while building community resilience against insecurity and violent extremism in the Northwest, Global Rights in partnership with The Kukah Centre and House of Justice with support from the CSSF Nigeria Stability Programme of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) commissioned this baseline research in Kaduna and Sokoto communities, particularly Zonkwa and Gagi. The research comprised a mapping exercise to identify the key stakeholders, power dynamics, and interests in the target communities. The research also identified potential triggers for conflict, strategies for conflict prevention and resolution that have been utilised over time, presence and community awareness of early warning response systems, where applicable; and an assessment of the level of women's engagement in peacebuilding efforts at both state and community levels.

The study was conducted using a participatory rapid appraisal that employed mixed methods, which included observation consultations/key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Desk review was also carried out from open sources for the sake of understanding the contextual background of the issues around the governance system of the Northwest region and the place of women in decision-making.

We sincerely thank the research team, CDRT Consults and the field respondents for their immense contributions to this project.

We are hopeful that this report will serve as a valuable source of information for policymakers, academia, and other stakeholders and offer significant insights and practical implications that can be effectively utilised for informed decision-making and meaningful action.

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Executive Director, Global Rights

¹ Barnett, J. & Rufai, M. (2021). 'The other insurgency': Northwest Nigeria's worsening bandit crisis

Executive Summary

The contextual issue framing this study is of two folds: One is the persistent violent conflict and insecurity which poses a severe threat to the north-west and by implication the entire nation and the need to find urgent and lasting solutions to the conflict. The second is the need for women to be involved in conflict prevention and peace building processes as women are important to the peacebuilding process. Women are also the central caretakers of families and everyone is affected when they are excluded from peacebuilding.

The research objectives were to (1) Conduct a mapping exercise to identify the key stakeholders, power dynamics, and interests in the target communities in Kaduna and Sokoto State (2) Conduct a conflict triggers assessment (CTA) to identify potential triggers for conflict, and develop strategies for conflict prevention and resolution in Kaduna and Sokoto State- as entry point engagement to facilitate better inclusion of women in peacebuilding efforts and the civic space, and build community resilience against insecurity and violent extremism in Northwest Nigeria. Therefore, it focused mainly on three key areas which includes identifying the key stakeholders, power dynamics, and interests in the target communities, to identify potential triggers for conflict, and develop strategies for conflict prevention and resolution and to measure the level of women's involvement in peacebuilding efforts in the states.

The research comprised both desk research and field research. The fieldwork component of the study was conducted over a five-day period in Kaduna and Sokoto states, the study sought to hear voices and gather information and facts from within the community, the security operatives, the traditional and religious institutions, women and youth groups as well as all the other stakeholder groups. The study adopted a qualitative approach making use of key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD) as tools for information-gathering. In orientation, the approach was participatory to emphasise freedom of voice and storytelling. There were 30 interviews/focus group discussions over the five-day period in the two states (15 per state). The team also observed the communities and tried to validate some expressions of the participants in relation to community and power and influence. CDRT Team maintained its independence in the selection of respondents by working with research assistants who were familiar with the communities but had no direct interest whatsoever in the communities. Nonetheless, a rapid assessment of this nature comes with inherent limitations. The breadth of coverage

for example and availability of respondents is determined by the number of days allowed in the field in the face of crisis scare. And this was the case in reality as there was an attack in Southern Kaduna while the team was still carrying out the fieldwork.

The key findings emerging from the research points to the reasons why the conflict in the northwest has continued, despite military strategies to neutralise troops. the reasons for the limited effects and impact that various conflict resolution efforts including military strategies have had, in ending violent conflicts, and also why women have had less impressive levels of participation and involvement in conflict prevention and peace building processes. These are some of the highlights:

- ❖ Traditional Leaders rank about 95% level of influence in the community with religious leaders as 85%, ordinary citizens with 80%, Women with 70%, political leaders 40%, youth leaders with 50% level of influence respectively showing that for any conflict mechanism to be effective, it must recognize the position of power and influence exercised by these various stakeholders in the conflict space.
- ❖ The common triggers of conflict in these states have been mirrored around issues of the dwindling availability of environmental resources as a result of population growth and climate change with its resultant impact on the access to land and water resources, which has intensified farmer/Herder clashes/conflict and the proliferation of small arms have made the war intense. Also are socio-economic situations around the gold mining, inflation, rising food prices and youth unemployment which has increased poverty, inequality and hunger and has exacerbated the incidences of banditry, kidnapping for ransom, criminality. Also, political Interest and competition for resource control has induced illicit drug use by young people whom the politicians mobilise as instruments of violence and violent conflicts leading to election violence.
- ❖ Conflict prevention and resolution efforts such as military operations and amnesty programmes as well as negotiations with Bandit groups have yielded less significant results as far as ending the conflict is concerned. However, there are community mediation, peace-making dialogues as well as the existence of early warning systems and mechanisms in some communities like Gagi and Zonkwa that have proved effective in reducing incidence of conflict at the community level.
- ❖ Although women involvement in peace building efforts appears low in terms of official participation and role assigned to women, they are seen to be significantly involved in fact-finding, mediation, negotiation and preventive diplomacy, especially at the level of family and home where they hold a high stake and power and influence on their children, husbands, fathers, in-laws and so on. The lack of visibility has also limited the impacts of peace efforts over time.

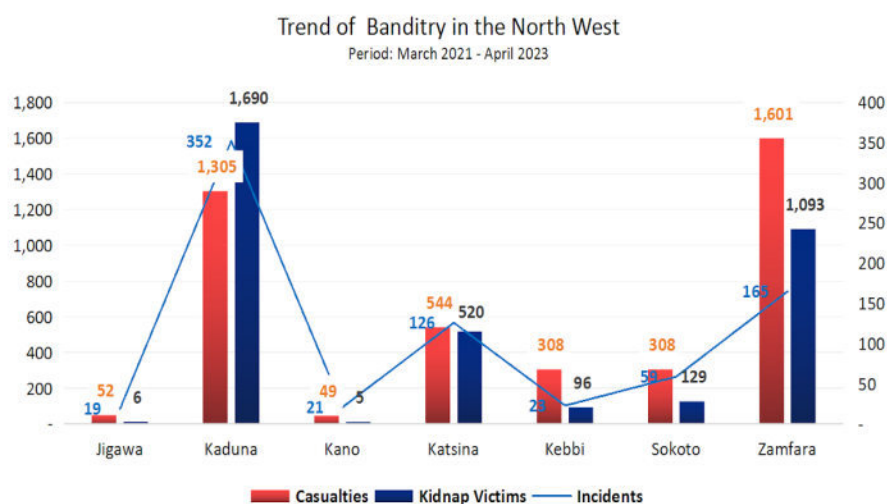
- ❖ The research concludes that for meaningful conflict prevention and peace efforts, there must be deliberate or intentional efforts to incorporate civilians and local communities who work under good leadership [to localise the context, build credible community dialogue committees, network, negotiate, advocate] into such mechanisms. Also, more women must be recruited into the space for conflict prevention and peacebuilding [family and home as spheres of influence] and government efforts towards peace should combine both addressing root causes of conflict and security vigilance [less of military operations]. It is also important that peace-building efforts of non-state actors combine both community-level efforts and state or federal-level engagements to address conflict in the northwest of Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context:

Northwestern Nigeria is suffering from an intense, destabilising conflict that has flown under the radar of international policymakers and analysts. Since the mid-2010, conflict has led to the killing of at least 12,000 (the true toll is likely much higher), displaced over a million people, and led to the shuttering of hundreds of schools and colleges across the region. The Nigerian state is all but absent from large swathes of the northwest, with even the federal highways unsafe for government officials and their armed escorts. The bandits number in the low 10,000, making them more numerous than the country's jihadists, and they have developed surprising fighting capacity, shooting down military jets and breaching the Nigerian Defense Academy (Barnett and Rufai, 2021). The incidences of bandit action is shown in the table below. The table shows that between March 2021 and April 2023, there have been about 1,305 casualties, 1690 kidnap victims and 352 incidents, 308 casualties, 129 kidnap victims and 58 incidents documented from bandit actions in Kaduna and Sokoto State respectively. In reality these numbers may be more.

Figure 1: Trend of Banditry in the North West



Source: NEXTIER Violent Conflict Database, 2023

In Sokoto State, violence has broken out in nine of the 23 local government areas, but mostly in Gada, Sabon Birni, Goronyo and Isa to the north, along with Rabah and Tureta to the east (International Crisis Group, 2020).

The security situation is particularly alarming in the eight eastern LGAs of Sokoto state that share a border with Zamfara State, which comprises Gada, Isa, Sabon Birni, Wurno, Rabah, Goronyo, Illela, and Gwadabawa. For instance, since the commencement of protection monitoring activities in July 2021 by GISCOR, serial attacks by non-State armed groups (NSAG) were reported in Tsamye, Gangara and Dambo villages of Sabon Birni; Birjingo Village of Goronyo LGA; Kogogo Lambar Tofa, Doliyom, Amgamba, and Rijiyar Bugaje, all in Rabah LGA. In addition to the whirls of attacks that destroyed lives and property which characterise the situation of the most affected LGAs, the NSAG also attacked Sokoto Municipality on 29 August 2021, a development that heightened fears generally and constituted a threat to other parts of the State that currently enjoy relative peace.

In Kaduna State, from 1992 to date, the indigenous settler conflict exploded into the well-known Zangon Kataf crisis, in Kaduna, which spread to other parts of Kaduna state beyond Zangon Kataf LGA. From 2015 thereabouts, little conflicts started to spring up with groups of Hausa/Fulani people attacking individuals. In 2017, there was an attack which involved the fatal shooting of four individuals in Samaru Market even as others were injured. In 2018 at Gangora, there was another attack where two ladies were killed and others injured and many more were ambushed on their way to the farm. In 2020, the situation worsened and took on yet another pattern so that entire communities were attacked, and houses razed. By 2021, the conflict worsened even further and saw the destruction of crops, animals and lives and properties. This has continued till date including the recent attacks in April 2023.

The activities of these terrorists/bandits/gunmen threaten the security of lives and infrastructure, as well as gains made in the struggle for the advancement of women's rights and peacebuilding efforts by development actors, civic participation, and the fundamental rights of citizens in the region. With significant hurdles to overcome in advancing women's rights and voice, the instability in the North-West threatens to put women's issues on the back burner and erode the gains made over the years.

There are obvious reasons why women are important to the peacebuilding process. For example, they constitute half of every community and the difficult task of peacebuilding must be done by men and women in partnership. Women are also the central caretakers of families and everyone is affected when they are excluded from peacebuilding. Women are also advocates for peace, as peacekeepers, relief workers and mediators. Women have played prominent roles in peace processes in the Horn of Africa such as in Sudan and Burundi, where they have contributed as observers. However, efforts to foreground the perspectives of women in peace processes and to prevent/mitigate conflict and violent extremism have met with limited success. Women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is limited by a number of factors, including socio-cultural structures.

Stability is an overarching goal with a priority focus on the security and justice sectors accompanied by a concerted drive to increasingly embed gender equality social inclusion (GESI) approaches into development practice. With an estimated population of 200 million, 49% of which are female, Nigeria makes a compelling case with its prominent presence within the continent, for effecting change which can lead to better access to justice and development outcomes for excluded groups. The role of women is increasingly being recognized as crucial to achieving sustainable change and improving state-society relations and would require a more inclusive process—one that includes women playing more pivotal roles in building a peace from the bottom up as well as from the top down, engaging multiple stakeholders.

1.2 Objective and Scope of the Exercise

Global Rights through its intervention - Women, Peace and Security (WPS) project seeks to achieve better inclusion for women in peacebuilding efforts and the civic space, and build community resilience against insecurity and violent extremism in the Northwest. In specific terms the baseline research focuses on:

- A mapping exercise to identify the key stakeholders, power dynamics, and interests in the target communities.
- A Conflict Trigger Assessment exercise to identify potential triggers for conflict, and what strategies for conflict prevention and resolution have been utilised over time; the existence of early warning response systems, and the level of community awareness of early warning response systems where they exist.
- An Assessment of the level of women's involvement in peacebuilding efforts in the states and communities,

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Method of Data Collection:

The study was conducted using a participatory rapid appraisal that employed mixed methods, which includes observation consultations/ key informant's interviews and focus group discussions with target groups in Kaduna (Samaru Kataf) and Sokoto (Gagi). The review of relevant literature was also carried out from open sources for the sake of understanding the contextual background of the issues around the governance system of the North West Region and the place of women in decision making, the conflict backgrounds and scenarios.

2.2 Sample Size and Procedures:

A total of 30 interviews were conducted across the two communities in Kaduna and Sokoto States among the different categories of stakeholders as shown in the table below. They include Peace and security agencies, NGO, women' rights organisation, Traditional leader, Religious leader, Community and youth groups, relevant Local Government departments, and Citizens:

Table 1: Sample Size and Procedures:

S/N	Category of Respondents	Type of Interview	No. of interview w
1	Key Stakeholders		
a	Traditional Leader	KII	1
b	Religious Leader (Imam, c) one on each side	KII	1
c	Religious Leader (Pastor, Rev Father, CAN Chairman)	KII	1
d	Political office holder (counsellor, ward leader)	KII	1
e	Youth Leader (leader of respectable or vibrant youth group who is influential)	KII	1
f	Women Leader (like party women leaders and church group leaders or an elderly woman in the community with historical background knowledge)	KII	1
g	Conflict focused NGO or CSO or Community Based Organization	KII	1
h	Head, LG Department of Youth and Social Development	KII	1
l	Local Govt. Gender Desk officer	KII	1
2.	Community Members (Ordinary Citizens)		
a	Men group (A mix of men-farmers, Artisans, traders, cattle or goat herders within the age of 25-55.	FGD Men	1
b	Youth Groups (A mix of youths from different youth groups).	FGD youth	1
c	Women (Mix of 8 women from the community-traders, house wives, mothers, farmers, herders, within the age of 20-50)	FGD Women	1
3.	Security operatives /personnel		
a	Police at the community level office-nearest police station	KII	1
b	Civil Defense Officer nearest to the community	KII	1
c	Vigilante groups	FGD	1
	TOTAL INTERVIEWS PER STATE	KII FGD	KII=11 FGD=4

2.3. Method of Data Analysis

The information gathered from the desk review was triangulated with the responses from the interviews as well as the quick scan of the conflict environment in Kaduna and Sokoto States to form opinions. Also, the information from the interviews was validated with other programme or project staff/personnel in the locations such as the TMG chair in Zangon Kataf who was also recruited into the research at community level and Academics in Sokoto and Zamfara states as persons who have carried out similar studies and constantly relating with issues in the region.

2.4 Rationale for the Approach

Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) is considered an educational method for individuals involved in the study to discover, to analyse and evaluate the issues, opportunities and challenges and adopt attitudes towards projects and development programmes. It allows for data gathering in a quick and organised way to be used in the evaluation of needs and analysis of the general situation.

2.5 Limitations of the Survey

There are inherent limitations in a rapid assessment exercise of this nature. The breadth of coverage for example is limited especially in this exercise where limited days were available for fieldwork. In the circumstance, the respondents were limited to those who were available to take part in the exercise at the time. Also, the fact that conflict could also erupt at any time with researchers still in the community limits how much time and allowance the team could spend on field observation to determine the participants of the interviews. Hence the reason for recruiting more researchers into the study and the cross validation that was carried out, to rule out biases.

3.0 Findings:

3.1 Stakeholder Mapping, Power Dynamics and Interest in Gagi and Zonkwa

The nature of hierarchy in Zangon Kataf is such that there is parallel administration of the people by the traditional institution. The traditional institution has Agwam Atyp (the Chief of Atyp) as the head, who has district heads under him (Dakatai). Each district head has at least three village heads under him, and under the village heads there are ward heads (Mai Ungwars) who are closer to the people in their respective areas of residence. Most communities also have youth leaders, referred to in Hausa as Sarkin Samari who are often invited to sit in, and take instructions from the traditional council for implementation by the youth who are the most active and vibrant people in the communities. This structure is similar in both Samaru Kataf and Zango Urban but there is only one Chief of the entire Atyp chiefdom, while the Hausa community call their District Head Hakimi. The FGDs and KIs revealed that in both Samaru Kataf and Zango Urban, the decision of the representatives of the traditional institution counts most, because they are the ones with whom the people interface daily. The decision-making power is also incremental from the bottom up, like the ward head is under the village head who is also under the district head (Hakimi in Hausa) and the Chief of Atyp is the paramount ruler in the Atyp chiefdom under which both Samaru Kataf and Zango urban fall.

In Sokoto, Gagi is a multicultural community in Sokoto South Local Government Area with Hausa Fulani in the majority. Igbo, Ijaw, Hausa, Berom, Itsekiri, Yoruba, Kaje, Gbagyi and many more populate this area and now with not less than seven hundred internally displaced persons who escaped crisis in neighbouring communities. These different ethnic groups are present in other parts of the state but have higher numbers in Gagi. The District Head of Gagi, is under the Sultanate Caliphate of Sokoto, (Sarkin Yaki). He is supported by five Village heads, each of which has settlement heads under them known as Mai Ungwar. There are no less than 10 settlement heads under each village head. In these districts, there are the Ward Development Committees (WDC) made up of retired police men, academicians, politicians, and artisans. The Village Head is answerable to the Sultan. Whatever he/and the other leaders decide at the community level is presented to the Sultan at the monthly security meeting. The district head is the highest decision maker at the district level and the village heads at the village level and the ward heads at the ward level. This is the hierarchy in respect to decision making. If for any reason a problem cannot be resolved at a ward level, it will be referred to the village head and if it is not resolved, it is referred to The District Head and if there are complications, he escalates the matter to the Sultan. He can also report directly to the government. There is also the secular political government of the day, in the case of Kaduna, the closest structure is Zonkwa, the headquarters of Zangon Kataf Local Government Area and in Sokoto it is Sokoto South Local Government Area. The formal structures of secular political authority at the local government level are located in Zonkwa, the LGA headquarters

Respondents from the FGDs and KII respondents agree that the formal government structures representing the government have a significant stake in decision making. This is because the federal government of Nigeria has sovereign control over the affairs of the citizens in the area, followed by the state government and then the local government authority. Although the traditional institutions are closer to the people, the individuals occupying the offices of chiefs, village heads and ward heads (Mai Ungwar) are mostly employees of either the state or local government administrative structures, from whom they take instruction and who supervise their activities. The traditional rulers are also careful not to have a sour relationship with the government of the day because such can also attract severe sanctions like suspension, and even outright deposition in some cases. However, these decisions are also in consultation with the leaders of the other ethnic groups resident in the respective areas.

Secondly in the line, among the structures of authority, to which the people listen, and who adjudicate matters of conflict or potential conflicts among the residents, are representatives of the religious institutions, namely, the pastors and the imams. The people listen and obey them as leaders of faith, a situation most glaring as like the case of Gagi where the District Head has a dual reporting line; to the Sultan directly and also to the government. In the interview with the Christian religious leader in Samaru Kataf, it was revealed that the religious leaders themselves submit to the supremacy of the decisions of the traditional institution over their followers first. He added that depending on the community, some decisions are taken by the village head and sometimes, the district head. Some other key decisions are taken by the paramount chief. There are also community bodies headed by community leaders who take decisions on behalf of their followers. With respect to the chiefdom as a whole, there are also elected executives who take certain decisions as it pertains to happenings in the community. The different hierarchies need each other.

The community leaders usually consult with the traditional leaders at all levels especially when there is a very serious decision to be taken. In some cases, like Zango Kataf, the church is involved, in certain other cases, Muslims are involved. When it comes to matters of peace, even security agents are invited to such meetings to deliberate on issues and make decisions. The Muslim religious leader, the imam of the Friday Mosque in Zango Urban also agrees with this viewpoint, adding that the religious leaders reinforce the decisions of the traditional institutions in their places of worship which in most cases does not go contrary to their religious faiths.

Another critical point that emerged from the discussions regarding the different levels of power and decision making, is the role and power of parents. According to one of the participants in the FGD for men, the home is the first institution of learning and the closest monitor of the behaviour of youth are the parents and women are particularly the closest to their children. This position is amplified by Falola (2023) in his assertion that:

“From pre-colonial times to the early 21st Century, the role and status of women ... have continuously evolved. However, the image of a helpless, oppressed, and marginalised group has undermined their proper study, and little recognition has been granted to the various integral functions that Nigerian women have performed throughout history. He stressed further that, in politics, women were not as docile or powerless as contemporary literature tends to portray them. Adding that the basic unit of political organisation was the family, and in the common matri-focal arrangement, which allowed a woman to gain considerable authority over her children, a woman and her offspring could form a major bloc in the household. Power and privileges in a household were also based on age and gender, thereby allowing senior women to have a voice on many issues. Because the private and public arenas were intertwined, a woman’s ability to control resources and people in a household was at the same time an exercise in public power. She could use food production to gain respect. She could control her children and influence men through this power. She could evoke the power of the spirit or gods in her favour. Or she could simply withdraw and use the kitchen as her own personal domicile for interaction with her colleagues, friends, and children. Beyond the household level, power was generally dominated by men, but in many areas specific titles were given to women”

Women also in conscious recognition of their place in decision making participate in the affairs of the community and are nominated as women leaders in the different communities. When something pertains to the women, the women leaders are consulted, in this way, they play an important role. The table below reflects the power ranking among the different stakeholders in the target communities.

Table 2: Power ranking of Stakeholders in Gagi and Zonkwa

Stakeholder	Power Ranking (in %)
Traditional Leaders	95
Religious Leaders	85
Political Leaders	50
Youth Leaders	50
Ordinary Citizens	80
Women	70

Key
 0-20 ■ Least influential.
 21-40 ■ Fairly influential
 41-60 ■ Moderate level of influence
 61-80 ■ High level of influence
 81-100 ■ Most Influential

Source: Field work 2023

There are also the law enforcement agencies like the police stations and then some bases of the military personnel who were drafted to the area to try and control the incessant occurrences of communal clashes on the one hand, and then Fulani herdsmen guerrilla attacks on residents on the other hand. The research found that these structures in the community like the police, the military bases, and the groups of community vigilante are interested in using a combination of intelligence gathering, peace building and force where necessary as a way of keeping law and order and promoting peaceful coexistence of the people in the community.

The youth FGD for instance, also revealed that there are also leaders of thought and opinion gatekeepers like elderly people who have worked in the public and private sector but are now retired, whose wise counsel are also often sought.

4.0 Potential Triggers for Conflict

The research revealed that initially, both the Samaru Kataf and the Zango Urban communities were multicultural in nature, and people coexisted freely across religious and ethnic lines. However, it is sad that the occurrences of conflict so far have polarised the communities and led to the displacement and relocation of people from their erstwhile neighbours to areas closer to their kith and kin, where they find safety and strength in numbers. Fights between different settlements within the same community are less because the pattern of demographic settlement has changed, people now cluster around where they feel safer.

There are less inter communal clashes or intra communal clashes: rather, it is the problem of guerilla attacks that is happening now more than before. There are a few incidents of indigenous/settler groups' conflicts between neighbouring communities.

In 1992, a proposal to move Zangon Kataf market located in a Hausa dominated area, to a more spacious area, away from the Hausa enclave, led to fierce resistance, violence, and bloodshed. The 2011 post- election violence in Hausa dominated areas of Northern Nigerian states led to reprisals in Samaru Kataf, where the biggest Friday Mosque was razed down. In 2017, three people were said to have been murdered in Kataf land. Someone murdered them and left. Since then, there have been similar attacks on almost all the villages in Kataf land. (Some of the respondents did not take kindly to the situation being referred to as “conflicts” and preferred the term, “attacks”. In one of the respondent’s words,

“There is a difference between conflict and attacks, when you are sleeping in your room and someone comes to attack you; that is not conflict. This is different from conflict; it is an attack.”

The crisis that took place in 2020 happened as a consequence of the disregard for the rule of law. The Kataf people claimed that one of them, by the name Yusuf had gone to the farm but never

returned and when he was eventually found, he was already dead. Rather than allowing the law to run its course, however, the Kataf took the laws into their hands and launched an attack on the people of Zango Urban whom they believed were responsible for the murder.

The main contention is between Hausa/Fulani whose grandparents settled in the area, and the Atyap people who are original inhabitants. Differences manifest in ethnic and religious dimensions. On the sideline of the indigene settler issue is the new threat of incessant guerilla attacks on communities by unknown gunmen, suspected to be non-local Fulani herdsmen. Further probe of the vigilante group in Samaru Kataf revealed that the perpetrators of the attacks were young Fulani males and some rear cattle.

These prompt reactions from the indigenes (in later parts of the interview the respondent mentions the retributive killing of Fulani men and/or their cows as some of the forms such reactions may assume. He expressed his point saying '*Conflicts grow just like a human or any plant, or animal grows*'. Farmer/herder clashes also occur because of the presence of cattle rearing Fulani in the surroundings. One of the staff of a tertiary institution who participated in the Men FGD revealed even just the day before, the school management instructed him and other staff to get some Fulani herdsmen and their animals off the land belonging to the polytechnic. He said when they approached the herdsman and told him that he needed to leave, he instead threatened to attack the polytechnic staff with his machete if they did not go away and leave him alone.

Rural communities in Sokoto have been hard-pressed by the devastating effect of rural banditry which has claimed hundreds of lives and properties. It began as localised disputes between headers and farmers over access to land and water resources. Poor handling of the security problem has largely contributed to its transformation into a deadly conflict posing a major threat to national and regional security and integration. The pattern and intensity of rural banditry in the Northwest are connected to socio-economic, environmental, and political forces which shape the development of the geo-political zone. Land-use conflict has increased dramatically in recent decades, driving a wedge between Hausa and Fulani communities. Though the divisions are often blurry in practice, farmers belong largely to the Hausa community and herders to the Fulani. Environmental degradation and population growth have helped fuel a sense of resource scarcity, though residents and community leaders mostly identify government corruption in apportioning land titles and settling of disputes as factors that pushed both farmers and herders to begin arming themselves. As a result, between 2011 and 2014, an increasing number of herders found themselves joining criminal gangs or forming pastoralist militias. Some were motivated by the need for self-defence, others by sentiments of ethnic solidarity, and still others, including non-Fulani, by simple economic opportunism. The line between criminal gangs and Fulani militia has long since blurred, with all the militants colloquially lumped together under the label of bandits (Barnett and Rufai, 2021). Factors that encourage banditry in the region include cattle

rustling, illicit artisanal gold mining, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), youth unemployment, inequality and poverty. In both Kaduna and Sokoto States, Male FGD respondents identified the preponderant use of illicit drugs and other intoxicating substances by youths as part of the causes of violent expression of conflict. They see that there is more access to and use of these drugs and substances in recent times than previously. The increasing levels of unemployment is seen to be one of the factors that make youths idle and are therefore, available and vulnerable to being used as instruments of conflicts and violent extremism.

The research also reveals that the cattle rearing Fulani often send young children to herd the cattle, most times, the children do not exercise discretion when grazing the cattle, or sleep off while herding, so that the cows wander into farm lands. In some cases, the children would even cut the leaves of economic trees to feed the cattle. When the children are confronted, they respond rudely, and complain to the older Fulani at home, who return to attack the owners of the farms and their neighbours. As such, it might be that these conflicts are evidence of micro-nationalism, ethnic groups asserting themselves in order not to be dominated by others, and perhaps exacerbated by climate change and its resultant environmental degradation. Whether they are numerically weaker or stronger, indigenous or settler, domiciled or migrant.

Without provocation you find someone ambush another person and kill them, carry guns to public places and begin shooting sporadically, ambush communities at night while asleep and kill them, these are all done for reasons best known to the attacker.

Although there were agitations by the Hausas and Fulanis in that time over additional land, they were made to sign a treaty, and whenever an indigene did not need the portion of their land, they made it available to them without duress. All the parties involved were satisfied with this.

The vigilante groups in both states, in their own contribution, added that there is an increase in farmer herder clashes because of Competition for land as a resource. In the past, the Fulani would migrate to other places during the rainy seasons, to allow the farmers space to carry out their farming activities. Now, they no longer do that so that in the rainy seasons when farmers are growing their crops, the Fulani are also grazing their herds, which end up feeding on the farmers' crops. This means that farms and economic trees are often sacrificed to feed the cows.

One of the FGD participants sees the denial of entitlements, injustice and unfairness as some of the deep-rooted animosity that exists across ethnic and religious lines, which gives rise to resentments and violent explosion of conflict. An example cited is the denial of the rights of some individuals to repossess their land after the return from seeking refuge at a time of crisis. They return to find their farmlands and homesteads taken over and the community structures for adjudication sometimes do not dispense justice with equity and fairness. In a community, the wrongdoer should be reprimanded, and the complainant should get restitution in order to bring reconciliation and closure to disagreements. However, in all of these, the stakes of women need more onboarding than is currently the case.

In Zangon Kataf, there are also perceived cases of marginalisation arising from religious bias. The chieftdom used to have about sixteen districts, the smallest of them was the district with Muslim settlement. When the government embarked on merging the districts, they merged large districts that covered vast areas, so that fifteen Christian dominated districts were merged into three while the small Muslim dominated district was left on its own. Now, that district is treated as a ward on its own while vast areas with thousands of people are considered as one ward, making the bias glaring. “As long as there is no justice, there is that tendency that there will be conflict. Injustice triggered the crisis in various ways.”

Based on these viewpoints expressed, the research therefore, draws an inference that conversely, two key unresolved issues that perpetuate conflict between the diverse populations for whom Zangon Kataf is now a homeland. On the one hand, there is a sincere concern of the Hausa/Fulani people whose grandparents first came to Atyap land, acquired landed property through rent or outright purchase, but are still considered strangers after several generations of their offspring. On the other hand, the original inhabitants of the communities do not want to be displaced bit by bit from their ancestral lands whether or not all of that land is in use or some are fallow. Perhaps, bias from the past constitutes a strong factor in the recurrence of the crisis in the area.

This places on the front burner of the discourse on conflict mitigation and peace building, the germane issue of the contestations between indigenes and settlers. The Zangon Kataf crisis is an example of how this issue plays out in other locations like Plateau, Taraba and Benue states. Addressing this is at the heart of the solution to intractable conflicts in Kaduna, Sokoto and the rest of the country. In all of these, the key takeaway from the conversations with the FGD participants in Samaru Kataf and Zango Urban along with the views of the Zango Urban Friday Mosque Imam is that law enforcement and armed forces personnel cannot create peace whatever the number deployed. It is the people who had a past history of peaceful coexistence across religious and ethnic divides that must find a way of going back to what they once enjoyed and now miss. It is along these lines that all conflict mitigation and peace building efforts must be directed.

4.1 The Manifestations of Conflict?

The information gathered from the field revealed that indeed, there is a mixture of fear and mistrust, suspicion among community members as well as intolerance which has led to displacement and relocation. Zango residents apart from Zonkwa residents who are Muslims have now moved to Zango urban, which is a Moslem dominated cluster. This had led to the perpetuation of Fear, mutual suspicion, hatred, mistrust, panic, loss of lives and property, economic downturn, and breakdown in relationships. The current wave of conflicts have also resulted in the loss of lives, the destruction of properties (no less than 600 houses and 500 lives at the time, according to the respondent), trauma, the crippling of businesses and the economy, setbacks in education (the respondent says that there are some schools that have been shut

4.2 Key Actors in the Conflicts

Findings from the research also found that actors or players in the conflict Situations differ or vary per location. Men, women and even children are involved in different ways. By this, the respondents mean that they as community people are both perpetrators and victims as the case may be depending on the specific conflict situation. For instance, the political government of the day and the military personnel drafted to the area are sometimes perceived as being part of the actors. This is because, even though the government has the power to exacerbate the situation or make it better, appropriate measures do not seem to be taken. As is expected in almost every group, there are good people and bad people. Although it is also difficult to prove the army's involvement in the conflict, they engage in it (the respondent again alludes to not being able to prove this). Security agents in general who maintain the peace but in certain instances contribute to the problem.

The perpetrators appear to be well organised. In Kaduna, on one hand, there are the Fulani youths with sophisticated weapons and on the other hand there are the victims of Atyap origins. (The respondent seems to strongly believe that the involvement of the indigenous people, Atyap in this case, is simply in reaction to the acts of violence perpetrated by the Hausa/Fulanis). The youth FGD also revealed that Unknown gunmen suspected to be Fulani herdsmen just like the herdsmen seen with sophisticated guns are openly seen moving about the community. Some among the Kataf have encountered them in the bush. There are also politicians and people in the corridors of power who allegedly sponsor the purchase and distribution of weapons to the aggressors. These ones are alleged to play a passive role in the conflicts. There are also the Kataf people who as victims in these conflicts are vulnerable to the attackers who have weapons, and possibly get support from the politicians and security agents.

Conflict in Sokoto mainly takes the form of bandit attacks and cattle rustling. According to the accounts of one respondent among the security agencies,

'They were mainly bandits that were passing through, they were strangers. Gagi hosted many IDPs that ran away from the attacks of the bandits in their communities that were neighbouring communities. Many children were orphaned or deserted. Vans were used to pick PWDs that were trying to escape by security agents. Some people died during the attacks. The dead bandits were buried in a mass grave. They did not really look like Nigerians'.

The main actors in Sokoto state's conflicts are militias from herders and farmers communities, created to protect their own communities but leading to more violence and retaliation attacks. In addition, many incidents in the state seem to be the work of criminal groups that have mushroomed as the overall security situation has deteriorated amid a proliferation of small arms in the region.

In October 2019, Boko Haram or ISWAP claimed responsibility for an attack on Nigerian troops in Sokoto state. Security sources consulted note that 'Sahel-based jihadist groups are known to be seeking a foothold in Sokoto and other neighbouring states.

There are also the beneficiaries; those who benefit from corruption. There are also those who get monetary benefits, this includes those who have been hired to join the minority to kill. In the community. There are also those who cause conflict to garner support from others on religious grounds; only using religion as a platform for mobilisation, in order to achieve a certain goal. In such cases, when financial support is given, part of it is used in the furtherance of such causes while the rest is possibly kept for personal enrichment. There are also probable sponsors which is a matter of conjecture and not admissible evidence, but the respondents appear to think that those in the corridors of political power are complicit, or at least have some knowledge of who these people are. He by implication refers to the way and manner in which people in authority openly make provocative statements that could fuel a crisis without impunity.

Traditional rulers, security personnel, political elites amongst others were alleged to be some of the beneficiaries of this conflict. This is similar to the views of Abdullahi (2019) who asserts that apart from political elites, traditional rulers were also involved in aiding and abetting rural banditry in the Northwest. Empirical evidence shows that some traditional rulers provide safety to bandit's groups to carry out their illicit operations. They were accused of blatantly refusing to take action against rural bandits' activities in their communities. He further posits that public officials in state security institutions are also becoming part of the conspiracy through outright misappropriation of funds meant for the welfare of security personnel and supply of arms to fight banditry in the Northwest. This is evident in the series of alleged cases of misappropriation and out-rights embezzlement of funds meant for military and police operations across Nigeria. Lastly, there are those who have tried to intervene to broker peace, like religious leaders and some non-governmental organisations.

5.0 Conflict Prevention and Resolution Mechanisms

The Sokoto state authorities, as in other north-west states, tried to secure law and order through military responses to attacks, launching battles, air raids to destroy camps and kill or disperse militias. On the other hand, they engaged in dialogues with armed group leaders, predominantly from the herder-allied groups, offering amnesties and other incentives to stop the violence. The Sokoto government said in November 2019 they had negotiated with about 17 armed groups. The government has taken more steps to reduce farmer-herder conflicts, by demarcating the state's grazing reserves to secure them properly and prevent encroachment. The Nigerian security forces have launched several military operations in the North-West Region states. Non-kinetic efforts were also put in place as part of conflict mitigation and prevention.

According to Barnett and Rufai (2021), non-kinetic efforts to curtail banditry have not proven more successful. Several northwestern governors have undertaken a series of amnesties since 2016 in which bandits lay down their arms and “repented” in return for promises of their freedom (and often some material incentives). Each of these amnesties has eventually collapsed as both the bandits and the state government accuses the other of bad faith. All but a few of the once “repentant” bandits have resumed their armed activities. In September 2021, following a rise in violence and a record number of mass kidnappings specifically targeting schools,

5.1.1 The Existence of Early Warning and Response Systems in Target Communities.

At the community level however, the finding from the research reveal that there exist in different forms informal systematic or logical process or structure put in place that may process warning and response situation in a (a) Fact-finding, (b) Mediation, (c) peace-making dialogue, (d) negotiations, (e) preventive diplomacy or more robust mechanisms such as sanctions. Both the vigilante as a group, and individual members of the communities are responsible for communicating early signals of likely conflict to other members of the community. There is mostly a merger of the vigilante and youth groups. Members of the community stay alert. Some of them temporarily relocate to other communities until the immediate threat passes.

In the case of Zangon Kataf for instance, members of the community in general are able to identify signs which include rumours, and in some cases, overt and covert notification by the Fulani of an impending attack; the covert notifications occur when Fulanis warn their Atyap friends of an impending attack. The overt notifications come from the issuance of warnings to the Kataf people possibly as an intimidation tactic. Some of the signs of impending conflict or attacks in a community are rumours, a sudden influx of men in threes on motor bikes into the community.

In Gagi, when youth are seen gathered in a place holding green leaves, then something serious is happening somewhere nearby, or people are seen forming groups or even strangers assembling are all early signs that something could be happening. In both locations, occurrences such as an

attack on certain ethnic group, attack on certain religious worshippers/adherents/faithful, alleged blasphemy / abuse on religious sensibilities, hate speech / propaganda, sudden disappearance of local service providers [water seller, okada riders, shoe makers, etc.], Perennial Land disputes, sudden general bad telecoms network in particular locality, increased security presence/measures in a particular locality, sudden migration/departure of specific ethnic group, unusual several closed-door meetings of particular ethnic groups, community boundary disputes, farmer-herder dispute or quarrel, cattle rustling, youth restiveness/non-celebratory burning of tyres, panic buying of consumables [food, airtime, snacks, etc.] in a particular locality, sudden influx of scavengers in a particular locality, sudden influx of strangers in a particular locality; unusual assembly of youth/strangers, notification of attacks by attackers, deliberate spread of rumours, disruptions to normal daily activities, incidents of violence such as clashes between religious sects, mob attack/jungle justice, unclaimed corpses of strange face lying on the street continually, abduction, all point to the fact that crisis or conflict is brewing! Once such signs are observed, the security agencies and community leaders, traditional leaders and any other person or group of persons who may be able to forestall such events or have influence over any group of people, are alerted.

There are telephone numbers of government officials and representatives of security agencies that have been provided for citizens to call and report early warning signs or call for help. However, the first response teams are limited in number, are spread thin, and often encounter logistic challenges/limitations that inhibit them from responding as swiftly as expected/required.

Sometimes the military response teams themselves experience fatigue from incessant conflict situations. Response by security agents in most cases is considered a bit late as they have to wait for “orders from above” to take action. The leaders usually respond however, by calling for meetings where members of the community are asked to stay on alert. Men may also be advised to take their families to neighbouring communities until the conflict is over.

Sometimes also members of the community may call on security agencies by going directly to their bases at the checkpoints or by calling their numbers sometimes through emergency contact numbers provided on social media, and to community leaders, and/ or elected representatives and government officials like the Commissioner of the Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs who communicate with the appropriate quarters to intervene.

There are also press releases to call the attention of the government in certain cases. In some cases, the community leaders or traditional leaders prepare reports on the conflict situation. The respondents in Kaduna revealed that in the past, there was the committee for reconciliation led by the sector commandant and composed of religious leaders, community leaders, the GNI, CAN, and traditional leaders. Every community had one of such committees although they are mostly employed in situations where there are already tangible identifiable disagreements.

There is a Discipline and Peace Committee of which the District Head is the chairman. The members include retired policemen and retired lawyers. Traditional leaders at the different levels participate in the monthly Security Council meeting at the LGA. All security operatives are members of the Security Council. There is a mandatory security report made to the Sultan every month whether there is conflict or not. However, it appears as though these semi-formal or community mediation and peace-making dialogue may also have contributed to the stability of Zonkwa and Gagi communities and can be considered as one of the early warning responses. So far, the people lodge their complaints of any form of disagreement to the traditional leaders, religious leaders and law enforcement agencies. There are community mediation interventions organised by the traditional institution as a strategy for resolving disputes/disagreements. It is made up of the traditional leaders (the Dakachi, the Mai Ungwars) , the representatives of the different ethnic groups resident in the area, and religious leaders. The various options of resolving conflict include:

- Negotiations and compromise between parties in dispute
- Intervention of the traditional institution
- Attempts at conflict resolution by the police
- The option of approaching the court of law.

Table 3: Early warning response team and action in Gagi and Zonkwa

Type of response	Group composition	
	Kaduna	Sokoto
Fact Finding	Community Members Vigilante groups	WDC/vigilante
Mediation	Community leaders and other stakeholders	WDC
Peace making dialogue	Traditional leaders, community leaders and other stakeholders	WDC/women
negotiations	Traditional leaders, security agents	WDC
Preventive diplomacy	Community, traditional leaders, youth groups, etc.	WDC
Sanctions	Security agency	WDC/police/civil defence

Source: Field work 2023

5.1.2 The Community Mediation System: Modes of operation

When there is a complaint by an individual against another, the two parties are invited for mediation. In many cases, the conflict is resolved at that stage and any necessary restitution are made. However, if any or both of the parties fail to honour the terms of the mediation, the matter is then escalated to the law enforcement agencies or other higher levels of authority at the LGA and State government levels. The research participants discussed a hypothetical scenario whereby there is disagreement between two individuals for instance. The following steps may be taken under the guidance of the traditional institution:

- Asking the two parties in the dispute to negotiate, discuss and come to a compromise
- Allowing the traditional institution at the ward or village level to adjudicate, with the hope that the parties in dispute will respect the ruling that will come out of the process
- When options a and b above fail, and then the parties may head to the police station, where police will investigate and advice on what can be done to bring about resolution
- Should the intervention of the police also fail to resolve the matter, then there is the option of going to court, for which there are different levels of courts of law from customary, to magistrate, to high court, court of appeal and even the supreme court where necessary. Table 3 above shows the different groups who ensure the communities remain in peace.

If in spite of all of the above steps, people still disagree and the disagreements sometimes gets to the level of the outbreak of violence, then security agencies and The military are drafted to the area for peace enforcement. The Christian religious leader interviewed confirmed that the strategies for resolving disputes involve mediation and sanctions. Meetings involving traditional leaders, community leaders and security agents like the army are called. In some cases non-governmental organisations may also be called on to mediate. The Christian religious leader also considers armed intervention by the military to dispel the perpetrators of an attack as a means of resolving conflicts. Although this strategy offers temporary peace is not a deep rooted and lasting peace, it is more of an enforced cease fire; the grievances are yet to be addressed and conflict may erupt again.

Around the Zangon Kataf area for instance, it is important to note that at the level of the local government authority and the state government, peace committees had been set up and representatives of various interests in contention have attended meetings, seminars and workshops but many of the representatives in such efforts do not necessarily disseminate what they learnt to their communities and only see their participation in the meetings as an opportunity for expense paid travels and enjoyment. This point is important to note in subsequent peacebuilding strategies so as to put in place checks and balance or

"In my view it is not the security agents that will bring us peace; we are the ones that should check what went wrong, make amends, and then continue to coexist peacefully like we did in the past. If we fail to do that for ourselves, I think whatever the number of peacekeeping personnel that is drafted to this area by the government cannot create the much needed peace for us"- Muslim Cleric in Zonkwa

evaluation mechanism that ensures that knowledge gained from such efforts of peace actors is stepped down and also taken into action afterwards

5.1.3 The Effectiveness of Existing Community Structures in Preventing and Resolving Conflict

When there is conflict, the traditional leaders may report the situation to security agencies to help bring it under control or to help summon the leaders of the parties involved in the conflict for resolution. The security agents and sometimes non-governmental organisations also help to resolve the conflicts. There have also been pacts where representatives from both parties to the conflict have agreed to sanction offenders by handing them over to the security agencies. The security agents (in a particular case, the Sector Commander) invite representatives from the communities affected by the conflict and give them a lecture on how to ensure that conflict situations do not repeat themselves and tells them how to conduct themselves in such situations. One of the respondent states clearly that such meetings have had only representatives of the aggrieved parties but supposes that representatives from the aggressors' communities may also have been summoned for similar lecture sessions with the security agents although he cannot say this as a fact. What is certain however is that the sessions the respondent describes here do not involve representatives from both parties in the conflicts. The strategies have been considerably effective because this process has several times stopped crisis or conflict from occurring between farmers and animal herders for example, where crops are damaged but some fee is paid as restitution and the matter is amicably resolved.

Such processes have also reduced inter communal clashes. In recent electoral seasons, youth were mobilised and that stopped electoral violence. However, lasting solutions to the issues that cause crises are yet to be found.

In Gagi for instance traditional leaders participate in the monthly Security Council meeting at the LGA. All security operatives are members of the Security Council. There is a mandatory security report that the district head makes to the Sultan every month whether there is conflict or not. The Ward Development Committee which is not necessarily formed for the sole reason of peace and security are also part of making sure peace is maintained in the community. They hold town hall meetings at the village and at the Palace of the District Head. They gather security information and are able to deal with any suspicions and lingering issues before it becomes a problem.

5.1.4 Possible Reasons for the Effectiveness/Ineffectiveness of the Existing Conflict Prevention and Resolution Mechanisms

In the areas where there have been some sort of peace and less conflict such as Zonkwa, the Zango Urban and local government headquarters, one could attribute the level of effectiveness of the system or structure to the respect the community members have for the elders that make up the committee and the esteem in which both the traditional, religious and community organisations are regarded. Aside from that, the meetings organised by the security agents are effective in the sense that they serve as platforms for passing information and enlightenment. Educating the members of the community on peacekeeping helps to rid the people of ignorance and create awareness on the need for peace. Also, the rapid response from security agencies and stationing security agents along the roads that perpetrators could use to escape has also been effective.

The research respondents revealed that the structure has not been very effective in preventing or resolving conflicts beyond the Zango urban areas. Although Zonkwa appears relatively stable and with less incidence of conflict, in certain other Atyap lands, conflicts have occurred even while the meetings were going on. As it has to do with rapid response also, there have been instances where even after seeking help from security agents to intervene in conflict situations they have been unable to help in the midst of the conflict due to the level of sophistication of the perpetrators' weapons. In such cases, they have to wait till things quiet down before they can intervene.

Nevertheless, it appears as though there is a limit to communal mediation in the sense that the contenders in the conflict have to first agree that they will submit to the adjudication of the communal conflict mediation system. Where both or one party is not willing to do so, the effort will not yield much. Also there may be some power brokers engaged in conflict whose realm of operation is beyond the level that such mechanisms can control, but whose actions still impact on the community. Such require higher level engagements to subdue. In terms of peace enforcement by military personnel, the research revealed that the sector commandant may be changed at any time leading to lack of continuity of peace processes. What usually happens in situations when he is changed is that while the previous commandant might have already begun to make headway on the situation, a newly deployed commandant would find it difficult to continue from where the previous commandant may have ended.

Also, the members who constitute the community joint peace committees are limited, and it is possible that depending on the number of persons available to enlighten the many people in the community, loss of pertinent information and nuances may result. Again, instances where peace seminars are organised, there may not be the equal number of the representatives of both parties to the conflicts in attendance.

In Gagi, the involvement of the traditional leader in the peace process may be advanced as a major reason for the success of such processes. Apart from the traditional institution having a significant stake in decision making, the choice of the leader could also be considered as a factor. The Sarkin Yakin Gagi hails from a family line of warriors considered to have been in the forefront of defending Sokoto from invasion as far as history is concerned. According to his accounts, *‘Yerima Sambo was the first Sarkin Yaki. He killed Tambari Hurja from Niger Republic, a bandit who attacked many communities. Since that time, the Sultan appointed us the second Sarkin Yaki under the caliphate because of the success achieved during the battle with Tambari Hurja. My father, grandfather and great grandfather, all bore the title of Sarkin Yaki. I am the 11th Sarkin Yaki. There were five or six Yerimas on the throne before they were upgraded to become Sarkin Yaki.’* Overall the fact points to the presence or involvement of a credible or respected leader in peace keeping mechanisms.

6.0 Women Involvement in Conflict and Peace Building Processes:

6.1 The Effects of Violent Conflict on Women and Girls

Women are worst hit by conflict situations. More women are killed during a conflict than any other demography (at this point the respondent cites an example of a recent conflict where sixteen people were killed. Nine out of these were women, the rest were men and children). Women and girls are often the targets either directly or caught in the crossfire of inter-communal conflict. They also bear the brunt of economic pressures through displacement, livelihood and property destruction, or loss of household breadwinners as a result of the violence.

Women’s education and economy is also affected as in most cases, it is women who end up relocating to other places for safety. Women also suffer trauma, some of them have been taken to other communities for treatment. They are widowed when husbands die in conflict, Women are likely to feel more of the loss of their children as young people who participate in violence, and Women take care of those who fall sick or are injured in the event of violence. When there is breakdown of law and order, a man can easily find his way to safety alone, but women may be encumbered by the fact that they are unlikely to leave their children behind.

If a lot of responsibility for the care and safety of families lie on women, then they should be equally involved in the peace building that will help avert the breakdown of law and order in the first place. According to a study by the United Nations Population Fund, 2001, the impact of conflicts on women and girls’ reproductive and sexual health can never be underestimated. Their psychological, reproductive and overall well-being is often severely compromised in times of conflict. Conflicts tend to increase the incidence of sexual violence; rape; sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS; and unwanted pregnancies. In addition, essential social

services, such as medical facilities, on which women heavily depend for their well-being, are greatly disrupted by armed conflicts.

6.2 The Role of Women in Peacebuilding Processes: Opportunities and Threats

The research revealed that the level of women participation in conflict prevention and peace building is low in both the Zango Kataf area in Kaduna and Gagi in Sokoto State. This is because they may have more role to play in conflict prevention than reaction to expressions of violence and in differences and disagreements than they currently have the opportunity to do. There is minimal open membership of youth groups by younger women, and older women have not been seen to play much role in early warning systems. However, the Religious clerics in both States agree that since mothers are closer to their children both girls and boys, they are in position to warn the youths against participation in acts of violence which will put their personal safety and lives at risk. Apart from minimal membership of youth groups by younger women, they have not been seen to play much role in early warning systems. Older women however, who are mothers are active in warning their children to avoid the danger associated with conflict.

Parents have the responsibility to train their wards to be law abiding, obedient and good citizens. If parents play this role early enough and effectively enough, the young people that operationalize conflict will be limited in number. As parents and especially mothers, women spend the most time with their children, many children listen to their mothers: women may advise their children on peace building. Women are also in different leadership positions in their various ethnic and religious groups associations. In churches, and so on, they may use such avenues of influence to create awareness among their followers. Those who are courageous among them may also be trained for defence.

Women could also leverage their nurturing qualities to impact their children from childhood, and instil discipline in them. It is unlikely that well brought up children would lend themselves to conflict and violent extremism in the future. In a number of families, women take on the bread winning role and are therefore quite influential. They may leverage such influence to contribute to peace building by enlightening members of their families and communities at large on the benefits of peace. Women could be willing parties to intercultural marriages with the Fulanis, Hausas and other ethnic groups or tribes. Women as members of the community attend markets and social events that make them travel to different settlements/parts of the communities and interact with people who come from far and near. As such, they are in a good position to gather information, observe and give intelligence to the appropriate quarters. The amount of information they are able to access and the level of depth and insight they are able to share can be considered as ‘good gossip’ and may help in peace building and conflict prevention. Culture and religion however, poses a threat to women's open participation (outside her home) and most times the permission of the husband is required which in turn is subject to his conviction.

In both States, Women are less visible in daily activities to a level comparable to men. The Men FGD participants, for instance, agree that this is as a result of cultural and religious inhibitions that limit the open participation of women outside of her house except those permitted by her husband. Again, not every intelligence information supplied by women is regarded, as in certain cases, the women are said to be speaking out of fear. In certain other instances, the women's warnings were taken seriously but unfortunately, found to be false alarms on further investigation. According to a male respondent, there is the need first of all for more women to learn composure to enhance the role of women in conflict response within the community, - although this goes both ways so that there are certain characteristics that even men may exhibit that may lead to their intelligence being discarded it is more common with women. Some respondents from the Male FGDs are of the opinion that women are able to make more impact when they control their emotions, are courageous and less gullible. They will probably be more believable. They claim that women are emotional and sometimes speak from that point, this makes their contributions to be regarded as less serious. According to him, it is important that they confirm their facts before going ahead to provide intelligence. If and when this condition is certified, involving women in peace building can have a positive as well as a multiplier effect: There are therefore enormous opportunities in getting women to participate in and pass forward what they learn in the direction of conflict mitigation and peace building. Majority of the male respondents however agree that women's inclusion in peace building processes was crucial.

When you educate a man, you educate an individual but when you educate a woman, you educate the entire community'. -Male FGD participants, Zonkwa

Women constitute up to half of the population of the community. Men cannot continue to pretend that they alone can address all the issues of peace building and conflict prevention without the vital contribution of women'-Male FGD Participants, Gagi

Some of both male and female respondents consider Women to be benign, and less temperamental than men hence they are less suspect and have a calmer approach to resolving conflict. Women are also considered to be kind, and as such their strategies for peace building may differ from that of men. This is evidenced by how well they resolve conflicts at family level, they also seem to have a better understanding of their fellow women. There may also be less limitations for women culturally and religiously than men. Islam for instance might not allow men access women's gatherings, but women may have access to men's gatherings for such purposes as peace building. Therefore, Intelligence coming from women should be treated with more seriousness and credibility than is currently the case.

The research revealed that women realise the significance of their roles. The accompanying responses however seemed to indicate that although the respondents appreciated women's involvement in the peace building processes in their respective communities, they also believed that more could be done especially if cultural barriers were eliminated or managed. Oftentimes, Culture and religion may interplay in how the roles of men and women are construed. Islam recognizes the place of women in decision making as expressed by Badawi (1980): In the midst of

the darkness that engulfed the world, the divine revelation echoed in the wide desert of Arabia with a fresh, noble, and universal message to humanity.

"O Mankind, keep your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate (of the same kind) and from them twain has spread a multitude of men and women" (Qur'an 4: 1). "It is believed that there is no text, old or new, that deals with the humanity of the woman from all aspects with such amazing brevity, eloquence, depth, and originality as this divine decree."

It is therefore almost impossible to ignore the significant place of women in the home and community and by implication the role they can play in any peacebuilding efforts. One of the KII respondents claims that so far, women have contributed about 25% to peace building efforts in the community and that he is satisfied with that level of involvement as he is eager to "see what they can do with the quota before they can be given more". In what appears like a contradiction however, the same respondent goes on to say that he would like to see more of them involved in peace building. He alludes to speaking to a group of about 300 women a week before the interview, and that he advised them to be more involved in all aspects of leadership and decision making. Such expressions question the true level of commitment of key stakeholders to genuinely be interested in the inclusion of women in peace processes in the community.

Findings from the research also reveal that there is need for more enlightenment and the creation of awareness on peacebuilding as well as team playing skills. Physical training on how women can defend themselves and their children as well as emotion control should also be organised for the women. Also, conflict prevention and peace building should be seen as the responsibility of all members of the community, male and female, and not the responsibility of men alone. That way the community recognizes the effect that conflict and violent extremism have on women and considers women as critical to preventing and resolving conflict and by extension inclusive citizenship. Men tend to leave home early to pursue their daily earnings and often return late. Most men travel more often than women. In the period that men are away, women have a lot of roles to play in the character moulding of the youth, so as to build peace and prevent conflict. It was observed that Women are involved in trade and commerce across ethnic and religious lines. They could contribute to peace building by not discriminating among the different ethnic groups which they interact with while buying and selling.

7.0 Recommendation: Changing Games and Building Bridges:

To make the existing structure /channel an effective conflict prevention and resolution mechanism, will require more inclusiveness in the composition of such conflict mediation committees to embrace membership across ethnic and religious divides that would bring about more reach, more impact, and greater respect for the mechanism by stakeholders. At the moment, it appears different faiths and different ethnic groups run their separate mechanisms whereas some of the issues in the conflict are cross cutting. In other words, the structure should permit for decentralisation, so that rather than having the committee at only the wider community level, it exists even at the neighbourhood level to ensure much wider participation by all. Also, more meetings that involve people from the opposing sides of the conflict should be held regularly.

The humanization that comes with attendees being able to attach faces to those on the opposing side of the conflict already goes far in promoting the peace process. If possible, the government could leverage on the support of non-governmental organisations alongside security agencies rather than the military or security agencies alone to educate the parties involved in the conflicts on peace building processes. In addition, partnering with non-governmental organisations to create awareness of the benefits of peaceful co-existence will help produce the required results and improve on what is currently obtainable, as their techniques and know-how as it pertains to conflict prevention and resolution and peace building would likely prove to be more effective.

The vigilante groups are mostly men, but the youth groups have minimal female representation in Samaru Kataf. As for Zango Urban, the Imam who granted a KII to the research team explained that as a Hausa dominated community, the vigilante groups are only men, but the youth groups may have some level of minimal/ restricted female participation. This is mostly because in a Muslim community, young females marry as soon as they attain puberty. So, there is no time lapse between the end of childhood and life as a young bride unlike in Christian communities where girls can remain as spinsters for a very long time before eventually getting married. Then once married, the Muslim woman has little participation in activities outside her house and immediate family and with the strict permission and control of the husband.

It is also suggested that more women are brought into the space for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, in recognition of the family and home as spheres of influence and where women have a high stake and strong decision-making power. Government effort should combine both addressing root causes of conflict and security vigilance and less of military operations which obviously has not proven to be a solution to the conflict. Also, peace building efforts of non- state actors should combine both community level efforts and state or federal level engagements to address conflict.

We conclude by saying that from the findings of the research, social cohesion, inclusivity and political settlement are factors that have been identified to promote peace and may be some of the factors that have helped locations like Zonkwa in Kaduna State and Gagi in Sokoto State to remain relatively peaceful. Peace building efforts are likely to yield more positive results if there is an incorporation of civilians and local communities who work under good leadership, especially where the legitimacy and authority of such civilian leadership to effect peace is accepted and recognized by the government. This is likened to the case of Jigawa, Kebbi and Kano states which appear to be relatively stable (Nwokolo, 2023).

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