

# Women's Participation In Grassroot Post-Conflict Peacebuilding In Nasarawa State: Beyond United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

Nankap Elias Lamle

(PhD: Leuven, Cum Laude)

Centre For Conflict Management And Peace Studies  
University Of Jos, Nigeria

Adzuayi Jessica Ahgu

Centre For Conflict Management And Peace Studies  
University Of Jos, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Women's participation in grassroot post-conflict peacebuilding has gained increasing global recognition, particularly following the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security in Nigeria. Despite this normative progress, women's contributions especially at grassroots and informal levels, remain marginalised within formal peace processes. This article examines women's participation in grassroots post-conflict peacebuilding in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with specific focus on Lafia and Obi Local Government Areas. Grounded in Liberal Feminist Theory and Intersectionality Theory, the study analyses structural, socio-cultural, and intersectional barriers to women's participation, evaluates the effectiveness of policy frameworks, and highlights grassroots women-led initiatives. Drawing on empirical and theoretical literature, the study demonstrates that women's informal peacebuilding activities ranging from mediation and conflict resolution to humanitarian and socio-economic interventions significantly contribute to local peace and stability. However, patriarchal norms, limited political representation, and institutional barriers perpetuate their marginalisation. The study identifies key gaps in integrating informal grassroots initiatives into formal peace processes and provides policy recommendations to strengthen women's participation for sustainable and inclusive peace.

**Keywords:** Women, Peacebuilding, Grassroots, UNSCR 1325, Post-Conflict, Nasarawa State

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## I. Introduction

Women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding has become a central concern within contemporary peace and security discourse. Traditionally, peacebuilding processes have been dominated by men, with women systematically excluded from leadership and decision-making roles due to entrenched patriarchal norms, gender inequality, and weak or uneven policy implementation (Akpan, Olofu-Adeoye & Ering, 2014). This marginalisation persists despite the fact that women are often disproportionately affected by violent conflict and play critical roles in sustaining families and communities during and after periods of violence.

International recognition of women's contributions to peacebuilding emerged gradually through sustained advocacy, beginning with the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985) and a series of global conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing. These efforts culminated in the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, which established a normative framework organised around four interrelated pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. Resolution 1325 marked a significant conceptual shift by reframing women not solely as victims of conflict but as essential agents of peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and post-conflict recovery (Olsson & Gizelis, 2013).

Despite this progress, women's meaningful participation in peace processes remains limited, particularly at the grassroots level. Contemporary conflicts, increasingly characterised by intra-state dynamics and driven by ethnic, religious, and communal divisions, have heightened women's exposure to violence while simultaneously excluding them from formal peacebuilding structures. Although a growing body of evidence

demonstrates that inclusive peace processes are more durable and effective, the translation of global commitments into locally grounded practice continues to face significant impediment (Adefisoye & Adefisoye, 2019).

In Nigeria, post-conflict peacebuilding has increasingly underscored the importance of non-state and community-based actors in addressing the root causes of violence and sustaining peace. While formal peace processes remain largely dominated by male political elites, women have consistently engaged in grassroots peacebuilding through mediation, reconciliation, humanitarian response, and socio-economic recovery initiatives. The domestication of UNSCR 1325 through Nigeria's National Action Plan (NAP) represents an important policy commitment to gender-inclusive peacebuilding. However, implementation has remained uneven, particularly at sub-national and community levels where women's peacebuilding efforts are most visible (Adefisoye & Adefisoye, 2019).

## **II. Conceptualising Peacebuilding And Grassroots Participation**

Peacebuilding gained prominence in international discourse following Galtung's (1976) foundational articulation of peacebuilding as a process aimed at transforming the structural and cultural conditions that give rise to violence. This perspective was subsequently institutionalised by the United Nations in *An Agenda for Peace* (UN, 1992), which positioned peacebuilding as a core pillar of international peace and security alongside preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. Although definitions vary across scholars and institutions, peacebuilding is widely understood as a multidimensional and long-term process that addresses the root causes of violent conflict, prevents relapse into violence, and fosters both negative peace, the absence of direct violence and positive peace, characterised by inclusive governance, social justice, and human security (Call & Cousens, 2008, cited in Issifu, 2015; Moulton, 2020). Closely related, conflict resolution emphasises non-violent mechanisms such as mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and dialogue that seek to reduce the destructive capacity of conflict and transform adversarial relationships (Best, 2012, cited in Simonsson, 2024). Together, these concepts reflect a shift away from state-centric and militarised responses towards more inclusive, participatory, and transformative approaches to peace.

Central to contemporary peacebuilding discourse is the growing recognition of grassroots participation as a critical driver of sustainable peace. Grassroots peacebuilding foregrounds the role of local actors, community networks, and informal institutions in addressing conflict dynamics from the bottom up. This approach challenges elite-driven and externally imposed peace models by emphasising local ownership, contextual knowledge, and everyday practices of peace (Anderlini, 2007; Basu, 2024). Within this paradigm, women's participation has emerged as both a rights-based imperative and a strategic necessity for effective peacebuilding. The United Nations has repeatedly affirmed that durable peace cannot be achieved without women's full and equal participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (UN, 2002). Historically, women have contributed to peace and conflict resolution at multiple levels, from households and communities to national and international arenas often operating through informal and grassroots mechanisms that remain invisible within formal peace spheres.

In Nigeria, women's grassroots participation in peacebuilding is deeply rooted in historical and socio-cultural practices. Figures such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Moreme, and Mrs Ransom Kuti exemplify women's longstanding roles in promoting peace, social cohesion, and community development. Contemporary evidence further shows that Nigerian women actively engage in community mediation, early warning, negotiation, humanitarian response, trauma healing, and socio-economic recovery initiatives (Arostegui, 2013; Agbiboa, 2022; Emordi, 2016). These grassroots interventions directly address both the immediate manifestations and the structural drivers of conflict, including poverty, social fragmentation, and mistrust. Empirical studies demonstrate that peace processes that meaningfully include women particularly at the community level are more likely to yield sustainable outcomes, as illustrated by post-conflict experiences in Liberia and Rwanda (Issifu, 2015; Shepherd, 2015; Dayal & Christien, 2020).

Despite the demonstrable effectiveness of grassroots peacebuilding, women's contributions remain systematically underreported and marginalised within formal peace and political processes. In Nigeria, deeply entrenched patriarchal structures and socio-cultural norms restrict women's access to public authority and decision-making platforms, confining their participation largely to informal and community-based spheres (Garba, 2015; Olaitan, 2018). This exclusion persists despite women constituting a significant proportion of conflict-affected populations and possessing critical local knowledge essential to sustainable peacebuilding. Structural barriers including limited access to education, economic insecurity, weak political will, inadequate funding, and poor implementation of gender-responsive frameworks such as UNSCR 1325 continue to undermine the integration of grassroots women's efforts into formal peace spheres (UN Women, 2015; Balogun, 2021; FMWASD, 2017).

Conceptualising peacebuilding through a grassroots lens therefore requires moving beyond normative commitments to recognise and institutionalise the everyday peace practices of women at the community level. It also demands analytical frameworks and policy interventions that bridge the gap between informal grassroots

initiatives and formal peace processes, ensuring that local women's knowledge, agency, and leadership inform peacebuilding strategies at all levels. Without such integration, peacebuilding risks remaining exclusionary, elite-driven, and insufficiently responsive to the lived realities of conflict-affected communities.

### **III. Theoretical Framework**

To analyse women's participation in grassroot post-conflict peacebuilding in Nasarawa State, this article adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining Liberal Feminist Theory and Intersectionality Theory. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive lens for examining both the structural conditions that shape women's inclusion in peacebuilding institutions and the differentiated lived experiences of women peacebuilders across social contexts. This combined approach allows the study to move beyond a singular focus on gender to capture the complexity of women's participation in post-conflict settings.

Liberal Feminist Theory emphasises gender equality through legal, political, and institutional reforms, arguing that women's meaningful participation in public life including peacebuilding is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable peace outcomes (Day, 2016). Within this framework, women are viewed not as passive victims of conflict but as active agents whose inclusion in decision-making enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of peace initiatives (Goyol, 2019; Olaitan, 2020). Applied to Nasarawa State, liberal feminism provides an analytical tool for assessing the implementation of UNSCR 1325, highlighting gaps in women's political representation, institutional support, and policy alignment, as well as the enduring influence of patriarchal socialisation and structural exclusion.

Intersectionality Theory complements this perspective by foregrounding how overlapping identities such as gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, disability, and geographic location interact to shape women's experiences of inclusion and exclusion in peacebuilding processes (Crenshaw, 2013; Holley et al., 2016). In Nasarawa State, women from minority ethnic or religious groups, rural communities, or low-income households often face compounded barriers that limit their agency and visibility in peace initiatives. By integrating intersectionality with liberal feminism, this study captures both institutional and contextual inequalities, providing a robust framework for evaluating the effectiveness of UNSCR 1325 and for linking grassroots peacebuilding realities to broader policy and governance structures.

### **IV. Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design to examine women's grassroots participation in post-conflict peacebuilding in the Nasarawa South Senatorial District (NSSD) and to assess the effectiveness of UNSCR 1325 within this local context. A mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate for peacebuilding research, as it enables the integration of measurable indicators with in-depth analysis of socio-cultural and institutional dynamics shaping participation (Creswell, 2014). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the study captures both the structural patterns of women's participation and the lived experiences that inform their peacebuilding roles.

The quantitative component employs structured questionnaires to generate statistical data on key indicators of women's participation in grassroots peacebuilding. These include women's representation in local decision-making structures, peacebuilding organisations, and community initiatives, as well as the extent to which gender perspectives are integrated into local peacebuilding policies and practices. Quantitative analysis provides a baseline for assessing trends and gaps in the operationalisation of UNSCR 1325 at the grassroots level, building on evidence that women's inclusion enhances the sustainability of peace outcomes (Anderlini, 2007; Paffenholz, 2015).

The qualitative component draws on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to explore the contextual, socio-cultural, and economic factors influencing women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding. Interviews with women peacebuilders, community leaders, civil society actors, and government representatives provide insight into the barriers and enablers shaping women's engagement, including gender norms, access to resources, and political marginalisation. Focus group discussions facilitate collective reflection on community-level peacebuilding experiences and offer local perspectives on the perceived relevance and impact of UNSCR 1325.

Data triangulation enhances the validity and robustness of the findings by cross-referencing quantitative trends with qualitative insights (Flick, 2018). While quantitative data illuminate patterns of participation, qualitative evidence deepens understanding of the underlying dynamics that shape women's roles in peacebuilding. Overall, the mixed-methods approach enables a comprehensive analysis of women's grassroots peacebuilding in Nasarawa State, generating empirically grounded insights to inform policy and practice on the localisation and effectiveness of UNSCR 1325.

## **V. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 And Its Implementation**

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), adopted in October 2000, represents a landmark shift in global peace and security policy by formally recognising women not only as victims of armed conflict but also as essential actors in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. Grounded in earlier international gender equality frameworks—most notably the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action—the Resolution calls for women's equal participation in decision-making, protection from gender-based violence, prevention of conflict through gender-sensitive approaches, and gender-responsive relief and recovery. These four pillars—participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery—form the foundation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and have shaped subsequent UNSC resolutions addressing sexual violence, accountability, and women's leadership in peace processes (UNSC, 2000; Lahoud, 2020; Shepherd & Hamilton, 2016).

Globally, UNSCR 1325 has stimulated significant policy innovation, including the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) by 84 UN member states, strengthened feminist mobilisation, increased visibility of conflict-related gender-based violence, and expanded advocacy for women's participation in peace and security governance (UN Women, 2024; Hudson, 2021). However, scholarly assessments emphasise uneven implementation and limited transformative impact. Critics highlight persistent challenges such as weak political commitment, inadequate funding, superficial state compliance, reinforcement of gender binaries, and the marginalisation of intersectional (George & Shepherd, 2016). These debates underscore a tension between preserving the gains of the WPS agenda and addressing its structural and conceptual limitations.

In Nigeria, UNSCR 1325 was domesticated through the adoption of a National Action Plan in 2013, followed by a revised NAP (2017–2020) that introduced State and Zonal Action Plans to strengthen localisation and address context-specific security challenges, including terrorism, farmer–herder conflict, and communal violence (FMWASD, 2017). Nigeria's NAP articulates five pillars—prevention, participation, protection, crisis management and recovery, and partnerships aimed at enhancing women's participation, safeguarding their rights, and promoting accountability. Empirical evidence suggests that the NAP has contributed to increased awareness, some improvement in women's participation, strengthened legal frameworks against sexual and gender-based violence, and greater engagement of civil society organisations in peacebuilding (Adamu, Kudu & Ibrahim, 2018; Balogun, 2021).

At the subnational level, Nasarawa State adopted its State Action Plan (SAP) in 2020 to operationalise UNSCR 1325 in response to local conflict dynamics. The SAP emphasises inclusive governance, women's leadership in peace processes, and gender-sensitive approaches to conflict prevention, protection, participation, and post-conflict recovery (Nasarawa SAP, 2020). While the framework reflects strong normative alignment with the WPS agenda, implementation remains constrained by socio-cultural norms, limited resources, weak institutional capacity, and persistent insecurity. As in many African contexts, women's peacebuilding contributions in Nigeria and Nasarawa State remain largely informal and insufficiently integrated into formal peace and security architectures.

## **VI. Conflict And Post-Conflict Context In Nasarawa State**

Nasarawa State is a highly heterogeneous society characterised by multiple ethno-communal groupings, a condition that has made it particularly vulnerable to identity politics and recurrent communal conflicts since its creation in 1996. Shortly after its establishment, the state experienced violent clashes between the Igbira and Bassa communities in Toto Local Government Area, largely over chiefdom, chieftaincy, and boundary disputes. These early conflicts were followed by sustained violence involving the Tiv and other ethnic groups in Awe, Keana, and Obi Local Government Areas, resulting in widespread loss of lives, displacement of communities, and destruction of property (Ugwu & Enna, 2015). Scholars identify the underlying drivers of these conflicts as competition over land and natural resources, political power struggles, and deep-seated historical grievances among ethnic groups in the state (Ugwu & Enna, 2015; Nlewem, 2018).

Over time, communal violence in Nasarawa State intensified and became increasingly militarised, with farmer–herder conflicts emerging as a dominant and persistent feature, particularly in rural areas such as Lafia, Obi, Keana, and Awe. Clashes between Tiv farming communities and Fulani pastoralists escalated into mass killings, arson, and large-scale displacement, leaving many villages deserted and livelihoods destroyed. Women and children were disproportionately affected, experiencing food insecurity, disease exposure, sexual violence, and heightened risks of child labour and exploitation (Ugwu & Enna, 2015). A major escalation occurred in 2013, when violent confrontations led to extensive human casualties and property losses estimated at over ₦2.3 billion, alongside the widely reported killing of 74 Nigerian Police officers during an operation in Alakyo village. Numerous unreported incidents of killings, invasions, and arson further deepened ethnic tensions among groups such as the Eggon, Alago, Tiv, Mighili, Mada, Gwandara, Bassa, and Fulani (Ugwu & Enna, 2015).

Environmental pressures have further compounded these conflicts. Declining vegetation cover, desert encroachment, and increasing scarcity of arable land and water resources have intensified competition between farmers and herders, undermining traditional livelihoods and fuelling recurrent violence (Ugwu & Enna, 2015).

These ecological stresses intersect with weak governance, poor regulation of grazing routes and farmlands, and rising arms proliferation, contributing to broader insecurity manifested in cattle rustling, rural and urban banditry, and the emergence of ethnic militias, most notably the Ombatse group affiliated with the Eggon ethnic group (Nlewem, 2018). The ethnic framing of these conflicts—often transforming resource-based disputes into identity-driven confrontations—has entrenched cycles of retaliatory violence, mistrust, and political exclusion, severely constraining peace and development efforts in the state (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; Nlewem, 2018).

Although Nasarawa State has experienced relative calm in recent years, the legacies of prolonged violence remain profound. Many affected communities, particularly women and children, continue to grapple with trauma, displacement, and socio-economic hardship. The persistence and complexity of conflict dynamics in the state underscore the fragility of peace and the urgent need for sustained, inclusive, and context-sensitive peacebuilding strategies that address ethnic, ecological, and governance-related drivers of insecurity, as well as support the effective implementation of the Nasarawa State Action Plan (SAP) (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; Ugwu & Enna, 2015; Nlewem, 2018).

## **VII. Women's Participation In Grassroots Post-Conflict Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is an inherently complex and demanding process, and it is often even more challenging for women peacebuilders. Beyond working to transform violent conflicts within their communities, women frequently confront entrenched bigotry, structural injustice, social silencing, and, in many cases, direct physical violence. Despite these obstacles, women have historically made profound contributions to peace and stability at the individual, family, community, national, and international levels. In Nigeria, women such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Moremi of Ife, and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti exemplify long-standing traditions of female leadership in conflict management, social mobilisation, and resistance against injustice, underscoring women's enduring role as agents of peace even in highly constrained environments (Garba, 2015; Olaitan, 2018).

Notwithstanding this historical legacy, women's participation in peacebuilding in Nigeria remains severely constrained by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that marginalise women across political, economic, and social spheres. These inequalities are reflected in women's limited access to education, political representation, and formal decision-making spaces, including peace negotiation tables, where women's distinct experiences and understandings of security are largely absent (Garba, 2015). This exclusion is particularly paradoxical given that women constitute a significant proportion of Nigeria's population and are disproportionately affected by conflict-related violence, displacement, and insecurity. As Annan (UN, 2002) emphasised, sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men; yet, in practice, women continue to be relegated to informal and largely unrecognised peace roles.

Empirical studies consistently show that women's peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria are concentrated at the grassroots and community levels, where they engage in mediation, early warning, humanitarian assistance, trauma healing, advocacy, and social cohesion-building through informal networks and civil society organisations (Scanlon, 2016; Olaitan, 2018; Olaitan, 2020). While these interventions are critical to sustaining local peace, they are rarely integrated into formal peace architectures, reinforcing gendered hierarchies within peace and security governance (O'Reilly, Súilleabháin & Paffenholz, 2015; Datzberger & Mat, 2018). This marginalisation persists despite global evidence demonstrating that peace processes that meaningfully include women are more inclusive, legitimate, and durable (Dayal & Christien, 2020).

Nonetheless, Nigerian women have continued to assert their agency through activism, advocacy, education, and collective action aimed at promoting peace, democracy, and human rights. Across conflict-affected regions—including the Niger Delta, Borno, and Plateau States—women have mobilised communities, mediated disputes, supported reintegration of conflict-affected persons, and resisted violence through non-violent protest and dialogue (Donna, 2000; Imam, Biu & Yahi, 2020; Osah & Odedina, 2017). Women-led civil society organisations have further strengthened these efforts by building local capacities, amplifying women's voices, and fostering inclusive peace initiatives (Uzuegbunam, 2013).

Recent policy shifts, growing women's movements, and increasing interest among women in political participation suggest cautious optimism for the future of women's involvement in peacebuilding and decision-making in Nigeria (NSRP, 2013). Where women have been included as peacekeepers, mediators, educators, trauma counsellors, and development actors—their contributions have helped reduce violence, promote social healing, and strengthen community resilience. Expanding women's participation beyond the grassroots into formal peace and governance structures therefore remains essential for amplifying the voices of women and girls and for building inclusive, sustainable peace in Nigeria.

## **VIII. Women In Grassroots And Informal Peacebuilding**

While women remain largely excluded from formal peace processes, extensive scholarship demonstrates that they play critical and often indispensable roles in grassroots and informal peacebuilding (Anderlini, 2007). Across conflict-affected contexts in Nigeria, particularly during the Boko Haram insurgency

in the North-East, women have emerged as central actors in community-level mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation. Drawing on dense social networks, moral authority, and deep contextual knowledge, women facilitate dialogue, negotiate local ceasefires, and de-escalate tensions within and between communities—often accessing spaces closed to formal peace actors (Arostegui, 2013; Agbibo, 2022; UN Women, 2015).

Women's peacebuilding roles extend beyond mediation to community security and humanitarian response. In several localities, women operate as informal early-warning actors, community intelligence providers, and caregivers, contributing to local security governance and conflict prevention (Baines & Paddon, 2012). They have historically led humanitarian responses by providing medical care, psychosocial support, reproductive health services, and protection for displaced women and children (Ní Aoláin et al., 2011; UNDP, 2017). In addition, women promote socio-economic recovery through income-generating initiatives, relief distribution, peace education, and interfaith dialogue programmes aimed at rebuilding trust and social cohesion (Tripp, 2015).

Feminist peace scholars emphasise that such bottom-up initiatives possess transformative potential that extends beyond immediate conflict resolution. By reshaping gender relations, challenging exclusionary norms, and influencing local governance practices, women's grassroots activism can catalyse broader systemic change (Bell & O'Rourke, 2010; Paffenholz, 2015; Krause, Krause & Bränfors, 2018). Informal peacebuilding efforts should therefore be understood as essential complements to formal processes rather than temporary substitutes.

## **IX. Barriers To Women's Meaningful Participation**

Despite their proven contributions, women's participation in peacebuilding in Nigeria remains constrained by deeply entrenched socio-cultural, institutional, and structural barriers. Patriarchal norms constitute a foundational obstacle, shaping gender roles that limit women's access to education, leadership, and public decision-making. Mensah's (2023) ethnographic study on naming practices among the Bette and Owe communities illustrates how everyday cultural rituals symbolically reproduce male dominance, reinforcing women's marginalisation from public life. Drawing on the concept of "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987), such practices actively sustain gender hierarchies that extend into peacebuilding spaces.

In Northern and North-Central Nigeria, persistent stereotypes portray women as weak, dependent, and unsuitable for leadership or security roles, undermining their legitimacy as peace actors (Shepherd, 2015). Women who challenge these norms by engaging in mediation or community security often face stigma and social sanctions, discouraging broader participation (Agbibo, 2022). These socio-cultural constraints are reinforced by institutional barriers, including Nigeria's wide gender gap in political representation. Women constitute a small proportion of elected officials at federal, state, and local levels, limiting their influence over peace and security policies (UN Women, 2022).

Limited access to formal education further compounds these challenges by restricting women's exposure to leadership training, conflict-resolution skills, and political literacy (UNESCO, 2020). Conversely, education has been consistently identified as a key enabler of women's agency and effectiveness in peace processes. Together, these factors form a self-reinforcing cycle in which patriarchal norms limit education and political participation, sustaining women's exclusion from formal peace processes and the adoption of gender-responsive policies (Paffenholz, 2015).

## **X. Findings**

Using a mixed-methods design, this study examined women's roles, constraints, and the policy environment shaping peacebuilding in Lafia and Obi Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State. Qualitative evidence from 40 participants shows that women are central to grassroots peacebuilding, serving as informal mediators, mobilising social networks, and drawing on indigenous knowledge to de-escalate local conflicts and strengthen community cohesion. Despite their effectiveness, women face persistent barriers, notably entrenched patriarchal norms, exclusion from political and institutional spaces, insecurity, and limited access to resources, which collectively restrict their participation in formal peacebuilding structures.

The quantitative survey of 297 respondents corroborates these findings. Community perceptions overwhelmingly recognise women's peacebuilding contributions as effective, yet the analysis reveals a strong positive correlation between patriarchal beliefs and women's exclusion from formal peace processes. The results also expose a significant policy-practice gap, as most respondents reported little or no awareness of the Nasarawa State Action Plan (SAP) on Women, Peace, and Security, despite its formal adoption.

## **XI. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that women in Lafia and Obi Local Government Areas, and more broadly across Nigeria, are critical agents of peace, particularly at the grassroots level. Empirical evidence from both qualitative and quantitative findings confirms that women play indispensable roles in mediating local disputes, fostering social cohesion, and sustaining community resilience through informal networks and indigenous

peacebuilding practices. Despite the effectiveness of these contributions, women remain systematically excluded from formal peacebuilding and decision-making processes due to entrenched patriarchal norms, political marginalisation, insecurity, and limited access to resources.

The persistent gap between women's recognised peacebuilding capacity and their formal inclusion reflects a wider policy-practice disconnect within the Women, Peace and Security agenda. While frameworks such as the Nasarawa State Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 exist, their limited visibility and implementation at the community level undermine their transformative potential. The strong statistical association between patriarchal beliefs and women's exclusion from formal peace structures further indicates that policy reforms alone are insufficient. Without deliberate efforts to challenge and transform socio-cultural norms that define public leadership and security as masculine domains, women's participation will continue to be confined to informal spaces.

These findings align with broader global and national scholarship showing that the exclusion of women weakens peace processes and reduces their sustainability. Empowering women through targeted capacity-building, increased political representation, and institutional support for grassroots peace initiatives is therefore essential for achieving durable peace. Recognising women not as passive victims of conflict but as active and effective peacebuilders enhances the legitimacy, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of peacebuilding processes. Ultimately, integrating women meaningfully into both grassroots and formal peace architectures is not only a matter of equity but a strategic imperative for long-term stability in Nasarawa State and other conflict-affected communities in Nigeria.

## **XII. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several actions are recommended to enhance women's participation in grassroot peacebuilding in Nasarawa State:

- i. **Strengthen Policy Implementation:** The Nasarawa State Action Plan (SAP) on Women, Peace, and Security should be actively localised and adequately funded. This includes translating policy provisions into local languages, creating community-level action plans, and establishing communication channels to ensure that grassroots communities are aware of and can implement the SAP.
- ii. **Promote Women's Political and Institutional Inclusion:** To address systemic exclusion, the state and local governments should adopt measures such as quotas or affirmative action policies to increase women's representation in formal peace and security committees, ensuring that they have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes.
- iii. **Empower Grassroots Women's Groups:** Civil society organizations and NGOs should provide capacity-building, technical training, and financial support to women-led grassroots groups. Strengthening these informal networks enhances their ability to mediate conflicts effectively and provides a link between formal institutions and community peacebuilding.
- iv. **Engage Men in Gender-Inclusive Peacebuilding:** Programs should actively involve male community members to challenge entrenched patriarchal norms and encourage support for women's participation. Collaborative approaches increase the effectiveness and sustainability of peace initiatives.
- v. **Promote Research and Knowledge Development:** Academic and research institutions should conduct intersectional studies to understand how ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status influence women's experiences in peacebuilding. Culturally sensitive research tools, including translations into local languages, should be developed to capture local realities effectively.

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