

THE ROLE OF DIASPORA IN PEACEBUILDING: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract: The role of diaspora for a long time now has been seen from a negative perspective. They are usually seen as sponsors of conflict and terrorist activities in their homeland. However, there is a growing recognition that sees diaspora groups in a more positive light, that is playing a vital role in national development, integration, and peacebuilding. The paper aims to examine the role of the Nigerian diaspora in peacebuilding processes in Nigeria. Basing itself within the theoretical framework of transnationalism, the paper finds that they play certain roles of lobbying and advocacy, network and partnership, discussion and awareness, conflict mediation and negotiation, remittances, investment, and social development. However, playing these roles have become very daunting due to challenges such as lack of adequate fund, poor communication, lack of voting rights, fragmentation inter alia. The paper concludes that diaspora can contribute effectively to the peacebuilding of the nation so long as they maintain constant contact with their home country and recommended that peacebuilding of any nation is a national responsibility for all its citizens, home and abroad. The government must create a safe, peaceful, and conducive environment for an effective and diaspora involvement in all peacebuilding processes of the nation.

Keywords: Diaspora, peace-building, transnationalism, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, academics, policymakers and peace practitioners have become increasingly aware of the growing significance of diasporas due to the globalization of markets, politics and culture (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002). While the term diaspora has been variously defined by scholars, the important common elements are; immigration, a location outside the homeland, continued identity with the home country even when many years have been spent in the host country, transnationalism, and group identity (Grossman 2019). Diasporas are transnational communities of a specific kind and they form a unique third-level between interstate and domestic politics (Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002). They have become new forces prompting the interactions between nations, regions, and continents, through their commitment to the maintenance and restoration of their countries of origin as they participate transnational in numerous ways. The manner through which they create impacts and make their voices heard in their homeland consequently has come more prominently on the radar of researchers in recent times. Turner (2008) states that the activities that connect diasporas to homeland include economic (remittance and investment); political (linking with civil societies, taking part in political parties and election); social (transmission of ideas and values); and cultural (preserving and passing on language, traditions and promoting art culture). Also, diaspora groups are habitually seen to intensify conflict and aggravate tensions through radical mobilization during ethnic and religious lines “through funding militias and terror groups, arms export to homeland countries, political lobbying and even direct involvement in fighting” (Mariani et al, 2016, p. 1). Hence, their roles as transnational actors could be negative or positive. However, the paper is more concerned with the positive

part as new studies show that diaspora communities are increasingly key players in conflict prevention and resolution, peacemaking and peacebuilding processes of their homeland.

Building peace in countries emerging from and experiencing conflict is a huge and complex task, and diaspora contributions to development and peacebuilding take many shapes with variations occurring in who acts, how doing what, why, and where (Horst 2010). According to the United Nations, “peacebuilding involves a great number and variety of stake holders-starting with the citizens of the countries themselves where peacebuilding is underway. It is neither a purely political, security nor developmental process, but one that must bring together security, political and economic, social and human rights elements in a coherent and integrated way” (Torrent 2019, p. 620). “Peacebuilding is primarily a national challenge and responsibility. It is the citizens of the country where peacebuilding is underway with support from their governments who assume the responsibility for laying the foundations of lasting peace” (Torrent 2019, p. 621). Consequently, Diasporas despite being far away from their home country are not exempted, as they also have a responsibility to contribute to the peacebuilding process of their home country.

Freitas (2012) posits that “diaspora groups are said to play constructive roles in Sub-Saharan, which has been the theatre of numerous armed conflicts over the decades. Well developed and interconnected, sub-Saharan African diasporas are already known for their capacity to engender positive results in the homeland’s economy, society and politics” (p. 3).

In Nigeria, Beyene (2015) decries that even though there are some efforts, the vast majority of the Nigerian diaspora is not active in dealing with conflict resolution, peacebuilding and political affairs. However, the government had

long recognized the positive potentials of the Diasporas in peacebuilding. After several years of military rule, Diaspora involvement and contributions in the political landscape of Nigeria began to gain ground and get recognized by civilian governments from the commencement of the Fourth Republic in 1999. Indeed, the 1999 Constitution allowance of dual citizenship represented a turning point in the country's Diaspora engagement followed by years of lobbying by diaspora groups (Spiro 2010). The action initiated by the first civilian government included arranging diaspora meetings, dialogues and conferences, establishing the Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS) to engage the Diaspora in development work; and adopting July 25 as National Diaspora Day. According to the International Center for Ethno-religious Mediation, the government also launched the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization (NIDO) in 2000 as a means to harness the tremendous skill exposure expertise and knowledge-based of Nigerians resident outside Nigeria and also to strengthen networking within the Diaspora. It was then the single representative body recognized by the federal government as an umbrella body for Nigerian citizens in Diaspora. It gave the Diaspora the platform to contribute their quota to the development of the nation.

The increasing recognition of diaspora contribution led to several innovations to the institutional framework. The House of Representative Committee on Diaspora Affairs was established in 2009- a rare illustration of a platform on diaspora engagement housed within a national legislature. Later on, the Buhari administration established an office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Foreign affairs and Diaspora. Then in 2019, the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) was established under the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a mandate to coordinate the country's diaspora engagement work.

The Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) was established by the Nigerian Government on 19th May 2019 with Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa as Chairman following the Senate's approval and confirmation. The establishment of the Commission became crucial due to the massive exodus of Nigerian professionals out of Nigeria, labeled the 'brain drain' and various initiatives were suggested to stem the tide including persuasion through the media, stringent visa requirement, and to mediate relations with Nigerians in the Diaspora for mutual and developmental benefits of Diasporas and the Nigerian homeland. It is the government's central body managing policies, projects and relationships related to Diaspora engagement, intending to mobilize Diaspora resources and expertise to support the development of Nigeria. NIDCOM sits under the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although the chair and members of NIDCOM are appointed by the President.

However, in spite of all these establishments, Wapmuk et al., (2014) observed that "the efforts of the Nigerian government to engage its diasporas hardly went beyond efforts aimed at cultural reconnections" (p. 293). Also in academia, while there is an expanding literature on the role of Nigerian diasporas in national and cultural development, little has been done on the role of Nigerian diasporas in the peacebuilding process of the country (Irobi, 2015). In corroboration, Wapmuk et al., (2004) state that "much of the work on the Nigerian diasporas have been cultural, examining such things as survival of African cultural practices in the New world or the representation of home in the processes of diasporic identity formation" (p. 295).

While the role of Nigerian diasporas as peacebuilders is less publicized in the current diaspora debate, it is clear that they have significant roles to play in peacebuilding which involves consolidation of democracy and promotion of human rights,

strengthening local capacities for peacebuilding, supporting negotiations and mediation between warring groups, establishing structures and institutions that promote peace, and lobbying the international community to help resolve the violent conflict in their home country. Therefore, this paper tends to highlight the role of Nigerian diasporas as peace-builders in Nigeria as it contributes to the ongoing debate on the role of diaspora in peacebuilding. The paper also highlights the challenges they face before and during the peacebuilding process as well as proffers strategies for effective engagement of diaspora in peace processes in Nigeria. Thus, it is within this backdrop that this paper situates itself. `

Defining Diaspora and Peacebuilding

The quest for the definition of Diaspora seems to be an impossible task because of the plurality of historical experiences, trajectories and agendas (Sideri 2008). With the emergence of Diaspora studies as a field, scholars from different disciplines have offered diverse definitions of the concept of Diaspora (Grossman 2019). The word Diaspora finds its root in the Greek word *disapeire* in meaning to 'disperse' (*dia*-across + *Speirien* "scatter"); it connotes spreading or scattering of seeds (Wapmuk et al, 2004). The word historically was reserved for explaining the Jews' experience as forcibly scattered people but the term is now ever more associated with the misery and forceful displacement of other groups with similar experience to ancient Jews who now live far from their homeland (Abdile 2010).

According to Horst (2010, pp. 32-33) Diaspora is an "expatriate minority communities that have been dispersed from the home and have a collective memory, believe in an eventual return, are committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland and have a collective identity group, consciousness or solidarity". Laakso & Hautaniemi (2014) defines Diaspora as a group of or

groups that meet the following characteristics "Communities dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral' or foreign, regions... (who) regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return" (pp. 53-53). Nordien (2017) sees Diasporas as transnational communities comprised of individuals who come together in a "community' far from home' (p. 6).

In order to circumvent the interminable argument on the definition of Diaspora, the paper draws inspiration from the Draft National Diaspora Policy 2019 which defines the Nigeria Diaspora as people of Nigerian descent born in Nigeria or elsewhere, and members of Historic African Diaspora who choose to identify with Nigeria and to support the achievement of its national goals. Hence, the Nigerian Diaspora are those peoples of Nigerian origin living outside the country regardless of their ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations and who are enthusiastic to contribute and give their unending support to the growth and development of Nigeria. Hence, the paper aligns itself with the above definition.

On peacebuilding, the concept is multidimensional with no unanimous perspective. There are several possible definitions of peacebuilding and varying options about what it is involved in. Emerging over 30 years ago, Nordien (2017) asserts that "the term was initially used in situations where a peace agreement had been concluded, to prevent recurrence of violent conflicts and facilitate the consolidation of negative peace" (p. 6). However, "over time it has been recognized that peacebuilding activities can take place before and during violent conflict, and seek to create conditions for positive and sustainable peace by addressing structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner" (p. 6). Mpangala defined peacebuilding as "a process of making sure that a country or society creates conditions for sustainable

peace.”(8) According to the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development (Wyeth 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TRANSNATIONALISM

The involvement of the diaspora in peacebuilding in their homeland country is within the framework of transnationalism. The term transnationalism is often used to describe and categorize certain activities, some of which are familiar to us as normal activities of immigrants. (Dunn, 2005) Transnationalism according to Vertovec (1999) “is the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across borders of nation-states” (p. 447). Patria Román-Velázquez and Jessica Retis (2021) define transnationalism as the “process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together the societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political border” (p. 9). Hence, in this paper, the Nigerian diaspora is seen in supporting and maintaining social relations that link together place of origin (Nigeria) with the societies of settlement.

The Role of Diasporas in Peacebuilding In Nigeria

Diasporas all over the world have a responsibility to contribute in peacebuilding of their homelands. Diaspora intervention in peacebuilding in their homeland is complex and multidimensional. The following roles they play in peacebuilding is not exhaustive.

Transmission of Social Remittances

Levitt asserts that “a more abstract contribution that can be made by the diaspora to peace relates to the transmission of social remittances—behaviors, identities, ideas and social connections.” All these can transform local attitude and perception that becomes receptive to peacebuilding processes. As a result of globalization, societies are experiencing a change in their ways of doing things (culture and customs). Nordien (2017) posits that “traditional values and practices are rapidly changing as people struggle to survive and make meaning of life in the modern era. In his maelstrom, the diaspora has become a “carrier of values’ between societies” (p. 11). Nigerians are scattered all over different societies where norms such as the desire for a solution, tolerance and respect for diversity, gender equality, human and women’s rights, accountability and transparency and democracy can be transmitted back to the homeland. In Nigeria, corruption, violations of human rights, intolerance and unaccountability are rife in the country, hence; the diaspora has a role by supporting grassroots mobilization for change and transformation (Chrisantus 2018, p. 33). Day by Day we hear of misappropriation of funds, improper accounts keeping and falsification of receipts to embezzle funds (Ezedike and Ariche, 2017).

Lobbying and Advocacy

In their host countries, diasporas may have attained influential positions within their host countries and have the chance to bring attention to the conflict in their home county and thereby influence home governments, international organisations, NGOs and other decision-makers to put pressure on groups contributing to violence, engaging them in constructive conflict resolution, aid in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Nkemdilim, 2012). The

involvement of the Diaspora in peacebuilding is part of broader advocacy processes. Diaspora advocate for changes in policies to bring about conditions more conducive to development, and they lobby peacemakers to act in favour of their interest. Lobbying is an important tool used by Diasporas in their advocacy efforts. The diaspora also lobbies home states for certain rights to be granted to them. For instance, the right to vote during home elections. Although securing the right to vote in general elections has been unsuccessful, the Nigerian diaspora has petitioned the government of extraterritorial voting rights and has used the issue of voting as a key point in testing Nigerians commitment to diaspora engagement. Lobby skills are thus essential to access political, financial, human, and other types of support for effective peacebuilding.

Networking and partnership

Networking involves promoting dialogue and sharing information, the convening of a relevant organization or people, analyzing problems at different levels, mobilizing and rationalizing the use of resources for its members and strengthening international consciousness, commitment and solidarity (Nordien 2017). Diasporas gain from partnerships or networks in a wide range of areas to promote their cause of peacebuilding. They can partner with the local and grassroots movements, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), regional and international organisations to facilitate peacebuilding in their homeland. The diaspora also actively uses social networking sites to keep in touch and promote their causes

Discussion and Awareness

When Diasporas discuss, it is a way of communicating to understand the 'other', rather than to convince him/her that you are right. Olatuyi, Awoyinka, and Adeniyi

(2003) state that Most Nigerian diasporas connect to Nigeria by receiving and sharing information on events in the home country mostly through telephone and internet-based means of communication (p. 16). Nordien (2017) asserts that "dialogue enables diaspora organizations and mainstream sectors to engage continually, to learn from each other and to regularly exchange information, best ideas and practices. Dialogue also provides an avenue to address misinformation, thereby dealing with stereotypes and other factors that hinder progress" (p.14). Another strategy used by the diaspora is raising awareness about a situation. They target the people from their host country and the world at large and inform them on the ongoing conflict and crises situations in their homelands or raise awareness to the hearings of their host country's population in order to get quick humanitarian intervention and assistance. Raising awareness can take many forms; through paintings, poems, songs, films and cartoons, stage plays, etc., they use their creative abilities as their medium to do peacebuilding work both in the diaspora and at home (Nordien 2017). For instance, "Nigeria Diaspora in London demonstrated day-to-day experiences of people at home in Delta village through arts and cultural expression. This allowed them to establish a connection between those at home and the international community and calling attention to the issues that concern them." (Lilja 2018, p. np).

Conflict Mediation and Negotiation

Diaspora members can offer the mediation process a highly desirable combination of locally derived knowledge and internationally obtained contact and skills. "as one scholar notes, being from outside a conflict zone but having ...to it might provoke diaspora groups with specific abilities as third party actors in pre-negotiation or even informal talks over a political settlement" (Cochrane

2007, p. 21). While diaspora members can contribute unique and valuable perspectives to the process, it must be remembered that they are themselves stakeholders with their own priorities and underlying objects. The inclusion of diaspora reps in mediation efforts defies the conventional belief that mediators must be neutral and unbiased. Impartiality, however, may not be the only determinate of acceptability. Diaspora members are often able to secure the trust of key actors simply by virtue of being from the country in question but distinctly removed from the conflict. For instance, in the long-standing Tiv and Junkun crises in northern Nigeria, Uva (2011) claims that the Tiv diaspora on many occasions has called on the Tiv nation to positively and purposively engage both the Junkun and the Federal government in establishing a long-standing peace, as well as participating itself in peace processes, democratization and development initiatives in Nigeria (p. 6). Also, they can also give international mediators valuable insights into the "local conflict, historical complexities and personal characteristics of the group leaders. Also, members of the diaspora may also play a role in the consolidation of the legality of elections by helping resolve the post-election dispute, just as in the case of Liberia where the diaspora aided to curtail post-election violence after the contested 2005 presidential run-off elections (Vanore *et al.*, 2015).

The remittance, Economic Investment, and Social development

Some activities that promote internal peacebuilding are; temporary return migration, diaspora entrepreneurship and civil society participation. Quist-Adade & Royal (2016), in their study, observed that most Diaspora identified skill transfer, knowledge transfer as the type of support they will offer to development projects in Nigeria. While external promotion of peacebuilding includes: investment (Nkemdilim 2012)

and remittances, promotion of human rights and democracy and community development driven initiatives. Many Diaspora has acquired assets for private investment in Nigeria in the education, health and housing sectors. Diaspora remittance is considered the tool choice by which most Diaspora assist the peace process in their homelands. Some have argued that migrants and especially migrant Diasporas are the motor forces driving remittances. The effectiveness of remittances as a tool in peacebuilding is due in part to the fact that they are stable, countercyclical and augment the recipients' income more directly than official aid could. Evidence showing the role of remittance in stimulating the economies of developing countries has catapulted their relevance to the forefront and caught the attention of the international community. Most of the remittances sent to Nigeria were primarily for survival. (Quist-Adade & Royal 2016) For instance, the Tiv diaspora sends money home each month to support families, thereby providing a lifeline to many on the bottom rungs of the society. These indeed become a reliable form of sustenance for increasingly improvised households in Nigeria with relations abroad. Thus, remittances can sustain families in the wake of conflict and ultimately kick-start a debilitated economy. The diaspora can also directly support the peace-building process of their country by funding peace conferences and other events that bring together delegates from warring parties or groups.

Consultation and Advisory

Diaspora can act as advisers, consultants in certain peacebuilding processes. For instance, when there is a de-escalation of open conflict, transitional justice mechanism can help bolster peace efforts, which diaspora members can substantially contribute to. Vanore, Ragab, and Siegel (2015) assert that transitional justice measures such as

truth and reconciliation processes that encourage public disclosure of past crimes without the threat of retribution can help encourage trust among divided societal groups. Haider stated that a number of countries have consulted their refugees, IDPs, and diaspora about their transitional justice strategies. Some diaspora in other countries has even encouraged the state to pursue a transitional justice measure. For instance, the Haitian Diaspora pushed the State to create a truth commission for Haiti; the diaspora formulated a proposal that outlined the activities the commission should pursue and then lobbied for the proposal to be implemented (Vanore et al., 2015). Such an event shows the diaspora's commitment to the peace and reconciliation process as well as aid in enforcing norms of solidarity by promoting acknowledgment and acceptance of past crimes.

CHALLENGES OF DIASPORA IN PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA

Peacebuilding is an intricate process that occurs in an insecure and politically fragile environment. Hence, there will be numerous challenges that could potentially prevent proper diaspora engagement in peacebuilding. The potential challenges are as follows;

Lack of Adequate Fund

Finance or funding is one of the greatest challenges of the Diaspora in engaging fully in peacebuilding. A funding gap may ensue when the humanitarian response to a crisis begins to draw down but fully-fledged development assistance is not yet in place. It may also occur because donors are unwilling to fund critical but high-risk political and security activities. Yet this is the moment when the country most needs timely strategic financial support to undertake critical peacebuilding.

Insecurity

Security of diaspora members is a major challenge in peacebuilding. Currently in Nigeria, the security situation has become very porous. The country is experiencing all forms of security challenges and such an environment is not conducive for diaspora because they are often kidnapped, detained, and even killed. Hence, scared diaspora cannot perform effectively if their lives are in danger.

Poor Communication and Lack of / (Mis) Information

To communicate with the people involved in the conflict as well as gathering essential information about the security situation and what is being done to protect people is a challenge to the diaspora. Lilja (2018) posits that "distance is a constraint to the diaspora community, distance both in time and space, from the conflict, which may decrease their understanding of the 'needs at home.'" Hence, the diaspora groups may not know exactly how to go about the peacebuilding process and they cannot implement any peacebuilding project without proper information, in order not to incite or escalate the conflict. Thus, information and communication challenges make it difficult for the diaspora to effectively carry out their peacebuilding initiatives duties in peacebuilding.

Lack of Voting Rights

The Nigerian Diaspora does not vote in general elections in Nigeria. Although attempts have been made to secure the right to vote in general elections, it has been unsuccessful. The African Foundation for Development stated that while the significance of diaspora remittances has already positioned Nigerians abroad as a key political constituency, allowing the diaspora to vote in elections has proved to be a contentious issue in a context where

managing elections and voter count persist as domestic challenges. (Ragab et al, 2013). This means that Furthermore, the Nigerian diaspora has petitioned the government for extraterritorial voting rights and has used the issue of voting as a key point in testing Nigerians commitment to diaspora engagement, (Binaisa, 2013).

Lack of Coordination and Mismanagement

There are a plethora of cases of lack of management and coordination (Ariche et al., 2021) These are some problems faced by the diaspora in peace building because there is the absence of a united and organized group of Nigerians in the Diaspora. Moreover, who will be at the helm of the coordination, approving a common policy, planning and delegating of roles and tasks are factors that affect the peacebuilding process.

Fragmentation

Nigeria is a society highly and deeply fragmented along religious, regional, and ethnic, political and gender lines. Hence, Nigerian Diasporas are also deeply fragmented along these lines. Their levels of fragmentation, as well as politicization, are major causes. Sinatti & Horst (2015) posit that these divisions within diaspora groups may be the result of a transfer of the conflict from the country of origin, a factor that can threaten the peacebuilding potentials of their actions. Such a situation can even make it difficult for external actors who may want to meet with them and know where they can fit into the scheme of things. In fact, understanding who they represent is a major concern for government institutions, NGOs and CSOs, who find it difficult to identify who to trust and ultimately who to cooperate with. Because of the fragmentation among Diasporas, there is a perceived threat that cooperation may easily become politicized (Sinatti & Horst 2015). While

this division and politicization are genuine causes for concerns, Horst et al., (2010) state this should however not lead to the conclusion that diaspora actors cannot be partners in development and likewise peacebuilding.

Past Experiences and Memories of Conflicts in the Home Country

As a result of the fragmentation in the Nigerian society is one of the major sources of the incessant conflict bedeviling the nation as every group's voice wants to be heard and recognized. No year passes by that conflicts and violence of varying magnitudes are not recorded with massive loss of lives and destruction. The scars of the civil wars, tribal and religious wars, Boko Haram insurgency, and Fulani-herders and farmers conflicts are still fresh and unpleasant memories are still lingering in the hearts of Nigerian diasporas who wish to unite and stand with one voice. Distrust, tension, animosity, anger, and enmities between ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria are affecting the Nigerian diaspora in a manner making it difficult for them to establish any meaningful sustainable diaspora system, peace initiatives, and institutions. Consequently, they are few lobbies and pressure groups that can efficiently establish and address matters of peace in their homeland.

Negative Perception of Diasporas

Most times there could be a negative perception about Diasporas. Perception according to Nkemdilim (2012) is a process through which an individual gains knowledge of his environment. What is perceived depends on one's mental state or his state of awareness . The government may be reluctant to accept diasporas' intervention and capabilities. Freitas (2012) asserts that "in some cases, diaspora groups can be perceived as 'foreigners', already too distant from the hardship of the conflict to

take a part in the peace settlement, or the voice concerns of those 'who have stayed' (p. 4). Likewise, even upon returning to home countries, there are no reintegration diaspora members who may continue to be isolated, for they may be perceived as having been less concerned by the consequences of the conflict-or the failure of the peace-building process. Some of them may be perceived as the agents of external actors, are not fully committed to the interests and goals of the homeland, less traditional hence adjusting and reintegrating with people in the home country becomes difficult. Such perception can forestall full engagement of the Diaspora in peacebuilding because they will not be fully accepted by their government or even their people.

THE NEED FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING

Diasporas as earlier noted are potential players in the peacebuilding process of their nations and their role cannot be overemphasized. One may wonder what use can people who are far away from their home country aid in peacebuilding. However, Horst (2010, p. 19) claims that "in a conflict situation, there are greater and more acute needs that must be met, for example, owing to the need to migrate from insecure areas health-related expenses in the event of injuries and inflation in the event of scarcity. At the same time, there is no functioning state to fall back on, nor is there speaking local assistance to be had as everybody tends to be affected by the same events. This also means that a number of people who are living in dire conditions or face the risk of sudden crises and thus need regular or occasional assistance are larger in a conflict setting. Furthermore, opportunities for making a living are scarce in areas affected by conflict. For Nordien (2017) "diasporas have more comparative advantages and possess attributes that differentiate them from

traditional NGOs and official aid agencies because they are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural norms, relations, and networks, and thus have "greater knowledge of and sensitivity to local customs and traditions in places of origin" (p. 7).

Again, after conflict, the Democratic Progress Institute claims that there is usually a 'brain drain' as members of the skilled labour force take what resources they have and run (Glytsos 2010). In the wake of the war, the lack of uneducated workers can hinder reconstruction initiatives and the possibility of a democratic transition. Diaspora remittance to members of their families in the homeland is said to have an invaluable stabilizing influence in countries riddled with violence. In recent years much has been made of the role of remittances as a tool for economic development. When war makes paid labour too dangerous or difficult to continue, remittances may keep a family from starving or a disenfranchised son from enlisting in the military. The role of remittances in countries recovering from the devastation of war cannot be understated. In the aftermath of armed conflict, the problems facing the vulnerable do not disappear and indeed they often increase: the number of female-headed households grows: returnees find themselves without the wherewithal to rebuild or recover economically; fragile post-conflict states unable to bring the benefits to the citizens. This factor among others mentioned above all combine to make diaspora engagement and involvement in development and peacebuilding initiatives very urgent, strategic, timely, and vital. To get the diaspora to engage in peacebuilding as well as fulfill their national responsibility, the following must be done;

The government should allow Nigerians abroad to vote in elections so that they can help in installing credible and accountable leaders. Also, they must also show serious commitment to the plight of diaspora groups, so that they can

in turn be of help to Nigeria when the need arises. The government should establish a reintegration framework for returnees and a framework for diaspora engagement. The government should do everything to ensure that insecurity is reduced to the barest minimum so that the Nigerian diaspora can feel safe to return and move about.

The Diaspora must first see its commitment to the peacebuilding of its homeland as a national responsibility and must act accordingly. Peacebuilding is not only for the government and for those back home. Diaspora must take it as a challenge no matter how small and in whichever manner contribute to restoring and maintaining peace.

The people back home must accept Nigerian diasporas as their brothers and sisters. They should also eliminate the negative perceptions about them. Due to environmental factors, their thoughts and ways of life may be different, but they are still Nigerians. Again, those back home must also furnish the diaspora with proper information about happenings in the country, so that they can also plan an appropriate intervention that will rather de-escalate a conflict and promote peace than exacerbate the conflict or cause a relapse.

CONCLUSION

The work examined the role of Nigeria Diasporas in peacebuilding in Nigeria. It is established here that diaspora is key players in the peacebuilding process of their home country so long as they maintain constant contact with their home country. However, these transnational actors are faced with various challenges such as insecurity, poor communication, financial and coordination challenges that often restrict their full and active participation in ensuring that peace is restored and maintained during and after conflict. The paper reiterates the need for more diaspora involvement in the day to day activities of their homeland, and that for that to happen, the government must

ensure a safe, peaceful and conducive environment for them, and those at home must see the diaspora as part of them and do everything to ensure they feel at home when the return.

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