

**THE  
ROLE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS  
IN  
PEACE INITIATIVES  
IN  
NIGERIA**

**JANUARY 2013**

**NIGERIA STABILITY AND RECONCILIATION PROGRAMME**



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## ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AFCSC	Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji
ASE	Alliance for Sustainable Environment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFWI	Christian Women's Fellowship International
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSC	Conflict Sensitive Communication
CWEENS	Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society
DFID	Department for International Development
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
EWEI	Empowering Women for Excellence Initiative
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria
GEPaDC	Gender Equality, Peace and Development Centre
IANSA	International Action Network on Small Arms
IGSR	Institute of Governance and Social Research, Jos
J4A	Justice for All Nigeria
JAS	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)
JDPCC	Justice Development and Peace Commission/ Caritas
M4M	Mobilising for the Millennium Development Goals
MOSOP	Movement of the Survival of Ogoni People
MOWASD	Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development
MSO	Muslim Sisters Organisation
NAP	National Action Plan
NBA	Nigerian Bar Association
NCAA	National Coalition on Affirmative Action
NDWJ	Niger Delta Women for Justice
NGF	Northern Governors' Forum
NGFCRHS	Northern Governors' Forum Committee on Reconciliation, Healing and Security
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIPPS	National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies
NOI	Ngozi Okonjo Iweala Polls
NSRP	Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
POWA	Police Officers Wives Association
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
V4C	Voices for Change
VOWAN	Voice of Widows, Divorcees and Orphans of Nigeria
WANEP	West African Peace Network
WIC	Women Interfaith Council
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WOWICAN	Women's Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WINN	Women in the New Nigeria

WWWI	Women Without Walls Initiative
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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***Fundamentally, women are now in a position to galvanize themselves, from the grassroots to the tree tops, so they can make positive change that is real:***

Chief Loretta Aniagolu September 2012

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

While it is well known that women and girls are affected by violent conflict and that these experiences differ from those of men and boys, women and girls are largely invisible regarding conflict management and peacebuilding initiatives and mechanisms. This is not because women or girls are unable to engage with violent conflict for any biological or structural reason. It is because there are obstacles in their way.

Nevertheless, women (girls less so) in Nigeria *are* active in this area. This study, therefore, aims to identify the ways in which women in Nigeria have been active and the obstacles that prevent women's activism or their visibility as such.

The study seeks to support the work of both the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the government of the United Kingdom; the former in its drafting and implementation of a National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security<sup>1</sup> and the latter in its preparations for the Commission on the Status of Women 57<sup>th</sup> session in March 2013. It is anticipated that the research will also be useful for the implementation of DFID's new programmes, particularly the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) and others as they start to be implemented. Terms of reference are at Annex 4.

### METHODOLOGY

The research consisted of a literature review, information gathered by NSRP's regional teams based in the three zones and Kano and interviews with key informants (see Annex 2).

### KEY FINDINGS

1. Women exclusion from formal conflict management and peacebuilding initiatives and mechanisms reflects their exclusion from public life in general. Nigeria has some of the worst statistics across sub-Saharan Africa for women's inclusion in public institutions and this is worse in the northern zones.
2. It is widely believed that, because women are not the main perpetrators of violence, they are not relevant in the peace and security discourse. Hence, women's contribution is often relegated to the trivial, cosmetic or logistical – reflecting their role as 'wives and mothers' rather than as full citizens.
3. Nevertheless, women *are* active in peacebuilding and conflict management in all areas of Nigeria. Their type and level of engagement and the effectiveness of their involvement depends on the local context, including the existence, level and nature of the violence on the one hand and the obstacles that they face on the other (such as social norms or the nature and extent of the violence).
4. Women – like men - are motivated to be involved in peacebuilding and conflict management for a variety of reasons. Market women, for instance, motivated by the need to protect their livelihoods, try to ensure that the market is a safe and neutral

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<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2010), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010)

space for all their customers. Women in communities under frequent attack may organise themselves to provide humanitarian assistance to victims. In some cases, women recognise that their relative neutrality enables them to leverage mediation often from traditional or religious leaders. Women involved in organised religion and those involved in human rights work are also motivated to prevent unnecessary death and suffering.

5. Women take action in peacebuilding in a multiplicity of ways. These mainly fall into the following five categories, with inevitable areas of overlap:

- i) Participation in formal mechanisms
- ii) Autonomous 'conflict' women's civil society organisations
- iii) Autonomous general women's civil society organisations set up to address other issues (e.g. health)
- iii) Participation in mixed 'conflict' civil society organisations addressing violent conflict
- iv) Ad-hoc activism in response to specific incidences of violent conflict or to prevent conflict escalating into violence
- v) Conflict management in organised religion

6. There are some notable examples of women individual leaders who may or may not be associated with groups or organisations, but, as in most countries, Nigerian women usually work collectively. The *modus operandi* of women's action falls into the following categories.

a) Traditional forms of protest: Since the 1929 'Aba Women's Riot' when women's protest against unfair taxation led to a reform in colonial administrative practices, when faced with extreme situations women have used traditional methods of protest such as chanting and weeping or walking together dressed in black. These methods are particularly used in the southern zones or the Plateau. Marching semi-naked is often a method of last resort, to shock leaders into taking necessary steps to avoid violent conflict or its recurrence.

b) Joining across ethnic or religious lines: The way that women use religion or ethnicity to organise on conflict is determined largely by the demography of the region, as well as the nature of the violence. Although religion and ethnicity divides women as much as men, women have recognised that they are more powerful when united, particularly when male leaders are promoting divisions. In 'Middle Belt' states, particularly, women have joined together to demand that their traditional leaders protect women and their families from being victimised. In Kaduna, Muslim and Christian women have held joint prayer meetings.

c) Using traditional roles: Women sometimes use their positions as wives or mothers to exert influence over male decision-makers. Examples include the First Lady's leadership of the African First Ladies Peace Initiative, the wives of the Northern Governor's Forum and the Association of Police Wives. Using their husbands' status (even if they are educated, powerful women in their own right) these women can be influential; through adopting their traditional roles they do not threaten the status quo.

d) Identifying key loci and interests: Women in the Niger Delta region, Jos and in Maiduguri have centred protests and other activism on the local market places. This is partly because women (particularly outside the north) often rely on markets for their survival. It is also because markets are amongst the most neutral places in Nigeria.



f) **Formal mechanisms:** Women do play an active role in formal fora when they are able to obtain a 'place at the table'. For instance, in the few panels of enquiry where women have participated, they have demonstrated that they bring fresh insights and can ask 'gendered' questions that may be otherwise missed. In the security sector, women police officers can result in greater reporting of gender-based violence (including that associated with violent conflict). Communiqués from formalised meetings can have an impact on leaders and can obtain publicity for particular issues.

7. Obstacles to women's participation include the following:

**Discriminatory social norms:** While the specifics of social norms (expressed as cultural, traditional or religious) vary across Nigeria, the marginalisation of women and girls is the single common factor and influences all other obstacles. It is, for example, difficult for women peace builders to be recognised in the media unless they are wives of powerful men or there is something particularly sensational such as when women take off their clothes in protest.

**Gender-based violence:** Violent conflict often involves or results in the use or threat of gender-based violence against women and girls. This can be immediately direct (e.g. sexual violence by armed forces or groups), less immediately direct in the form of violence against women who contravene 'accepted' behaviour (e.g. the killing of a woman police officer and woman councillor in the north east), indirect (e.g. where women and girls are prevented from going outside their homes for fear of violence). Where violence becomes 'normalised', levels of gender-based violence are likely to increase. This all militates against women taking up leadership, speaking out or being seen to stand against the violence.

**Religious interpretations** are often used to justify women's secondary position and their exclusion from public life. Although the Islamist radical groups in the northern zones promote extreme versions of women's marginalisation in the name of religion, it is conservative religious interpretations that maintain women's marginalisation. Conservative Christian beliefs, too, create an environment where women are expected to behave in certain ways which do not include adopting leadership roles. There are very few women in formal leadership positions in either Muslim or Christian structures; women activists resort to 'flanking' approaches whereby they enlist the support of wives of powerful men or find ways to influence by reference to bio-determinist constructs of women as 'naturally' peaceful.

**The nature of the violent conflict itself** can constitute an obstacle to women's participation. In the North East zone, women's civil society organisations that have worked on sectoral development issues are finding it increasingly difficult to meet, let alone form strategies for peace-building. At the same time, women who speak out about violent conflict risk being perceived as partisan and becoming targets either personally or through their families.

**The lack of disaggregated information** – whether in recording the impact of violent conflict, the sex of perpetrators or "who's in the room" regarding peace initiatives means that women's peacebuilding work goes largely unnoticed and is not recorded. In turn, this feeds the myth that women 'just don't' take part in peace initiatives and prevents younger women and girls from seeing positive role models.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development is leading the development of a NAP on women, peace and security and has convened a multi-stakeholder

committee of government and civil society entities. The implementation of the NAP will rely on the commitment and resources of the Federal Government and state governments as well as the involvement of – and scrutiny by – civil society.

DFID's programmes are increasingly focused on addressing gender-based marginalisation. NSRP has a dedicated component (output) on women's and girls' participation in peacebuilding and the reduction of violence against women and girls and is explicitly mainstreaming gender through the entire programme.

Other DFID programmes such as Voices for Change, Mobilising for the Millennium Development Goals, Justice for All and the Education Sector Support in Nigeria all have a focus on adolescent girls, involving finding innovative, effective ways of countering the social norms that keep women and girls silent and invisible. The challenges here will be to ensure that all DFID programmes take this approach where possible and to help DFID programmes operating in areas other than the northern states to adopt an approach that supports women's and girls' participation in peacebuilding.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) is a five year programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It seeks to deliver interventions to reduce the impact of violent conflict and to promote reconciliation processes. Consisting of four 'outputs', the programme operates at national level and in eight focal states across four zones of Nigeria, namely, Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers and Yobe States.

DFID, NSRP and others constituting the informal DFID Women, Peace and Security Network<sup>2</sup> have identified a need for research which identifies the current and potential role of women and girls as active citizens in conflict management and peacebuilding more broadly.

This study – conducted by NSRP - aims to obtain the most up to date evidence on the role of women and girls in peace mechanisms and conflict management in Nigeria; to inform the Nigerian National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 & 1820 and to support the related, multi-stakeholder group and to support NSRP's implementation

### 1.1 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The study will also be used to inform efforts across HMG and the FGN in preparation for the Commission on the Status of Women 57<sup>th</sup> Session in March 2013. As DFID operates in many conflict-affected countries, it is envisaged that this study will provide useful lessons and evidence for supporting women's involvement and leadership in other contexts. Terms of reference are attached at Annex A.

### 1.2 METHODOLOGY

The study is based on (a) a desk review of available literature (see Annex B); (b) information gathered by NSRP Regional Coordinators in NSRP's eight focal states and (c) interviews with relevant personnel (see Annex C).

This information is gained from all levels of Nigeria's government: Federal, state and local government area (LGA). Nigeria's diversity means that each area offers its own insights and context. For instance, the Northern Governors' Forum is peculiar to the northern states, whereas the amnesty provisions and structures operating in the Niger Delta region are only applicable in those states.

### 1.3 WOMEN AND GIRLS; VIOLENT CONFLICT, PEACE AND SECURITY

Security is at the top of all Nigerians' agenda. In an NOI<sup>3</sup> Poll conducted in 2012, Nigerians were asked to suggest what their first assignment in office would be if they were to become the President. The single most quoted aspiration (36%) was to address the country's security challenges, followed by employment (26%).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Including 'Voices for Change' (V4C) and 'Mobilising for the Millennium Development Goals' (M4M)

<sup>3</sup> An opinion polling and research organisation set up by Ngozi Okonjo Iweala which conducts scientific periodic opinion polls in Nigeria in partnership with Gallup Poll (USA), <http://www.noi-polls.net>.

<sup>4</sup> This study interviewed over 1000 people (75% male, 25% female)

Strategic conflict assessments<sup>5</sup> and conflict mapping work undertaken by NSRP have identified a wide range of factors shaping conflicts locally.<sup>6</sup> All zones experience violence as a result of disputes over land and water, access to (government) resources including jobs, and over chieftaincy titles. Religious tensions and militancy amongst both Muslims and Christians have been particularly pronounced in the North but are negatively affecting inter-group perceptions in all parts of the country. Issues of social exclusion fuel resentment and reduce alternatives to violence. This is evidenced by young men's vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups or gangs, the exclusion from conflict management mechanisms experienced by women, girls, male youth and 'non-indigenes' and a security sector that is often viewed as – at best – unresponsive to the needs of the majority of the population.

It is well known that women and girls are profoundly affected by violent conflict. As well as experiencing the same as their male counterparts, their experience is different and they experience particular, gender-based violations or abuse of their human rights. For example, conflict-induced displacement has a differential impact on women, men, girls and boys, while the type of violence experienced during violent conflict frequently differs according to gender as well as other factors such as age and ethnicity. Women and girls are, however, largely excluded from participating in conflict management, mediation or inter-group negotiations. In some areas, women are almost universally excluded from public life *per se*, a situation that may be exacerbated in situations of violent conflict<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, women have the capacity to take action with regard to conflict and in some areas have already done so. The challenge for both national and international programmes, therefore, is to remove the obstacles to women's effective participation and organising.

The UK has enshrined its commitment to addressing issues of women, peace and security in its National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820, its strategic vision for women and girls and associated documents on addressing violence against girls and women.

Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development (MOWASD) is in the process of drawing up its own NAP<sup>8</sup> and has convened a multi-stakeholder committee, consisting of government ministries, agencies and departments working together with women and men from relevant civil society organisations.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2002) Strategic Conflict Assessment for Nigeria. (IPCR with support from DFID, UNDP and the WB); USAID (2010) Politics by Other Means: Nigeria Conflict Assessment; Francis, P., Lapin, D. and Rossiasco, P. (2012) Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC

<sup>6</sup> NSRP (2011-12) Conflict mapping studies for Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, girls are known to be kept away from school in the northern states when there is an upsurge in violent conflict.

<sup>8</sup> The Nigeria NAP process is supported by DFID (through NSRP), UN Women and ECOWAS.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 HISTORY OF WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

The first recorded account of women's activism in peace initiatives is contained in the 'Aba women's riot' or 'Igbo women's war'<sup>9</sup>. Under British colonial rule, poor people were subject to draconian taxation. On November 18, 1929, the British-appointed Warrant Chief Okugo asked a teacher to count his people in keeping with the directive of the British district officer. Women who feared that they would be taxed began to protest in traditional forms against the census. Thousands of women chanted war songs and danced around the Warrant Chief. The protest turned violent when a pregnant woman was assaulted and miscarried. Several protesters were killed and many others wounded. A commission of inquiry was set up resulting in many administrative reforms, including the reform of the warrant chief system and a reorganization of the native courts to include women members.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.2 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS:

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states<sup>11</sup> that 'The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government'. The Constitution also states that 'In furtherance of the social order, every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law';<sup>12</sup>, creating a basis for women's and girls' equal participation in public life, including in matters to do with peace and security. It is also a universal principle that the primary responsibility for protecting security and human rights lies with national governments.

In addition to the universal principles of non-discrimination and that the state bears primary responsibility for the security and human rights of its citizens; Nigeria is a state party to major human rights instruments. These include both the UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and its Protocol on the Rights of the African Woman, although neither has yet been domesticated.

### 2.3 GENERAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND IN POLITICS:

At 5.9%, Nigeria ranks significantly below the sub-Saharan African average of 20% regarding women's representation in the national legislature<sup>13</sup>. At 5.9% female representation in the Federal House of Representatives (the lower chamber) stands below neighbouring Niger (12.3%), DR Congo (8%), Ethiopia (27%) and Cameroon (20%) as well as Uganda, South Africa and Rwanda (34%, 43.2% and 56% respectively)<sup>14</sup>. The profile does not improve at the Senate (upper legislative house)

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<sup>9</sup> Post-colonial discourse has challenged this use of language. See <http://what-when-how.com/western-colonialism/igbo-womens-war-western-colonialism/> Accessed on 24 January 2013

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.

<http://nigeriaworld.com/focus/constitution/chapter2.html>. Chapter 14 (2) (b) Accessed 7 December 2012

<sup>12</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.

<http://nigeriaworld.com/focus/constitution/chapter2.html>. Chapter 17 (2) (a) Accessed 7 December 2012

<sup>13</sup> MDG Report 2012:

[http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The\\_MDG\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The_MDG_Report_2012.pdf) Accessed 26 January 2013

<sup>14</sup> <http://dailytimes.com.ng/article/nigeria-needs-more-women-politics-olurode> Accessed 7 December 2012

where Nigeria at 9% stands below the global average of 15%<sup>15</sup>. The situation in the North of Nigeria is worse. In a study commissioned for DFID<sup>16</sup> in Yobe, Bauchi, Zamfara and Jigawa states, the findings were that 'women were only 2% of political office holders at state level in 2007'.

### **3.0 INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PEACE BUILDING IN DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY**

The factors mentioned in 2.3 above mean that any participation by women is in itself a significant achievement. While it would be ideal to examine the impact of women's involvement as *women*, this assumes a level of participation above that of most Nigerian institutions. It also risks subjecting women to greater scrutiny than their male counterparts; it is rare to ask whether men have had an impact in institutions as *men*. This study has found, nevertheless, that when women are included, they can make a difference to the process and results of conflict mechanisms.

A word of explanation about women's leadership is helpful here: Women's leadership takes many forms. It may include active participation in public institutions such as the legislature or panels of inquiry; activism using traditional roles such as motherhood or marriage or activism based on women's particular experience such as gender-based violence. Women's leadership, particularly in situations where women are systematically silenced and made invisible in the formal, public domain, may also mean that women use their informal networks and organisation such as loans committees, mothers' groups or neighbourhood alliances to speak out on conflict, to resolve conflicts non-violently or to influence the conduct of more formal mechanisms. This is not to say that 'behind the scenes' participation is adequate, but to state that in seeking to identify and support women's active role in peacebuilding, it is often necessary to look beyond the formal and overt to the roles that women play in communities.

#### **3.1 WOMEN IN PANELS OR COMMISSIONS OF ENQUIRY**

The usual response to violent conflict by FGN is to send in security forces to quell the conflict followed by the setting up of a panel or commission of enquiry<sup>17</sup>. For instance in response violent conflict in Plateau State, seven commissions of inquiry<sup>18</sup> have been set up to date. Four of the commissions were established by the state government and three by the Federal government. Examples include the Abisoye panel of inquiry (2009), the Solomon Lar Presidential Administrative Panel of Inquiry and Prince Bola Ajibola panel of inquiry, among others.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Gender in Nigeria report (2012). Improving the lives of girls and women in Nigeria. Issues, Policies, Action. British Council Nigeria. Pg 63

<sup>16</sup> Ladbury, S. et al (2011) 'Religion, exclusion and violence in Northern Nigeria' (REVINN) Final report to DFID

<sup>17</sup> <http://what-when-how.com/western-colonialism/igbo-womens-war-western-colonialism/> Accessed on 24 January 2013

<sup>18</sup> Including the Fibresima Report, the Justice Niki Tobi Judicial Commission of Inquiry, the Abisoye Panel of enquiry, Solomon Lar Presidential Administrative Panel of Inquiry and Prince Bola Ajibola Panel of Inquiry. Ref: <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/politics/endless-search-for-peace-on-the-plateau/> Accessed on 19 December 2012

<sup>19</sup> <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/politics/endless-search-for-peace-on-the-plateau/> Accessed on 21 December 2012

Women are largely absent from these mechanisms. No woman has led a panel of enquiry for 20 years, when Honourable Justice Rahila Hadea Cudjoe<sup>20</sup> headed the Zango-Kataf (Market), Kaduna State Riots Judicial Commission of Inquiry in 1992.

“It came as a surprise to find out that my name had been recommended to the Governor to Chair the panel at a time very few women were in key positions. As a legal draftsman people expected to see a man behind the desk when they came to my office. I have always accepted challenges. As we were submitting the report another crisis engulfed the State and I was requested to head another panel”.

Interview with Hon Justice Rahila Hadea Cudjoe (January 2013)

Dr Eleanor Nwadinobi was the only woman to participate in the Judicial Commission of enquiry set up in March 2002 to look into the death of 14 worshippers at Government Technical College in Enugu state.<sup>21</sup>

In my report, I drew the attention to the fact that 9 out of the 14 dead were women and this was probably due to their inability to scale the fence during the stampede.

This may have been as a result of their being brought up not to scale walls or their restrictive clothing. Interview with Dr Nwadinobi (January 2013)

## 3.2 WOMEN IN HIGH PROFILE POSITIONS

### 3.2.1. Women as wives of men in power

There are some instances of women using their traditional positions as wives of men who hold power to attempt to exert influence regarding conflict. As President of the First Ladies Peace Mission, Her Excellency Dame (Dr) Patience Goodluck Jonathan, First Lady Federal Republic of Nigeria hosted that body's meeting in Abuja in July 2012. Nigeria's First Lady stated: 'The First Ladies of Africa are determined to register our voice as a strong force, working for peace in our continent....We all recognize and accept the need for a strong and credible voice for women in decision-making and peace processes in our continent'<sup>22</sup>. As a follow up, a strategy is being drawn up to implement the plan of action and the recruitment of regional staff is underway.

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<sup>20</sup> Hon Justice Rahila Hadea Cudjoe is also notable as the first female Lawyer in North Central State; first female Legal Draftsman in Kaduna State; first female High Court Judge in Kaduna State; and first Woman Chief Judge of Kaduna State Ref:

[http://www.zoominfo.com/people/Cudjoe\\_Justice\\_627643425.aspx](http://www.zoominfo.com/people/Cudjoe_Justice_627643425.aspx) Accessed on 12 December 2012

<sup>21</sup> Dr Nwadinobi was nominated to the committee in her professional capacity as the doctor on the panel to examine the reports of the two independent pathologists.

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.nigeriafirst.org/article\\_12020.shtml](http://www.nigeriafirst.org/article_12020.shtml) Accessed on 13 December 2012

The Northern Governors' Wives Forum also met in July 2012 to issue a statement to Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) to lay down its arms and engage in dialogue with the Federal Government<sup>23</sup>.

### **3.2.2 Women's Subcommittee of the Northern Governors Forum**

The Northern Governors' Forum Committee on Reconciliation, Healing and Security (NGFCRHS) was constituted and inaugurated by the Northern Governors' Forum (NGF) in August 2012. It is a 41-member peace committee, made up of distinguished personalities from the North, set up in response to the general and specific challenges of development peaceful coexistence and security in Northern Nigeria

There are six women members<sup>24</sup> of the committee (14.63%), from both Muslim and Christian groupings. Mrs Saudatu Mahdi MFR<sup>25</sup> is Deputy Secretary of the Committee. Other members include operational and retired members of the security sector, academics and the judiciary.

The inclusion of women in the committee, including in the role of deputy secretary reflects the gender dimensions of conflict in the North and is considered by the committee members to be an opportunity to amplify the voices of women and girls.

When asked why she thought she was appointed as deputy secretary Mrs Saudatu Mahdi said 'I believe my antecedents having served on other committees as well as the initiative I took to do a study once we were appointed which reviewed issues of gender, spread and flash points of conflict'<sup>26</sup>

### **3.2.3 Female activists and politicians**

In addition to collective organising, individual women may adopt leadership roles or use their position within the political sphere or civil society to influence or mobilise others. Often, women occupy multiple roles. A few examples follow:

*Mrs. Ayubakuro Warder*, a leader in the Okordia/ Zarama Community in Bayelsa is an environmental activist who mobilized women to protest the activities of Shell and Agip oil companies.

*Ankio Briggs* visited her community, Abonnema, after a long sojourn in the UK and USA and has been outspoken regarding environmental degradation due to oil pollution. She also worked with security agencies to secure the release of 19 foreign oil workers kidnapped in 2010.

*Fatima Adamu*, activist, renowned academic, researcher and head of Society for Women and Development in Nigeria (SWODEN), Kano has also played a vital role in sensitizing youth to avoid election violence.

Civil society and politics in Nigeria are often entwined. Women leaders are no exception and may use their voice as civil society activists to further political causes or to make political commentary. For instance, Hajiya Hafsat Muhammed Baba is

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/index.php/news/news/national-news/report/4149-boko-haram-of-peace-initiative-northern-leaders-and-traducers> Accessed on 28 December 2012

<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Maryam Uwais MFR, Haj. Dije Jibrin Bala mni, MFR, Mrs. Saudatu Mahdi MFR, Mrs. Aisha Oyeboode, Rev. Sister Kathleen MacGarvey and Mrs. Nguyan S. Feese

<sup>25</sup> 'MFR' means 'Member of the Order of the Federal Republic'. It is a national honour bestowed on those considered to have rendered service to the nation.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Mrs Saudatu Mahdi: January 2013



both the National Women Leader of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and coordinator of the Global Initiative for Women and Children. She identified with and participated in the Occupy Nigeria protest, especially in Kaduna State, and used her position of leadership to state in a newspaper interview:

“There is a lot of work to be done, that is why we are looking for a change of government so that there will be a government that is sensitive to the people and look at the issues of the youth, development, education, agriculture and security so that Nigeria will be safe for everybody.”<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3 SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS

Research conducted by the global NGO Womankind found that ‘Women are likely to work collectively, rather than individually, in pursuit of peace. Working together gives women a degree of protection, and also amplifies their voice.’ Bandana Rana from Saathi in Nepal says: ‘In a patriarchal society, it is extremely important that women come together. Unless they act together, no one is going to hear them. They find security and strength in each other’s experiences’.<sup>28</sup>

DFID’s *Gender in Nigeria* report<sup>29</sup> states ‘Nigeria has a plethora of socio-cultural networks which provide social security to members and provide a sense of belonging and security to members as well as a rallying point for action. These include town unions, age grades, religious and cultural societies to name a few. The existence of strong social networks, trade unions and civic associations that cut across ethnic divisions has been associated in other contexts with conflict resolution. In Nigeria, Porter et al. (2010) describe how market associations play this role. They involve women as well as men from different ethnic and religious groups in mediating and resolving disputes, and interact with ethnic organisations and state agencies in the process (Porter et al., 2010)’ Porter concludes that market women are concerned, primarily, with their livelihoods and take action to manage violent conflict because it threatens their income in the short and longer-term<sup>30</sup>.

At community level, institutions and bodies which have had an impact in other areas such as education provide an avenue for increased women’s participation in decision making and by extrapolation peace building. One such body is the school-based management committees (SBMCs) which have been recorded as having the ability ‘[T]o empower communities and ensure that women have greater say in decision making.’<sup>31</sup> DFID’s Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) has instituted SBMC Women’s Sub-Committees. An SBMC Women’s Sub-Committee’s efforts in Gurin Gawa village, Kano state, has resulted in the enrolment of about 300 formerly out-of-school pupils, the majority of whom are girls.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.4 WOMEN AND TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

NSRP conducted a study in six states<sup>33</sup> in 2012 to investigate existing community conflict management mechanisms. The study included hearing the narratives of over

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<sup>27</sup> <http://peoplesdaily-online.com/index.php/news/news/national-news/5565-northern-governors-just-take-tea-at-meetings-says-acn-women-leader> Accessed on 20 December 2012

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.womankind.org.uk/2012/09/when-is-peace-not-peace/> Accessed on 19 December 2012

<sup>29</sup> *Gender in Nigeria Report: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria* DFID 2012  
<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/publications1/gender-nigeria2012.pdf> Accessed on 3 January 2013

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Dr Porter: January 2013

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/nigeria.html> Accessed on 21 December 2012

<sup>32</sup> [www.esspin.org/.../ESSPIN%20055%2015th%20Quarterly%20Report](http://www.esspin.org/.../ESSPIN%20055%2015th%20Quarterly%20Report) Accessed on 28 January 2013

<sup>33</sup> Bayelsa, Borno, Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers and Yobe

400 respondents as well as key informants and focus group discussions. Excerpts of the reports, indicating the acceptance of traditional leaders as mediators and the role of women appear below.

*Traditional and religious institutions are by far the most widespread and most trusted mechanisms for resolving disputes between individuals and families on an everyday basis, and that they have on occasion played significant roles in mediating in inter-communal violence and in promoting peace. Respondents ascribed their popular acceptance to their closeness to the people and the trust people have in their integrity. Respondents frequently commented that traditional and religious methods of dispute resolution get to the bottom of problems, while formal processes merely pass judgment, allowing the cause of the problem to resurface at a later date.*

*Women tend to be relatively poorly served by traditional and religious mechanisms: the functionaries, advisers or mediators are mostly men, and the status quo, which they are inclined to uphold is generally a patriarchal one. However, examples of women mediators in the traditional or informal sphere do emerge from the narratives. Many communities [particularly in the Niger Delta] have women's leaders, who in some cases have the power to call men to account, or who have taken part in formal peace negotiations between communities. While these were largely responsible for managing a fairly limited range of issues (mainly domestic disputes and conflicts between women) this was not always the case, and there appears to be no effective bar on women taking more onerous responsibilities in such structures.<sup>34</sup>*

DFID's Justice for All (J4A) programme is currently working with Traditional Justice systems in the resolution of conflicts. In the South, J4A is working with 'Umuada' (daughters of the lineage) and in the North with traditional rulers and their wives to build their capacity in human rights and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

### 3.5 WOMEN IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

A literature review conducted by NSRP found gender-based discrimination to be institutional across the security sector, although there have been improvements in female police numbers at junior levels.

*'Women remain under-represented in state institutions, the police and army in Nigeria, and severely under-represented at senior levels. The executive has set goals to increase female representation in the public administration to 30% and create gender desks or units within all public institutions. However, implementation is slow, especially within the security sector. Nonetheless, the NPF has made some progress with increasing the numbers of women recruits.*

*The proportion of female police officers has increased in the last two decades to 12.41%, although only 5% of senior officers are female, a reduction of 3% since 1993. The NPF has also introduced a recruitment target for women of 20% and is reviewing its internal regulations in order to counter discriminatory provisions (Dayil et al, 2011).*

*Women account for 3% of military personnel and are banned from combat units. The few high-ranking female officers are mostly within the medical unit...Married women*

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<sup>34</sup> 'Watching us die on CNN' NSRP Report on the study of Community-level Conflict Management Mechanisms In the Niger Delta, Middle Belt and North East zones of Nigeria

*may not be recruited into the military and unmarried pregnant women are dismissed.* (Dayil et al, 2011)<sup>35</sup>

To date, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has had four women Deputy Inspector Generals (DIG), and currently the most senior woman police officer is a Commissioner of Police. The highest ranking woman in the armed forces is (two-star) Rear Admiral (Rtd) Itunu Hotonu<sup>36</sup>.

The Nigeria Police Force launched a gender policy in August 2011, which analyses the current situation and rationale for the police as well as the policy framework, priorities and institutional context<sup>37</sup>.

Nigeria is also a Troop Contributing Country to international peacekeeping operations. This is reflected in the NAP progress indicator as 'Increase in women's representation in peacekeeping missions particularly as military observers and civilian police'<sup>38</sup>

Justice for All Nigeria (J4A) in its equal access to safety, security and justice for women is working with the NPF to introduce family support units, supporting the police to develop core strategies and management systems with gender considerations and helping the voluntary policing sector to focus on women's needs.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.6 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSO)<sup>40</sup>

#### 3.6.1. CSOs in the Niger Delta

The Federation of Ogoni Women Associations has been active for over 20 years. In the 1990s, they stood with men and women in the Movement of the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), taking part in non-violent actions to protest against the destruction of Ogoni farms and livelihoods and, later, to commemorate the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues.

In 1999, following a confrontation between the military and youth, the community in Odi was devastated by Nigerian soldiers in an apparent act of collective punishment<sup>41</sup>. Around 1,000 women in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, led by the President of Niger Delta Women for Justice<sup>42</sup> protested to the visiting Senate delegation. They called for the immediate release of over 2000 women and children and 1,000 Ijaw

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<sup>35</sup> Violence against women and girls in Nigeria Prevalence, attitudes and response Lyndsay McLean-Hilker with Sarah Maguire, April 2012

<sup>36</sup> [www.nigerianbestforum.com/blog/?p=79861](http://www.nigerianbestforum.com/blog/?p=79861) Accessed 28 January 2013

RA Hotonu was among the first set of architects to be enlisted into the Nigerian Navy and the first female military officer to serve as a Directing Staff (that is an instructor) at the famous Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC), Jaji. She was also the first female military officer to attend the then National War College, now National Defence College, where she emerged the best overall graduating student and won the Commander-in-Chief's prize as well as the Commandant's prize for the best research.

<sup>37</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria, A Gender Policy for the Nigerian Police force, NPF, UN WOMEN, UNFPA

<sup>38</sup> Draft NAP 1325 Nigeria

<sup>39</sup> Information provided by Emiola Oyfuga, J4A: January 2013

<sup>40</sup> References in this section are largely restricted to NSRP focus states

<sup>41</sup> Onwuemeodo 1999

[http://www.waado.org/environment/fedgovt\\_nigerdelta/bayelsainvasion/LegislaturesReactions/SenatorsWitnessDestructionOfOdi.html](http://www.waado.org/environment/fedgovt_nigerdelta/bayelsainvasion/LegislaturesReactions/SenatorsWitnessDestructionOfOdi.html) Accessed 28 January 2013

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Pere

youths locked up in Ebele Barracks and Bori Camp in Port Harcourt.<sup>43</sup> More recently, the Federation of Ogoni Women Associations has been collaborating with MOSOP and through its activities on violence against women and girls has been able to contribute to the reduction of gender based violence in Ogoni.

Women activists in the Niger Delta have transcended inter-ethnic hostilities and grievances to take action against oil companies 'against corporate irresponsibility'<sup>44</sup>.

Women's associations such as Gbaramatu, Isoko, Itsekiri, Ugborodo and Ogbakiri Women's Peace Forum have participated in environmental activism and peace initiatives. In 2002, thousands of women were reported to have occupied eight major oil facilities including the Chevron oil platform. '[A]lthough in the first instance the actions were taken separately by women from three different ethnicities in the final occupation, for the first time, women from three different ethnic nationalities, Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Ilaje, came together in a united action'<sup>45</sup>.

Women in this region have also resorted to the culturally legitimate, yet greatly feared and rarely used 'curse of nakedness' after conventional protests had fallen on stony ground<sup>46</sup>.

*The Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre*<sup>47</sup> is a member of the West African Peace Network (WANEP) and, working to promote women's empowerment, inclusion in communal/governmental decision making and peace building. It has worked with community women in all Niger Delta States, aided victims of the Gbaramatu invasion in the heat of the Niger Delta militancy and worked with women when they seized the Chevron platform to protest injustice to host communities by the oil company. The organisation's Peace and Security Programme started in 2007 with the holding of Mothers for Peace Marches in Emohua, Ogbakiri and Ogoni and continued in 2009 with a programme of peace education for in and out of school youths in Ika (Akwa Ibom state), Biseni (Bayelsa state), Ogoni, Emohua and Ogbakiri (Rivers state) prior to the declaration of amnesty by the Federal Government in 2009. The organisation continued with creating awareness on the implementation of the amnesty programme in Rivers and Bayelsa states.<sup>48</sup>

The *Tere-Ama Women's Association*, a community based organisation took direct action to persuade young men in the creeks in Okrika to stop them from participating in armed violence in the run up to the 2007 general elections. The women resolved a dispute over land ownership that threatened the main community market and livelihoods by calling the traditional leader to a meeting thereby avoiding bloodshed. The market remains a major source of revenue for the Tere-Ama community<sup>49</sup>.

*The Ekunuga Women's Association* was also able to convince the councils of chiefs from Ekunuga and Okolomade communities to meet regularly to ensure peace in their communities<sup>50</sup>.

### 3.6.2 CSOs in the North East Region

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.sweetcrudemovie.biz/pdf/engenderingCivilSociety.pdf> Accessed 28 January 2013

<sup>44</sup> Violence as an instrument of governance, Sokari Ekine, 2009-02-18, Issue 420.

<http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/54174> Accessed 28 January 2013

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsyKH8ViaEg> Accessed 28 January 2013

<sup>48</sup> Interviews with Constance Meju, Programme Manager kebetkache@yahoo.ca

<sup>49</sup> Information provided by Patrick Naagbanton, NSRP Regional Coordinator, Niger Delta region

<sup>50</sup> Information provided by Patrick Naagbanton, NSRP Regional Coordinator, Niger Delta region

Development outcomes in the North East are significantly below the rest of Nigeria<sup>51</sup>. Until relatively recently, therefore, most women's CSOs in this zone have focused their efforts on improving women's and children's health and education, with environmental issues also a major concern. Recently, however, the deterioration in the security situation has meant that CSOs find it increasingly difficult to operate; freedom of movement is restricted, communication is patchy at best and many people are living in fear. Moreover, the nature of the violent conflict in this zone means that working on conflict is either liable to misinterpretation or simply dangerous. The depiction of the violence as about a two-sided conflict between the government and the JAS means that activism for peace or for non-violent conflict resolution risks being perceived as partisan, with potentially disastrous consequences. In 2011, in Maiduguri Borno State, Women in the New Nigeria (WINN) organised a public rally at the market place, one of the last recorded women's public activist event in the state.

While civilians are targeted by both security forces and JAS, visible women are particularly at risk of attack. In January 2013 one of Borno State's few police women was killed in an apparently targeted attack, while a woman councillor was also killed in July 2012. Female police officers in the Community Policing Department of the NPF are working in partnership with Police Officers Wives Association (POWA) to carry out advocacy for peace in the state.

Women's organisations have not, however, stopped all their activities. Organisations with an existing advocacy function, such as BOABOB for Women's Rights, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Gender Equality, Peace and Development Centre (GEPaDC) carry out advocacy and provide counselling and legal assistance. FOMWAN and the Integrated Women and Youth Empowerment Centre continue to provide care and counselling to communities, youth, women and young girls affected by the violence. Although largely on hold because of the violence, these organisations' programmes include leadership training, vocational skills training, orphan support scheme, youth communal farming and agro-allied activities, workshops/seminars, micro-credit schemes for women, advocacy campaigns and research. As well as the difficulties referred to above, women's CSOs in this zone are unaccustomed to working in the midst of political violence and have, largely, yet to adapt.

### **3.6.3 CSOs in Kano State**

Most of the well established and long standing women's CSOs in Kano are focused on health issues while few are active around peace and security issues. To a lesser extent than what operates in the North East zone, activists speaking out about public or political violence risk being associated with one 'side' or the other in violent conflict. For women, this is compounded by the portrayal of women as symbols for men's honour and status and the depiction of women as – on the one hand – in need of protection from public violence and – on the other hand – responsible for young men's and boys' joining militant groups or gangs.

In part, as a proposed conflict management mechanism, Kano authorities (government and *Hizbah* – the Islamic police), in collaboration with Voice of Widows, Divorcees and Orphans of Nigeria (VOWAN) have initiated a set of mass weddings, whereby women and girls who are divorced or widowed are matched with men (often

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<sup>51</sup> For example, maternal mortality in the NE zone is around 10 times that of the South East [http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng\\_publications\\_advocacybrochure.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng_publications_advocacybrochure.pdf) Accessed 28 January 2013

already married) in order to provide the women and their children with male 'protectors'. The aim is also to reduce the likelihood of fatherless, male children joining organised armed violence. The participants are given financial benefits including a dowry for the men 'The Hisbah paid the 10,000 naira (\$63) dowry for grooms and provided the brides with furniture and kitchen wares, as well as 15,000 naira (\$95) to enable them to start small businesses such as tailoring or food preparation.'<sup>52</sup> The practice has been decried by Nigerian and international human rights organisations as promoting polygyny, compromising women's and girls' freedom from domestic violence and doing nothing to prevent the prevalence of men divorcing women and leaving them without support in form of maintenance payment<sup>53</sup>.

The three relevant organisations identified by NSRP<sup>54</sup> in Kano are (a) The Interfaith Peace Foundation which runs a peace initiative through football competitions, bringing youths together from various communities ;(b) Freedom Radio which runs a phone-in programme anchored by Lami Murtala giving women the opportunity to phone in anonymously to have their voices heard regarding a broad range of issues including peace initiatives and (c) Interfaith Peace Foundation, Kano which carries out peace sports activities.

#### **3.6.4 CSOs in the Middle Belt**

The National Coalition on Affirmative Action (NCAA), Plateau State chapter has been championing the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill. The bill passed second reading at the Plateau State House of Assembly in 2012 .When passed, the provisions of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Act will address women's participation in peace-building and decision making in Plateau State.

BAOBAB in Plateau State carried out a successful mentoring of Christian and Muslim girls over a six year period. Some of these girls are women now operating different organizations and have organized self help groups within their communities.

The National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), Alliance for Sustainable Environment and Plateau State Coalition on Affirmative Action collectively advocated for a safe and friendly environment, job creation and an end to violence against women in the state.

International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the Legal Aid Council have on various occasions offered free legal advice and probono services to women who have been victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence in the state.<sup>55</sup>

Empowering Women for Excellence Initiative (EWEI) trained 35 women on the role of women as advocates for peace in September 2012.

The Alliance for Sustainable Environment (ASE) brought together individuals from across the religious divide to carry out advocacy on environmental issues in 2010.

#### **3.6.5 International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)**

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/100-couples-in-kanos-mass-wedding/> Accessed 31 January 2013

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.euronews.com/2012/05/19/nigeria-mass-wedding-for-divorcees-denounced/> Accessed 31 January 2013

<sup>54</sup> Information provided by Kabiru Riruwai, NSRP Regional Coordinator

<sup>55</sup> Information provided Imran Abdul Rahman, NSRP Regional Coordinator

IANSA with support from the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) carried out a project called 'Enhancing Women's Participation in Peace building in the Niger Delta' in four communities each in Rivers, Delta and Edo States from May 2010 to April 2011. The objective was to identify a pool of women who would actively engage in conflict resolution and peace building activities through advocacy, training and mentoring and the establishment of a network: 'Mothers for peace in the Niger Delta'. Monitoring in the target communities demonstrated increased awareness of the significance of the role of women in conflict resolution.

IANSA Nigeria has also produced a training manual on Conflict Transformation Peace Building and small arms control for women.<sup>56</sup>

### **3.6.6 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)**

WILPF Nigeria coordinates a loose network called Partners of 1325 which has supervised the translation of UNSCR 1325 into nine Nigerian languages. This has been used in running capacity building programmes for close to 2,000 women and girls, over a period of two years and four months. So far they have carried out over 15 capacity building trainings in Lagos, Edo, Delta, Enugu, Kaduna, Abia, Benue and Jigawa States on UNSCR 1325 and women's role in peace processes.

Under TEAM 2015 - an initiative towards the 2015 Nigerian elections - WILPF Nigeria also aims to promote and improve women's qualitative political participation by 2015 as well as promoting the implementation of policies and legislative provisions for the protection of women's rights in peace and security. Activities include capacity building trainings on leadership skills, conflict analysis, communication and non violence, increasing women's visibility in communities, establishing political participation and building support networks amongst others<sup>57</sup>.

## **3.7 FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS**

Religion is a powerful influence in Nigeria. Most people follow Islam, Christianity or African traditional religions and take their religion – and religious leaders – seriously. Faith-based organisations and religious leaders, therefore, have influential positions, reflected both by the targeting of places of worship for violence and the coverage of religious events in the national press. Women may choose to organise through their religions, finding that it gives their work a legitimacy and space that may otherwise be denied.

As is the case in most countries, there are few women in top-level leadership positions within Nigeria's major organised religions. There are fewer in formal leadership positions in the North. Nevertheless, there are prominent women leaders working to create dialogue and spaces for inter-faith cooperation. There are heads of religious institutions like Archbishop, Margaret Benson Idahosa, the Presiding Bishop and General Overseer of Church of God Mission International and Founder of Christian Women's Fellowship International (CFWI)<sup>58</sup>. Some are wives of religious leaders or active members of women's wings of religious institutions. Some of these women work through faith-based organisations. Others use their positions within the structure of their religion, despite not being recognised by formal leadership positions. As a woman leader of faith said:

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<sup>56</sup> IANSA women's network Nigeria with support of USIP, Training manual on conflict transformation peace building and small arms control for women. June 2010

<sup>57</sup> Information provided by the current President of WILPF Nigeria Joy Onyesoh

<sup>58</sup> <http://therestplace.org/archbishop-cgmi> Accessed 29 January 2013

*'To be a leader in dialogue is a different thing from being a formal leader of a religious community. That is why we go for women who are interested in peace building. Also, women have an advantage in dialogue because they can listen and hear what the others are saying. And they are very determined to see peace. Enough is enough.'*

*[We] go to the grassroots communities through their leaders, mostly women but also men. There are many women who have accepted leadership roles in all religious communities, Christians and Muslims. What we need to do is to find people who are interested in peace building and we start from there.'*<sup>59</sup>

Women's faith-based work reflects both the demography and politics of the country. In the largely Christian Niger Delta region, for instance, women organise across denominations; in the religiously mixed 'Middle Belt', women may come together across religions and in the conflict-affected, largely Muslim Northern zones, women are more likely to organise in their own religious groups.

3.7.1 Member organisations of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), which operates in 36 states, have promoted women's participation in public life since 1985. In a media interview conducted in 2010 FOMWAN's Aisha Akanbi stated *'If we were successful in increasing female participation in government we would have improved governance and development. The government would be more gender sensitive. Democracy would be strengthened. We as women, we would be partners in progress. I also envision that greater participation of women would lead to a significant reduction in violence'*.<sup>60</sup>

The 27th FOMWAN annual conference: 'Islam Women Peace and Security' was held in Owerri, Imo state in August 2012. The organisation chose Imo in order to identify with *'our Eastern sisters and prove to all cynics and promoters of disharmony that there exists a beautiful inter-connectivity among the diverse populations in Nigeria'*.<sup>61</sup> At the conference, the Governor of Imo State commended the organisers for the bringing together of Muslim and Christian women across religious divide. One of the recommendations in the resulting communiqué was the 'Involvement of women in conflicts resolution and peace building initiatives'.<sup>62</sup>

3.7.2. In Kaduna, the Women Interfaith Council (WIC) provides a forum for dialogue between women leaders and members of Muslim and Christian faiths. WIC has carried out many peace initiatives including press conferences, visits to media houses and internally displaced persons camps, visits to victims of bomb blasts in hospital, interfaith prayers, sensitisation meetings, seminars, workshops, public lectures and marches<sup>63</sup>. In April 2012, WIC held a workshop for Imams and Pastors at the Women's Multipurpose Hall, Kaduna, with the theme: *Women and Peace building: the Influence of Religion*. According to Sr. Kathleen McGarvey, WIC's coordinator 'As women of faith we recognize the need to raise the awareness of male

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<sup>59</sup> Sr Agatha Ogochukwu Chikelue co-chairs the Women of Faith Network in Abuja with Hajia Maryam Dada Ibrahim, is a founder of the Abuja Interfaith Youth Forum Nigeria and founding member of Christian/Muslim Women Dialogue Forum in Nigeria.

<sup>60</sup> <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-maryam-othman-and-aisha-akanbi-of-the-federation-of-muslim-women-s-associations-in-nigeria> Accessed 20 December 2012

<sup>61</sup> FOMWAN's President, Hajia Maryam Othman: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/08/nigeria-requires-collective-prayers-commitment-jonathan/> Accessed 12 December 2012

<sup>62</sup> This section draws on information provided by Hajia Hamsatu A. Allamin

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Sr Kathleen McGarvey. WIC works with wives of religious leaders and women's groups in churches and mosques who are leaders in their own right and champion activities as long as they do not go against the religious principles of their faith



religious leaders about the importance of interfaith dialogue and of peace building and of women's participation in the same'<sup>64</sup>.

3.7.3. In Jos, the Women Without Walls Initiative (WWWI) has presented recommendations to the Plateau State Government through a peace proposal. The co-ordinator of the group, Pastor Esther Ibanga of Jos Christian Missions<sup>65</sup> explained that they are united with a vision which is 'to develop a non-violent, creative and inclusive approach for conflict resolution and transformation in Nigeria, through women.'<sup>66</sup>

3.7.4. Also in Jos, the Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS) collaborated in March 2010 with a broad range of women leaders under the aegis of Women on the Plateau for Peace to organize a protest march of women against ethno-religious violence. The march was in response to the violence in January 2010, and the Dogon Na Hauwa (Jemburuk) massacre of 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2010. The protest march brought together a broad coalition of Christian and market women's groups. Around 10,000 women, dressed in black and carrying palm branches set out from a church near the city centre after a period of prayer and marched, weeping and singing, to the State House of Assembly. There they presented to the Speaker of the House a copy of the communiqué titled: 'Enough is enough!' which included reference to the need to implement the recommendations of the panels of investigation into Plateau State crises including the 1994 Justice Fiberesima commission and the 2002 Nikki Tobi Commission<sup>67</sup>. From there, they marched on to the Office of the Plateau State Government and presented the same communiqué to the Deputy Governor, Mrs. Pauline Tallen<sup>68</sup>.

3.7.5. Faith-based organisations in the North East include the Muslim Sisters Organisation (MSO); Women in Da'awa; Zumuntan Mata (EYN) Church Women; Kanem Women Association and WOWICAN. Women's intervention in disputes is restricted to the domestic sphere and they are not involved in mediation between the JAS and government.

The exception is Barrister Aisha Wakil Gana, who is believed to have a spiritual gift. She is known to periodically fall into a trance during which verses of the Holy Qur'an appear on certain parts of her body and remain for some days. Many people visit her home to see the inscriptions on her body, for which she is revered. Barrister Aisha was recommended by the JAS as a mediator between them and Government, a matter which was omitted in the press reporting of government-to-JAS mediation attempts which referred only to current and former prominent men from the military, government and Borno Emirate.<sup>69</sup>

The only woman senior pastor in the region, Pastor Jemima Mbaya of Latter House Christian Centre, runs regular programmes for widows and orphans of the violent conflict, including peacebuilding.

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Sr Kathleen McGarvey, January 2013

<sup>65</sup> Pastor Ibanga is the first woman to start pastoring a church in her own right, not inherited from her husband. <http://www.nigeriaa2z.com/2011/02/18/women-launch-peace-initiative-in-plateau-state> Accessed 21 December 2012

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Information provided by Dr. Funmi Para-Mallam – National Coordinator of CWEENS

<sup>68</sup> The march was led by: Pastor Esther Ibanga, Dr. Funmi Para-Mallam and Mrs Josephine Ewuga.

<sup>69</sup> <http://dailypost.com.ng/2012/11/03/boko-haram-didnt-nominated-mediator-buhari/> Accessed 28 December 2012

3.7.6 The largely Christian Niger Delta has representation of most of the Christian denominations with their corresponding women's wings. Preaching and teaching on peace from a biblical perspective is conducted at annual conferences, meetings, outreaches and interdenominational activities. Also very active and vocal on issues of peace and human rights is the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).<sup>70</sup> The Catholic organisation, Justice Development and Peace Commission/ Caritas (JDPCC) has a project 'Sustainable action for Community Peace' which is directed at 'reducing the tide of conflict in River State, with a focus on the Youths whose efforts are to be redirected towards positive endeavours'<sup>71</sup>.

## 4. 0 OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

### 4.1 Discriminatory social norms

While the specifics of social norms (expressed as cultural, traditional or religious) vary across Nigeria, the marginalisation of women and girls is the single common factor and influences all other obstacles.

### 4.2 Representation in the media

Print and electronic media either under-report, black out or relegate women-led initiatives to back pages, small print or fashion inserts.

The nature of news is such that it is the unusual that tends to be reported. Indeed peace initiatives are not generally reported except where there is a sensationalist element for example 'women in a peace march half naked'. Women have generally had less capacity to cultivate media relations. Added to these are the general shortcomings in news reporting such as lack of community radio.<sup>72</sup>

The editors of some papers were interviewed for this research, regarding the reporting of stories on WPS. The reasons the editors gave for giving women no publicity included the lack of capacity of women's organisations to activate media interest, women not being able to spend on media campaigns, issues of women and peace not generally interesting unless they are unusual.<sup>73</sup>

This is often attributed to poor pay and the demand for cash for stories. As a newspaper columnist puts it:

'By comparison, Nigerian journalists might be some of the worst paid in the world earning N360K per annum when the average journalist earns N6M in the UK, N4M in the US, N994K in India, and N2M in South Africa. It becomes more understandable why the culture of brown envelope journalism thrives and why reporters expect to be paid to cover stories'<sup>74</sup>

In order to address these poor reporting on roles of women and girls in peace building, the NSRP is developing a curriculum for Post-graduate conflict sensitive communication (CSC) diploma course that will be delivered through distance learning

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<sup>70</sup> <http://www.thetidenewsonline.com/2012/10/10/ywca-decry-female-mutilation/> Accessed 29 January 2013

<sup>71</sup> <http://jdpccportharcourt.org/> Accessed 29 January 2013

<sup>72</sup> Information provided by Gordon Adam and Lauratu Umar Abdusalam (NSRP)

<sup>73</sup> Interviews with Daily Trust, Punch Newspaper, Abuja Bureau Chief The Nation Newspaper, Northern Editor and Premium Times, Editor-in-Chief conducted by Adeshola Komolafe

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.leadership.ng/nga/columns/43886/2013/01/01/dear\\_2013\\_welcome.html](http://www.leadership.ng/nga/columns/43886/2013/01/01/dear_2013_welcome.html) Accessed 27 December 2012

for 170 journalists. The course will include training in how to report on women's and girls' peace initiatives.

#### **4.3 Women leaders' invisibility**

Linked to the above issue, women leaders – particularly those who do not depend on traditional roles – are largely invisible or are treated as exceptional. ESSPIN is currently conducting a study looking at women in communities who face socio-cultural obstacles and are able to go outside the norm to perform various leadership roles. Members of the community were asked to enumerate qualities of leadership and then to identify women in their communities who portrayed these same qualities. One of such qualities identified by community members was the ability of women to resolve conflicts. These women have been identified as 'positive deviants' by virtue of rising above the usual socio-cultural norms.<sup>75</sup>

#### **4.4. Tokenism**

Generally, women are not engaged in high level peace initiatives. However, when they are invited to such initiatives they are often assigned auxiliary and subsidiary roles. Thus, with the exception of cases where women are called upon to address 'women, peace and security' issues, women's involvement in mainstream peace and security events is still often relegated to domestic, logistical or nurturing roles, rather than as mediators, panellists or negotiators. For example, the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPPS) recently held an eminent persons and expert group meeting on complex insurgencies in Nigeria in which they came up with the 'Kuru Declaration 2012'.<sup>76</sup> Women were present as participants, a woman was the compère, but women did not present any of the papers or chair any of the 12 sessions.

**4.5 Gender-based violence:** Violent conflict often involves or results in the use or threat of gender-based violence against women and girls. This can be immediately direct (e.g. sexual violence by armed forces or groups), less immediately direct in the form of violence against women who contravene 'accepted' behaviour (e.g. the killing of a woman police officer and woman councillor in the north east), indirect (e.g. where women and girls are prevented from going outside their homes for fear of violence). Where violence becomes 'normalised', levels of gender-based violence are likely to increase. This militates against women taking up leadership, speaking out or being seen to stand against the violence.

**4.6 Religious interpretations** are often used to justify women's secondary position and their exclusion from public life. Although the Islamist radical groups in the northern zones promote extreme versions of women's marginalisation in the name of religion, it is conservative religious interpretations that maintain women's marginalisation. Conservative Christian ideologies, too, create an environment where women are expected to behave in certain ways which do not include adopting leadership roles.

This is despite the fact that both major organised religions feature examples of women playing a role in peace efforts, sometime for entire nations. For instance,

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<sup>75</sup> Information provided by Kabiru Abass, ESSPIN

<sup>76</sup> National institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPPS), Kuru, Nigeria.  
Eminent persons and expert group meeting on complex insurgencies in Nigeria  
Kuru declaration 2012 on complex insurgencies in Nigeria .30th August, 2012

Nasibah bint Ka'b (Umm 'Imarah) was one of the early Ansar who embraced Islam and gave a pledge to the Prophet in the Greater 'Aqabah Pledge, which was a significant moment in the history of Islam<sup>77</sup>.

Similarly, the Old Testament of the Bible is replete with stories of women taking action (albeit sometimes violent) to avoid violent conflict.<sup>78</sup>

As there are very few women in formal leadership positions in either Muslim or Christian structures; women activists resort to 'flanking' approaches whereby they enlist the support of wives of powerful men or find ways to influence by reference to bio-deterministic constructs of women as 'naturally' peaceful.

**4.7 The nature of the violent conflict itself** can constitute an obstacle to women's participation. In the North East, women's civil society organisations that have worked on sectoral development issues are finding it increasingly difficult to meet, let alone form strategies for peace-building. At the same time, women who speak out about violent conflict risk being perceived as partisan and becoming targets either personally or through their families.

**4.8 The lack of disaggregated information** – whether in recording the impact of violent conflict, the sex of perpetrators or "who's in the room" regarding peace initiatives means that women's peacebuilding work goes largely unnoticed and is not recorded. In turn, this feeds the myth that women 'just don't' take part in peace initiatives and prevents younger women and girls from seeing positive role models. The importance of this is emphasised in the Nigerian draft NAP as part of the implementation plan as well as a progress indicator.<sup>79</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development is leading the development of a NAP on women, peace and security and has convened a multi-stakeholder committee of government and civil society entities. The implementation of the NAP will rely on the commitment and resources of the Federal Government and state governments as well as the involvement of – and scrutiny by – civil society.

DFID's programmes are increasingly focused on countering gender-based marginalisation. NSRP has a dedicated component (output) on women's and girls' participation in peacebuilding and the reduction of violence against women and girls and is explicitly mainstreaming gender through the entire programme.

Other DFID programmes such as Voices for Change, Mobilising for the Millennium Development Goals, Justice for All and the Education Sector Support in Nigeria all have a focus on adolescent girls, involving finding innovative, effective ways of

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<sup>77</sup> Information provided by Hajja Hamsatu A. Allamin NSRP NE Regional Coordinator. There were seventy-two Muslims who swore allegiance in this pledge, seventy men and two women, namely Nasibah bint Ka'b, otherwise known as Umm 'Imarah, and Asma' bint 'Amr, also known as Umm Mani? After consultation between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Ansar, they rose to take the oath. Umm 'Imarah narrated the event as follows:

The men shook hands with the Prophet (peace be upon him) one after the other on the eve of 'Aqabah while Al-'Abbas was holding the Prophet's hand. They all finished except Umm Mani' and me. My husband Ghuziyah bin 'Amr called the Prophet (peace be upon him) and told him, "Messenger of Allah, here are two women who came with us to pledge to you." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "I take their pledge in the same way I take yours except that I don't shake hands with women."

<sup>78</sup> See for example stories of Esther & Deborah: Holy Bible New International Version Chapter 7: v3, 4 and Judges Chapter 4 v 4, 5 respectively

<sup>79</sup> Draft NAP 1325 Nigeria

countering the social norms that keep women and girls silent and invisible. The challenges here will be to ensure that all DFID programmes take this approach where possible and to help DFID programmes operating in areas other than the northern states to adopt an approach that supports women's and girls' participation in peacebuilding.

## **6.0 ANNEXES**

6.1 Bibliography

6.2 Individuals contacted

6.3 Text of the letter to key informants

6.4 Terms of reference

## 6.0 ANNEXES

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## 6.2 ANNEX 2 INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED

Sr No	Name	Designation/ Organisation
	<b>NSRP Team</b>	
1	Hajja Hamsatu A. Allamin	Regional coordinator North East
2	Imran Abdul Rahman	Regional coordinator Middle Belt
3	Patrick Naagbaton	Regional coordinator Niger Delta
4	Kabiru Riruwai	Regional coordinator North West
5	Gordon Adams	Media Adviser
6	Lauratu Umar Abdusalam	Media Manager
	<b>Civil Society</b>	
5	Dr. Funmi Para-Mallam	National Coordinator CWEENS
6	Saudatu Mahdi	WRAPA
7	Joy Onyesoh	WILPF
8	Mimidoo Achakpa	IANSA
9	Constance Meju	Programme Manager Kebetkache
	<b>Faith Based Organisations</b>	
10	Sr Kathleen McGarvey	Women Interfaith Council
11	Pastor Jemima Mbaya	Senior Pastor, Latter House Christian Centre
	<b>DFID Funded Programmes</b>	
12	Emiola Oyefuga	Knowledge management manager, J4A Justice for All Nigeria
13	Kabiru Abass	ESSPIN Gender and Equity task specialist
	<b>Others</b>	
14	Honourable Justice Rahila Hadea Cudjoe	Chief Judge of Kano State
15	Ivy Okonkwo	Rtd. Deputy Inspector General of polices (DIG)
16	Adekemi Ndieli	National Programme officer ,UN WOMEN

17	Mrs. Florence Iheme	Ag. Director, early warning directorate, ECOWAS commission
18	Adeshola Komolafe	Chief Executive Officer Media Insight
19	Col James Hall	Defence Adviser BHC
20	Nkechi Onwukwe	Assistant Director Women Affairs
21	Dr Gina Porter	University of Durham

### 6.3 ANNEX 3 TEXT OF THE LETTER TO KEY INFORMANTS

Dear .....,

I am writing to seek your assistance with the desk study I am doing under the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP).

Little is known and less is recorded about what women and girls actually *do* in peacebuilding in Nigeria. Although they are profoundly affected by the various forms of violent conflict, they are largely excluded from conflict management mechanisms and peacebuilding initiatives. In some areas, women and girls are largely excluded from public life *per se*. Nevertheless, women and girls do have the capacity to play an active role and, in some areas, have already done so. It is important to find out about the work that women and girls have already done, in order to publicise this work (where appropriate) to dispel the belief that women and girls are not *able* to take part in peacebuilding. Robust research in this area, therefore, will provide evidence to leverage resources to support women and girls in peacebuilding,

This research, therefore, seeks to investigate the role of women and girls as active citizens in peace mechanisms and conflict management.

The research will attempt to answer the following questions:

What are women and girls doing currently in peace building?

Where have they been involved in making a difference?

What are the obstacles in their way?

What has been done so far to improve participation?

I will therefore require you to please give me information on:

Any peace initiative such as meetings, protest marches, advocacy visits, joint games etc that your organisation has been involved in.

How many women participated?

How many were panellists or leaders?

How many of the communiqué items, recommendations or resolutions were specific to Women's needs?

I will kindly require this information by the end of December as the report is due before the middle of January. Please be assured that your input will be acknowledged and the final output shared with you.

Best wishes,

DR. ELEANOR NWADINOB I

OUTPUT MANAGER

NSRP

#### 6.4 ANNEX 4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Investigating the role of women and girls in peace mechanisms and conflict management in Nigeria

Planned schedule: November 2012 to January 2013

##### Background

The NSRP has four 'Outputs':

1. Improved conflict management mechanisms: Broader societal participation in and oversight of conflict management mechanisms at federal, state and local level
2. Mitigating drivers of conflict: Reduced grievances in target areas around economic opportunities and distribution of resources
3. Increasing participation of, and reducing violence against, women and girls; increased and more influential participation by women and girls in institutions and initiatives relevant to peacebuilding, with reduced prevalence and impact of violence against women and girls
4. Supporting other actors to learn from and build on the NSRP: key decision-makers and opinion-formers engaged by the programme have an increasingly positive influence on stability and reconciliation

NSRP works at local, state and national levels. It has particular focus in eight states:

Kano, Kaduna, Borno, Yobe, Plateau, Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa.

Output 3 consists of three components: Supporting the development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; addressing violence against women and girls and a small grants scheme for women's civil society organisations.

##### Rationale

The UK and the Federal Government of Nigeria are both bound by UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security<sup>80</sup>. These create a framework within which to address the dual pillars of protection from conflict-related violence

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<sup>80</sup> Relevant resolutions include 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

and the participation of women in peacebuilding (including conflict management). These resolutions also form the framework of NSRP's work under Output 3.

Little is known and less is recorded about what women and girls actually *do* in peacebuilding in Nigeria. Although they are profoundly affected by the various forms of violent conflict, they are largely excluded from conflict management mechanisms and peacebuilding initiatives. In some areas, women and girls are largely excluded from public life *per se*. Nevertheless, women and girls do have the capacity to play an active role and, in some areas, have already done so. It is important to find out about the work that women and girls have already done, in order to publicise this work (where appropriate) to dispel the belief that women and girls are not *able* to take part in peacebuilding. Robust research in this area, therefore, will provide evidence to leverage resources to support women and girls in peacebuilding,

This research, therefore, seeks to investigate the role of women and girls as active citizens in peace mechanisms and conflict management.

The research will attempt to answer the following questions:

What are women and girls doing currently in peace building?

Where have they been involved in making a difference?

What are the obstacles in their way?

What has been done so far to improve participation?

#### Objectives

To obtain the most up to date evidence on the role of women and girls in peace mechanisms and conflict management in Nigeria

To gather data to inform the Nigeria National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 & 1820 and to support the related, multi-stakeholder group

To obtain information to support NSRPs implementation phase

#### Beneficiaries

NSRP (across programme)

DFID programmes through the cross programme women, peace and security coalition

Other HMG departments (e.g. FCO, MoD)

British High Commission to Nigeria

Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) Ministry of Women's Affairs

National Action Plan multi-stakeholder committee members

UN entities (e.g. UN Women)

It is envisaged that the research will be used both as an advocacy piece within and across Whitehall and in preparation for FGN's contribution to the up-coming Commission on the Status of Women (March 2013).

## Methodology

The research will consist of (a) a desk review of available literature; (b) interviews with relevant personnel and (c) information gathered by NSRP Regional Coordinators in NSRP's eight states of concern.

Literature will include the following:

NSRP documentation

Reports / minutes of peace building meetings such as NIPPS, Regional meeting on Terrorism

DFID's Gender in Nigeria report

Documentation from other DFID programmes

Documents from the Northern Governors Forum

Reports by national non-governmental / civil society organisations

Reports by international non-governmental / civil society organisations (e.g. Action on Armed Violence)

Literature published by UNICEF

Documentation by UN Women

Interviews will be carried out with:

NSRP Regional Coordinators

Other DFID programme personnel

Non-governmental / civil society organisations (national and international)

UNICEF

UN Women

Ministry of Women's Affairs

FGN security sector agencies

NSRP's Regional Coordinators are based in the north, middle and south of Nigeria, covering the eight states as described above.

## Resource requirements

The research will be carried out and the report written by the NSRP Output Manager for Output 3, in collaboration with the NSRP Regional Coordinators. Peer review support will be provided by an international consultant (previously Output 3 co-lead). The latter will require 3 days of consultant time.

## Timescale

The assignment will be carried out from the 15<sup>th</sup> of November to the 15<sup>th</sup> of January

## Deliverables

A report of no more than 15 pages, with a three page executive summary. The report will be submitted to the DFID WPS coalition through the NSRP Programme Manager and will be published on the NSRP website.