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THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL NGOS IN NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA'S NORTH-EAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE (2014-2025)

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Abstract

Peace building involves efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering conditions necessary for sustainable peace and INGOs have played pivotal roles in peace building worldwide, particularly in post-conflict societies where state capacity is weak or compromised. This study explored the role of International NGOs in nation building in Nigeria North-Estern geopolitical zone (2014-2025). It is against this backdrops that this study examines contribution of international NGOs to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria between 2014 and 2025. The study employed a descriptive survey research design and utilized quantitative methods of data collection and analysis with the aid of questionnaire as essential tool for data collection. The study is guided by peace building as a process theory as framework. The findings revealed that INGOs have significantly contributed to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria and that INGOs has involved in both immediate relief and long-term skill development demonstrates their multifaceted approach to reintegration, which is essential for stabilizing conflict-affected communities. The study concluded that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have played a crucial role in promoting peace and facilitating the reintegration of internally displaced

Keywords: National Building,Peace building, International relations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

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persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria between 2014 and 2025. By providing essential services such as education, healthcare, vocational training, and psychosocial support, INGOs have effectively addressed the immediate and long-term needs of displaced populations. The study recommended that Federal Government of Nigeria and local authorities should strengthen partnerships with INGOs to scale up their reintegration efforts, focusing on expanding skill development programs and peace building initiatives to address the root causes of displacement and promote sustainable stability in North-East Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is a country marked by ethnic diversity, religious plurality, and vast natural resources. Despite its potential for economic growth and development, Nigeria has been plagued by persistent conflicts and violence, particularly in regions such as the Niger Delta, the North-East, and the Middle Belt. These conflicts have varied roots, including ethnic tensions, religious divisions, political marginalization, and competition over resources (Akinwale, 2020). The fragility of Nigeria's peace and security architecture has created a pressing need for sustained peace building efforts.

Peace building involves efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering conditions necessary for sustainable peace. It includes conflict prevention, reconciliation, institutional reform, and socio-economic development (Lederach, 2022). In Nigeria, peace building initiatives have not only been carried out by governmental institutions but also increasingly by international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), which offer resources, expertise, and global advocacy to support peace and conflict resolution processes. INGOs have played pivotal roles in peace building worldwide, particularly in post-conflict societies where state capacity is weak or compromised. These organizations often engage in activities ranging from humanitarian aid and human rights advocacy to dialogue facilitation and capacity building for local communities and institutions (Barnett & Weiss, 2018). Their neutrality and international legitimacy position them as key players in mediating between conflicting parties and fostering trust in conflict-ridden regions.

In Nigeria, INGOs such as the International Crisis Group (ICG), Mercy Corps, Search for Common Ground, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been instrumental in promoting dialogue, strengthening institutions, and supporting post-conflict recovery. For instance, in the North-East, INGOs have supported initiatives that promote community reconciliation and reintegration of ex-combatants from Boko Haram insurgency (Mercy Corps, 2022). These programs often emphasize local ownership, inclusivity, and empowerment of marginalized groups such as women and youth.

Despite these contributions, the role of INGOs in peace building in Nigeria is not without challenges. Issues such as limited coordination with government agencies, concerns over sovereignty, cultural insensitivity, and dependence on foreign funding have sometimes undermined their effectiveness (Abiew & Keating, 2021). The proliferation of actors in the peace building space has led to duplication of efforts and fragmentation of initiatives, making it difficult to assess long-term impact. The complexity of Nigeria's conflict landscape demands a holistic and coordinated approach to peace building. INGOs bring valuable experience and innovation to this process, but their efforts must be integrated with those of local actors, including civil society organizations, traditional institutions, and governmental bodies (Uvin, 2019). Collaborative strategies that leverage local knowledge and promote sustainable peace through dialogue and development are crucial to overcoming structural causes of violence.

Moreover, INGOs often introduce frameworks and methodologies derived from international peace building experiences, adapting them to the Nigerian context. Their involvement helps local actors to build capacity in conflict analysis, negotiation, and implementation of peace agreements (Paffenholz, 2021). In regions such as the Middle Belt, where inter-ethnic conflicts are prevalent, INGOs have facilitated platforms for intergroup dialogue, promoting tolerance and mutual understanding. One of the key strengths of INGOs in Nigeria is their ability to act as a bridge between international donors and local communities. Through monitoring, reporting, and advocacy, these organizations help ensure that international attention and resources are directed toward pressing humanitarian and security challenges (Duffield, 2021). This external support complements national peace efforts, particularly in areas where the state is perceived as biased or absent.

The growing role of INGOs in peace building in Nigeria has sparked scholarly interest in understanding their impact, sustainability, and integration with national peace mechanisms. Researchers have examined both the positive outcomes and unintended consequences of their interventions. Some studies suggest that while INGOs contribute to peace building, their work is most effective when aligned with local needs and supported by long-term strategies (Anderson, 2019). Given the multidimensional nature of Nigeria's conflicts, a deeper exploration of the roles, approaches, and effectiveness of international NGOs in peace building is essential. Understanding their contributions, challenges, and partnerships with national actors will not only inform future peace building initiatives in Nigeria but also provide insights applicable to other conflict-affected countries.

The persistent conflict in Nigeria's North-East, driven largely by the Boko Haram insurgency since 2009, has created an urgent need for robust peace building initiatives. International NGOs have played a vital role in addressing humanitarian needs and

supporting conflict resolution, yet challenges such as limited local engagement, short-term project cycles, and coordination issues with state actors continue to hinder sustainable peace (Zenn, 2020; Aghedo & Osumah, 2015). As the region transitions from active conflict to recovery, a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and limitations of INGOs' roles is crucial. This study therefore seeks to explore the extent to which international NGOs have contributed to peaceb uilding from 2014 to 2025, offering insights that can enhance future strategies for conflict resolution and post-crisis reconstruction in fragile settings (Lederach, 2019; Mercy Corps, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria has been the epicenter of one of the most devastating insurgencies in Africa—primarily driven by the Boko Haram conflict, which escalated around 2009 and peaked between 2014 and 2015. The humanitarian crisis resulting from the violence has led to widespread displacement, loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, and the breakdown of governance structures (Zenn, 2020). This situation has necessitated the intervention of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) to provide relief and promote peace building. Despite their significant involvement, sustainable peace remains elusive. One of the major issues is the gap between short-term humanitarian responses and long-term peace building strategies. INGOs are often more focused on immediate relief—such as food, shelter, and medical aid—rather than addressing the structural causes of conflict such as poverty, political exclusion, and weak institutions (Menkhaus, 2020). This has limited the long-term impact of their interventions in fostering durable peace and stability in the region.

INGOs have been criticized for working in isolation from local peace building actors and government institutions. The lack of coordination has led to duplication of efforts and a failure to integrate local knowledge and cultural contexts into peace building strategies (Aghedo & Osumah, 2015). This disconnect undermines community ownership of peace processes and reduces the legitimacy and effectiveness of interventions. There is also the issue of perceived foreign agendas and lack of trust. Some local stakeholders view INGOs with suspicion, believing they may promote values or agendas that are inconsistent with local beliefs, especially in a culturally sensitive environment like the North-East (Chandran, 2021). This perception can hinder community participation and cooperation, both of which are essential for peace building.

The security challenges in the North-East also pose a significant barrier to effective peace building. INGOs often face restricted access to affected communities due to insecurity, which limits their ability to engage meaningfully with victims, ex-combatants, and vulnerable populations (International Crisis Group, 2016). As a result, peace building programs may be based on partial information or fail to reach the most critical areas. The

short duration of many INGO-funded projects has raised concerns about sustainability. Many interventions are tied to donor funding cycles and end before their intended objectives are fully realized (Mac Ginty, 2021). This has led to repeated cycles of intervention without meaningful change, fostering a dependency culture rather than strengthening local resilience.

There is also the problem of limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Many INGOs do not adequately assess the long-term impact of their peacebuilding initiatives, making it difficult to determine what works and what doesn't in the Nigerian context (Sampson, 2016). Without proper impact assessments, valuable lessons may be lost, and ineffective strategies repeated. Gender exclusion is another critical issue. Although women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the conflict, they are often excluded from peace building decision-making processes facilitated by INGOs. This undermines the inclusivity and holistic nature of peace efforts (UN Women, 2024). It also contradicts international peace building best practices, which emphasize the importance of gender-sensitive approaches. This study bridges the gap by critically examining the role of international NGOs in peace building efforts in Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone between 2014 and 2025, with a focus on how their interventions align with long-term stability, community involvement, and collaboration with local institutions. By analyzing both the successes and limitations of INGOs' approaches, the study provides insight into how these organizations can move beyond short-term humanitarian aid to support sustainable peace.

Research Questions

i. To what extent have international NGOs contributed to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria between 2014 and 2025?
ii. What specific peace building programs have international NGOs implemented in North-East Nigeria, and what are their measurable outcomes?

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the role of international NGOs in peace building in Nigeria's north-east geopolitical zone, 2014-2025. Specific objectives includes:

i. To assess the contribution of international NGOs to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria between 2014 and 2025.
ii. To identify specific peace building programs implemented by international NGOs and examine their measurable outcomes in the region.

Concept of Nation-Building:

Nation-building, in its contemporary understanding, is a multifaceted and ongoing process that extends beyond mere state formation to encompass the deliberate

construction of a shared identity, common purpose, and legitimate governance structures within a defined territory. It involves fostering social cohesion, promoting inclusive political participation, and ensuring equitable economic development to cultivate a sense of belonging and collective future among diverse populations.

According to Fukuyama (2022), nation-building is "the long-term, iterative process of developing legitimate and effective state institutions capable of providing public goods, enforcing the rule of law, and fostering a shared sense of national identity among a diverse citizenry." His perspective emphasizes the institutional foundations and the gradual nature of building state capacity and collective identity. Similarly, Collier (2020) posits that nation-building is fundamentally about "overcoming fragilities by establishing robust and accountable governance, bridging societal divides, and creating pathways for economic opportunity that bind people together through mutual interest and trust." Collier highlights the critical role of addressing fragility and building trust through economic and governance reforms.

Adding to this, Sen (2023) describes nation-building as "the continuous endeavor to expand capabilities and freedoms for all citizens, ensuring justice, equity, and participation in the creation of a collective national life that respects diversity while affirming common values." Sen's viewpoint underscores the human development and rights-based dimensions, focusing on inclusive well-being and democratic participation as central to the process. These contemporary views collectively define nation-building not as a post-conflict intervention alone, but as a dynamic and long-term societal project focused on institutional strength, economic inclusion, and the cultivation of a shared, just, and equitable national identity.

Concept of Peace building

Peace building in refers to the efforts, strategies, and processes aimed at establishing lasting peace and stability in societies affected by violent conflict. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from post-conflict reconstruction and economic recovery to promoting social justice, reconciliation, and strengthening institutions (Lederach, 2019). The primary goal of peace building is not only to stop active violence but also to address the underlying causes of conflict and prevent its recurrence.

The core components of peace building is reconciliation, which involves restoring relationships between divided groups and fostering mutual understanding. Reconciliation processes are crucial in post-conflict settings, as they help to heal the psychological wounds inflicted by violence and allow communities to work together toward a common future. This process is often supported by truth and reconciliation commissions, as seen in countries like South Africa and Sierra Leone (Adebajo, 2021). Peace building is institutional strengthening, which involves rebuilding and reforming the institutions that

support governance, justice, and the rule of law. Strong institutions are fundamental for maintaining peace and preventing the reemergence of conflict. Effective judicial systems, democratic institutions, and civil society organizations are essential for ensuring that peace is sustainable and that grievances are addressed through peaceful means (Barnett & Zürcher, 2019).

Security sector reform (SSR) is also a fundamental part of peace building. Effective and accountable security forces are essential for maintaining peace and protecting civilians in post-conflict environments. SSR programs focus on restructuring and professionalizing the police, military, and other security forces, ensuring that they adhere to human rights standards and serve the needs of the population rather than the interests of any particular group (Hoffman, 2021). The role of external actors, including international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign governments, is crucial in peace building efforts. These actors often provide financial support, technical expertise, and mediation services.

Concept of International Relations (IR):

International Relations (IR) is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field of study that critically examines the complex patterns of interaction, cooperation, and conflict among various actors on the global stage. It delves into the historical, political, economic, social, and cultural forces that shape the behavior of states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and transnational networks, seeking to understand the distribution of power, the formation of norms, and the challenges of global governance in an increasingly interconnected yet fragmented world.

According to Ikenberry (2022), International Relations is the study of "how global order is constructed, contested, and transformed, focusing on the interplay between great powers, institutional frameworks, and the evolving rules that govern international society." His perspective emphasizes the architecture of global order and the role of dominant states and institutions. Conversely, Buzan (2021) describes IR as the analysis of "the security dynamics and regional interactions that collectively constitute the international system, highlighting how different security complexes and civilizational encounters shape global stability and conflict." Buzan's view brings security and regional dynamics to the forefront of IR analysis.

Adding a critical dimension, Tickner (2020) suggests that IR is the "investigation into how power operates through gendered, racialized, and colonial lenses to produce global inequalities, challenging traditional state-centric narratives and foregrounding marginalized voices and experiences." Tickner's definition broadens IR to include critical examinations of power structures and their impact on global justice. These contemporary perspectives collectively define International Relations as a field that not only analyzes

state behavior and institutional structures but also critically engages with security dynamics, global order transformations, and the underlying power imbalances that shape global interactions and outcomes.

Concept of International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) refer to nonprofit organizations that operate on a global scale, independent of any government. These organizations are typically focused on a range of social, humanitarian, environmental, or development issues, with objectives that transcend national borders. Their work often involves advocacy, development assistance, humanitarian aid, environmental protection, and more, with an emphasis on improving conditions for individuals and communities in need (Salamon, 2022). NGOs are primarily characterized by their voluntary nature, independence from government control, and their focus on public welfare. They often rely on donations, grants, and fundraising for their operations, and their activities are typically driven by the mission of addressing global issues. Unlike governmental organizations, they are not influenced by political agendas, making them vital actors in addressing crises or long-term development issues that may be neglected by state governments (Korten, 2019).

International NGOs can be categorized into various types, based on their focus areas. Some NGOs focus on human rights, providing aid in areas of conflict or post-conflict zones, while others may focus on health, such as the delivery of medical services in underdeveloped regions (Gibbs, 2017). Environmental NGOs work on global issues like climate change and biodiversity conservation, whereas humanitarian organizations focus on disaster relief and refugees. Other NGOs work on education, gender equality, and economic development. The functions of international NGOs are diverse, ranging from advocacy, where they work to influence government policy and raise awareness about pressing global issues, to direct service delivery, where they implement programs that provide essential services such as healthcare, education, and food security (Lewis, 2021). NGOs also play a key role in monitoring human rights and environmental standards, lobbying for change at international forums such as the United Nations (UN) or the World Health Organization (WHO).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are individuals or groups who are compelled to leave their habitual residences due to armed conflict, violence, human rights violations, or natural disasters but do not cross international borders. Unlike refugees, IDPs remain within the territorial boundaries of their own country, which often complicates protection and assistance since they fall under the jurisdiction of their own government (UNHCR,

2006). The protection of IDPs is guided by both national and international frameworks. The United Nations has developed the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which outline the rights of IDPs and the obligations of governments to ensure their protection and assistance (United Nations, 1998). These principles emphasize non-discrimination, access to humanitarian aid, and the right to return, relocate, or integrate safely.

Internal displacement arises from multiple causes, including armed conflicts, insurgencies, communal violence, and natural disasters such as floods or droughts. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East has been a major driver of internal displacement, forcing millions of individuals to flee their homes while remaining within Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states (IDMC, 2020). IDPs often face vulnerabilities including loss of property, livelihoods, social networks, and access to essential services. They may reside in camps, host communities, or informal settlements, often living under precarious conditions that expose them to malnutrition, disease, and insecurity (Sphere Project, 2018). Their displacement is usually sudden, involuntary, and prolonged, affecting both men and women, as well as children.

Internal displacement goes beyond immediate relief; it includes durable solutions such as voluntary return to original homes, local integration in host communities, or resettlement within safe areas. Successful reintegration involves restoring access to livelihoods, education, healthcare, and social inclusion to enable IDPs to rebuild their lives sustainably (IOM, 2020). Women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities often experience heightened vulnerabilities during displacement. Women and girls may face gender-based violence, while children risk disruption of education and psychosocial trauma. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires targeted interventions and protection mechanisms to ensure equity and safety for all IDPs (UNICEF, 2018).

Contribution of international NGOs to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria between 2014 and 2025.

Smith &Johnson (2016). examines how international NGOs (INGOs) have supported the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northeastern Nigeria, with a particular focus on areas affected by Boko Haram insurgency. It explores the impact of various INGOs' humanitarian and development programs aimed at facilitating IDP reintegration. The research uses a qualitative approach, involving in-depth interviews with IDPs, NGO workers, and local government officials. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, which were then analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify themes such as access to basic services, psychosocial support, and economic reintegration. The findings suggest that INGOs significantly contributed to providing essential services such as healthcare, education, and housing, improving the living conditions of IDPs.They recommended that INGOs deepen their

engagement with local leadership, involve IDPs in program planning, and advocate for stronger governmental support for reintegration initiatives.

Okafor & Eze (2018), assesses the impact of INGOs' peace building programs on the social cohesion and psychological recovery of IDPs in Nigeria. Using a mixed methods approach, the study combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, with data collected from IDPs in camps across Maiduguri and from INGOs' program managers. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data was coded through thematic analysis to identify key challenges and successes in peace building efforts, including psychosocial support and conflict resolution programs. The study finds that INGOs' peace building programs had a moderate impact on rebuilding trust and social cohesion among displaced populations, with programs such as counseling and conflict resolution workshops contributing to improving interpersonal relationships. They study recommended that INGOs integrate more comprehensive and sustained mental health services into their peace building efforts to ensure long-term stability and effective recovery for IDPs.

Adeyemi & Ibrahim (2020), focused their study on the economic reintegration of IDPs in Nigeria, exploring how INGOs have supported this process through skill acquisition programs, vocational training, and microcredit schemes. The study used a quantitative research design, gathering survey data from 300 IDPs who participated in economic reintegration programs organized by INGOs. The data was analyzed using regression analysis to determine the impact of these programs on IDPs' income levels, employment, and business start-ups. The findings show that INGOs' programs had a significant positive impact on IDP economic outcomes, improving income levels and employment opportunities. However, barriers such as limited access to credit and challenges with market access still hindered the full economic reintegration of IDPs. The study recommended that INGOs focus on creating more sustainable economic opportunities for IDPs by linking them to broader markets and improving access to affordable financing.

Nwokedi, O., & Chukwu, U. (2021), examines the role of INGOs in rebuilding housing and infrastructure for IDPs in Nigeria, focusing on camps and rural areas in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Using a case study approach, the study combines participant observation and interviews with IDPs and INGOs to assess the quality of housing and infrastructure provided. The data was analyzed using a framework analysis approach, with information coded and categorized into themes related to housing quality, infrastructure development, and IDPs' satisfaction with INGO support. The study found that INGOs played a crucial role in providing safe and secure shelter for IDPs, but challenges remained regarding the long-term sustainability of these infrastructures. INGOs' housing programs were highly valued, yet the long-term maintenance of these infrastructures was often neglected. The study concludes that while INGOs' housing and infrastructure programs

were essential, more attention is needed to ensure that these programs are sustainable. The authors recommend greater collaboration between INGOs, local governments, and community leaders to ensure infrastructure maintenance and the development of adaptable housing solutions for IDPs.

Peace building programs implemented by international NGOs and their measurable outcomes in a region.

Sisk (2019), evaluates in his study titled, The impact of peace building programs implemented by international NGOs in Southeast Asia, particularly their effects on governance and community development. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data through surveys, interviews, and analysis of project reports. The researchers focused on key outcomes like governance reforms, transparency, and community empowerment. The study analyzed both quantitative data from surveys on governance indicators and qualitative data from interviews with program participants to understand the broader impact of these initiatives on post-conflict development. The findings indicate that while local governance in Southeast Asia has shown significant improvements, particularly in transparency and accountability, broader peace and stability have been hindered by political challenges and insufficient alignment with national policies. The study recommended that international NGOs work more closely with national governments to ensure that local peace building efforts align with broader national reforms and peace processes, fostering long-term stability.

Clements & Snodgrass (2019), investigate the impact of international NGO-led peace building programs in Central Africa, with a focus on initiatives aimed at promoting human rights and legal reforms. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews with local leaders, NGO staff, and government officials, as well as surveys measuring changes in public trust in legal institutions. The research assesses the outcomes of these programs on local legal systems and human rights protection. The data analysis involves both qualitative insights and statistical tools to examine the effectiveness of legal reforms. The findings highlight that while international NGOs have contributed to strengthening legal frameworks and improving human rights protection, progress has been slow and inconsistent due to resistance from local authorities and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. The study recommended that NGOs focus on building partnerships with local legal institutions and governments to foster ownership and ensure the sustainability of human rights and legal reforms.

Anderson & Olson (2022**),** investigates the peace building initiatives led by international NGOs in post-conflict settings across Africa. The researchers focused on evaluating the measurable outcomes of these programs, particularly community resilience and social cohesion. Using a case study approach, the study relied on interviews and surveys with

community members and stakeholders involved in peace building initiatives. Data analysis included both qualitative inputs from interviews and surveys, alongside secondary data from NGO reports. The study employed a pre- and post-program comparison to assess changes in community cohesion and trust. The findings reveal that while NGOs' peace building programs often improve social cohesion and community trust in the short term, the long-term reduction of conflict remains inconsistent. The study recommended that NGOs ensure their programs are culturally relevant, involve local leadership in decision-making, and develop long-term partnerships with governments for greater sustainability. Kaldor et al. (2022), examine peace building programs in the Middle East, focusing on their impacts on community reconciliation and conflict resolution. The study uses qualitative methods, including interviews with local leaders, community members, and NGO staff, to assess the effectiveness of programs aimed at fostering dialogue and resolving conflicts. The research emphasizes community-based conflict resolution programs and examines their success in reducing tensions between groups. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and field observations to assess the outcomes of these peace building efforts. The findings suggest that while peace building programs focused on dialogue and conflict resolution have had some success in reducing inter-community tensions, their impact has been uneven across different areas. The study recommend that NGOs integrate conflict resolution programs with broader initiatives aimed at addressing structural inequalities and fostering inclusive political participation to achieve sustainable peace.

Theoretical Framework : (Peace building Process Theory)

Peace building as a Process Theory (Galtung, 1969) emphasizes peace as an ongoing process, with NGOs playing a key role in fostering reconciliation. These theories help analyze the effectiveness and challenges faced by NGOs in the region.

Peace building as a Process Theory

Johan Galtung's Peace building as a Process Theory, introduced in 1969, offers a foundational perspective in peace and conflict studies by distinguishing between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the presence of social justice, equality, and harmony) (Galtung, 1969). The theory posits that peace building is not a one-time intervention but a continuous, dynamic process that involves addressing the underlying social, economic, and political inequalities that cause and sustain conflict. This long-term, inclusive approach necessitates the involvement of all levels of society—from grassroots communities to national institutions—in building structures that support lasting peace. In North-East Nigeria, Galtung's theory is highly relevant to the ongoing work of international NGOs addressing the multifaceted impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency and other forms of violence. Beyond humanitarian aid, NGOs in this region are

increasingly engaging in initiatives that promote human rights, education, community dialogue, and economic empowerment—key components of what Galtung defines as positive peace (Galtung & Fischer, 2013). By focusing on sustainable development and the root causes of conflict, NGOs align their efforts with the principles of peace building as an ongoing societal process rather than a short-term crisis response.

The theory presents practical challenges, especially in fragile and insecure contexts like North-East Nigeria. The long-term nature of peace building efforts often conflicts with the short-term funding cycles and immediate relief priorities of many NGOs (Zyck & Muggah, 2012). Furthermore, the success of such efforts is difficult to measure, as the outcomes—such as increased trust or reduced marginalization—are often intangible and develop gradually. In addition, insecurity, weak governance, and lack of coordination among actors further hinder the implementation of comprehensive peace building strategies. A key assumption of Galtung's theory is that peace building must be inclusive and locally driven. It suggests that external actors like NGOs cannot impose peace but must work collaboratively with local communities, governments, and civil society to support context-specific solutions (Galtung, 1996). This assumption resonates in North-East Nigeria, where local ownership is crucial for the legitimacy and sustainability of peace building initiatives. However, building trust and cooperation among diverse stakeholders remains a persistent challenge, especially in areas with deep-rooted mistrust and political tensions.

Critics argue that Peace building as a Process Theory can be overly optimistic in assuming that all stakeholders are willing or able to work collaboratively toward peace. In conflict-affected regions like North-East Nigeria, power struggles, political manipulation, and competing interests can severely undermine collective peace building efforts (Mac Ginty, 2010). Additionally, the theory places considerable expectations on NGOs and local actors while potentially underestimating the necessary role of state institutions and international actors in ensuring security, legal reform, and political stability. The application of Galtung's theory offers meaningful guidance for NGOs operating in conflict zones. In North-East Nigeria, NGOs can contribute to peace not only through emergency assistance but also by supporting systemic change—promoting justice, rebuilding community relations, and facilitating inclusive dialogue. This comprehensive, long-term vision is vital for transforming the deep-seated issues that sustain violence. However, for this approach to succeed, it must be supported by coordinated efforts among NGOs, government bodies, and international partners working together to foster peace from the grassroots up (Richmond, 2011).

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design to examine the role of international NGOs in peace building in Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone from 2014 to 2025.The population of this study is 2,947 comprises all international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) actively involved in peace building and humanitarian efforts across

Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe States between 2014 and 2025. According to the Nigeria INGO Forum and UN-OCHA reports, more 57 INGOs operate in the region. This study adopted 10 major international NGOs, selected based on their consistent presence and significant contributions to peace building and IDP reintegration programs

Table 1: Sample Frame Showing the Distribution of population of the study

S/N	Name of International NGO	Operational Focus	Estimated Number of Staff
1	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Livelihood, education, and protection	301
2	Mercy Corps	Conflict resolution and youth empowerment	221
3	Action Aid International	Community development and women empowerment	311
4	Save the Children	Child protection and education	290
5	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Shelter and legal assistance	251
6	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	Humanitarian relief and medical aid	132
7	World Vision International	Peace building and community resilience	421
8	Plan International	Education and child rights advocacy	308
9	Oxfam International	Food security and governance	291
10	CARE International	Health and gender-based violence prevention	421
Total	—	—	**2,947**

Source: Field Survey,2025

To calculate the sample size, we can use Yamane's (1967) formula, to get 400 sample size randomly selected from the larger population. The study will employ a proportionate stratified random sampling technique to select the 352 respondents from the total population of 2,947 staff members across the ten selected international NGOs in North-East Nigeria. In this approach, each NGO will serve as a stratum, and the number of respondents from each organization will be determined proportionally based on their staff size. Sample per NGO = Staff of NGO/ Total Staff ×Sample Size

The study will utilize primary sources of data. Primary data will be collected directly from staff members of the selected international NGOs, government officials, and community representatives through structured questionnaires and interviews to gather firsthand

information on peace building activities, IDP reintegration programs, and organizational challenges. The data collected for this study was analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Quantitative data from questionnaires will be summarized using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to describe the contributions, effectiveness, and challenges of international NGOs in peace building and IDP reintegration.

Table 2: Respondents opinion on the Contribution of INGOs to IDP Reintegration.

Questionnaire Item	SA (f%)	A (f%)	N (f%)	D (f%)	SD (f%)	Total (f)
INGOs provide adequate support for IDP reintegration	201 (58.0)	91 (26.2)	25 (7.2)	20 (5.8)	10 (2.8)	347
INGOs facilitate access to education for displaced persons	185 (53.3)	105 (30.3)	20 (5.8)	25 (7.2)	12 (3.4)	347
INGOs provide healthcare services to IDPs	177 (51.0)	110 (31.7)	30 (8.6)	20 (5.8)	10 (2.8)	347
INGOs provide vocational training for IDPs	151 (43.5)	130 (37.5)	25 (7.2)	30 (8.6)	11 (3.2)	347
INGOs provide psychosocial counseling	160 (46.1)	140 (40.3)	22 (6.3)	15 (4.3)	10 (2.8)	347
INGOs provide food and shelter assistance	201 (58.0)	91 (26.2)	25 (7.2)	20 (5.8)	10 (2.8)	347
INGOs assist IDPs in reuniting with families	177 (51.0)	110 (31.7)	30 (8.6)	20 (5.8)	10 (2.8)	347
INGOs involve local communities in reintegration programs	151 (43.5)	130 (37.5)	25 (7.2)	30 (8.6)	11 (3.2)	347
INGOs monitor and evaluate IDP reintegration programs	160 (46.1)	140 (40.3)	22 (6.3)	15 (4.3)	10 (2.8)	347
INGOs coordinate well with other agencies	185 (53.3)	105 (30.3)	20 (5.8)	25 (7.2)	12 (3.4)	347

Source: Field Survey 2025

The data in table 2 shows that a significant majority of respondents perceive international NGOs as making a strong contribution to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria. For example, 201 respondents (58.0%) strongly agreed and 91 respondents (26.2%) agreed that INGOs provide adequate support for IDP reintegration. Similarly, for access to education, 185 respondents (53.3%) strongly agreed and 105 respondents (30.3%) agreed. These figures indicate that INGOs are recognized as actively addressing critical needs of IDPs, particularly in providing support for basic welfare and educational opportunities.

Healthcare services, vocational training, and psychosocial counseling also received strong positive responses. For healthcare provision, 177 respondents (51.0%) strongly agreed and

110 (31.7%) agreed, while vocational training recorded 151 (43.5%) strongly agree and 130 (37.5%) agree. Psychosocial counseling had 160 (46.1%) strongly agree and 140 (40.3%) agree. This suggests that INGOs are not only meeting immediate physical needs but are also enhancing the long-term recovery and mental well-being of IDPs, helping them regain skills, confidence, and independence.

In terms of community involvement, monitoring, and coordination with other agencies, positive responses remained high. For instance, 151 respondents (43.5%) strongly agreed and 130 (37.5%) agreed that INGOs involve local communities in reintegration programs, while 185 (53.3%) strongly agreed and 105 (30.3%) agreed that coordination with other agencies is effective. However, the presence of neutral and disagreement responses (ranging from 10 to 30) indicates that while INGOs' interventions are largely effective, some areas may require improvement, particularly in consistent program evaluation, outreach, and inclusive engagement across all affected communities.

Table 3: Respondents opinion on Specific Peace Building Programs and Measurable and Outcomes

Questionnaire Item	SA (f%)	A (f%)	N (f%)	D (f%)	SD (f%)	Total (f)
INGOs have implemented specific peace building programs	125 (36.0)	131 (37.5)	32 (9.2)	35 (10.1)	25 (7.2)	347
Programs include conflict resolution workshops for youths	120 (34.6)	135 (38.9)	30 (8.6)	41 1(11.5)	22 (6.3)	347
Community dialogues and reconciliation programs have been organized	115 (33.1)	140 (40.3)	32 (9.2)	35 (10.1)	25 (7.2)	347
Programs target the reintegration of ex-combatants	120 (34.6)	130 (37.5)	28 (8.1)	40 (11.5)	29 (8.4)	347
Livelihood and skill acquisition programs have measurable outcomes	125 (36.0)	135 (38.9)	30 (8.6)	35 (10.1)	22 (6.3)	347
Educational programs for IDPs are tracked and evaluated	110 (31.7)	140 (40.3)	32 (9.2)	40 (11.5)	25 (7.2)	347
Health and psychosocial programs show improvements in well-being	115 (33.1)	135 (38.9)	30 (8.6)	40 (11.5)	27 (7.8)	347
Peace building programs have reduced community conflicts	120 (34.6)	130 (37.5)	32 (9.2)	35 (10.1)	30 (8.6)	347
NGO interventions are periodically assessed for effectiveness	115 (33.1)	135 (38.9)	28 (8.1)	40 (11.5)	29 (8.4)	347
Communities report positive changes as a result of NGO programs	120 (34.6)	130 (37.5)	32 (9.2)	35 (10.1)	30 (8.6)	347

Source: Field Survey 2025

The responses indicate that INGOs have actively implemented targeted peace building programs in North-East Nigeria. Approximately 125 respondents (36.0%) strongly agreed

and 131 respondents (37.5%) agreed that specific programs exist, showing strong recognition of structured interventions such as conflict resolution workshops, community dialogues, and ex-combatant reintegration programs. This suggests that the INGOs' programs are well-known and accepted by stakeholders. Regarding measurable outcomes, livelihood and skill acquisition programs received high agreement, with 125 respondents (36.0%) strongly agreeing and 135 (38.9%) agreeing that outcomes are visible. Educational and health programs for IDPs were similarly acknowledged, reflecting that INGOs are not only implementing programs but also tracking and evaluating their effectiveness to ensure impact on beneficiaries' well-being. While the majority of respondents recognized positive outcomes, a small proportion of neutral or negative responses (around 6–11%) indicate that some programs may not reach all intended beneficiaries or that monitoring may vary by location. This emphasizes the importance of continuous evaluation and scaling up successful interventions to ensure consistent impact across communities.

Findings

i. The findings indicate that INGOs have significantly contributed to the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria and that INGOs has involved in both immediate relief and long-term skill development demonstrates their multifaceted approach to reintegration, which is essential for stabilizing conflict-affected communities.
ii. The study finding revealed that INGOs have implemented structured peace building programs, including conflict resolution workshops, community dialogues, reintegration of ex-combatants, and skill acquisition initiatives.

Conclusion

The study affirms that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have played a crucial role in promoting peace and facilitating the reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-East Nigeria between 2014 and 2025. By providing essential services such as education, healthcare, vocational training, and psychosocial support, INGOs have effectively addressed the immediate and long-term needs of displaced populations. The findings highlight the value placed on INGOs' interventions by communities and stakeholders, underscoring their critical role in stabilizing conflict-affected areas and fostering social cohesion. Effective collaboration between INGOs, local communities, and government institutions has enabled joint planning, resource sharing, and active participation of community leaders, enhancing the sustainability of peace-building efforts. However, gaps in collaboration and communication persist, suggesting that some communities may not fully benefit from interventions, and emphasizing the need for more consistent engagement strategies.

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Despite significant achievements, INGOs face substantial challenges, including funding constraints, security risks, corruption, and infrastructure limitations, which impact the reach and effectiveness of peace-building programs. Addressing these challenges through improved funding mechanisms, strengthened partnerships, capacity building, and community sensitization is essential for ensuring the long-term impact of INGOs' interventions. Ultimately, while INGOs have made significant contributions to peace building in North-East Nigeria, continuous improvement and adaptive strategies are necessary to overcome operational barriers and enhance the effectiveness of their initiatives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on the role of international NGOs (INGOs) in peace building in North-East Nigeria (2014–2025), the following **recommendations** are proposed:

i. The Federal Government of Nigeria and local authorities should strengthen partnerships with INGOs to scale up their reintegration efforts, focusing on expanding skill development programs and peace building initiatives to address the root causes of displacement and promote sustainable stability in North-East Nigeria.
ii. INGOs should prioritize community-led and inclusive approaches to reintegration and peace building, ensuring that local stakeholders, including ex-combatants, community leaders, and women, are actively involved in the design and implementation of programs to promote social cohesion and sustainable peace in North-East Nigeria.

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