An Analysis of Non-Governmental Organisations' Approach to Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northern Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organisations in northern Ghana have been key actors in rural development and peacebuilding in conflict-affected communities. This study employed qualitative methods to critically examine how NGOs contributed to maintaining relative peace for the successful resolution of the crisis in Yendi after regicide in 2002. Forty- nine respondents were selected using purposive sampling criterion. Thematic descriptive approach was used for the analysis of the data. The research reveals that peacebuilding NGOs, in partnership with the state agencies and international community, play significant stabilisation role in post-conflict societies due to their neutrality and general acceptability to conflict parties. Based on the perspectives of interview respondents, we argue for the state to focus on creating a conducive atmosphere while NGOs and other non-state actors synergize to effectively manage conflicts in affected societies until lasting solution can be achieved. Some of the recommendation are: Donors must be expanded in order to solicit sufficient funds for successful completion of peace initiatives. NGOs must expand their scope of operations, devise a comprehensive approach for addressing adverse activities and turning them into 'builders' in post-conflict settings.

Keywords: Yendi, Peacebuilding, Non-Governmental Organisations, Conflict Prevention, Post-Conflict Societies

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Ghana remains one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have avoided large-scale conflict of interstate or civil war nature (Issifu, 2016; Annan, 2013). Ghana's ability to maintain national peace and stability has won admiration around the world. Ibrahim (2018) and Annan (2013) have noted that international community and civil society often regard the country as a politically stable nation in the ECOWAS sub region noted for decades of protracted armed conflicts. Such conceptions are based largely on the successful political transitions through multiparty democratic elections since 1992 rather than cordial relations across the country. Indeed, peaceful transfers of political power between the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2001, 2009 (Arthur, 2010), 2017 and 2021 make Ghana relatively a "beacon of democracy" in Africa.

The genesis of this success remains difficult to fully comprehend and explain because Ghana was also one of the first post-colonial states in African to suffer military coup d'état in 1966, less than a decade after gaining independence in 1957. Although it has maintained peace at the national level, the internal experience is different as it struggles to resolve several group conflicts linked to disputes over chieftaincy succession, land ownership and resources (Suaka & Longi, 2022 ; Issifu and Bukari, 2022; Ibrahim, 2018; Kendi & Boakye, 2014). Hoeffler' (2019) assessment of post-conflict stabilization indicates that affected communities are often faced with difficulty in regaining stable peace after loss of human lives, properties and other legacies of violence. While the state is primarily responsible for maintaining social order, conflict parties do not trust the government to rebuild peace in a just manner.

Against this background, NGOs have stepped forward to fill the gap as the most widely accepted and effective stakeholders in rebuilding conflict-ravaged communities due to their neutrality and impartiality (Ateng & Abazaami, 2016). Most intergroup conflicts over the last few decades, including the Konkomba-Nanumba, Kusasi-Mamprusi, Alavanyo-Nkonya, Bimoba-Konkomba and Konkomba-Chokosi, were based on identity and land ownership. The

intragroup disturbances, on the other hand, were caused mainly by chieftaincy succession disputes involving rival royal lineage families competing to occupy a skin (Ibrahim, 2018; Ateng & Abazaami, 2016). Ibrahim (2018) has identified these conflicts, including the Jamong-Jafuag affair in Bunkpurugu and the Abudu-Andani crisis in Yendi. Although the latter has been recently resolved paving way for the enskinment of the new Ya-Na, Abukari Mahama II, demands for justice remains unmet and sustaining the achieved peace cannot be guaranteed. This is because the importance of post-conflict justice in building sustainable peace cannot be overemphasised (Issifu, 2015; Hyden, 2015; Annan, 2013).

Similar conflicts are prevalent in Northern Ghana where efforts by actors such as NGOs to rebuild stable peace have achieved limited successes and face complex challenges. Although the state has the central role among the multitude of actors within the peacebuilding arena, it mainly enforces peace by deploying uniformed peacekeepers to prevent physical violence (Issifu, 2017; Annan, 2013). According to Galtung (1967), while peace-making aims to minimize tensions and precipitators of violence, peacebuilding focus on establishing just structures and institutions to sustainably address the underlying issues towards positive peace. In this complex multi-actor network, NGOs often partner with state agencies, donors and private sector to prevent conflict, build peace and promote development. Despite the important role NGOs play in these interwoven relationships, Abiew & Keating (2004) criticize them for failing to consult their target beneficiaries which lead to limited impact on the society.

Against this background, an analysis of NGOs' approaches to peacebuilding becomes a matter of necessity in order to deepen understanding of how they prevent relapse into violence and promote sustainable peace. A lot of scholarly literature tends to focus on the broader civil society organisations (CSOs) and their role in conflict resolution, prevention and peacebuilding (Ateng & Abazaami, 2016; Issifu, 2017; Suaka & Longi, 2022; Braithwaite & Licht, 2020). This paper was driven by the desire to further analyse the specific measures, actions and strategies NGOs deploy to maintain relative peace in Northern Ghana. The study assesses NGOs' role in preventing conflict recurrence and the efficacies of their strategies for building stable peace in Yendi as a case. In addition, it examines the challenges NGOs face in peacebuilding and how they maintained relative stability for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

2.1 Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention

The complex challenge of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies, both in theory and practice, has been widely acknowledged (Hoeffler, 2019; 2016). This has resulted in a range of varying conceptual definitions and terminologies relating to peacebuilding. Hancock (2017) posits that peacebuilding as a concept was evolved by Johan Galtung in the mid-1970s to mean measures used to address the "root causes" of conflict in order to create sustainable peace. However, the International Peace Institute (IPI, 2009) traces the modern concept of peacebuilding to the "*An Agenda for Peace*" by Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) that focuses on 'preventive diplomacy' described as actions taken to prevent or contain conflict. To Paris (1997), the term covers humanitarian and economic assistance as well as physical reconstruction of affected societies. The conventional UN usage of peacebuilding implies post-conflict activities following peacekeeping operations aimed at reducing the negative factors that could precipitate resurgence. In this context, the OECD (2005) associates peacebuilding to a broad range of approaches and practices aimed at changing the structural formation for peaceful relations and good governance. As the major process for preventing the outbreak, continuation or recurrence of violent conflict, it encompasses long-term political, developmental and human rights programmes and mechanisms.

The practice of peacebuilding, thus, employs such methods and strategies to prevent the re-emergence of risk factors and triggers in post-conflict context (Joshi, 2014). It is key to avoiding human and economic losses. A concept that appears closely related to peacebuilding is conflict prevention. The latter has been conceptualized in Franche et al (2004) as a range of interventions, mechanisms and procedures for addressing structural defects and tensions to avoid the outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict. However, other conceptualisations seek to detach prevention from conflict and place it at the core of peace and security discourse (Coleman & Williams, 2021; Connolly, 2015). The long-term focus of structural prevention approach aims at addressing the underlying causes together with their potential triggering factors. The strategies involved in structural action against potential conflict are often intended to tackle economic development challenges, poverty and illiteracy, inequality and political participation among others. This structural approach involves long-term mechanisms that may overlap with post-conflict peacebuilding interventions aimed at forestalling resurgence (Joshi, 2014). In contrast, operational prevention relies on short-term specific actions, such as mediation, negotiation or armed deployment to eliminate the immediate threats to peace in post-conflict societies.

2.2 Post-Conflict Societies

Post-conflict societies refer to communities or states that have recently been affected by violent upheavals which often cause human losses, damage to infrastructure and displacement of people. Such societies are vulnerable to relapse into violence due to animosities, vengeful actions and other legacies of conflict. They are often characterized by low economic prospects, high unemployment, polarisation, crimes, mistrust and proliferation of small arms. These conditions result from capital flight, lack of expertise and investments needed to create economic opportunities for the youth in such societies. The unfavourable conditions created by the previous conflict tend to fuel the outbreak of future conflicts in a cyclical manner that Collier et al. (2003) refer to as "Conflict trap". In response, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) often intervene with varieties of peacebuilding initiatives to rebuild stable peace, protect human lives and facilitate a conducive atmosphere for social and economic development.

2.3 Non-Governmental Organisations

It is nearly impossible to provide a precise definition for an NGO as well as to analyse its phenomenon. Lewis (2009) describes NGOs as diverse set of organisations which range from structurally small informal to large formal entities with varying mandates and nature thereby evading generalisation. Lewis observed a further complicated situation of NGOs being classified based on what they are not rather than what they are, making them more complex and difficult to pin down for analysis. These analytical complexities generate divergent perspectives about what NGOs are or are not, and about how best to analyse their roles (Lewis, 2009). Some receive government funding or are government-organised organisations (GONGOs) while others generate revenues for their operations and defy the needed status of independence. Based on origins, there are "Northern NGOs" (NNGOs) and "Southern NGOs" (SNGOs), and on the basis of membership, there are CBOs, and "grassroots organisations" (GROs). There are those that front for government and others formed by individuals for pure personal benefit. Yet there are both professionalised and volunteer-dependent NGOs, and secular and faith-based organisations. While some of these NGOs seek immediate solution to people's needs, others focus on long-term approaches to problem solving all of which compound the difficulty in defining the term with precision. NGOs receive government funding while others generate revenues for their operations against the required status of independence and non-profit. Further complications exist in the "classification that emphasise what they are not rather than what they are", making NGOs more complex and difficult to pin down analytically. These analytical constraints have led to the generation of different thoughts and perspectives about what is and what is not an NGO, and about the most acceptable approaches for the analysis of their roles (Lewis, 2009). By virtue of their advantageous position, they continue to play essential roles in development delivery and conflict prevention at both the policy and operational levels (Union of International Associations, 2005; DESA, 2004). For instance, coalitions of non-governmental actors have now been acknowledged as significant role players in transnational advocacy efforts such as in human rights, environmental protection and violence against women (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

These according to Walter (1997) are essential prerequisite for development. Peace builders therefore adopted some already existing state and traditional mechanisms including local government and chieftaincy institutions as well as developing context-specific ones for implementing peace programmes. For example, WANEP, FOSDA, CRS, UNDP, AAG and UN-HSP operated through the Department of Community Development, Gender Desk Office, and traditional authority, YPC, NCCE, FOMWAG and BIRDS. As implementation of the roadmap to peace is being guided by the Committee of Eminent Chiefs, NGOs and their partners rely on the peacekeeping operations of the Military and Police to perform their functions.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in Yendi Municipality, one of the 261 metropolis, municipals and districts (MMDs) units nationwide and 16 in the Northern Region of Ghana (Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development, 2023). The Municipality is located at the centre of the eastern corridor, sharing boundaries with Saboba, Zabzugu and Tatale/Sanguli districts to the east; Nanumba North to the south, Mion to the west, and Gushegu to the north. Yendi plays the role of a dual host as the Municipal capital on one hand and the traditional capital and seat of Ya-Na, King of Dagbon. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2021 population and housing census report, the municipality has a population of 154,421 comprising 49.3% male and 50.7% female (Ghana Statistical Service)(GSS), (2021). This constitutes 6.7% share of the region's population which stands at 2,310,939 and represents 7.5% of Ghana's total population of 30,832,019 people (GSS, 2021). The Yendi Municipal Assembly (2013) has indicated that, besides

the Dagomba majority, there are many minorities' ethnic groups in the area, including Konkomba, Basare, Chokosi, Hausa, Moshie, Bimoba, Ewe and Akan among others. The predominant religion is Islam which has more than two-thirds of the population as followers (GSS, 2014). The area map of the municipality has been provided in figure 1 below.
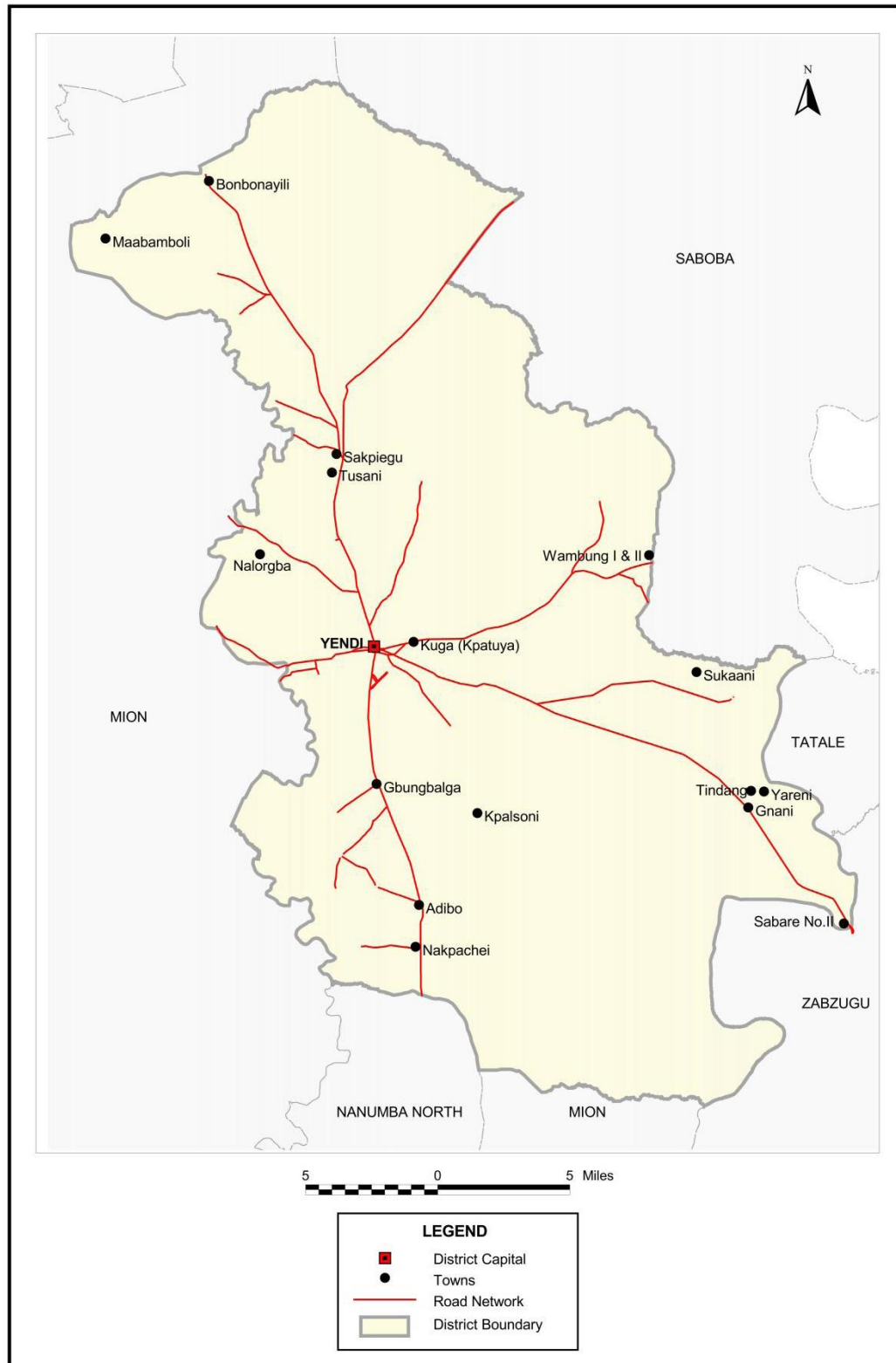

Figure 1
Map of Yendi Municipal
Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2021

The study employed qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of data taking into consideration the propositions of other authors (Mohajan, 2018; Gopalda, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). A case study design was used as the most suitable approach to the phenomenon under investigation and the categories of respondents needed to address the research topic. This is because, qualitative case study design creates room for broader and less restrictive exploration especially where the researcher's intent is to understand people's belief system, perspectives and experiences (Levitt et al., 2017; Gustafsson, 2017; Rahman, 2017; Patton & Cochran, 2002). The study involved three categories of respondents, namely, state security and civil agencies, NGOs engaged in peacebuilding, and beneficiaries of the peace process. Purposive sampling criterion was used to recruit respondents from the organisations. Thematic descriptive approach was used for the analysis of the data. The data was coded in order to come out with the main theme for discussion. This was aimed at selecting knowledgeable interviewees with holistic and relevant insights about the topic as noted in Kelly, Dowling and Miller (2018). For the beneficiary's category, each of the two royal gates voluntarily constituted a focus group of 8-12 individuals for discussion in addition to a separate interview session with the family elder. A third focus group was made up of some elected members of the Yendi Municipal Assembly. A total of forty-nine (49) respondents were sampled from the three categories as indicated in table 1 below.

Table 1
Categorization of Respondents Sampled for the Study

Category	No. of Organisations	No. of Respondents	Share of Respondents (%)
NGOs	6	8	16.3
State agencies	8	19	38.8
Beneficiaries	2	22	44.9
Total	**16**	**49**	**100.00**

Source: Field Work, August, 2014

3.2 Background of Respondents

The interview respondents were classified into three main categories based on their role in the peacebuilding process, namely, the protagonists, NGOs and state actors. The major NGOs were WANEP represented by its 40-year-old Programmes Manager, CPJ represented by its 69-year-old Head and Catholic Bishop of Yendi Diocese, and YPC represented by its secretary. BIRDS was represented by its Executive Director, and FOMWAG by its President. The state actors were mainly state security agencies, including the BNI (now NIB) represented by the Station Officer and his Deputy. The Divisional and Municipal Commanders and Crime Officer Spoke for the GPS while a 34-year-old Army Captain and Detachment Commander answered on behalf of the GAF. The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) stood in for MUSEC as the Chairman. The security agencies played peacekeeping role to provide the atmosphere conducive for peacebuilding. The experience of NCCE was shared by its Municipal Director, YMA by the Municipal Coordinating Director, and the Departments of Community Development and Gender Desk by their respective heads. The protagonist's category composed of the *Abudu Yili* (Abudu family) and *Andani Yili* (Andani family) were direct parties to the conflict and indispensable part of rebuilding peace in Yendi. They were represented by their elders aged 67 and 58 years old respectively. In addition, 11 Abudus aged 28-51; 9 Andanis aged 32-58 and 8 YMA members aged 25-55 years, participated in FGDs conducted to capture broader views. For each group, 12 participants were requested but the actual numbers recorded were within the range of 8-12 persons required for FGDs. Incidentally, all the FGD participants were Dagombas from both royal and non-royal families.

A total of 49 respondents were interviewed in 21 interview sessions that stretched over a period of 11 days (19th-29th August, 2014). The cumulative period of time spent with all the interviewees was 22 hours, 45 minutes at an average of approximately 1 hour, 4 minutes per session. The shortest session lasted 32 minutes whereas the longest one took 1 hour, 36 minutes. Respondents comprised of 5 females and 44 males representing 10.2% and 89.8% of the study population respectively. This imbalance raises issues of gender equity and fairness in Dagbon where sensitive matters of chieftaincy nature are considered men's affair. The average age of respondents was 45, ranging between the youngest (25) and the oldest (69). Their level of education ranged from Middle School Leaver's Certificate (minimum) to a Ph.D. All respondents were gainfully employed with overwhelming majority being native Dagombas and twelve persons being of other ethnic origins including Nanumba, Mossi, Akan, Dagaaba and Frafra.

The study population consisted of sixteen organisations. These were purposively selected based on their relevance and are listed in table 2 below.

Table 2
List of organisations involved in the study

No	Name of Institution	Type of Institution
1	West African Network for Peacebuilding	NGO
2	Bangumanga Integrated Rural Development Society	CBO
3	Fed. of Muslim Women's Association of Ghana	Faith-based NGO
4	Catholic Peace and Justice Commission	Faith-based organisation
5	Yendi peace council	NGO
6	Women in peacebuilding	CBO
7	National intelligence bureau	State intelligence agency
8	Ghana Police Service	Security agency
9	Ghana Armed Forces	State military organisation
10	Municipal Security Council	Security body
11	National Commission for Civic Education	Constitutional body
12	Department of Gender	Local government dept.
13	Department of Community development	Local government dept.
14	Municipal Assembly	Local government structure
15	Abudu Royal family	Beneficiary faction
16	Andani Royal family	Beneficiary faction

Source: Field Work, August, 2014

Data for the study were obtained from both the primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data included in-depth interviews, focus groups, key informants, and field notes. The secondary data sources comprised previous research reports and other available documents. The combination of primary and secondary data in qualitative research enhances data credibility and dependability (Mohajan, 2018; Yin, 2003; Patton, 1990). The data collection methods used included face-to-face in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with probing for insights on peacebuilding and NGOs' operations. Interviews were conducted at the times and locations chosen by respondents. Each interview lasted about thirty minutes. There were three focus group discussions involving eleven (11) Abudu, nine (9) Andani and eight (8) elected Assembly members.

Two sets of data collection instruments were used, namely, in-depth interview guide and focus group discussion guide. Questions for the NGOs were framed slightly differently from that for other respondents for relevant views and perspectives to be obtained. The beneficiaries answered in-depth interview questions bothering on their involvement and perceptions of NGO performance. The focus group discussion guide was administered to groups of Assembly, Abudu and Andani family members. The views of respondents were tape-recorded and the thematic descriptive and narrative approaches were used to analyse the data transcribed. The information gathered was examined thoroughly and summarized under the themes developed. This method is reliable for exploring meanings and insights in social science research (Brikci & Green 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Levitt et al., 2017). The themes were interpreted to reveal meanings and highlight the information analysed based on consensus, reflections and past research.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Contribution of NGOs to peacebuilding in Yendi
The study found that NGOs activities promoted an atmosphere of consensus and cooperation in Yendi. This was achieved by creating avenues for dialogue, mediation and negotiation, capacity building, advocacy and early warning (DESA, 2004). These are outlined and discussed in turn. In the words of the Catholic Bishop of Yendi Diocese:

> *"Almost all the job of managing the conflict and reconciliation were done by NGOs, who else could? They initiated the peace projects because they were cordially accepted by both the Abudus and Andanis for supporting neither 'party A' nor 'party B'. Most of the ground activities were championed by WANEP, CPJ and YPC which are committed to restoring peace and security in Yendi."*

4.2.1 Funding of Peace Programmes
Lewis (2009) opined that it was clear that NGOs sourced funding from the donor community for peace programmes as narrated by the MCD and the Bishop respectively:

"They are major sources of funding for peace building activities in Yendi. Funds for peace education and sensitization, capacity building, training and economic programmes were all provided by the NGOs who donors view as community workers."

"Majority of the grassroots peace projects run on NGO funds and end abruptly when funds stop flowing. Some of the programmes like community peace advocacy campaigns have terminated because NGOs have ran out of funds."

4.2.2 Disputes resolution capacity building

From Joshi, 2014, the NGOs had trained several indigenes to resolve disagreements without violence. Selected leaders of communities, women, youth, security agencies and key individuals could apply alternative disputes resolution (ADR) skills to mediate conflicts. A 54-year-old Secretary of YPC, the MCD and the Director of NCCE agreed on how the training drastically reduced the risk of relapse:

"The support of CRS, AAG and WANEP enabled us to organize 105 workshops to train over 2,600 persons in handling individual and group differences. Our trained agents, women and youth groups, community and opinion leaders are encouraging only peaceful means of dispute settlement in the communities".

"The capacity building programmes have benefited all parties involved in the peacebuilding work. The Municipal Assembly, youth, women, Pastors, Imams, Police Officers, Abudus and Andanis have all gained. I participated in one of the workshops held in Damongo where we learned about tolerance and mediation of conflict".

"They have been able to turn some trouble makers and sponsors of violence into peacemakers by training and engaging them in Peace Committees."

The disputants engaged in resolving their grievances peacefully in line with the conflict settlement school's (Licklider, 2005) prescription for protracted conflicts.

4.2.3 Dialogue promotion and mediation

Respondents endorsed the way NGOs promoted dialogue and mediation processes to forestall reprisals. The Bishop, Abudu focus group and FOMWAG President respectively remarked that:

"Before dialogue was initiated, the adversaries were not talking to each other. Silence and suspicion brewed more hatred and enmity until they were brought to the negotiating table to dialogue. Once the disputants agreed to dialogue, platform was provided."

"We the Abudus and also the other side have full trust and confidence in CPJ. If dialogue sessions were not organized by this centre, we would not be sitting here thinking about peace."

"Their proactive settlement initiatives have been instrumental in lowering tensions, building confidence and trust among disputants. They have successfully mediated the conflict because they are non-political, non-discriminatory and fair in dealing with both factions."

This resonates with Babbitt and Hampson's (2011) relationship-based approach to trust and confidence building.

4.2.4 Peace education and advocacy campaigns

Licklider, 2005 assert that Peace builders also created awareness about living together peacefully despite differences. Sensitization and advocacy campaigns were integral part of NGOs' strategies which respondents claimed has changed people's behaviour about using violence as a solution. The importance of this strategy was underscored by the MCE and Andani elder in their comments below:

"Education has been useful in changing mindsets of the youth and those who see violence as a means of pursuing their aims. The relationships among members of the Abudu and Andani factions are lubricated by sustained awareness education and sensitization programmes."

"Educational campaigns were the magic behind this relative peace and stability in Yendi. The people have become aware of the dangers of war and benefits of peace. Our youth were bent on taking revenge against the Abudu gate for killing the Ya-Na but they have changed their stance. They now understand that vengeance is not the solution, it won't bring back the Ya-Na."

Indeed, transforming relationships between adversaries helps to avoid reprisals in post-conflict peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). These narratives reflect conflict transformation process (Kriesberg, 1997) of changing fundamental perceptions, attitudes and behaviours to promote tolerance and trust.

4.2.5 Creation of early warning systems

The study found that WANEP had set up intelligence mechanisms in communities which detected early signs of imminent violence for prevention. The representative of WANEP explained that:

> *"We have formed 'early warning teams' in all communities of Yendi, comprising of youth, women and some men. They monitor happenings in the communities particularly of hardliners and report suspicious movements to WANEP or the Bishop. For example, some youth had mobilised to attack a chief and his elders for indiscriminately selling lands to outsiders. We were hinted of an impending clash and when we confirmed it, the security agencies were alerted. It was averted by quick deployment followed by a negotiated settlement".*

Clearly, these efforts prevented major breaches to peace agreements in Yendi until the final resolution.

4.2.6 Cooperation and partnership

The NGOs partnered other actors in managing the Dagbon State crisis as narrated by WANEP's official, Police and Military Commanders:

> *"Many stakeholders have contributed to peacebuilding activities either through networking or direct engagement. We provided technical expertise in building capacities of others to participate more effectively in building peace. Those we train are positioned to perform critical roles based on whether they were 'spoilers' or 'builders' of peace."*

> *"The Police regularly attended NGO peacebuilding strategy meetings and also provided safety and security for participants and organisers of peace activities. The CID normally conducts background checks for advising the NGOs on anticipated problems and measures being taken to forestall disorder."*

> *"The NGOs enhanced fostering of friendly relations and cooperation between the Military and the youth by sometimes offering us the platform to interact with them during peace campaigns."*

These narratives corroborate Walter's (1997) argument that security is essential for peacebuilding and demonstrate how NGOs employed diverse strategies to prevent peace collapse in Yendi. A summary of some of these strategies are discussed in the following section.

4.3 Strategies for Preventing Conflict and Building Peace

The NGOs adopted an integrated multi-sectorial approach to peacebuilding, targeting leaders of groups, families and communities. Interventions deployed included sensitization, job creation, financial aid, trades training, socio-cultural events and alternative livelihood programmes. The various strategies and activities have been categorized based on their intended impact on the peace process and have been summarised in this section.

4.3.1 Attitudinal change education

This strategy intended to overcome ignorance and alter the worldviews of factions. For example, peace education had addressed quick resort to violence. Members of the Abudu and Andani families who received conflict resolution skills training became advocates for tolerance as explained by their elders respectively:

> *"Since our training by the YPC and WANEP, we have served as the links between NGOs and the communities".*

> *"We do not only mobilise community members for conflict prevention awareness campaigns, we also educate people during weddings, funerals and naming ceremonies."*

It achieved a shift from adversarial to cooperative positions a 40-year-old WANEP Official and group of Assembly members narrated:

> *"The change of attitude was achieved through deliveries of peace messages at advocacy meetings, community durbars and forums, socio-cultural events, religious services in Mosques and Churches, conferences, and open broadcast to communities."*

> *"The educative programmes were crucial in changing mindset of the youth in particular about chieftaincy rivalry as a competition and not a war between them. The youth of Yendi are no longer eager to take up guns against their brothers as they were previously."*

This was in line with the conflict transformation scholarship (Babbitt & d'Estree, 1996; Chigas, McClintock & Kamp, 1996) about fostering change.

4.3.2 Economic Assistance Programmes

The study found that NGOs in partnership with UNDP tackled poor socio-economic conditions of the affected population by providing cash grants and agriculture inputs to induce poverty. The UN-HSP and FOSDA also used an alternative livelihoods initiative to discourage local blacksmiths from manufacturing arms (Walter, 1997). The Community Development Officer and the Chairman of MUSEC had more to say about these:

> "The economic model involved job creation, small grants, and farm inputs (fertilizer, seed, small ruminants, pesticides), aimed to engage beneficiaries in profitable economic activities. The facilities provided for women serve as sources of incomes for them."

> "The alternative livelihoods programme aimed at the reformation of artisans from manufacturing and trading in small arms. In its implementation, some blacksmiths were identified, given more training and supported with cash and tools to switch to coal pots, trunks, ploughs, hoes and other farm implements instead."

4.3.3 Early warning monitoring

The early warning systems by WANEP tracked information about small arms, illegal military training and suspicious meetings. This enabled pre-emptive action to avert possible violence. WANEP's official and the WIP Secretary explained how this worked:

> "Early warning monitoring teams in local communities detect signs of danger and alert us for the appropriate response. Our mediation and dialogue committees are also on the ground to facilitate non-violent settlement of disagreements by mediating inter-personal, communal and inter-group disputes peacefully."

> "The Queen Mothers and Overlord Queen Mothers (daughters of Kings) Associations were formed to facilitate access to royal families for early warning information gathering."

The Andani focus group did not appear pleased about this early warning system:

> "Now anytime we hold a family meeting, people from the community especially the women inform the Bishop or Police about it. Then the CID Officers would come asking us what is happening and what our meeting was about. Some people are hypocrites and they are always watching what others are doing."

4.3.4 Development of indigenous capacities

According to Licklider (2005), the respondents claimed that leaders of grassroots organisations had been empowered to handle disputes peacefully. In MCE's words:

> "The people have become more self-reliant in resolving disputes and avoiding violence as means of addressing grievances. The unemployed youth have also been trained and resourced to pursue gainful economic objectives thereby reducing poverty levels and risk of violence. Even members of MUSEC participated in essential skills training programmes to complement peacekeeping and peace enforcement."

4.4 Challenges of NGOs in peacebuilding

The foregoing remarkable achievements of NGOs in Yendi were not without obstacles. Implementation challenges included inadequate logistics and funding; weak institutional mechanisms; political interference; proliferation of small arms; and perceived injustices (Lewis, 2009).

4.4.1 Logistical and funding challenges

Lewis (2009) stated that Lack of sufficient funds forced NGOs to end peace initiative abruptly as the Bishop and WIP leader narrated:

> "They (NGOs) often experience shortage of funds for peace programmes and tend to demand receipts for every item purchased with their money. Such a situation normally posed problems to implementers in Yendi."

> "NGOs' extreme cautiousness in attempt to avoid being maligned and quick dissipation of funds usually lead to slow pace of implementation progress and too quick termination of peace initiatives."

The President of FOMWAG and the Army Captain added that:

"After building our capacities, mobility issues and lack of funds have limited our sensitisation and awareness creation drive in certain communities. This has compelled us to seek political party platforms for delivering peace messages which has its own implications".

"Sometimes request for protection of peace activities are not adequately met due to faulty equipment that sometimes take days to fix. This does not auger well for our operations here in Yendi because arms and ammunitions have become their household goods."

Clearly, peacebuilders varied in their priorities and modes of operation due to differences in conceptualizations of the conflict and resources allocations.

4.4.2 Mistrust among key peace actors

They are often characterized by low economic prospects, high unemployment, polarisation, crimes, mistrust and proliferation of small arms. The unfavourable conditions created by the previous conflict tend to fuel the outbreak of future conflicts in a cyclical manner (Collier et al., 2003). Obviously suspicion and mistrust caused uncooperative behaviours of some actors. WANEP's Official offered an explanation of how unpredictable the Protagonists were.

"The disputants backslide at peace implementation stages and refuse to cooperate with settlement efforts. Their entrenched positions and lack of full cooperation greatly impede peacebuilding process".

The trust issue was general as the MCE and the Andani elder also remarked:

"The NGOs face difficulties in maintaining neutrality amidst increasing pressure from both gates for sympathies. A decline to such requests increases suspicions of disputants about their genuineness and credibility".

"As opinion leaders of Andani Gate, our participation in peacebuilding processes is considered hypocritical by our brothers because they do not share our view. Those who preach tolerance and civility are viewed as pogues and traitors, conniving with NGOs for monetary gains".

WANEP's representative also explained their challenges as follows:

"Other organisations perceive our effort as a competition with them which negatively affect cooperation among us. Also, the policy shift to human security from state security and the creation of early warning system encountered severe resistance from security agencies. This is because they associated it with intelligence gathering which is deemed a sole preserve of state security apparatus."

Mutual suspicion among various actors affected cooperation and compliance with peace agreements. This requires enforcement mechanisms and security guarantees that reduce costs of negotiation and increase sanctions for non-compliance (Crocker, 1992; Zartman, 1989; Zartman & Touval, 1985).

4.4.3 Political infiltrations of Dagbon Kingship affair

Generally, people were worried about interference and lack of political will in implementing agreements. Hoeffler' (2019) assessment of post-conflict stabilization indicates that affected communities are often faced with difficulty in regaining stable peace after loss of human lives, properties and other legacies of violence. While the state is primarily responsible for maintaining social order, conflict parties do not trust the government to rebuild peace in a just manner (Hoeffler'2019).

The MCD and Abudu elder (aka 'Show Boy') stated explicitly that:

"The dominant political parties notably the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) are suspected of deriving political capital by unduly delaying and manipulating peace process."

"The political elites are behind the so-called 'concerned groups' who without any consultation organise press conferences to propagate grievances that stir tensions and agitations in Yendi."

4.4.4 Injustice and impunity

Some people demanded justice for the slain Ya-Na, however, NGOs do not facilitate criminal accountability as the WANEP official and Bishop noted:

"The Andani faction keeps demanding that the killers of Ya-Na must be brought to book as a pre-requisite for lasting peace without which the likelihood of retaliation in the future is predictable. They have also demanded an apology from the Abudu side for killing the sitting king and destroying Gbewaa Palace but none is forthcoming".

*"The inability of state actors to deliver justice to the victims and their families has made lasting
peace almost impossible. Without justice, no society can maintain peace forever."*

Scholars of peace and conflict studies argue that 'responsibility for harm, justice seeking process, and empathy' are essential in peacebuilding (Dwyer, 1999; Rouhana, 2000; Kelman, 2008). Yet, these components were missing in the Dagbon solution as the Abudu faction was unwilling to either accept wrongdoing or apologise for the King's death.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This paper analyses post-conflict peacebuilding in relation to the role non-governmental organisations play within the complex network of actors in Yendi. According to Lewis (2007) however, NGOs undertake three main sets of activities that explicitly define their roles: implementers, catalysts and partners in development. As implementers, they mobilise resources for use to provide goods and services for the populations who need them. They catalyse their beneficiaries by inspiring, facilitating and contributing to improved thinking and actions that ultimately promote change. NGOs have also been working in partnership and cooperation with other relevant stakeholders such as governments, donors and the private sector in efforts to improve conditions for the general wellbeing and peaceful co-existence of diverse groups. Generally, their peacebuilding functions include protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, social facilitation, social cohesion and service delivery.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings of the study point to certain measures and steps needed for ensuring stable peace and security in Dagbon and possibly other traditional states in similar crisis. Such measures are intended to enhance the collective effort of stakeholders at achieving the goals of sustainable peace in emerging societies like Yendi. The recommendations provided in this study are based on the findings of the study. It is hoped that NGOs involvement in peacebuilding would be improved and lead to more peaceful societies conducive for socio-economic development and wellbeing of people.

NGOs rely on international donor funding shortage of which causes peace interventions to terminate abruptly. Their continual relevance as peace builders depends on relationships with these donors and the ability to secure funds for prevention activities. This means healthy inter-linkages between NGOs, donors and protagonists, though difficult to maintain, are necessary for achieving the ultimate goal of peace. Therefore, they must expand the donor community in order to solicit sufficient funds for successful completion of peace initiatives.

'Spoilers' including political parties, concerned groups aligned to factions, hardliners and Diasporas create tension and threaten peace agreement implementation. These segments and their activities, as stressed by Newman and Richmond (2006), obstruct or undermine the conflict settlement and peacebuilding processes. NGOs must expand their scope of operations; devise a comprehensive approach for addressing adverse activities and turning them into 'builders' in post-conflict settings.

There were significant rates of illiteracy, poverty and youth unemployment in the municipality. People reeling under ignorance and poor economic conditions are usually more vulnerable to recruitment into perpetuation of violence against perceived foes. Peace builders including NGOs should focus more on intensifying education and awareness creation to overcome ignorance and promote civility and coexistence. Also priority may be given to job creation and employability skills training to help engage the active population in gainful activities and make them unavailable for recruitment.

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