



PROJECT IMPACT REPORT

**Support to the National Peace Committee
(Through The Kukah Centre) To Ensure
Peaceful Outcome of the 2023 General
Elections' Cycle and Overall Peace in Nigeria**



2024

www.thekukahcentre.org

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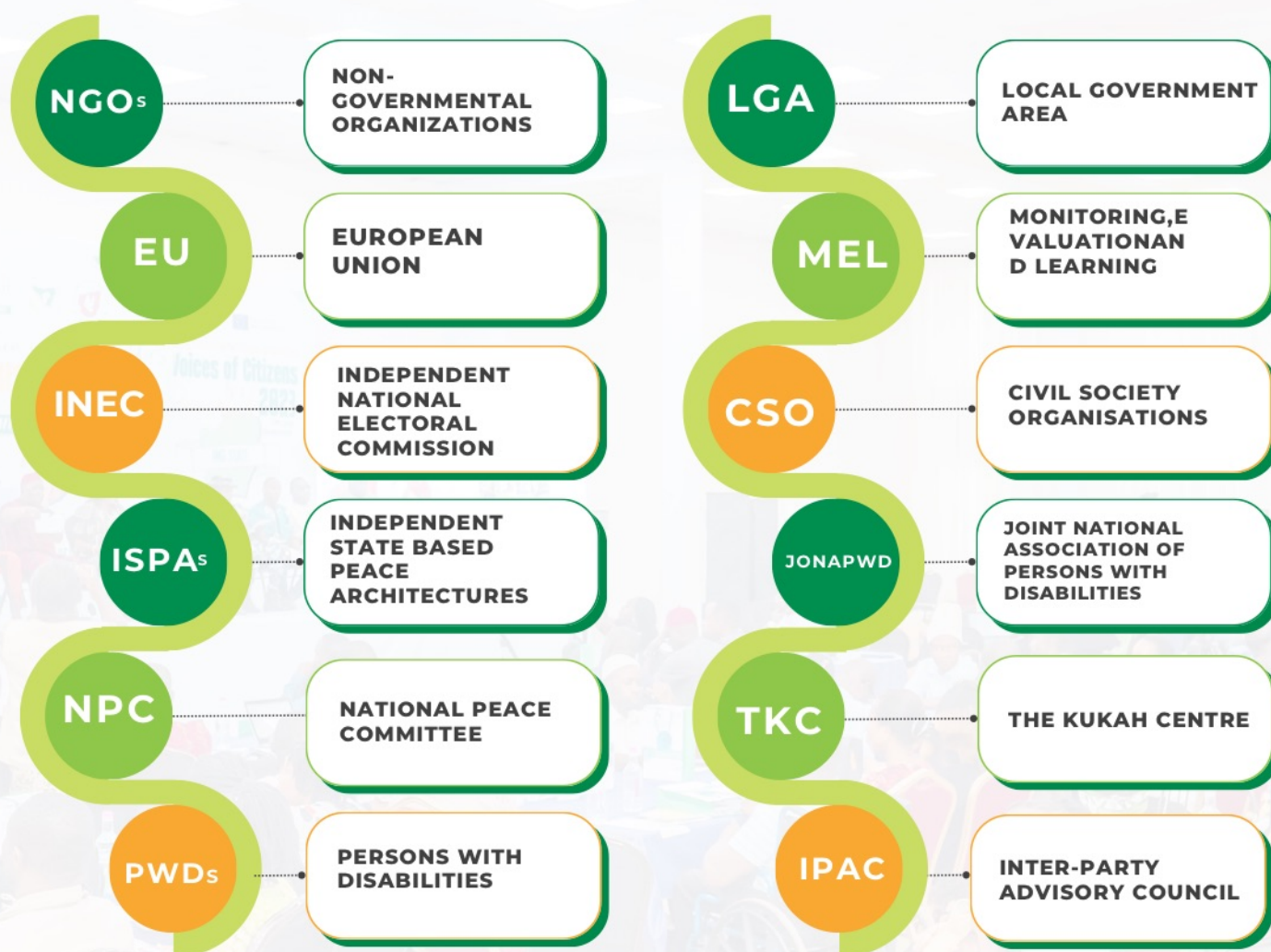
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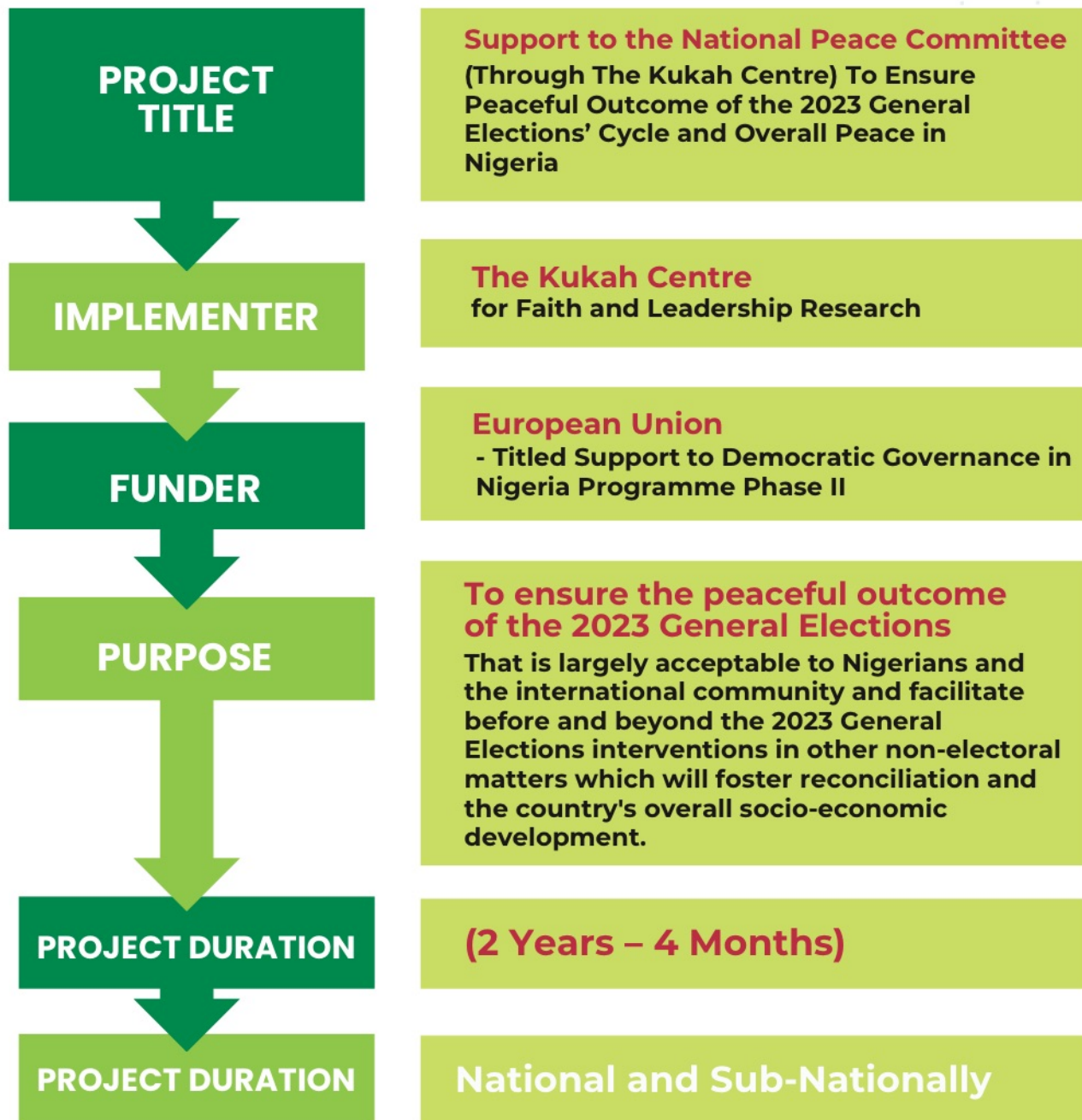
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PHOTO GALLERY

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS



KEY PROJECT INFORMATION





60M

Total of persons reached via Media



30%

Social Media



55%

Traditional Media



10%

Newsletters



5%

Online Blogs

PROJECT DIRECT REACH

2736

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS REACHED



MEN REACHED **1986**

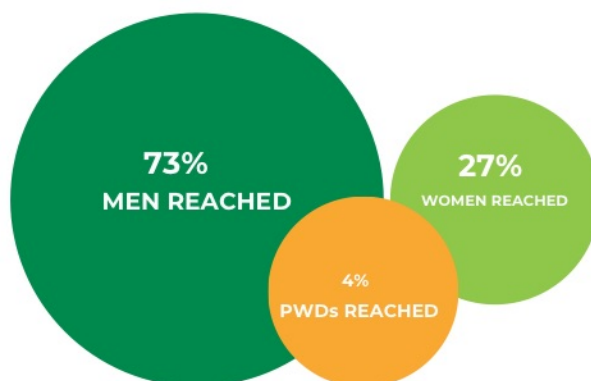


WOMEN REACHED **750**



PWDs REACHED **101**

GENDER DISTRIBUTION



MEN REACHED

WOMEN REACHED

PWDs REACHED

1.0 ABOUT THE KUKAH CENTRE

The Centre was established by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah to enhance and encourage greater citizen engagement in Nigeria. The Kukah Centre is a non-profit organization that promotes an active and engaged citizenry by providing support for inclusive dialogue and advocacy initiatives. The Centre treats political leadership as a collaborative exercise and aims to promote governance structures which incorporate multiple levels of engagement, including individuals, households, small businesses, the private sector, NGOs and government. Interfaith dialogue is at the core of the Centre's work and involves actively promoting conversations among Nigeria's faith communities, as well as between leaders in faith and public policy.

1.1 CENTRE'S VISION, MISSION, AND FOCUS



MISSION

Believing that the pursuit of the common good of all citizens should be the basis for the existence of government and that citizen participation in their own affairs should be at the heart of governance, we shall aspire to set up a mediating institution for achieving this. We shall seek to conceptualize, design, clarify and articulate proactive mechanisms that will increase policy proficiency, effectiveness and efficiency, and public participation and input for the attainment of the common good and pursuit of the ideas of good governance.



OUR VISION

To aspire towards the attainment of a more humane, democratic and free society where citizens can live in real and true freedom unencumbered by any structures of exclusion on the basis of ethnic, religious, social status, economic or gender differences.

CORE FOCUS



INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE



GOOD GOVERNANCE



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



MEMORY PRESERVATION AND
KNOWLEDGE PROMOTION

1.2 MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

The Kukah Centre places significant value on the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) process as an essential element of all project implementations and interventions awarded to the Centre. The MEL team has made it an integral component of its operational desk to track and monitor all project outcomes in a timely and accurate manner. The project's quarterly report schedule further facilitated this process, enabling the identification of any gaps and ensuring that the project adheres to its intended timelines, budget, and overall outcomes during the period of the project implementation phase.

1.3 PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change logic for this intervention hypothesised that;

IF: The National Peace Committee with its convening power can mobilise Political Parties and candidates participating in the 2023 elections to endorse and monitor compliance with the peace accords.

AND IF: The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and security agencies are encouraged to be transparent, non-partisan and/or impartial in the discharge of their electoral duties.

AND IF: Civil Society Groups and other stakeholders using media are supported to amplify peace and conflict mitigation efforts, including stepping down messaging, advocacy, and oversight/monitoring of the peace accords and provisions of the Electoral Act on peaceful elections.

AND IF: Local leaders, structures, and groups (including Traditional, Religious and Community leaders, Independent State-Based Peace Committees, and women and youth groups are trained to champion grassroots efforts to mitigate conflict/promote peace.

THEN: Nigerian electoral processes will be more peaceful and largely acceptable to Nigerians, thereby contributing to a functioning, inclusive, and peaceful democracy which fosters reconciliation, stability, and ultimately, the country's overall socio-economic development.

2.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The 'Support to the National Peace Committee (Through The Kukah Centre) To Ensure Peaceful Outcome of the 2023 General Elections' Cycle and Overall Peace in Nigeria project is a **28 months project** intervention programme funded by the **'European Union - titled Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria Programme Phase II'** which was implemented by **The Kukah Centre (Secretariat for the National Peace Committee)**.

The National Peace Committee (NPC) is a non-governmental initiative conceived in **2014** in response to the emerging threats posed by the **2015** general elections. It is an initiative composed of eminent elder statesmen who are committed to supporting free, fair and credible elections as well as intervening in critical issues of national concern through high-level mediation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. At its inception, the NPC had an urgent, broad-based mandate to make modest contributions to the smooth and peaceful conduct of the 2015 elections without any breakdown of law and order before, during and after the electoral process.

Consequently, the core mandate is: To observe and monitor compliance with the Abuja Accord signed by political parties during the elections; To advise the government and INEC on the resolution of political disputes and conflicts arising from issues of compliance with the Abuja Accord; To make itself available for national mediation and conciliation in the event of post-election disputes or crises; To ensure a peaceful outcome of the general elections that is acceptable to the generality of Nigerians and the international community. In the run-up to the 2023 General Elections, the usual political shenanigans started, thereby fueling tensions and the imminent collapse of law and order amid surging violence and killings. To avert the impending doom about to befall the country, the National Peace Committee, once again made itself available, leveraging its convening power and previous successes, to bring the various political players and key stakeholders together for dialogue towards peaceful conduct and resolution of political disputes, before, during and after elections.

The 2023 General Elections have come and gone, however, looking back at the enormous work that went into ensuring a peaceful and acceptable outcome, it becomes imperative to pause and reflect on the overall effectiveness of the intervention strategies and the extent to which the core objectives were met and review the lessons learnt as a way to improve subsequent interventions.

Key deliverables from the Implemented output in the project during the life cycle include:

1. Engage all presidential/gubernatorial candidates and political parties participating in the 2023 general and off-cycle elections at the federal and state levels to a peace agreement.
2. Monitored and documented the level of compliance and non-compliance with the provisions of the signed Peace Agreement through the NPC Situation Room to provide evidence-based information to the Committee and make workable recommendations for its interventions before, during and after the 2023 elections.
3. Worked with INEC and security agencies to ensure that all 10 peace agreements were brokered and can be used in court during electoral disputes if requested by interested parties. To a limited extent, media and stakeholder engagement contributed to the promotion of substantive, issue-based electoral campaigns free of divisive ethnic, religious and hate slurs, which contributed to the reduction of politically motivated violence before, during and after the 2023 elections; - The proportion of issue-based campaigns free of divisive rhetoric increased in the 2023 elections compared to the 2019 elections. - The proportion of campaigns with divisive ethnic, religious, and hate slurs also decreased in the 2023 elections compared to the 2019 elections.
4. Building on the Committee's 2019 legacy, up to **89% of losing candidates conceded and accepted the outcome of the 2023 general and off-cycle elections** in a timely and unequivocal manner, and up to **11 % sought redress through established legal channels.**
5. Provided advice through its plenary meetings, encouraging INEC, security and other government agencies involved in the elections to be transparent and impartial in the discharge of their duties throughout the 2023 election cycle.
6. Facilitated the resolution of intra- and inter-party disputes among political parties that could have undermined the 2023 electoral process. Promote unity by creating a platform for mediation and conciliation.
7. Leveraged her tremendous convening power and goodwill to promote peace in the short term and help de-escalate tensions and build confidence ahead of the 2023 elections, particularly in active conflict zones and parts of the country prone to electoral violence;
8. Proactively conducting plenary meetings with relevant stakeholders such as government agencies, security agencies, the Presidency, the business community, civil society groups, media owners and professionals, as well as religious, traditional and community leaders, the diplomatic community and international organizations, contributing to the credibility of credible and peaceful 2023 elections.

2.1 PROJECT OUTPUTS

OUTPUT 01



Plenary Meetings

Strategic meetings with key stakeholders at the state and National level and the highest level of government.



Peace Agreement Signing

Signing of peace agreements at the National and State level for the General and Off-cycle 2023 elections



Engagement and Training

NPC engagement and training of Women, Youths, and PWDs on Political participation and peaceful elections.



Visibility Actions

National Media-and NPC peace advocacy campaigns (pre and post election phase)



Conflict research

Evidence based studies/conflict mapping of political related violence and establishing situation room.



NPC Situation Room

Monitor compliance of the peace agreement



Historical documentation on NPC

2023 Election report and Book Public presentation

OUTPUT
06

OUTPUT
07

The project had a specific focus on engaging key stakeholders at the national and state levels, evidence-based research and reporting through the Situation Room, training of women, youth and persons with disabilities, and a media campaign by using the voices of key stakeholders to support its intervention and provide counter information to the propaganda while calling for peaceful elections and Nigeria's unity before, during and after the 2023 election cycle. This included collaboration with members of the EU-SDGN II cluster, civil society organizations, independent state-based peace architectures, and religious traditional and community leaders. The project covered national and sub-national levels and targeted the following states:



NORTH CENTRAL
Kogi, and Federal Capital Territory

NORTH WEST
Kano and Kaduna

NORTH EAST
Adamawa, and Taraba

SOUTH WEST
Oyo, Osun and Ekiti

SOUTH EAST
Imo and Enugu

SOUTH-SOUTH
Akwa-Ibom, and Bayelsa

2.2 PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

The project had several stakeholders that actively participated in the project intervention process. These stakeholders include:

- **Political Parties (including their presidential and governorship candidates)**
- **Independent National Electoral Commission (National and State Level)s**
- **Security Agencies**
- **Media Agencies**
- **Government Agencies (National and State-Level)**
- **The 3 arms of Government**
- **Diplomatic Community**
- **Women-Led Groups**
- **Independent State Based Peace Architectures**
- **Election Observation Missions**
- **PWDs- Led groups**
- **Youth-Led groups**
- **Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations**
- **Traditional Rulers and Groups**
- **Civil Society Organizations**

2.4 WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED: IMPACTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the 28-month project, several milestones were achieved, the project met its stated objectives, and positive results were achieved. Nigeria's electoral processes are somewhat more peaceful and largely acceptable to Nigerians as a result of the actions of the NPC.

The specific actions taken by the NPC during this period are divided into the pre-election and election periods, which include;



Improved compliance with provisions of election peace accords by Political Parties, candidates, and party supporters.

The Peace Accord is central to the work of the National Peace Committee because it commits presidential and gubernatorial candidates and political parties contesting the election to peaceful conduct and to seek redress only through legally established channels. It is a high-profile event in the Committee's calendar, attended by Nigeria's elite political class, top government officials, eminent international statesmen, civil society organizations, development partners and the diplomatic community, among others. The National Peace Committee (NPC), chaired by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, GCFR, used its convening power to facilitate the signing of a Peace Accord at the National and Off-Cycle Elections Peace Accord Political Parties and Candidates.

2023 ELECTIONS PEACE ACCORDS

2 NATIONAL
PEACE
ACCORDS 

1st National Peace Accord – Sept. 2022



2nd National Peace Accord – Feb. 2023



2023 ELECTIONS PEACE ACCORDS

3 STATE
PEACE
ACCORDS 

Kogi State Peace Accord – Nov. 2023



Imo State Peace Accord – Nov. 2023



Bayelsa State Peace Accord – Nov. 2023



5 STATE PEACE ACCORDS

With the support of the ISPAs5 with the support of the ISPAs5 with the support of the ISPAs that is, Oyo, Cross River, Taraba, Kano and Enugu States

The Political parties and candidates were mobilized to endorse and abide by the Electoral Peace Accord. The peace accord gained traction both nationally and internationally, contributing to publicity for the NPC and the de-escalation of political tensions/mediation in inter/intra-party conflicts in the 2023 elections.

2015-2023 - PEACE ACCORDS

STATES

13 STATES
Kogi, Imo, Bayelsa, Oyo, Cross River, Taraba, Kano, Enugu, Edo, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti, Anambra states

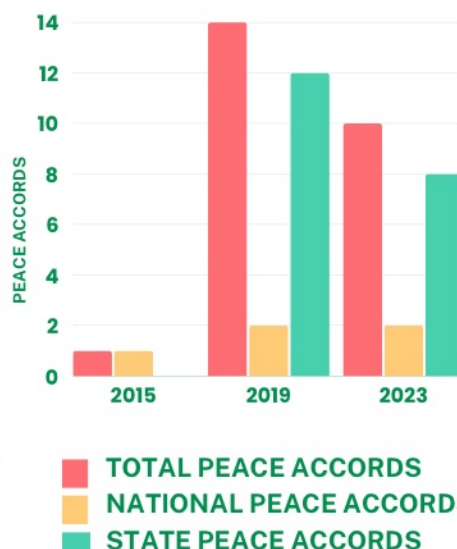


73 POLITICAL PARTIES ENGAGED

Over 2300
PARTICIPANTS.



25 PEACE ACCORD
5 NATIONAL, 20 STATE PEACE ACCORDS



2015



1 Peace Accord at the National Level

2019



14 Accords were signed 2 at the national level, 8 in all the off-cycle election states, and 4 in states with no off-cycle elections but with ISPAs, that is Adamawa, Benue, Bauchi and Gombe

2023



10 peace accords, 2 (first and second) at the national level, 3 in states with off-cycle elections i.e. Kogi, Imo and Bayelsa, and 5 with the support of the ISPAs, that is Oyo, Cross River, Taraba, Kano and Enugu states

In total, the NPC continually contributes to stronger compliance with the electoral legal framework through the signing of this agreement. So far, the committee has facilitated 25 agreements at the national and sub-national levels to contribute to peaceful elections in Nigeria. Since 2015, over 2300 people have participated in the signing of the peace accords ceremony. Typically, the agreement ceremonies gather critical stakeholders and political actors who deliver speeches committing to a peaceful process. All of the state-level peace accords committed the contending political actors to accept the results of the elections and, if aggrieved, to seek redress through legally established channels. In addition to resolving emerging inter-party disputes, the agreement further reduced tensions and increased citizen confidence in the NPC.

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Improved compliance with the electoral legal framework relating to the peaceful conduct of elections by INEC and security agencies - Stakeholder and Plenary engagements.

The NPC is the most credible and trusted body for dispute resolution in Nigeria, period. Its peacebuilding engagements with critical stakeholders—the presidency, political parties, religious leaders, traditional leaders, youth, women, PWDs, security agencies, CSOs, and EUSDGN—have made it so. The Committee demands greater accountability and transparency through its mandate, convening plenary meetings as a closed forum for developing election strategy and a regular platform for engagement with critical stakeholders.

Ahead of the 2015 elections, more than 7 different meetings were held to establish the NPC, and 4 other strategic meetings were held to prepare for the signing of the first peace agreement.

Ahead of the 2019 general elections, the NPC held approximately 5 strategic meetings.

These meetings helped to identify and inaugurate new meetings, receive briefings from INEC and security agencies, invite political parties and presidential candidates, prepare for the signing of the peace accord, and monitor compliance with the accord after the results were announced. The committee recorded more than **12 other meetings** that the chairman and convener held with various election observation missions.

Similarly, during the **2023 elections**, in line with the need to support peaceful elections at the national and state levels, the NPC adopted various strategies with stakeholders at different levels. The first strategic meeting was held on **June 1, 2022**, with the All-Party Parliamentary Group of the United Kingdom to discuss the functions of the NPC towards peace and reconciliation in Nigeria ahead of the elections. In addition, at a meeting held on **September 22, 2022**, the NPC reviewed and expanded its membership to reflect the nature and structure of the Nigerian state and its potential for peaceful electoral processes, given the age of some of the members and their past active years. This gesture underscores the moral and convening power of the NPC to advance the ideals of peace before, during and after elections.

The new members of the NPC were composed of **Alhaji Mahmud Yayale Ahmed**, with an outstanding pedigree in public service, **Ms. Idayat Hassan**, a thermometer in the civil society space in Nigeria, **Gen Martin Luther Agwai** vast experience in managing conflicts

both nationally and internationally, **Mr Femi Otedola** a business mogul, a great industrialist and philanthropist, a face of the new generation and represents the future of business in Nigeria, and **Mr John Momoh**, veteran journalist and owns one of the most reputable TV stations i.e Channels bringing together their experience and exposure to support the work of the Peace committee. Stakeholders such as the business community, civil society groups, media owners and professionals, and relevant regulatory bodies have been engaged to ensure credible and peaceful elections and to promote a culture of dialogue, peace and reconciliation beyond the 2023 elections that will facilitate Nigeria's overall socio-economic development.

This underscores the importance of inclusivity and the convening power of the NPC. The work of the NPC also extends to proactive engagement with religious, traditional and community leaders and organizations to de-escalate tensions and build trust in the run-up to elections, particularly in active conflict zones and parts of the country prone to electoral violence. This is reflected in their messages of peace and commitment to peaceful processes.

Before the signing of the National Accord, a two-day discussion was held in **July 2022** with political parties, INEC, security agencies, and civil society groups to jointly review the content of the Peace Accord and the role and impact of digital technologies in facilitating peaceful elections in Nigeria.

The discussion was instrumental in fostering a shared understanding of how digital tools can impact the democratic process. The engagement was critical in discussing the aspect of addressing the potential negative impact of misinformation, hate speech, and other harmful activities on the electoral process. In addition, the discussion allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the content of the peace agreement through a thorough review process. It focused on various aspects, including gender issues, the role of technology, and harmful information and behaviours. Participating political parties were able to submit their proposals for revising the agreement document, which were taken into consideration. Another achievement was the discussion on developing an effective accountability mechanism, consolidating these issues to ensure that the Peace Accord effectively addresses them in future elections.

The National Peace Committee held plenary meetings with key stakeholders such as INEC- office of the National and state Chairman, security agencies- the National Security Adviser, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Military Service Chiefs, the Inspector General of Police, the Director General of the State Security Services, IPAC-Office of the Chairman, Civil societies, religious and traditional rulers as well as the international communities to discuss their intended strategies for the accord signing, particularly since it's in her mandate to intervene during in electoral and non-electoral issues. These meetings were necessary for the signing of accords and plans for the 2023 and off-cycle elections. These meetings played a significant role in enabling the various entities to effectively strategize their interventions and contributions to the conduct of candidates and political parties before, during, and ahead of the signing of state and national accords. Moreover, these meetings fostered a culture of dialogue and reconciliation, resolving emerging and reemerging conflicts between INEC, political parties, and candidates through the convening power of the NPC. As a result, all parties were able to make valuable contributions to the successful conduct of the election.

To support the state-level accords, The National Peace Committee [NPC] as a facilitator fully recognizes the importance of a vertical (bottom-up) approach to conflict resolution hence its willingness to also engage conflict parties directly at the grassroots level (where possible and necessary). The Committee is neither an omniscient nor miracle-working body but has the humility to recognize that conflict parties, even at the community levels, possess what it takes to resolve their issues. All they need is a credible and trusted platform to drive the process which the Committee is privileged to offer. Throughout the 2015 and 2019 election cycles, the potential for violence has substantially remained at the state levels. Beyond staggered state elections, it has increasingly become difficult for peace committee members to visit every state and call for peaceful and non-violent elections. Sequel to this, fifteen [15] Independent State-Based Peace Committees [ISPAs] were mobilised and established. To facilitate the state-level nature of interventions, mediation, early warning, and data collection.

The state-based peace committees are independent of the NPC, and not established by the government of that state. They collaboratively worked with the NPC, especially in states involved with off-cycle elections. The State-level committees are independent of the government and made up of credible statesmen and women, with integrity and influence who have agreed to work with the committee at the national level. These committees are the grassroots mobilizers to support and contribute to the peace initiatives of the National Peace Committee with support from the independent state-based peace architectures, held a series of stakeholder dialogues in preparation for the signing of the peace accords in Ekiti, Osun, Kogi, Imo, and Bayelsa States. The stakeholders included -

Political parties Chairmen and gubernatorial candidates, State chapters of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Traditional leaders – Chairman Council of Obas such as the Ooni of Ife, Onisan of Isan, INEC’s Resident Electoral Commissioners, the Commissioners of Police in the states and CSOs, particularly the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD).

The stakeholders especially- political parties and candidates collaborated openly by – granting media interviews committing themselves to the rule of law, maintaining the integrity of the electoral process, and calling on the electorate and supporters to do the same.

These messages were used to promote peaceful election advocacy and were disseminated on state and national media, as well as via the Secretariat’s social media handles. Utilising Public awareness campaigns using its media and communication strategy to educate citizens about the importance of peaceful elections, the need for active participation in the electoral process, and a call on all citizens to be law-abiding and peaceful. These campaigns mobilised public support for peaceful elections while discouraging any form of violence or electoral malpractice. Through organised consensus-building, the NPC helped reduce tensions and promoted a shared commitment to peaceful electoral processes at the state level.

 **Enhanced stakeholder access to curated information on conflicts, elections and politically-related violence for engagement by the NPC-** *A mini Situation Room to monitor compliance with the signed Peace Accord by political parties and their candidates before during and after the 2023 general and off-cycle elections established.*

The NPC Secretariat engaged experts to assist the Committee in identifying potential conflicts and, in the case of existing conflicts, to prepare detailed reports to support the Committee's actions.

Two consultants were hired to conduct evidence-based research and mapping of conflict areas. This was done to ensure that NPC meetings and stakeholder engagements related to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria were well-informed. The research also included fact-finding missions to investigate the causes and effects of the various conflicts currently raging in Nigeria. Situation rooms were established at the state and national levels to monitor compliance with peace agreements.

These situation rooms produced quarterly reports based on primary and secondary data sources. The reports included impact analyses on compliance and violations of the peace agreements, as well as preparations for the upcoming general elections, lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations. This information was used to inform the NPC's strategic interventions and other project publications as needed.

These rooms were equipped and staffed to monitor political parties' compliance with the state peace agreements.

The protocol and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the situation rooms were widely disseminated to all political party officials/agents and members of civil society organizations to ensure a common understanding. All mini-situation rooms were tested before election day to ensure readiness.

For the first time since the inception of the NPC, Election Mini-Situation Rooms were established in Osun and Ekiti State,

Whereby >

Political parties that signed the Peace Accord in Osun State



Political parties that signed the Peace Accord in Ekiti State



65%

2023 PEACE ACCORD COMPLIANCE RATE ELECTIONS



40%

2019 PEACE ACCORD COMPLIANCE RATE ELECTIONS

The NPC Situation Room reported

They also noted that **16** out of **18** presidential candidates conceded defeat in the parliamentary elections in a timely and unequivocal manner. The NPC situation room also documented reports[3] that were shared constantly with members of the NPC which helped them to make informed decisions before, during and after the elections.



Strengthened media engagement to preach Peace and Unity, counter fake news and propaganda, and make visible the activities and interventions of the NPC before, during, and after the elections - NPC Peace advocacy campaigns.

Since the advent of digital media and the proliferation of social media, the spread of fake news and propaganda has significantly impacted Nigeria's democracy, both positively and negatively. The NPC Secretariat has been actively using the media to support its interventions, counter misinformation, and advocate for peaceful elections and national unity since 2015, 2019, and throughout 2023.

By maintaining a substantial presence through traditional media channels (newspapers, radio, television) as well as various social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.), the NPC has effectively reached more than “60 million” people, both domestically and internationally. This extensive outreach has been instrumental in shaping public narratives, driving meaningful change, and empowering communities. In addition, the NPC's media outreach has been dedicated to promoting peace and unity, dispelling fake news and propaganda, and transparently showcasing the Committee's initiatives and interventions.

This strategy facilitated shaping narratives, instigating change, and empowering communities, while effectively highlighting the committee's influence on the media as a key tool for building trust and reassuring the population. In addition, the NPC disseminated Press statements through several newspapers to express their concerns when political parties deviated from the issue-based campaigns they had previously committed to.

The dissemination of peace through the use of social media posters and videos, combined with extensive television and radio coverage of all peace agreement ceremonies, including live streaming on television and social media platforms, underscored the Committee's commitment to promoting reconciliation and overcoming misinformation and propaganda. In addition, members of the NPC participated in numerous TV and radio appearances to promote peace and unity, counter misinformation and propaganda, and increase transparency about the Committee's activities and interventions.

[3] NPC situation room reports available on the website.

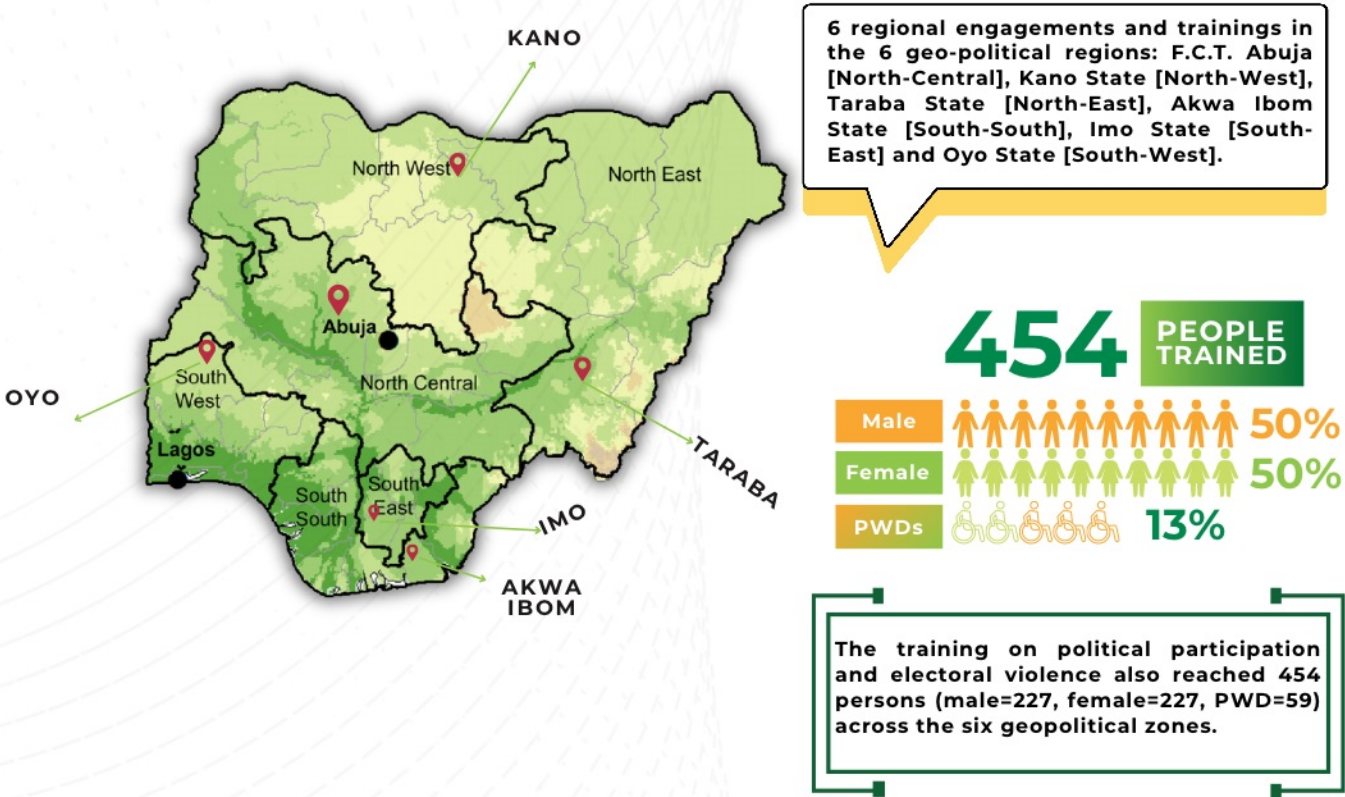
The NPC also facilitated the recording of peace messages from various stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of upholding the rule of law and maintaining the integrity of the electoral process, and urging voters to do the same. Special peace messages from highly respected individuals, such as traditional, religious and business leaders, key peace committee members and celebrities, were widely disseminated to encourage states and communities to support the peaceful electoral process. These messages were shared through both state and national media platforms, as well as through the Secretariat's official social media channels, and significantly reduced tensions at the national and state levels, particularly addressing concerns about hate speech, incitement and the spread of violent campaigns.

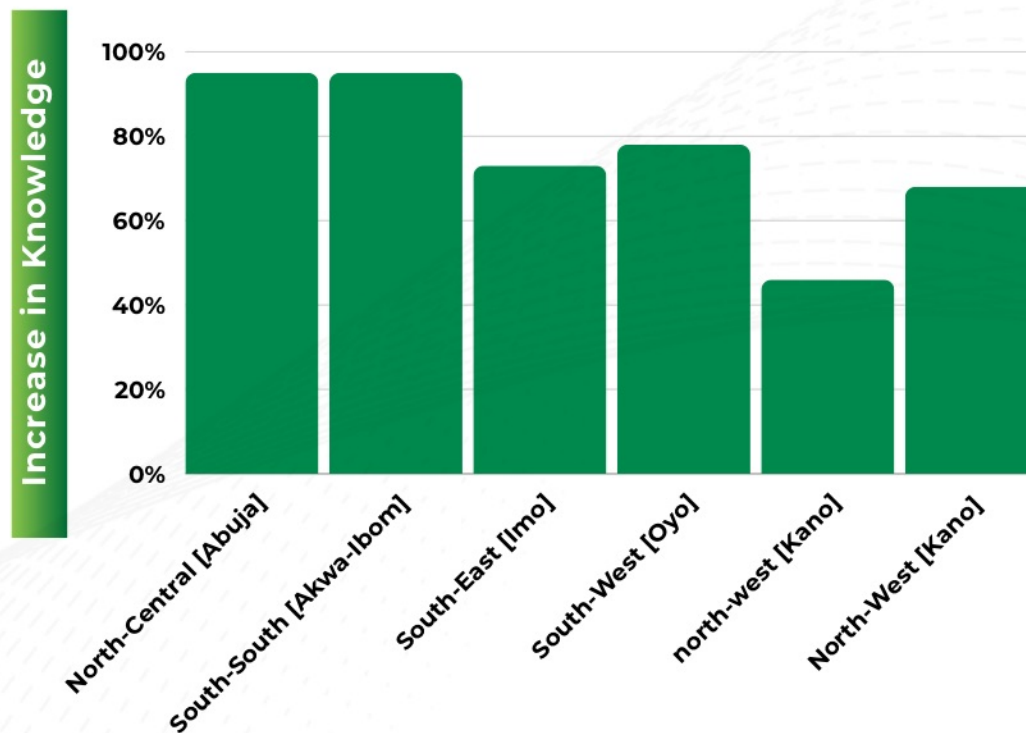


Innovative Local/State-level initiatives/actions to effectively mitigate conflict triggers before, during, and after 2023 elections

- Engagement with/capacity building of traditional, religious, and community leaders, Engagement with/capacity building of Women groups, youth groups and PWD groups

Over the years, the NPC and its interventions have been perceived as elitist and only visible during elections. It has also been perceived as out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Nigerians. Consequently, the NPC is committed to improving its engagement with Nigerians at the local level through training, seminars and workshops on political participation and peaceful elections.





Participants in the north-central [Abuja] and south-south [Akwa-Ibom] regions had an increase in knowledge of **95%** and **95%** respectively, while in the other regions, the increase was **73%** in the south-east [Imo], **78%** in the south-west [Oyo], **46%** in the north-west [Kano] and **68%** in the north-east [Taraba].

The peacebuilding training also strengthened the capacity of participants to disseminate the principles of a pluralistic society and the values of inclusiveness in democratic governance to their communities. The peacebuilding training also strengthened the capacity of participants to disseminate the principles of a pluralistic society and the values of inclusiveness in democratic governance to their communities. Participants agreed to become part of the NPC's local networks, which provide information on the compliance of political parties and their candidates, and to become part of the government's early warning systems.

*As a PWD, have never been motivated to participate in the elections but with the learnings from the training, I registered for my PVC and encouraged those close to me to do the same and we all participated in the voting on election day- **Abdulrahman Violet Joy**.*

“

I used the knowledge training to actively interface during the PVC registration and collection, for days I volunteered to mediate in the process, as well as conducted a small community meeting for voter education
- Stephen Ndaguba

”

The early warning system played a crucial role in contributing to the peacebuilding efforts of the National Peace Committee. The system served as a mechanism for the early identification and analysis of potential conflicts, electoral violence, tensions and security threats, enabling proactive measures to be taken to prevent escalation and promote peace. By monitoring state-level peace and security indicators, the Early Warning System provides valuable information to the NPC Situation Room, where its recommendations have been used by the National Peace Committees for informed decision-making and interventions.

This has further enhanced coordination and collaboration among stakeholders involved in peacebuilding efforts. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, the National Peace Committee was able to address complex challenges at the state level. This collaborative approach increased the impact of peacebuilding initiatives and fostered synergies among diverse stakeholders.

3.0 SIGNIFICANT CHANGE/ PROGRESS FROM THE PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Some of the beneficiaries of the project also provided feedback on the NPC's interventions for future engagement of the National Peace Committee at the highest level of government and how the various platforms have facilitated their work. Eliciting the various opinions of project stakeholders and beneficiaries helped to elicit further insights from stakeholder groups such as security agencies, the judiciary, INEC, civil society organizations, political parties, and the Independent State Peace Architecture at the state level after the general and off-cycle 2023. To this end, the focus group discussion revealed the following;

IMO STATE

In Imo State, 49% of stakeholders agreed that the elections were largely peaceful and the majority also agreed that the elections were inclusive, free, fair and credible.

68% of the stakeholders also agreed that the interventions of the NPC were effective in achieving the results. Stakeholders felt that INEC's level of impartiality was on the rise during the elections, security agencies were average, and state agencies were very low. The level of divisive ethnic, religious, and hate slurs perpetrated by candidates, political parties, and their agents was at its lowest after the election and peaked before the Imo State election. However, **78%** of the participants agreed that the signed peace agreement was very effective, but suggested that only about **42%** compliance was achieved. Stakeholders in Imo State have observed notable changes in the behaviour of the people of the state

towards promoting peaceful elections, especially when compared to previous elections. They have noted a heightened awareness among the people of the impact of their language, leading to a reduction in hate speech. While voter turnout has improved in some areas, it has been hampered by insecurity in others. There is a discernible increase in political awareness, albeit accompanied by persistent instances of vote buying. Stakeholders have also recognized improved relationships and cooperation as a result of the NPC-facilitated engagements, with an ongoing need to promote confidence-building for future elections.

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'it is important that Key stakeholders continue to receive feedback on effective processes and structure. The conversations driven by the NPC serve as a medium to reinforce the need to continually build, maintain, and strengthen mechanisms to ensure social integration and peace in the Imo state, the opportunity is continually welcomed for advancing our country's democracy'- Rev. Fr. Prof. Phillip Ogbonna, Chairman Imo ISPA.

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BAYELSA STATE

The feedback from Bayelsa State was different from that of another state. Stakeholders mentioned that the signing of the peace accord in Bayelsa looked like a carnival because the major political party actors disregarded the process. They felt that the pre-election activities did not adequately involve key stakeholders in the state. While it was agreed that INEC's conduct was impartial, some stakeholders felt that not all results were uploaded to the BVAS and that these were not added to the overall result. Overall, stakeholders agreed that turnout should not be measured solely by the total number of registered voters, as the register may not accurately reflect the true situation if it hasn't been updated in over a year.

70% of stakeholders agreed that the peace agreement is an effective strategy for promoting peaceful elections in Nigeria. There was a medium level of compliance with the agreement in the state and the election was a medium level of free, fair, credible and inclusive. They also emphasized the significant role played by political actors in Bayelsa State in the outcome of the election and encouraged the NPC to continue its mediation and intervention efforts in this regard. Although discussions with candidates at the stakeholder level are still ongoing, the number of disputes has decreased. The NPC's interventions have had a significant impact on Nigeria's electoral history.

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INEC Bayelsa state is continually committed to free, fair, and credible elections. Stakeholders' efforts such as the NPC are continually welcomed to help reach the citizens as this support is significant in the electoral process
- **Obo Effanga- REC, Bayelsa.**

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KOGI STATE

The stakeholders highlighted that the NPC support in Kogi state during the off-cycle election was very significant. They agreed the intervention was a welcome idea to continue strengthening peacebuilding in the state. Findings from the conversation revealed that fairness and equity are essential for promoting social with the advent of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. **90%** of the stakeholders agreed that the peace accord is an effective strategy for promoting peaceful elections.

Although there was considerable compliance with the peace accord by the political parties and candidates compared to the 2019 elections, there was also a decline in the level of divisive ethnic, religious and hate slurs perpetuated by candidates, political parties and their agents before, during and after the Kogi elections. Contributing to their perception that the elections were peaceful, inclusive, free fair and credible.

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National Peace Committee. The committee had enormously supported Kogi state during the last off-cycle election. The chairman reiterated that Kogi state people are brothers and sisters and that they love peace and will always live in peace. - **Ambassador Usman Bello, Chairman ISPA Kogi.**

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In the discussed intervention, it is emphasized that despite the collaboration with various stakeholders, including traditional and religious leaders across different states, there is a need to strengthen collaborations with other stakeholders.

They generally perceived that the election was peaceful, inclusive, free, fair and credible only to a medium extent. **95%** of the stakeholders also believe that the peace accord is an effective strategy for promoting peaceful elections. However, they expected that the outcome of the 2023 election was going to be better than the preceding elections with the experienced garnered this wasn't the case.

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The intervention of the NPC has brought a new perspective to the election process and the polity through fair play and peaceful conduct’.

- Fr Charles Etim, Chairman ISPA Cross-river.

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4.0 CHALLENGES FROM PROJECT IMPLEMENTATIONS



Growing expectation of the NPC:

The growing expectations of the NPC as a national mediator to respond to the increasing number of conflicts across the country, both electoral and non-electoral, is shifting the burden of primary responsibility and accountability away from the democratically constituted authorities.

The National Peace Committee essentially complements existing government interventions by leveraging its immense moral capital to convene stakeholders at the dialogue table to facilitate peaceful resolutions. However, stakeholders feel that moral interventions without adequate and effective accountability mechanisms are increasingly creating a sense of powerlessness to reign in various misbehaving political actors. This was particularly reflected in the toxic and violent pattern of campaigns which have emerged following the signing of the 1st National Peace Accord in September 2022. Consequently, it has become necessary for the secretariat to review its strategies on how to monitor compliance with the signed peace agreement.

✓ **Lack of Compliance:** Since 1999, Nigeria has worked to establish a legal framework to support electoral integrity, including provisions in the constitution, electoral laws and electoral guidelines, as well as INEC guidelines and political party constitutions. Despite these efforts, concerns remain about electoral violence, manipulation of results, and the judicialisation of the electoral process. The 2023 general election process highlights the abundance of laws for credible elections and the widespread violation of these laws with a culture of impunity and lack of rule of law. These issues must be addressed to improve elections in Nigeria.

✓ **Power struggles/transitions before and after the 2023 elections:** A change in government actors at the national and subnational levels generally affected the socio-political climate of the country, the pre-election scramble for power, or the use of godfatherism to influence political will. Unlike before, there were significant changes in the power of various political parties with drastic changes and policy implementation that affected some states. The influence of the NPC and its convening power helped to intervene in some of these cases, such as mediating with the incumbent government to allow free play and access to public facilities for their campaigns when necessary.

✓ **Patriarchal system and the limited inclusion of women and persons with disability in peacebuilding initiatives.** The patriarchal system is characterized by unequal power relations between men and women, where women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed.

Although the operational context was at the national and state levels, the prevalence of patriarchy is still present, especially in the inclusion of women in politics. However, the project promoted the inclusion of women by targeting specific women-led groups, which was reflected in the training organized by the NPC secretariat to ensure equal representation of women at all levels.

While there is a general acceptance of PWDs at the training, there is a situation that has made them feel conditioned, albeit that these PWDs often face stigmatization and discrimination.

✓ **Limited project funding:** Given more funds for the project, the project would have had a greater reach and impact, especially at the local level, especially with the high inflation rate that has continued to impact significantly on the price of commodities in the Country and substantially affecting the actual expenditures in comparison with budget estimates.

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Citizens and Limited Political Awareness: To many people, the NPC and its interventions are elitist. Its engagements have in the past been construed as out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Nigerians. Therefore, since the 2019 general elections, the NPC, through its secretariat, has committed to improving its engagement with Nigerian women, youth and persons with disabilities at the local level through training, seminars and workshops on political participation and peaceful elections. Many citizens also demonstrated limited awareness of political party processes, structures, ideologies and citizens' political rights. This is of great concern to the political process and Nigeria's desire to conduct credible elections.

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Financial limitations of Training beneficiaries: To advance peacebuilding efforts intervention in conflict situations and hinder the implementation of peacebuilding initiatives. The beneficiaries of the training were only able to undertake activities that were in line with their financial capacity as individuals. Despite their zeal and enthusiasm, the beneficiaries were discouraged from continuing the training.

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Trust deficit in the Nigerian system: There is a general deficit of trust in the Nigerian system, largely due to the economic imbalance that plays out in the country such as the high rate of inflation, and high level of unemployment amongst other factors. Interactions with certain stakeholders revealed an undertone of mistrust and distrust of government institutions. There is a high expectation from key stakeholders like the NPC, particularly since the project does not provide economic empowerment for the participants, and leaves them at their economically disadvantaged states.

4.1 LESSON LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Based on the challenges and impact of the project interventions identified, the project evaluation has provided valuable lessons learned for future sustainability plans. These key lessons highlighted can guide those who would use this evaluation to enhance the effectiveness and success of similar project interventions in the future as highlighted below.

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Investing in Training and Support: The positive impact of the project was attributed to the appropriate selection of the project team and consultants. In addition, the continuous learning process provided to the Secretariat staff was instrumental in their personal and professional development, leading to improved support for the NPC intervention. To ensure future sustainability, it is essential to continue to invest in staff development, especially in areas such as technical/analytical reporting, networking and partnership coordination. This will increase their capacity and effectiveness in implementing project interventions.

Strengthened Stakeholder Involvement at the State Level: The involvement of key stakeholders at the state level was a useful practice, especially during the off-cycle elections. This involvement ensured the ease of intervention. For future projects, it is critical to continue to engage relevant stakeholders at different levels to build support, local knowledge and ownership, which can lead to more successful outcomes.

Effective Collaboration and Transparency: The importance of working with stakeholders at all levels, being transparent with other donors, and making informed decisions using credible data sources from the NPC Situation Room. There has been an increased level of collaboration between the Kukah Center and other key partners (particularly members of the EU-SDGN cluster). This was also reflected in the quality of our interventions and the impact of sustained peaceful processes before, during and after the elections. This would provide ongoing support to government institutions to strengthen their capacity for effective implementation. The importance of open communication, collaboration, and data-driven approaches to optimize project results. NPC emphasizes transparency, neutrality, and data-driven decision-making to build trust and ensure accountability to local and international partners.

Documentation for Stakeholder Engagement: The impact of the intervention was evident in the documentation of the NPC 2023 Election Report and a book on the history of the National Peace Committee. These documents will serve as valuable resources for stakeholder engagement in Nigeria and beyond, providing credible information for informed decision-making. Documenting the results and lessons learned can contribute to knowledge sharing and serve as a reference for similar initiatives. Learning from other EU-SDGN partners was also an important aspect of the lessons learned. This included sharing best practices, ideas and lessons learned from our interventions.

Timing and funding: The timely intervention and funding from the European Union allowed sufficient time for the interventions to fully achieve the project objectives. It's crucial to adopt a longer-term perspective in project design, especially in an electoral project, as it is a full cycle. Short timeframes often limit the depth and scope of activities, making it difficult to achieve maximum impact. Allowing adequate time for planning, implementation, and evaluation in future interventions will allow projects to better adapt to changing circumstances, address complex issues, and achieve sustainable results. Inadequate funding can lead to rushed implementation and compromised results.

Sustain Support: The European Union is encouraged to continue its support for peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria, recognizing the critical role such interventions play in fostering stability and resilience within the country's democratic framework. Continued funding will enable the consolidation of gains made by this project and support the implementation of further initiatives aimed at addressing underlying drivers of electoral and non-electoral conflict by the NPC.

By incorporating these key lessons learned into future interventions, organizations and other stakeholders can increase the likelihood of success and create a more significant and lasting impact on their interventions.

5.0 PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed for various stakeholders involved in the project:

The National Peace Committee

- Should continue to work with relevant parties to maintain the progress and credibility achieved to date. Should focus on establishing a non-partisan approach to electoral processes to ensure long-term acceptance and build confidence ahead of the 2027 elections.
- Should prioritize engagement with the youth population, especially students in higher education institutions, to increase their participation and support in peacebuilding and electoral processes.

- Should share findings and best practices with other organizations involved in peacebuilding and electoral processes to promote knowledge-sharing and support for mediation.
- Should continually support marginalized groups such as women, youth, and PWD groups to enhance their inclusion in peaceful elections.
- Should invest in capacity building to enhance the skills and knowledge of local actors such as the ISPAs and consider expanding the network to other states to improve local intervention efforts.
- Should strengthen collaboration with government agencies such as the Judiciary, and legislature, to create an accountability mechanism to ensure compliance with signed peace agreements.

The Kukah Centre

- Should prioritize early engagement and follow-up with stakeholders at plenary meetings to effectively manage emerging challenges and risks in future interventions.
- Should share findings and best practices with other organizations such as INEC, political parties, etc., involved in peacebuilding and electoral processes, in order to disseminate lessons learned and strengthen knowledge-sharing on peace and security issues, and to promote cumulative support for mediation, where appropriate.
- Should provide additional support to staff and volunteers through capacity-building for election observation monitoring to improve data gathering, analysis, and information sharing on peace and security.
- Should continually provide support to marginalized groups such as women, youth and PWD groups to strengthen their inclusion in peaceful elections.

The Government

- Should recognize that ensuring peace and security before, during, and after elections is a major challenge in Nigeria, and hence prioritize efforts to address existing issues of conflict that can impact the upcoming elections.

- Should continuously support the National Peace Committee in its engagement with political parties and other stakeholders to strengthen the culture of mediation, reconciliation and facilitation of peaceful elections in Nigeria.
- Should recognize the challenge of ensuring peace and security before, during, and after elections in Nigeria and prioritize efforts to address existing conflict issues.
- Should be open to feedback from the citizens, especially regarding the electoral process, bringing forward actionable steps through the National Peace Committee as this will highlight further the key contributions of government to improving the democratic progress of Nigeria.

The Donor community

- Should support the continual funding of the National Peace Committee to expand its intervention and continuously establish another network of peace structures and an early warning system.
- Should ensure funding opportunities are made available timely ahead of the election process to allow for continuous data research and effective intervention approaches to enhance peace and election security.
- Should build on the National Peace Committee's success over the years for future initiatives, drawing from the knowledge and accomplishments of the committee to support the establishment of lasting peace, reconciliation, and socio-economic progress in Nigeria.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can enhance their efforts in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and electoral processes, contributing to a more stable and peaceful Nigeria.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY: MAKING PROJECT IMPACT LAST

The sustainability plan involves continual focus efforts on leveraging the capacity of NPCs in conflict resolution, mediation, and resource mobilization. We will continue to invest in the capacity building of local actors, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities to sustain peacebuilding initiatives at the local level to champion peacebuilding efforts.

The knowledge equipped these groups, such as the Independent State Peace Architectures [ISPAs] at the subnational level, with the necessary skills and resources to ensure their active contribution and participation in strengthening the promotion of peaceful elections and building confidence in future elections.

The NPC situation room has now been transitioned into an Election Security Information hub this hub will provide periodic analysis of election security trends and scenario-building and offer public education and enlightenment on election security.

The knowledge repository from the interventions is also made available on the NPC website. It is accessible to various individuals and organizations and enriches the existing pool of information on peace and security issues. It provides a comprehensive approach that can be used for several purposes, including research and interventions, both locally and internationally. These documents by the NPC will strengthen the capacity of various stakeholders, promote evidence-based policymaking, foster collaboration and synergy among different organizations and initiatives working towards peace and security in Nigeria, and contribute to the overall efforts to build sustainable peace and security in Nigeria.

Looking ahead, the European Union should consider extending its support to the NPC for the upcoming off-cycle elections in Edo and Ondo states or, in the longer term, for the 2027 elections, particularly as the signing of the peace agreement played a key role in the outcome of the 2023 elections. These forthcoming elections present significant opportunities for peacebuilding, as well as potential challenges. By providing support and funding, the NPC can continue to use its enormous convening power to de-escalate tensions and promote peaceful electoral processes.

In addition, continued engagement of government agencies, civil society organizations, community leaders and other key stakeholders will ensure coherence in peacebuilding efforts and maximize impact. Through these concerted efforts, the EU can continually contribute to making Nigeria's electoral processes more peaceful and widely acceptable to Nigerians.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The general elections in Nigeria are often marked by heightened tensions, violent incidents, and fears of potential disintegration caused by divisive ethno-religious politics. The 2023 general election was no exception, prompting calls for the National Peace Committee (NPC) to intervene and utilize its widely recognized convening power to ensure a peaceful and widely accepted outcome.

The NPC, drawing from its past successful interventions, significantly expanded its stakeholder engagements and interventions during the 2023 election cycle.

Prior to the election, the NPC engaged in various activities to bring together relevant stakeholders, raise awareness at both national and sub-national levels, and proactively address emerging conflicts. These efforts led to the signing of a Peace Accord by the candidates and their parties ahead of the elections. During the election, the NPC closely monitored and ensured that political actors upheld the principles of the Peace Accord. Following the election, the NPC continued its efforts to promote peace, reconciliation, and rebuild public trust. Despite challenges such as non-compliance with the Peace Accord by key political actors, the **2023** elections can be considered acceptable in terms of the peaceful transition of power. The lessons learned from these elections should guide future actions to strengthen the NPC and its peacebuilding efforts in preparation for the **2027** elections and beyond.

The National Peace Committee, with its capability, structure, and public trust, remains integral to ensuring a peaceful electoral process in Nigeria. The collaborative efforts of stakeholders at various levels were key in promoting peaceful elections and power transition in Nigeria's democratic landscape. The NPC's interventions and strategies during the 2023 elections have been a source of hope, catalysing collaborative efforts and fostering unity amid challenges.

The project has made commendable progress, raising awareness of the NPC's mandate, facilitating the peace agreement, and contributing to a change in the perception of the 2023 elections as relatively peaceful. Noteworthy achievements include improved compliance with the Peace Agreement, enhanced stakeholder access to curated information on conflicts and elections, strengthened media engagement to promote peace and counter misinformation, and innovative local interventions to mitigate conflict triggers throughout the election cycle.

