Partnership and Peacebuilding: Examining an INGO's Peacebuilding Intervention in the Farmer-Herder Conflict in North Central Nigeria

MARTINLUTHER NWANERI

Doctor of Philosophy

ASTON UNIVERSITY

September 2024

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THESIS SUMMARY

The nature of the partnership relationship between Northern International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs) and Southern Local Nongovernmental Organizations (LNGOs) jointly implementing intervention projects in the Global South is a subject of significant debate in international development. Are these relationships partnerships, principal-agent relationships, or contractee–contractor–subcontractor relationships (Abnett, 2024)? Scholars contend that there is a gap between rhetoric and the practice of partnership, as it is characterized by unequal power dynamics and effects (Peacedirect, 2020; Wright, 2012; Fowler, 2003; Altahir, 2016). While the literature acknowledges this power imbalance in partnerships, it has insufficiently explored how it empirically manifests and impacts joint peacebuilding projects (Contu and Girei, 2016; Brass et al., 2018; Onudugo, Onu, and Onudugo, 2021; Banks, Schulpen, and Brockington, 2020). Therefore, using the case study of a peacebuilding intervention run by an INGO in partnership with two LNGOs within the farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria from 2012 to 2016, this dissertation examines the intersection between partnerships and peacebuilding effectiveness. The study investigates the nature of the relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs, how this relationship shaped the effectiveness of the peacebuilding intervention, and how the intervention was supported or hindered by the Nigerian state. The study adopts a qualitative approach, relying on semi-structured interviews, a critical review of documents and a database, and leveraging Alan Fowler's (1998) Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) as an analytical framework. The data suggests that the partnership relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs was inauthentic in nature and in operation, and this had a consequential effect on the intervention. This dissertation found there was insufficient community engagement, inadequate needs assessment, a flawed theory of change, and projects were imposed on beneficiaries, while sustainability plans were poorly designed. Consequently, the intervention failed to achieve sustainable peace or reduce violent conflict in the affected communities. Despite its contributions to community development in terms of food processing, the provision of boreholes and joint farming activities, the peacebuilding intervention lacked direct support from the state. The dissertation contends that the effectiveness of the initiative was hindered by the problematic nature of the partnership and weak peacebuilding governance in Nigeria, emphasizing the necessity for more authentic partnerships and stronger local governance structures to improve the success of such interventions.

Keywords: INGO-LNGOs partnerships, Farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria, Peacebuilding, Power imbalance, Authentic partnership, Global South & North, State role in peacebuilding, Sustainable peacebuilding, Effective peacebuilding, Peacebuilding governance.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, whose immeasurable sacrifices in caring for our family and managing our home allowed me to focus on this study. I could not have achieved this without your support.

Acknowledgements

Many individuals supported me in various ways and contributed significantly to the success of my Ph.D. journey at Aston University.

First, I want to thank my supervisors, Drs. Balazs Szent-Ivanyi and Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik, for their invaluable guidance and advice throughout this period. I appreciate their patience in reading and re-reading my drafts, providing corrections, and offering constructive feedback. I am also grateful for their support in my career development, conferences, and publishing. I have learned a great deal from these opportunities and have become better as a result. My thanks go to Dr. Uwe Wunderlich for stepping in as my associate supervisor for a brief period and providing invaluable guidance during that time.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the members of the Politics, History, and International Relations (PHIR) department and the Business and Social Sciences (BSS) college for fostering an environment where PhD students can thrive. Your seminars have been invaluable in helping students to bond and exchange ideas on research. Thank you, Dr. Anne Jenichen, Dr. Amanda Beattie, Dr. Patricia Correa, Dr. Thomas Eason, and many others too numerous to mention.

I am equally grateful to the Aston Modern Languages Research Foundation (AMLRF) for their generous grant of £350, which supported the fieldwork for this study, and an additional grant of £500 that enabled my attendance at the European Workshops in International Studies (EWIS) in Istanbul, Turkey, organized by the European International Studies Association (EISA).

Special thanks to the Graduate School at Aston University for the £1500 Researcher Development Fund, which supported my conference trips to Glasgow for the British International Studies Association (BISA) conference and to Potsdam, Germany, for the European International Studies Association (EISA) conference. These experiences were invaluable for improving the dissertation, networking and personal growth.

I am forever thankful to my family, especially my loving wife, for being a constant source of encouragement and strength. I also want to thank my children for their understanding and patience during my periods of isolation due to this study.

I also want to express my gratitude to Ali Gordjahanbeiglou and Ernest Reid, members of my PhD cohort at Aston, for their friendship and valuable advice throughout our journey. I am truly grateful.

Finally, I am grateful to God for His mercies throughout the study.

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List of Abbreviations

INGOs	International Nongovernmental Organizations
LNGOs	Local Nongovernmental Organizations
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organizations
IPCR	Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
OHCHR	Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
UN	United Nations
APP	Authentic Partnership Principles
IPS	Institutional Peacebuilding Structure
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
IMF	International Monetary Fund
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
AU	African Union
PCRD	Post conflict Reconciliation and Development
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
DFID	Department for International Development
FCDO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NPP	National Peace Policy
AP	Authentic Partnership
UNPC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
NPC	National Peace Council

IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
IDP	Internally Displace Persons
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICG	International Crisis Group
GGWA	Great Green Wall Agency
FMARD	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
FFRN	Forum on Framer-Herder Relations in Nigeria
CEPAD	Centre for Peace and Development
BSS	Business and Social Sciences
AMLRF	Aston Modern Languages Research Foundation
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Partnerships between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local non- governmental organizations (LNGOs) in the Global South are widely debated in international development discourse (Abnett, 2024; Banks & Brockington, 2019; Banks, Schulpen, & Brockington, 2020). The nature of this relationship is questioned: is it a genuine partnership, a contractor-subcontractor dynamic, a collaboration or quasi-grantmaker relationship, or a principal-agent relationship? The literature suggests a gap between the rhetoric and the actual practice of partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs (Peacedirect, 2020; Wright, 2012; Bano, 2012), with many highlighting the power imbalance and inequality in the relationship (Makuwira, 2018; Altahir, 2016; Wright, 2012; Contu & Girei, 2014; Fowler, 2003). The literature also indicates that their effects are insufficiently researched in the Global South in project situations (Brass et al., 2018; Contu & Girei, 2014). However, NGO practitioners often portray these partnerships as inclusive and participatory, with all partners equally partaking in decision-making and project implementation (Contu & Girei, 2014). The Nigerian peacebuilding sector is one of the areas where the paradox of the INGO-LNGO partnership relationship and its effects are empirically under-researched (Onudugo, Odo, & Onudugo, 2021; Banks, Schulpen, & Brockington, 2020). The lack of empirical case studies examining the dynamics of INGO-LNGO partnership relationships in peacebuilding within the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria (Adzande, 2022) exacerbates this paradox.

Additionally, the critical role of institutional support in peacebuilding (DeConing, 2016) and the uncertain nature of Nigeria's institutional peacebuilding policy environment (Babatunde, 2017) further complicate the issue. Consequently, this dissertation examines the partnership relationship between an INGO and two LNGOs in Nigeria within the context of a peacebuilding intervention in the farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria. The objective is to gain insight into the partnership relationship, its influence on the intervention, and the institutional support provided by the Nigerian government.

The dissertation helps to empirically address the paradoxical gap in the literature concerning peacebuilding partnerships in Nigeria, unveiling their nature and influence on jointly implemented projects. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to understand some of the under-researched dynamics and unanswered questions about the protracted farmer-herder conflict and institutional support for peacebuilding in Nigeria. A

peacebuilding intervention run by an INGO in partnership with two LNGOs, aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the conflict and building the economic capacities of farmers and herders, provided data for the study.

Peacebuilding within a nation is a state responsibility (UNDP, 2020), but states sometimes fulfil this responsibility by supporting peacebuilding initiatives driven by non-state actors through policy, collaboration, coordination, security, and the general provision of an enabling environment (Onodugo, Odor, & Onodugo, 2021). Peacebuilding is even believed to be "more of a political undertaking than a humanitarian" one (Onodugo, Odor, & Onodugo, 2021, p.9). The farmer-herder conflict, especially in the North Central region of Nigeria, has intensified since the early 1990s, leading to massive destruction and loss of life in the region and the need for peacebuilding interventions. There have been many peacebuilding interventions in the farmer-herder conflict by multilateral bodies and NGOs, including INGO-LNGO partnerships (Kwaja & Ademola- Adelehin, 2018; CDD, n.d.). Ironically, despite these interventions and the resources committed to them by various stakeholders, sustainable peace and harmonious relations between the groups remain elusive in the region, with significant costs and implications for development (Ilo et al., 2019; Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2022; Amnesty International, 2022; Ogunode et al., 2022). A study by Mercy Corps in four states in the North Central region of Nigeria indicates that about US$13.7 billion is lost annually due to the conflict, representing about 2.9% of each state's formal and informal economy (ICG, 2017; Mercy Corps, 2015). However, there is a scarcity of studies investigating peacebuilding interventions in the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria (Adzande, 2022). Thus, little is known about peacebuilding partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs that have intervened in the conflict, how these partnerships have operated, and whether the nature of their relationship shapes their joint delivery of projects, their outcomes, or their effectiveness. There is also little information available about the institutional support in Nigeria for such interventions. This dissertation addresses these gaps in the literature.

The issue of institutional support is very important in the Nigerian context because, even though Nigeria developed a peace policy in 2009 (IPCR, 2009), which was intended to "provide a coherent, participatory, and coordinated approach to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict management in the country" (Olalekan, 2023, p.1), the policy has not been signed into law and remains a draft. However, to date, there are no empirical studies on the nexus between institutional peacebuilding governance within this policy framework and non-state actor-driven peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria, even though the literature has sufficiently emphasized that peacebuilding is never done in a vacuum but must intersect with national policies and structures to be successful and sustainable

(Akande et al., 2021; DeConing, 2016; Lederach, 2012).

This dissertation is significant because it explores how peacebuilding INGO-LNGO relationships have operated in the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria and whether the nature of such partnerships shapes the effectiveness of their jointly implemented projects. Furthermore, it examines whether these interventions are adequately supported institutionally to succeed in Nigeria. This research will contribute to fostering a fairer, more effective, and balanced relationship between INGOs and LNGOs in peacebuilding in the Global South. Additionally, it is important for aiding our understanding of the level of institutional support available for peacebuilding initiatives driven by non-state actors in Nigeria and how this may impact their work. Equally, the dissertation contributes significantly to addressing the gap in how NGOs engage communities in peacebuilding projects, as identified in the literature, leading to better engagement, more value for project funds, and outcomes that are more reflective of local realities.

After this introduction, Section 1.2 presents the research background, focusing on the gaps in our understanding. Following this, Section 1.3 introduces the three broad research questions that guided the study. This is followed by Section 1.4, where I provide the dissertation's structure. The final section of Chapter One (Section 1.5) presents the disciplinary positionality, which identifies the academic context in which the research is conducted. It highlights the discipline’s epistemological orientation, intellectual environment, and the multidisciplinary nature of the study.

1.2 Research Gaps

Partnership as a form of relationship between INGOs and LNGOs has become increasingly common since the 1980s and 1990s; however, it is a contested concept in international development (Contu & Girei, 2014; Fowler, 2000, 2003; Makuwira, 2018). Part of the contention, as pointed out in the literature, is reconciling the paradox between the rhetoric of partnership and its practice. While NGO practitioners believe they are practicing partnership in their supposed relationships with LNGOs, ideally based on openness, inclusivity, and joint decision-making (Contu & Girei, 2014), many NGO scholars do not believe this is the case (Fowler, 2003; Wright, 2011; Morfit, 2011; Bano, 2012). Specifically, the literature points to the insufficient understanding or confusion around the role of power in INGO-LNGO relationships. Though scholars allude to the issue of power imbalance, it is unclear how power is managed and demonstrated in an INGO-LNGO partnership in a project context. While existing studies have explored the collaboration between INGOs and LNGOs, there is limited research on how unequal power dynamics are displayed and operationalized in these relationships, particularly when they

work jointly on projects. This gap in understanding the mechanisms and manifestations of power imbalance within these partnerships highlights the need for more focused research on how such dynamics affect decision-making, resource distribution, project outcomes and the sustainability of the joint projects. This necessity is highlighted by Contu and Girei (2014, p. 4), who emphasized the "need for more research to understand the role of power in INGO-LNGO partnership relations at the micro level, work relations, and practice level." Unfortunately, there are insufficient case studies focusing on power in jointly implemented projects. Studies in different areas of NGO partnerships, such as health, development, and human rights (Olawoore & Kamruzzaman, 2019; Welle, 2001; Malavisi, 2010; Corman, Grimm, & Rana, 2005), appear to have responded to this gap. However, this has not been sufficiently addressed in the case of peacebuilding (Höglund & Lilja, 2018; Kolk & Lenfant, 2015; Oudraat & Haufler, 2008), especially in the Nigerian context (Onodugo, Odor, & Onodugo, 2021; Ukiyedeikimie, 2023), and specifically in the farmer-herder conflict.

This dissertation adopts Banks and Hulme's (2012, p.4) conceptualization of NGOs as "non-state, non-profit, self-governing, non-governmental organizations offering innovative and people- centered approaches to service delivery, advocacy, and empowerment." It is important to note that NGOs generally generate their funds from the benevolent generosity of both the public and private sectors. Therefore, it is also believed that their accountability, leanings, and responsibilities should be directed toward these groups (Malavisi, 2010; Wright, 2012; Werekoh, 2014). NGO accountability should extend both upwards to funders and downwards to partner LNGOs and project beneficiaries, such as local communities. However, this has not been the case in Africa (Werekoh, 2014), as this dissertation also demonstrates.

Furthermore, International Nongovernmental Organizations, or simply INGOs, are international NGOs with parental roots in the Global North but pursuing development objectives abroad in the Global South. They have "adequate finance and resources but have limited country-level and grassroots knowledge, choosing instead to work at the local level (in the South) through domestic or Southern NGOs as partners, who are in close proximity to communities geographically, culturally, and linguistically" (Banks & Hulme, 2012, p. 4). As confirmed by the literature review, most of their partnerships with NGOs in the Global South began after the 1980s and 1990s. Our case study INGO falls into this category.

LNGOs, on the other hand, are Local Non-Governmental Organizations based in the Global South that rely on funding from abroad, mostly from the Global North, typically through partnerships with INGOs or through contracting and subcontracting, to fund projects and

services. They are national or regional NGOs within their respective countries. Unsurprisingly, most, if not all LNGOs in the Global South depend on funds from the North to carry out projects and, very importantly, to remain afloat (Ukiyedeikimie, 2023). The two LNGOs in the case study belong to this category. Both generate a substantial portion of their operating and sustenance funds through partnerships with INGOs.

The farmer-herder conflict has become increasingly destructive since the 1990s and 2000s and has prompted peace-building interventions by many multilateral bodies and INGOs in partnership with LNGOs. These include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Red Cross (CDD, n.d.). Sadly, there have not been any empirical studies examining peacebuilding interventions in the conflict (Adzande, 2022), which could enrich the literature on the nature of interveners and their interventions. Although Adzande's work is focused on the conflict, it did not address the issue of peacebuilding partnerships and interventions, as pointed out in the literature. As a result, despite the money, time, and effort invested in building peace between the farmers and herders, sustainable peace and harmonious living remain elusive. Development is virtually suspended in some areas within the conflict zone (ICG, 2017). The protracted nature of the conflict over the years, despite the interventions, combined with the dearth of empirical studies on the subject, makes scholarly investigation into peacebuilding NGOs imperative. Who are the actors involved, what forms of partnership do they engage in? What is the nature of their interventions, and how do these partnership dynamics influence the effectiveness of their peacebuilding efforts? Additionally, what is the broader peacebuilding policy environment in Nigeria, and how does it enable or constrain such interventions? The literature is yet to empirically address these gaps in relation to peacebuilding in the farmer-herder conflict (Adzande, 2022), which is why this dissertation examines an INGO–LNGO peacebuilding partnership intervention in this conflict in North-Central Nigeria, aiming to understand the nature of the relationship between the actors in a project context.

The dissertation also explores how the nature of the relationship between the INGO and the two LNGOs shaped their peacebuilding intervention, examining how the nature of the relationship and perceptions thereof may have impacted the project's outcomes. The dissertation argues that unequal peacebuilding partnership relationships can affect project delivery and effectiveness. Contu and Girei (2014) remarked that the dominant literature has continued to ignore the consequences of unequal partnerships. This dissertation offers an opportunity to fill this gap by examining the experience of peacebuilding in

Nigeria.

Furthermore, regarding community engagements, the literature shows dissatisfaction with INGOs in terms of project implementation in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. This dissatisfaction arises because INGOs often adopt a centralized, top-down approach to development interventions or peacebuilding in Africa, which is synonymous with the liberal approach (Campbell, 2018). Scholars argue that the most significant setbacks and failures in achieving sustainable peacebuilding in Africa stem from the liberal approach (Zvaita and Mbara, 2019; Cravo, 2018). This approach to peacebuilding is criticized for imposing external values, ideals, and models, and for excluding local voices (Kharisma, 2017; Zambakari, 2016).

Local voices are conceptualized here to include both the voices of project host communities and LNGOs, as the latter are more closely connected to the communities than other actors (Altahir, 2016). The term, as used here, also includes the Nigerian institutional peacebuilding structure, which, despite having governing authority over others, still represents local perspectives. Generally, local voices refer to stakeholders, actors, or entities within the country, in contrast to international actors such as INGOs (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015; Randazzo, 2016, cited in Obradovic-Wochnick, 2018). This dissertation recognizes the power dynamics and inequalities that can exist among local actors and stakeholders, especially when external funding is involved or in interactions with international actors like INGOs in peacebuilding contexts (Obradovic-Wochnick, 2018).

Unfortunately, in externally funded peacebuilding contexts, the local is often presented as a lone voice on a level playing field. However, as Obradovic-Wochnick (2018) argues, the local is a complex mix of power dynamics, contestations, and hierarchies capable of reinforcing the existing power imbalances between external and national actors. In this context, the dissertation categorizes the local into three layers, each with different levels of power and influence. The first layer is the institutional peacebuilding structure (IPS), which operates at the national level with official backing. The IPS clearly holds more power than the LNGOs and host communities within the hierarchy and may have oversight, regulatory, or governing functions over the other two (Obradovic-Wochnick, 2018).

The second layer consists of the LNGOs, which do not necessarily have regulatory power or governing functions over the communities, but, through their programming, exert some influence over which projects ultimately reach the communities. In terms of hierarchy, their voice and power are significantly greater than those of the communities, as the communities rely on them to amplify their voices. The final layer is the host communities, which, in theory,

should be the most powerful because they host the projects and should dictate what they want (UN, 2020; Altahir, 2016). Sadly, they are unable to fulfil this role due to power dynamics within “local voices”.

Consequently, while referring to these three groups generically as local actors or “local voice” relating to INGOs and external funding, this dissertation acknowledges the varying levels of power each holds relative to the others. In line with Obradovic-Wochnick (2018), it notes that some local actors may exercise governing, disciplinary, and regulatory control over other local actors (2018, p. 1).

Additionally, in this dissertation, the term "community" refers to the project host communities—groups of people residing within a specific geographical location. However, these communities are far from homogeneous; they do not necessarily share the same values, religion, or goals (Owakoyi, 2019). While geographical space is a defining characteristic, community is a fluid, dynamic, and context-dependent construct that extends beyond physical boundaries to encompass social, political, and cultural dimensions (Chatterjee & Koleski, 1970; Yakkaldevi, 2013). Selimovic (2019) highlights that while everyday community life is embedded within specific physical and material contexts, residents nonetheless exercise agency through the development of creative micro-practices—what Solomon and Steele (2017) describe as “micropolitics.” These practices enable individuals to navigate and negotiate the structural and contextual constraints of their environment. Such micro-level engagements by diverse actors and stakeholders, referred to by some international relations (IR) scholars as the “everyday international” not only shape, but are also shaped by, broader political dynamics at the macro or international level (Steele, 2019; Björkdahl, Hall, & Svensson, 2019; Solomon & Steele, 2017; Selimovic, 2019).

Given the relevance of the concepts of *local voice*, *community*, *postcoloniality* and *everyday international relations* to the core focus of this study—namely, peacebuilding at the community level—this dissertation undertakes an in-depth examination of these terms within the literature review. This aims to develop a nuanced understanding of their meanings and to position them appropriately in relation to the underlying dynamics and gaps that inform the research.

Nevertheless, despite the issue of project imposition and exclusion of local voices being mentioned in the literature (Adzande, 2022), empirical case studies on peacebuilding in Nigeria have not clearly demonstrated how community voices are being excluded in practice. In fact, little scholarly attention has been paid to INGO-led peacebuilding at the community level, as the emphasis has been on the UN and its bodies (Christie, 2012;

Hoglund and Lilja, 2018). This dissertation addresses this gap by investigating the influence of the INGO-LNGO partnership on projects in the communities. This involves examining their community engagements and how these engagements are utilized in the project.

Lastly, peacebuilding within a political space, as identified in the literature, is inherently political, relational, and structural, and requires the active participation of the national government to be successful (UN, 2010; Olalekan, 2023; UNDP, 2020). Nigeria, a state with a history of violent conflicts, has made strides not only in providing institutional support to contain conflicts but also in peacebuilding. To this end, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) was established in 2000 with a mandate to research conflicts and advise the government on policies and actions to address conflict issues. The IPCR, therefore, serves as the government's institutional research resource and think tank on conflicts throughout the country. It is credited with the research and the amnesty policy that enabled Nigeria to address the Niger Delta militancy, which engulfed the region and paralyzed Nigeria's oil economy shortly after the advent of democracy in 1999 (*The Sun*, 2021). The IPCR has also designed and conducted yearly conflict assessments of all regions in Nigeria, with which it advises the Nigerian government on how best to respond to each prevailing conflict, as well as highlights their root causes (IPCR, 2017).

In continuation of its role, the IPCR crafted the Nigerian National Peace Policy (NPP) in 2009, which articulated, among other things, institutional support for peacebuilding in Nigeria. Unfortunately, since 2009, the NPP has remained a draft, but peacebuilding efforts by multilateral bodies, INGOs, NGOs, and INGO-LNGO partnerships have continued in Nigeria. The existing literature lacks empirical research on institutional support for NGO-led peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria. While Njoku and Fisher (2022) discuss the Nigerian government's apparent limited commitment to peacebuilding, their analysis is not grounded in government data on specific peacebuilding projects. Instead, their conclusions are drawn from a review of the existing literature and are based on perceptions rather than direct empirical evidence. Therefore, there is still no empirical clarity on how NGOs or NGO-driven peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria have been supported by the government. Since this study focuses on an NGO partnership-driven peacebuilding initiative in Nigeria that requires institutional support to succeed, this dissertation addresses this gap by exploring the institutional peacebuilding support provided for the case study intervention.

In addition to these gaps identified in the mainstream literature, there is also the issue of mutual suspicion and subtle hostility on the part of Nigerian government officials towards INGOs, as can be seen in the government's relationship with some INGOs and multilateral bodies (Njoku, 2020). Over time, INGOs and multilateral bodies have been accused, either

rightly or wrongly, of working at cross-purposes with local realities and undermining national security. This led to the suspension of the operations of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in northeastern Nigeria by the Nigerian Army in December 2018. The Army made the same accusation in 2019 while suspending Mercy Corps and Action Against Hunger, alleging that these INGOs were providing logistical support to Boko Haram fighters under the guise of humanitarian intervention in Northern Nigeria, instead of helping to address developmental challenges (Punch, 30/5/2019; The Cable, 9/11/2019; Quartz Africa, 26/09/2019).

In Nigeria's North Central region, where herdsmen and farmers have been engaged in a bitter and volatile contestation over land and water resources for decades, leading to gruesome mass killings and the destruction of property, including the razing of many farming communities, INGOs attempting to build peace have been accused by locals and state government officials of pursuing objectives at odds with theirs (Vande, 2019). However, it must be pointed out that the government never proved its case against the INGOs, and Vande's claims were not based on an empirical study but rather on anecdotal observations of the activities of peacebuilding INGOs in the conflict. Therefore, this dissertation fills a practical gap by leveraging a real-life situation to explore the peacebuilding relationship between the Nigerian government and an INGO, as well as that between an INGO and conflict-affected communities. Thus, it makes a significant empirical contribution to the literature on state support for NGO-led peacebuilding in the communities.

All the gaps identified led to the formulation of the three broad research questions, presented in the following section.

1.3 Research Questions

Building on the gaps identified in the literature and focusing on the specific case study of an INGO- LNGOs peacebuilding partnership and their intervention in the farmer-herder conflict in North- Central Nigeria, three broad research questions were formulated to guide this dissertation in achieving its aim. These are:

1.3.1 In the context of the peacebuilding project, how did the actors relate and perceive each other?

1.3.2 How did the nature of the relationship influence the effectiveness of the peacebuilding intervention?

1.3.3 Considering the importance of institutional support for peacebuilding interventions within a country, how has the broader institutional and policy context in Nigeria supported or hindered the partnership and the intervention?

1.4 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation has been structured into eight chapters.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents the literature review and outlines the conceptual framework guiding the study. The chapter critically engages with existing scholarship to identify relevant gaps and to inform the formulation of the overarching research questions. Adopting a thematic structure, it explores key themes pertinent to the study, including *Conceptualizing INGO–LNGO Partnerships*, *Peacebuilding in Africa and Its Challenges*, *Peacebuilding Governance in Nigeria*, and *the local voice, community, postcoloniality and the everyday international* (Solomon and Steele, 2017, Bjorkdahl, Hall and Svensson, 2019, Selimovic, 2019, Steele, 2019, Richey, 2018, Acuto, 2014; Croft and Vabghan-Williams, 2017, Rutazibwa, 2010, 2018 and 2019, Williams, 2002, Neely, 2011, Garcia, Mizrahi and Korazim-Korosy, 2022, Cleaver, 2007, Obradovic-Wochnik, 2020, MacGinty and Richmond, 2013, Richmond, 2011, Beattie and Bird, 2022)—all of which are central to understanding community-level peacebuilding. The chapter also introduces Alan Fowler's (1998) Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) as the primary conceptual lens for analysis, alongside a discussion of scholarly critiques of Fowler's framework. Additional concepts addressed include effective peacebuilding and the role of institutional peacebuilding structures.

Chapter Three examines the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria and the state of peacebuilding in detail. A thorough understanding of this conflict, its history, and the dynamics surrounding it within Nigeria's politics and development is vital to following the discussions in the dissertation.

Chapter Four describes and justifies the research methodology employed in the study to answer the broad research questions and achieve the research aim. It explains why the interpretivist social constructivist research philosophy was adopted and considered appropriate, why a qualitative case study approach was found most suitable, and why semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews and documentary analysis/database were used as primary data collection tools. The chapter also outlines the techniques used to analyse and interpret the data and discusses ethical issues. The chapter equally highlights the researcher's positionality in the research.

Chapter Five discusses the findings in response to Research Question One (RQ1), showing the nature of the partnership relationship between the INGO and the two LNGOs in a project context.

Chapter Six discusses the findings in response to Research Question Two (RQ2), focusing on how the nature of the peacebuilding partnership influences the effectiveness of the peacebuilding intervention in the communities.

Chapter Seven discusses the findings in response to Research Question Three (RQ3), which examines the peacebuilding intervention and the state's institutional peacebuilding structure, seeking to understand how the intervention fared under the institutional peacebuilding structure.

Chapter Eight summarizes the dissertation's findings in relation to the research questions and literature and outlines the implications and contributions of the key findings to the literature.

1.5 Disciplinary Positionality

This dissertation is situated within the discipline of International Relations (IR), with a specific focus on peacebuilding and partnerships involving international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and local nongovernmental organizations in conflict contexts. The field of IR, historically dominated by state-centric approaches and positivist paradigms such as realism and liberalism, has gradually evolved to encompass broader frameworks, including critical theories, postcolonial perspectives, and interdisciplinary methodologies (Acharya, 2014; Tickner and Blaney, 2012). This evolution provided a valuable lens for examining non-state actors like INGOs and LNGOs, whose roles in global governance, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding have gained prominence in recent decades (Barnett, 2008; Bebbington et al., 2008).

Flowing from this disciplinary positionality, this dissertation critically engaged with the traditional and contemporary paradigms of IR that shape peacebuilding discourses. The research draws on critical peacebuilding scholarship, which challenges mainstream liberal approaches that often prioritize state-centric and externally driven solutions (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty, 2011). This critical perspective emphasizes the importance of local agency, local voice, local turn, local ownership, localisation, everyday international politics, power dynamics, and the complex interplay between global actors, civil society actors, and local communities in everyday international relations (Steele, 2019; Bjorkdahl, Hall and Svensson, 2019; Solomon and Steele, 2017; Selimovic, 2019; Chandler, 2017; Autesserre, 2014). The dissertation focuses on the tensions and contestations that define partnership relationships between international NGOs (INGOs) and local NGOs (LNGOs) in the Global South. These dynamics are examined in light of the constitutionally mandated role of the state in maintaining peace and leading peacebuilding efforts—a role

that, in practice, often remains in the background or is marginalized. While partnerships are often framed in the language of equality and mutual benefit, they are frequently marked by asymmetries of power, resources, and decision-making authority. INGOs, often backed by substantial financial and institutional support from the Global North, dominate the agenda-setting and implementation processes, thus, reducing LNGOs to implementers of externally defined priorities. This dynamic perpetuates hierarchical relationships that reflect broader structural inequalities within the international system (AbouAssi, 2012; Altahir, 2016).

This research was driven by the need to empirically establish the nature of the partnership relationship between an INGO and LNGOs in a specific project intervention setting. It sought to understand whether the nature of these relationships impacts the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions and how the state supported—or failed to support—the intervention. Considering that state support is crucial for the success of peacebuilding efforts, the thesis examines the state's role as a critical factor influencing the outcomes of such partnerships. These issues are firmly situated within the field of International Relations as they pertain to the structure of global governance, the role of the state and non-state actors, aid regimes, and the politics of peacebuilding interventions (Barnett and Zurcher, 2009; Autesserre, 2014).

At the same time, the research intersects with International Development by engaging with questions of aid delivery, localisation and power dynamics in development partnerships, and the practicalities of implementing interventions in conflict settings. However, its primary focus remains within IR, as it addresses the broader theoretical and practical implications of international aid regimes and peacebuilding frameworks, particularly how they are mediated through partnerships between INGOs, LNGOs, and state actors (Ashman, 2001; Bebbington et al., 2008).

The research also engages with the interdisciplinary nature of peacebuilding studies, which intersects with anthropology, sociology, and development studies. These intersections provide nuanced understandings of local contexts, social structures, and the cultural dynamics of conflict resolution (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013; Lederach, 2005). By situating the research within this broader disciplinary and interdisciplinary framework, the thesis contributes to ongoing debates about the ethics, effectiveness, and sustainability of international peacebuilding interventions. It highlights the contested nature of partnerships, the role of state support, and the broader structural inequalities embedded in international development and IR frameworks (Chandler, 2017; Richmond, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: EXPLORING INGO-LNGO PARTNERSHIPS AND PEACEBUILDING EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIA

2.1 Introduction

This dissertation empirically explores the INGO-LNGO partnership in a peacebuilding intervention within the farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria and examines how the partnership influenced the intervention's effectiveness. Furthermore, it investigates how the intervention operated within the Nigerian institutional peacebuilding and policy framework. Chapter One introduced the research focus, background, and justification for undertaking the study. This chapter reviews the related literature, highlighting what is already established and identifying gaps to help structure the dissertation's main research questions. The chapter also presents the developed conceptual analytical framework adopted in the study.

Given the nature of the research, the review employs a thematic approach. Key themes reviewed include conceptualizing INGO-LNGO partnerships, the attainability of ideal or authentic partnership: reality or illusion, contradictions in partnerships and why they exist, global efforts to improve relations between northern and southern NGOs, peacebuilding in Africa, Nigerian NGOs and peacebuilding, NGO-led interventions and the state; the local voice, community, postcoloniality and everyday international relations. These themes are crucial for understanding the issues addressed in this work and for identifying the gaps this dissertation seeks to fill. The review begins with an exploration of NGO partnerships.

2.2 Conceptualizing INGO-LNGO Partnership

This section provides a theoretical conceptualization of INGO-LNGO partnerships, critically engaging with both their foundational ideals and the conceptual criticisms they attract. It further explores the practical contradictions between partnership discourse and operational realities, identifying the structural and relational gaps that this study seeks to address. By examining the underlying causes and implications of these contradictions, the section also outlines potential pathways for more equitable and effective partnerships.

The literature provides insights into the meaning of the term "partnership" as a form of relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs. However, it is important to establish from the outset that a partnership is distinctly different from other types of inter-organizational relationships, such as a principal–agent relationship or a contractor–subcontractor relationship (Abnett, 2024; Altahir, 2016). According to Squire (2012, p. 2), a partnership occurs when two or more NGOs "work together towards a common aim."

Squire's conceptualization emphasizes the collaborative nature of a partnership and its focus on a common goal. However, it does not elaborate on the conditions under which this collaboration takes place. The reality is that many organizations work together toward a common objective without being in a partnership relationship. In some of these relationships, such as a principal–agent relationship, there are often unequal power dynamics. Unequal power in a relationship challenges the essence of a true partnership because the party holding more power tends to control the relationship. A relationship in which one party unilaterally controls the other is not a partnership. This may explain why Cadbury (1993, p. 11) conceptualizes a partnership as "power being shared equally by all parties" (Blagescu and Young, 2005, p. 8).

Similarly, Olawoore and Kamruzzaman (2019, p. 9) argue that "effective partnership requires INGOs to be transparent in agenda setting, be conscious of their power as donors, and promote mutual accountability in their relationship with their local NGO partners." This perspective emphasizes transparency, accountability, and the mindful use of power. In fact, its key focus is on downward accountability, which has become a significant challenge for INGOs in the Global South (Awuah-Werekohoh, 2014). However, the primary challenge with this approach is that the effort to rebalance power in the relationship remains solely dependent on the actions of INGOs. Ideally, in a partnership between INGOs and LNGOs, INGOs would not unilaterally set the agenda. Such a partnership would also require complementary mutuality and the independent yet synchronized agency of all the partners involved.

In the same vein, Malhotra (1997, p. 49) outlines what they consider prerequisites for an ideal partnership relationship. These include a common vision shared by the parties, mutual agreement on the time frame of the partnership, reciprocity, openness to each other's honest assessments, organizational capacity, and funding. Malhotra further posits that, regardless of funding—which, although a significant factor in creating disequilibrium in partnerships—many partnerships still face various other challenges and inequalities (1997, p. 49). Malhotra's list includes important qualities for an effective partnership, such as the time frame of the partnership, which is rarely discussed. However, a key challenge is the absence of equality in decision-making, which is critical in any ideal partnership. Recognizing that each partner has an equal stake in decision- making, regardless of their mutually agreed individual contributions, is fundamental to the concept of an authentic partnership. To address this conceptual gap, the dissertation builds on Alan Fowler's work as a conceptual framework (section 2.9).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the concepts of an ideal partnership, genuine partnership or an authentic partnership refer to the same thing: a balanced relationship

between INGOs and LNGOs. To restate, partnerships are just one type of relationship that INGOs and LNGOs can have, and they must involve mutuality and equality between the partners to be considered authentic (Fowler, 1991). Mutuality involves a state of reciprocal relationship or interaction in which both partners benefit and contribute as agreed. In the context of NGO partnerships, mutuality implies that partners share common goals, responsibilities, and benefits, and that they engage in a balanced and equitable exchange. The concept of mutuality is fundamental to genuine partnerships, where cooperation and mutual support are essential for success.

Similarly, equality refers to the state of being equal, especially in terms of status, rights, and opportunities. In the context of partnerships, equality means that partners have an equal say, power, and access to the partnership's resources and decision-making. Equality ensures that neither partner is dominant nor subservient, and that all are treated with fairness and respect. Equality is critical for establishing a balanced and effective partnership. However, Fowler's conception of authentic partnership has attracted substantial critique, which will be examined in detail in the following section.

2.3 The Attainability of Ideal or Authentic Partnership: Reality or Illusion

Alan Fowler's conceptualization of authentic partnership between INGOs and LNGOs emphasizes mutuality, equality, and respect (1991; 1998). It has been widely promoted in development discourse. However, despite its normative appeal, the practical realization of these principles remains contested and complex. This section critically examines the conceptual challenges that cast doubt on whether authentic partnership is genuinely attainable or merely rhetorical.

First, Fowler's model implicitly assumes a universality of values and partnership norms. *Respect partners position, values, identity and autonomy*. Yet, in practice, what constitutes "mutual respect" or "shared goals" may vary significantly across cultural and institutional settings. Partnerships shaped without adequate sensitivity to local contexts can result in misalignments and tensions (Lewis, 1998). This calls for a more nuanced, contextually grounded approach to partnership that accommodates diverse ways of understanding collaborations and authority. Thus, context-specificality may be the key to authentic partnership experience.

Also, while Fowler's principles of authentic partnership, such as mutual accountability, are widely endorsed as desirable, critics argue that they are often difficult to realize in practice. For instance, INGOs tend to be more accountable to their donors than to their local

partners (Awuah-Werekohoh, 2014). This donor-centric accountability structure can result in the imposition of externally defined priorities, limiting the autonomy of LNGOs and marginalizing locally defined needs and strategies (Banks et al., 2015). The persistent tension between upward accountability to donors and downward accountability to communities and partners illustrates a key implementation gap—one that undermines the operationalization of otherwise well-intentioned partnership ideals.

Nevertheless, while critiques of the authentic partnership principles are well-documented, it is equally important to acknowledge that some progress has been made. An increasing number of INGOs have begun to adopt more reflective practices, recognizing the structural power imbalances inherent in their relationships with LNGOs and seeking to address them. Initiatives promoting participatory approaches, capacity sharing, and locally led development have gained traction in recent years (Brehm et al., 2004). These shifts—though uneven and context-dependent—indicate the potential for more balanced partnerships when INGOs are willing to relinquish a degree of control and engage in genuine dialogue. For instance, several INGOs and CSOs—including Bond (2022, 2023), Oxfam (2024), The Partnering Initiative (2020), the RINGO Project (2023), ActionAid, and ACORD (Williams, 2018)—are increasingly adopting participatory approaches, such as equitable funding practices, locally led development, and participatory grant-making to address power imbalances and enhance the effectiveness of INGO-LNGO partnerships.

However, significant challenges persist. These include a notable lack of empirical case studies on authentic INGO–LNGO partnerships in peacebuilding, the reliance on the INGO's moral imperative in the attainment of "authentic" partnership, and insufficient attention to the agency of LNGOs within these relationships. Additionally, the role of the state—as policy maker, implementer, regulator, and enabler of civil society space—remains underexplored in NGO-led peacebuilding discourse (Barnes, 2006). These issues are examined in greater detail in Section 2.4, which discusses the inherent contradictions in INGO–LNGO partnerships and explores the underlying reasons for their persistence.

Nevertheless, in response to these gaps, this dissertation seeks to move beyond abstract critiques and binary framings of idealism versus illusion. It aims to offer a more nuanced, context-sensitive, and politically attuned understanding of inter-organizational collaboration. Specifically, it investigates how power dynamics influence partnership intervention effectiveness, the extent to which Fowler’s principles are operationalized in specific contexts, the strategies LNGOs employ to assert agency, and the role of the state in enabling authentic partnerships capable of supporting sustainable peace in conflict-

affected communities. The persistence of these conceptual tensions underscores the need for closer empirical scrutiny and theoretical recalibration.

To lay the groundwork for this empirical investigation, the next section critically examines the key contradictions embedded within INGO–LNGO partnership relationships, interrogating why these tensions persist and what structural and contextual factors sustain them.

2.4 Contradictions in Partnerships and the Reasons They Exist

This section explores the contradictions between the rhetoric and practice of partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs. It traces the historical evolution of such partnerships and interrogates the structural and operational factors that explain the persistent inequality in these relationships, with specific attention to peacebuilding efforts in the Global South. While the previous section examined conceptual critiques of partnerships, this section focuses on the practical and empirical dimensions, culminating in a rationale for this dissertation's focus on power dynamics in INGO-LNGO partnerships in Nigeria.

2.4.1 Historical Origins and Evolution of INGO-LNGO Partnerships

Since the 1970s and 1980s, INGOs from the Global North have increasingly collaborated with LNGOs in the Global South to implement development projects (Yang, 2022). This shift emerged partly in response to the global spread of neoliberalism, which promoted the withdrawal of state-provided services, privatization, and reduced public spending, especially in social sectors such as health and education (Harvey, 2007; Wallace, 2004; Bond, 2006). As a result, NGOs gained prominence as alternative development actors amid state failures and economic crises (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015; Manji & O'Coill, 2002).

In this context, partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs were often framed as cooperative, equitable, and people-centered alternatives to paternalistic donor-recipient relationships (Ashman, 2001). Scholars initially regarded these partnerships as a step toward more inclusive development models (Banks et al., 2015). However, over time, questions arose about the nature of these relationships and whether they truly reflected partnership ideals (Fowler, 1997, 2000a; Dass, 1999; Manji & O'Coill, 2002).

2.4.2 Rhetoric vs. Reality: Misuse of the Term "Partnership"

Despite the frequent use of the term "partnership," scholars argue that many INGO-LNGO relationships are hierarchical and unequal. Fowler (2000a) criticizes the liberal use of the term to describe relationships that resemble principal-agent or subcontractor models (Altahir, 2016; Doane, 2019). LNGOs are often treated as local implementers of INGO-led projects, with limited decision-making autonomy or financial control (Brehm, 2004;

Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004). Such critiques emphasize that the global political economy continues to structure INGO-LNGO interactions, with INGOs often controlling legitimacy, resources, and normative standards (Contu & Girei, 2014). This structural imbalance mirrors the broader Global North-South divide and reproduces historical inequalities rooted in colonialism and neocolonialism (Manji & O'Coill, 2002; Rutazibwa, 2010; Sabaratnam, 2017).

2.4.3 Structural and Operational Power Imbalances

A central theme in the literature is the persistence of power imbalances in INGO-LNGO partnerships. These imbalances manifest in governance structures, decision-making processes, and control over funding (Reith, 2010; Peace Direct, 2020). INGOs often determine programmatic priorities, staffing decisions, and organizational language, even in their Southern offices. Attempts to address this imbalance—such as relocating INGO headquarters to the Global South as mentioned (e.g., ActionAid and Oxfam)—have not translated into meaningful power shifts (Williams, 2018; Doane, 2019). Fowler (2000a) warns that without critical reflection, the continued use of the term "partnership" could damage the credibility of the development sector. This concern is echoed in a 2022 Oxford University survey of over 50 INGOs, which found that localization and equitable partnerships remain unresolved issues.

2.4.4 Localization in Practice: Challenges of Ownership and Power in Humanitarian Funding

Localization—defined as the effort to return ownership to local actors (Barbelet, 2018)—has been promoted as a corrective measure. The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the subsequent "Grand Bargain" aimed to allocate 25% of humanitarian funding directly to local organizations. However, INGOs have redefined their Southern offices as "local" actors, thereby positioning themselves to receive funding meant for indigenous LNGOs (Peace Direct, 2020). Such maneuvers expose the role of funding as a key driver of inequality. INGOs, by controlling resources, influence LNGOs' strategic direction, often leading them to compromise their mission and values (AbouAssi, 2012; Elbers & Arts, 2011). Thus, funding mechanisms perpetuate dependency and reinforce power hierarchies, undermining the principles of mutuality and respect.

2.4.5 Rights-Based NGOs as a Possible Exception?

Some scholars suggest that rights-based NGOs exhibit more balanced partnerships. These organizations adopt a human rights-based approach (RBA) that prioritizes empowerment, accountability, and participatory decision-making (Marcinkute, 2011; Crawford & Andreassen, 2015). Empirical studies show that such partnerships may place less emphasis on financial leverage, fostering more authentic collaboration (Olawoore &

Kamruzzaman, 2019; Elber, 2012). However, these examples remain exceptions rather than the norm.

Despite the growing body of work on INGO-LNGO partnerships, significant gaps remain. Much of the scholarship originates from researchers in the Global North, raising concerns about representational bias (Malavisi, 2010; Hately & Malhotra, 1997). Moreover, empirical research on the micro-dynamics of partnerships—particularly within specific project contexts like peacebuilding—is limited (Brass et al., 2018; Contu & Girei, 2014). This dissertation could not identify any empirical study that investigates how INGO-LNGO partnership dynamics unfold in peacebuilding projects, or how these dynamics shape project design, implementation, and outcomes. Existing case studies largely focus on sectors such as development, health, or WASH, leaving peacebuilding partnerships underexplored.

Addressing these gaps, this dissertation examines INGO-LNGO partnerships in peacebuilding in Nigeria. It explores how actors perceive and enact partnership principles, and how power asymmetries influence collaboration and peacebuilding outcomes. Specifically, it investigates how INGOs and LNGOs engage with one another in both partnership relations and intervention practices, thereby responding to gaps identified by Banks et al. (2024), Brass et al. (2018), and Contu and Girei (2014). Guided by the first research question (RQ1), the study contributes to the literature by empirically establishing the nature of these partnerships within the peacebuilding context in Nigeria—an area that remains insufficiently explored. Using Fowler's six principles of authentic partnership as an analytical framework, the study examines how these ideals are practiced—or fall short—in real-world contexts.

Although partnerships are central to peacebuilding discourse, there remains a notable paucity of empirical studies interrogating their operational dynamics in Nigeria. This dissertation thus offers an important contribution by grounding theoretical critiques in the lived realities of INGO-LNGO collaboration in a conflict-affected setting.

Having examined partnership contradictions, challenges, implications, and the need for more contextual research to uncover the different dimensions of partnerships within a project context, the next section will highlight some global efforts to achieve a balanced partnership.

2.5 Global Efforts to Improve Relations Between Northern and Southern NGOs

This section reflects on some global efforts to make partnerships between INGOs and

LNGOs work in practice and the issues associated with such efforts. The first step is to conceptualize the Global South and Global North.

2.5.1 Conceptualizing Global South and North

The Global South geographically encompasses countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania, which are often associated with lower income levels, economic underdevelopment, and a history of colonialism (Dados and Connell, 2012). Countries in the Global South generally face challenges such as poverty, limited industrialization, and lower levels of infrastructural development. These nations often rely heavily on agriculture and natural resources, making their economies vulnerable to global market fluctuations (Green and Luehrmann, 2022). This contrasts with the Global North, which is characterized by higher human development index scores, longer life expectancy, higher education levels, better human rights records, and higher per capita income. Populations in the Global North enjoy a higher standard of living compared to those in the Global South (Kowalski, 2020).

However, the term "Global South" extends beyond geography; it is also understood in various ways by different people, reflecting its multiple framings. Some believe that the term was created by Euro-American stakeholders as a label for the rest of the world (Klob, 2017). The term is used in contrast to the Global North, which is characterized by economically developed countries, high levels of industrialization, advanced technological infrastructure, and significant economic wealth, primarily in North America, Europe, parts of East Asia, and Australia (Muller, 2018; Dados and Connell, 2012). Nevertheless, the distinction between the Global South and Global North often reflects historical inequalities rooted in colonialism, imperialism, and the unequal distribution of global wealth and power dynamics (Freeman, 2018). Some scholars believe that this historical context contributes to the prevailing developmental and socio-economic disparities between the two groups (Freeman, 2018; Klob, 2017).

2.5.2 Strengthening North-South NGO Partnerships Globally

There have been efforts at the global level to address some of the concerns in the partnership relationships between Northern INGOs and LNGOs from the Global South, especially in the context of aid delivery and fostering an inclusive sense of belonging. These initiatives have been the result of combined efforts by development stakeholders from both the Global North and Global South.

One such effort was the Partnership in Action (PARinAc) conference held in Oslo in 1994, which, according to Abnett (2024), added momentum to the partnership cause globally. The

issues of local ownership of interventions and inclusive decision-making in project planning and implementation, important in the INGO-LNGO partnership discourse, were highlighted. However, it is important to note that the Oslo conference, although organized under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and involving more than 800 NGOs from around the world, seemed more focused on harmonizing efforts to address global humanitarian challenges (UNHCR, 1996) than on contributing meaningfully to North-South NGO partnership relations.

Another effort was the ongoing work of the international community to modernize, broaden, and democratize the aid delivery regime and assistance programs, particularly between the Global North and Global South, which is central to international development and the relationship between INGOs and LNGOs. Four international high-level forums on aid were held to make aid delivery and transmission between the North and South more effective (Rome 2003, Paris 2005, Accra 2008, and Busan 2011). The Accra forum stood out because many Southern and Northern NGO leaders debated the terms of cooperation between Northern and Southern agencies, stakeholders, and NGOs. The final outcome document, the Accra Agenda for Action, emphasized the need for developing countries to lead and manage their own development processes. They were also required to systematically identify areas of development need, including capacity needs at the national, subnational, sectoral, and thematic levels (OECD, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011). In other words, development assistance was no longer to be imposed externally; instead, external help should only come in to strengthen local capacities to identify and address local problems. Peacebuilding is also perceived as part of development (Mercy Corps, 2011; Jantzi and Jantzi, 2009).

In addition to these efforts are the 'localization' initiatives and the various #ShiftThePower campaigns previously mentioned, which essentially advocate for more equitable relationships between Northern and Southern NGOs and development stakeholders (Doane, 2019). Localization, which gained prominence in the 1990s, has its roots in the 1960s, emerging from the inclusive participatory approaches promoted by the UN (Cooperation Canada, 2023, p. 34). This is exemplified by UN Resolution 2816 of December 1971, which urged the international donor community to provide assistance without undermining individual countries' national programs (UN, 1971). In essence, external funding should support local communities in addressing the challenges they have identified according to their own priorities, thereby avoiding the imposition of external projects and models. Localization achieved significant international recognition with the Grand Bargain agreement in Istanbul in 2016, as previously noted.

However, the challenges of operationalizing both localization and the Grand Bargain

agreement remain significant (Peace Direct, 2020; Barbelet, 2018; Oxford University, 2022). These efforts have yet to effectively address the power imbalances between international NGOs (INGOs) and local NGOs (LNGOs). The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) argues that localization suffers from both conceptual and operational ambiguity, as it lacks detailed explanations of what it truly entails. While there is widespread agreement on its importance, there is a clear lack of shared understanding regarding its meaning and the practical steps required for various stakeholders (ICVA, 2019, p. 3). Barbelet et al. (2021, p. 10), in their literature review on evidence-based humanitarian localization, further acknowledge that the literature indicates ongoing concerns about localization. These include doubts about sustained commitment from stakeholders to advance the agenda, an overemphasis on the roles of international actors at the expense of local actors, and fears that localization may be used as a distraction from addressing the deeper issues of power and discriminatory practices within the international aid system, potentially rendering it counterproductive to meaningful change.

The #ShiftThePower campaigns can be seen as a direct outgrowth of the Localization Conference held in Istanbul in May 2016. By December 2016, international development actors, including NGOs, gathered in Johannesburg to build on the discussions from the Istanbul conference, focusing on how to move away from an unequal international development aid system. In the lead- up to this event, organizers used the hashtag #ShiftThePower, marking the beginning of the Shift the Power campaigns in international development (Cooperation Canada, 2023, p. 10). At the Johannesburg conference, participants clarified the meaning of the Shift the Power campaign, emphasizing the need for external actors to cede decision-making power to local communities and to support grassroots efforts in designing their own projects. The campaign also highlighted the importance of holding development actors accountable through mutual understanding, transparency, honesty, long-term relationships, trust, and solidarity. It called for empowering local populations to unlock their own resources and become active citizens (Knight, 2019).

Additionally, the campaign advocated for de-emphasizing money as the primary driver of change, instead placing greater value on non-financial resources such as networks, trust, and knowledge. Other considerations include moving away from the traditional approach of building capacity based on external actors' definitions and instead prioritizing community organizing, where capacity is defined by community relevance, rootedness, and local support. This also involves shifting from English as the default language of development discussions to using languages that are most effective in the local context. Furthermore, there is a need to de-emphasize the importance of where development

stakeholders' offices are located and to move beyond the dependency syndrome, where Southern NGOs perceive the campaign as merely a call for more funding or take pride in pursuing development independently. Finally, for the organizers, shifting the power is a response to the decreasing flow of development funding (Cooperation Canada, 2023, p. 10).

The Shift the Power movement essentially advocates for increased localization, intentionality, and process changes among development actors. This includes cultural reform, changes in mindsets, policies, and services, as well as a more equitable distribution of resources among stakeholders (Cooperation Canada, 2023, p. 34). As mentioned earlier, some INGOs, in response to the campaigns, have tried to relocate their head offices to the Global South since 2016 to demonstrate their commitment to rebalancing power in their relationships with Southern stakeholders, despite the point being made that location does not truly matter. This is an example of the individual applicability and operationalization of the Shift the Power campaign, which may either succeed or become its weakness, as each stakeholder may approach it with divergent views and applications, potentially achieving different results but not necessarily rebalancing power. However, rebalancing power between INGOs and LNGOs will require much more than campaigns and physical relocation of headquarters (Forsch, 2018; Williams, 2018; Doane, 2019).

Despite these efforts, the literature still indicates that partnership relationships between INGOs and LNGOs in the Global South are not functioning well and need improvement. The literature identifies sectors that are insufficiently covered by research, including peacebuilding (Onudugo, Odo, and Onudugo, 2021; Banks, Schulpen, and Brockington, 2020), which is why this dissertation focuses on peacebuilding. Additionally, the literature contends that the impacts of NGO partnerships when they work together are not adequately addressed by research on the Global South (Contu and Girei, 2014; Oxford University, 2022; Banks et al., 2024). Specifically, Brass et al. (2018) call for more scholarly research to understand NGO partnerships' internal processes, impacts, and evaluations of their projects, while Contu and Girei (2014) emphasize the need for closer examination of NGO partnerships' impact at the micro and practice levels where they work together. This dissertation examines how the nature of the partnership impacted the intervention’s effectiveness, responding to these studies that outline the need for further research in specific areas and sectors to show the impacts of partnerships.

Specifically, the dissertation's second broad research question (RQ2) seeks to establish if there is a connection between NGO partnerships and effectiveness in their jointly

implemented projects. It aims to understand if the way NGOs perceive and relate to each other in partnership during an intervention has any bearing on how the project eventually turns out. In the dissertation, RQ2 aims to establish the relationship between the nature of the partnership and the effectiveness of partnership intervention, a topic that is insufficiently explored in Nigeria's peacebuilding (Adzande, 2022). The findings here will directly respond to the gaps identified by these studies and enrich the literature concerning the effects of INGO-LNGO partnership relationships on peacebuilding intervention effectiveness in Nigeria.

To adequately respond to RQ2, the dissertation will investigate how the INGO and LNGOs perceived and related to each other, engaged the communities, and carried out their intervention, and how the communities perceived them afterward. According to Westendorf (2015), effectiveness is also measured by the satisfaction of the project host community, while the World Bank points to stakeholders' active participation in project design, implementation, and ownership as essential ingredients of effectiveness (World Bank, 1998a).

The case study intervention used in this dissertation focuses on peacebuilding in the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. Therefore, it is important to understand the background of peacebuilding in Africa and Nigeria, as well as the issues involved, to follow the discussion and dynamics effectively. The next section discusses peacebuilding in Africa, beginning with an understanding of the concept of peacebuilding.

2.6 Peacebuilding in Africa

This section examines the issues and challenges of peacebuilding in Africa, highlighting the gaps that this dissertation addresses. The issues discussed include understanding peacebuilding, the external domination of African peacebuilding and its inherent problems, the lack of institutional coordination and peacebuilding frameworks, liberal peacebuilding and its challenges in Africa, and hybrid and decolonial peacebuilding. The section begins with an understanding of peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding is conceptualized by the United Nations as structural, institutional, and relational, involving many actors, including both external and fundamentally local ones. Former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (1992, p. 36). Boutros-Ghali further explained that while peacebuilding may involve external actors, their role is to assist and strengthen national and local structures with projects and initiatives that could prevent a relapse into violence. This may include identifying the root causes of conflicts and developing economic and social projects that are fundamental to peace, such as agricultural development projects,

improving transportation, providing water resources, electricity, joint infrastructural projects, cultural exchanges, educational initiatives, and other projects that help break down barriers of hostility (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 36).

Some scholars agree with the UN and describe peacebuilding as any activity that addresses the root causes of violent conflict in a society, including rebuilding roads, constructing schools, training judges, helping refugee populations, building local courts, equipping police forces, providing seed funding for small businesses, and more (Campbell, 2018, p. 10). Peacebuilding is intended to address the root drivers of conflict and create sustainable peace or a culture of peace, making it difficult for communities to revert to violence, especially in a post- conflict society.

This dissertation recognizes that peacebuilding involves multiple actors, particularly external actors, to build sustainable peace. However, it emphasizes, as Akande et al. (2021, p. 3) note, that all actors—local, national, and international—must work harmoniously in synergy, but crucially, they must "reflect local knowledge" and be driven by "national policies." Many scholars argue that peacebuilding is only sustainable when it is locally led and rooted, while still utilizing contributions from outside (Lotze and De Coning, 2010). This is also the position of this dissertation, in line with the United Nations' acknowledgment that "community engagements are at the heart of successful peacebuilding and sustainable peace efforts" (UN, 2020, p. 2).

The United Nations (UN), UN multilateral bodies, and INGOs operating in collaboration with LNGOs as "partners" dominate the field of peacebuilding interventions in Africa (Murithi, 2008; Abdulrahman and Tar, 2008). This dominance is partly due to the superior capacity of these external actors, but a more significant reason is the lack of interest and engagement by many African governments in peacebuilding, possibly due to funding constraints and the lack of synergy among LNGOs (Abdulrahman and Tar, 2008). Many African governments and the African Union (AU) seem overwhelmed by developmental demands, which limits their focus on peacebuilding. Scholars highlight several limitations to peacebuilding in Africa, including the failure to transform inherited colonial state structures and economies, which are necessary conditions for establishing the foundations for decolonial peace on the continent. Other challenges include limited resources, a lack of expertise, and the presence of multiple external actors and interests in the African peacebuilding arena, which the AU is unable to compete with or control (Khadiagala, 2021; Zondi, 2017).

LNGOs, on their part, are criticized for lacking essential capacity, particularly the ability to

generate their own funding for peacebuilding interventions in Africa (Crewe and Harrison, 1998). Ironically, while many African states are indifferent to peacebuilding, the continent grapples with numerous violent conflicts that require various interventions and interveners (Akinola and Liaga, 2024). This situation presents its own challenges, notably the reliance on external funding from different actors and stakeholders, each with varying approaches, values, positions, and strategic interests. As a result, the AU and individual states are often not effectively in charge of peacebuilding efforts in Africa, leading to the influence of multiple competing interests (Ukiyedeikimie, 2023). Furthermore, as conflicts in Africa persist, there is an increasing risk of donor fatigue among external actors, which can lead to a significant reduction in essential peacebuilding funding (Ukiyedeikimie, 2023).

Furthermore, African peacebuilding lacks institutional coordination and an operational framework (Murithi, 2008). There is little or no institutional support for external peacebuilding interventions, both at the national and regional levels. Between 2006 and 2008, both the African Union and the UN created different peacebuilding institutional bodies in response to this: the Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) and the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). These two were intended to bring some coordination and cohesion to peacebuilding in Africa at the continental and national levels (Murithi, 2008). However, despite these institutional efforts, peacebuilding in Africa continues to be challenged by a lack of coordination and coherence, both at the regional level and in most national contexts (Murithi, 2008).

Apart from the fact that many African states are not actively participating in building peace as institutional actors within their localities, some are also not actively supporting peacebuilding initiatives at the institutional level within their domains, and others are experimenting with multiple, confusing frameworks. For instance, countries like Sierra Leone are said to have multiple frameworks that are not properly aligned for effective national results, while others, like Nigeria, lack functional frameworks altogether, making it difficult to coordinate and support peacebuilding effectively at the national level (Lotze and De Coning, 2010).

Empirically, however, it is not yet clear in the literature how the absence of national peacebuilding frameworks impacts peacebuilding interventions driven by external actors. Nonetheless, Lotze and De Coning (2010, p. 3) acknowledge that a national peacebuilding framework, which should ordinarily contain the plans and strategies for peacebuilding, could “give true meaning and guidance to peacebuilding measures at the country level.” This dissertation empirically investigates how the peacebuilding intervention was institutionally supported, or otherwise, within the prevailing policy framework in Nigeria.

This investigation is conducted in the context of the interface between an INGO-led peacebuilding intervention and the institutional peacebuilding structure and national policy framework, as discussed by Lotze and De Coning (2010). The dissertation will examine whether there is a nexus between a peacebuilding intervention led by a non-state actor and the institutional peacebuilding structure and policy framework within a country, and whether this connection matters. This forms part of the issues addressed by this dissertation's third broad research question (RQ3).

Furthermore, African peacebuilding is also challenged by the negative effects of liberal peacebuilding, which is primarily dominated by external actors, especially INGOs from the Global North. Liberal peacebuilding is a Western-style framework and approach used in international relations and development to stabilize and rebuild societies and communities emerging from conflict (Wallis, 2018). It is rooted in liberal democratic principles that emphasize free market economies, democratic governance, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. The goal of liberal peacebuilding is to create sustainable peace by establishing institutions and norms (Richmond, 2006).

Such institutions include democratic governance mechanisms and democratic institutions, such as free and fair elections, political pluralism, and participatory governance. It is assumed that democratic societies are peaceful societies and are less likely to experience conflict (Robert, 2015). Other factors include economic liberalization, which encompasses the promotion of free markets, private property rights, and integration into the global economy, all seen as essential for stability and development. This is because economic growth and development contribute to reducing poverty and addressing the root causes of conflict (Roberts, 2015). This principle also applies to the rule of law and human rights, which liberal peacebuilding considers integral. It is believed that through legal reforms, training law enforcement, adhering to the rule of law, maintaining human rights, ensuring accountability, and achieving justice for past abuses, society can maintain some semblance of order and stability (Paris, 2004). Liberal peacebuilding also relies on civil society engagements, including those involving INGOs, LNGOs, community groups, and the media. Civil society fosters a culture of dialogue, accountability, and participation and is seen as crucial for holding governments accountable and promoting social cohesion (Paris, 2004).

Liberal peacebuilding, a Western-originated approach to peacebuilding, is implemented and supported by international actors, including the United Nations (UN), donor countries, and international NGOs. These actors provide financial aid, technical assistance, and expertise in governance, security sector reform, and development (Richmond, 2006). Nevertheless, liberal peacebuilding has faced diverse criticisms in non-Western

communities, including reflecting a Western bias that is often not suitable or culturally appropriate for all societies (Robert, 2015). Criticisms include the use of a centralized, one-size-fits-all, top-down approach, imposed from above, with insufficient local participation and input, leading to a lack of sustainability and legitimacy (Robert, 2015). Other criticisms of liberal peacebuilding include its failure to consistently bring peace to non-Western societies due to an inability to address the roots of conflicts and its lack of local ownership of the peace process (Kharisma, 2017). There is also the perception of it being hierarchical and elitist (Cravo, 2018). Moreover, apart from being a product of power imbalance, as witnessed in the relationship between its external and local actors, it also produces and reinforces inequality and power structures within the local stakeholders (Obradović- Wochnik, 2018). Robert concludes that liberal peacebuilders often "give subjects of peacebuilding what they think they should have instead of what they need" (Robert, 2015, p. 5), thus interventions are "yielding results that local people do not want" (Knight, p. 5). In a nutshell, this implies that peacebuilding imposes projects on local communities, projects that eventually do not achieve the peacebuilding expectations of the host communities. What is not clear in the literature, however, is how this imposition happens. This dissertation provides an opportunity to closely examine NGOs in project relationship context with communities. Nevertheless, Paris (2004, p. 6) sums up the application of liberal peacebuilding in Africa as "very far from smooth". Some other scholars opine that the “local turn” conversation of the 2000s was consequent on the shortcomings of liberal peacebuilding (MacGinty and Richmond, 2013; Randazzo, 2016). In essence, post-colonialists view liberal peacebuilding as the imposition of Western culture, identity, and norms over other cultures, leading to distrust among non-Western societies and the derailment of the peace process. It is important to note that African peacebuilding is heavily influenced and funded by Western actors, and these criticisms are widespread.

So, given the context of this study, the African peacebuilding arena can be regarded as an ungoverned space, in which anyone, including INGOs, can wield any type of influence. For the reasons advanced, it is the INGOs that dominate this space. According to Heleta (2013:45) citing Dossa (2007), this dominance is underpinned by the West's historical philosophy of aiding a "helpless and underdeveloped Africa." In their words, "the Western development community has assumed the 'burden of third world development,' which is seen as incompetent and incapable of improving its own situation without the help of Western economies, development experts, and aid workers" (see also Chuter, 2010:7).

Heleta and Chuter's position can be seen as an amplification of post-colonial writers like Chinweizu, Walter Rodney, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Chimamanda Adichie, who

believe that Western views of the developing world are unilateral, historically inaccurate, blurred, stereotyped, and need to be challenged with counter-narratives (Chinweizu, 1975; Said, 1979; Fanon, 1963; Adichie, 2009). Walter Rodney, in particular, disagrees with the notion that the West brought or is bringing development to Africa. The central theme of his seminal book, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" (Rodney, 1975, 2011), is that the West, contrary to its posturing of bringing development to undeveloped and uncivilized Africa, was systematically underdeveloping Africa through trade and imperialism. However, Rodney's postulations are not without criticism (Green, 1975). Regarding peacebuilding, the problems and challenges of Africa's over-reliance on former colonial powers and external actors for financial and technical resources are well-documented, including the tendency to undermine the African Union's approaches to peacebuilding (Zondi, 2017).

Thus, INGO or donor domination of peacebuilding, or more generally the development agenda in Africa, in terms of driving initiatives and ultimately deciding the direction to follow, is an explosive issue in the Global South's development discourse (Morfit, 2011). This domination manifests in many ways, especially in decisions about interventions: who decides where to intervene, how, and when? Even though these decisions are parts and parcels of accountability (Edwards & Hulme, 1995), in most cases, they are made without the consultation of the direct beneficiaries—the local community (Wallace, 1997) but are rather driven essentially by donor goals (Contu & Girei, 2014; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Bano, 2012).

Speaking of INGOs in Africa, Chuter (2010:5) remarked, "They are in competition with each other in the market of ideas and have to attract funding by offering to work in areas which are attractive to donors, even if they are not necessarily the most important areas as seen by Africans." Due to this apparent disconnect between the peacebuilding interventions driven by INGOs and the actual needs of the locals, there is deep-rooted mutual suspicion of INGOs and their local collaborators (LNGOs) in Africa, who are suspected of having ulterior motives.

Therefore, LNGOs are generally perceived as alienated and corrupt (Smith, 2010). Their key staff live in affluence and opulence amidst poor and suffering locals. Consequently, scholars like Chuter have concluded that "almost all NGOs in Africa are ultimately funded by governments in some form, and they are often resented by locals as mechanisms for indirect Western influence" (2010:5). Once more, it needs to be emphasized that such conclusions, in addition to being overly generalistic, need to be supported by empirical evidence.

In the field of Africa's peacebuilding, what Chuter refers to as "resentment by locals" manifests as deep-rooted suspicion on the part of governments, academics, and practitioners, sometimes leading to open condemnation of the activities of INGOs and hostility with government institutions. Thus, as is the case in development generally, peacebuilding interventions in Africa are plagued by accusations of INGOs following preconceived objectives in terms of intervention without recourse to realities on the ground (Onodugo, Odo, and Onodugo, 2021; Adzande, 2022). While there are few empirical studies in the literature identifying the causes of this, it is not unlikely to be partly driven by funding conditionalities.

In addition, the literature suggests that government agencies and institutions in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, may be involved in corruption when collaborating on peacebuilding efforts. This issue is not limited to national institutions but also occurs at various levels. When state governments undertake peacebuilding actions on their own or in collaboration with INGOs or multilateral bodies, the allocated funds for such programs often suffer from corruption. The widespread nature of corruption in Nigeria's development and civil society sector is well-documented in the literature (Smith, 2010; Routley, 2010). These criticisms are also noted in the broader aid assistance developments to Nigeria (Eze, 2023).

Another important issue highlighted by the literature on African peacebuilding is the fundamental question of how involved communities are in NGO-run peacebuilding projects. Are they carried along in the needs analysis before project design? Are they involved in the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, certification, sustainability, and exit strategies of the projects in their domain as important stakeholders? And to reecho Wallace (1997:15), "who actually owns the project?", or, in Szporluk's (2009, p. 8) words, "can project communities also serve as checks and balances on INGOs/LNGOs?".

Many critics would also pin this on the structural nature of liberal peacebuilding, which supports intervention designs and implementation models as part of a centralized template. This inadvertently reinforces the inequality in the international system between the Global North and South, between interveners and intervened communities, and between the core and the periphery. Thus, liberal peacebuilding is also seen in some quarters in the Global South as an instrument of global governance by the North (Chandler, 2011).

Scholars like Wallis (2018) have, however, queried whether what is being practiced is truly liberal peacebuilding, noting that there seems to be much contradiction between what is practiced and the principles of liberal peacebuilding. Wallis argues further that neoliberal peacebuilding, which is guided by an emphasis on individual or organizational autonomy

and removed from the basic principles of justice, has been practiced (2018, p.84). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that most of the criticisms and discussions against liberal peacebuilding in Africa tend to focus on the UN and UN multilateral bodies' peacebuilding initiatives in the region, excluding the INGOs and their peacebuilding activities (Campbell, 2018). Meanwhile, the INGOs operate with the same Western-modelled top-down centralized principles of liberal peacebuilding.

Again, though many studies submit that local voices are often excluded in peacebuilding in Africa (Adzande, 2022; Kharisma, 2017; Zambakari, 2016), there is a dearth of empirical research on how this happens in a real-life INGO case study. Thus, this dissertation will interrogate the implementation of an intervention and engagement in the communities to understand how communities engage peacebuilding INGOs and how their views are harnessed for their peacebuilding needs in response to this gap.

Furthermore, these criticisms of liberal peacebuilding gave birth to hybrid peacebuilding, which theoretically is the merging of different approaches to peacebuilding – including fusing Western and local approaches. But these are ongoing processes that are yet to be properly studied (Albrecht and Moe, 2014). Nevertheless, many INGOs pride themselves on incorporating the “locals” in their intervention by virtue of partnering with LNGOs and involving host communities in pre- intervention needs assessments, and proudly conceptualizing the “locals”, broadly to mean taking cognizance of “customary laws, indigenous knowledge, traditional structures, family, traditional authorities; religions, and social groupings that determine the social reality of the large parts of the population” (Wallis, 2018, p. 5). Again, it is not sufficiently established empirically in literature how hybrid peacebuilding (Richmond and Mitchell, 2012; MacGinty, 2010) in the context of an INGO-led peacebuilding intervention in non-Western societies works. This dissertation’s case study on peacebuilding combines external actors (INGO) and locals (LNGOs, the state, and the host communities), and offers an opportunity to empirically see hybrid peacebuilding in practice.

Some other scholars are advocating for what is called “decolonial peacebuilding,” which in theory is local peacebuilding without colonial worldviews, institutions, impacts, and values (Zondi, 2017; Schirch, 2022; Ayindo, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). While this approach may resonate with proponents of localization, a fundamental challenge facing decolonial peacebuilding lies in its practical feasibility in the absence of colonial funding and structures. This is particularly relevant in the African context, where most peacebuilding efforts are sustained by external financial support (Africa, 2020), amidst pervasive issues such as weak economies, political misgovernance, fragile institutions, insufficient

infrastructure, and a growing youth population facing limited economic opportunities. Although some scholars of decolonial peace (Zondi, 2017; Schirch, 2022) advocate for disengagement from colonial funding and the prioritization of internal or local funding sources, questions remain regarding the feasibility of such an approach given the scarcity of resources, competing developmental challenges, and fragile economies. Moreover, within the framework of INGO-led peacebuilding, decolonial approaches remain underdeveloped operationally and lack substantial empirical research.

However, while the perception of domination and inequality is deeply rooted, there is a dearth of empirical studies investigating power asymmetry between INGOs and LNGOs generally in Africa using specific case studies based on project interventions to validate the postulation in peacebuilding. It is even documented that most of the scholars interrogating the issue are from the Global North (Brass et al., 2018; Malhotra, 1997), meaning that Southern voices and perspectives are needed in literature as well (Kareithi and Lund, 2012; Brass et al., 2018). Olawoore and Kamruzzman's (2019) "NGOs, Partnership, and Accountability - A Case of ActionAid and Its Local Partners in Nigeria" came closest in this regard. However, the study's assessment was not based on a specific project/program intervention. It did not focus on the power asymmetry of ActionAid and its Nigerian partners within a project context. It was not a peacebuilding partnership and did not investigate a peacebuilding intervention. Furthermore, it was a rights-based NGO partnership. Contu and Girei's (2014) work used a development INGO-LNGOs case study in Uganda and focused on partnership as part of a political process within the wider North–South geopolitics. It submitted that the global structure of relations between the Global North and South was responsible for the inequality between development INGOs and LNGOs. This dissertation investigates the partnership relations between an INGO and LNGOs in a peacebuilding context to understand the nature of the relationship and how it shapes the intervention. Peacebuilding INGOs–LNGOs partnerships are insufficiently studied (Onodugo, Odo, and Onodugo, 2021; Oudraat and Haufler, 2008; Hoglund and Lilja, 2018; Kolk and Lenfant, 2015), just as scholars agree that more research is needed on NGOs and local peacebuilding in Africa (De Coning et al., 2010; Oudraat and Haufler, 2008). Not to mention that empirical studies on the impacts of partnerships are rare (Contu and Girei, 2014). Be that as it may, the literature review will narrow in on NGOs and peacebuilding, specifically in Nigeria, which is the location of this research.

2.7 Nigerian NGOs and Peacebuilding

This section discusses the nature, focus, and challenges of NGOs in Nigeria in the context of peacebuilding. In doing so, it unveils the gap that this dissertation addresses concerning

NGOs and peacebuilding in Nigeria. The themes discussed include the emergence and evolution of NGOs in Nigeria, the roles undertaken by NGOs, and their challenges. The section begins with the evolution of NGOs in Nigeria.

2.7.1 The Evolution of NGOs in Nigeria

Historically, the emergence of NGOs in Nigeria dates to the colonial period when many organizations representing various interests, including faith-based groups, began arriving in the country (Noah, 2011). These organizations provided evangelical, health, and welfare services such as establishing psychiatry homes, leprosaria, juvenile centres, welfare outreaches, and promoting Christian evangelism. Although many were not formally registered, they filled development gaps, including addressing anti-social cultural practices. For instance, Mary Slessor, who worked for the United Presbyterian Church, was able to persuade locals to stop killing twins, a practice rooted in local culture. The Lagos Ladies League supplied quinine medication to schools, and the Sacred Heart Hospitals run by a faith-based organization treated people (Ogoloma & Chuku, 2012). Some of these organizations, such as the Church Mission Society (CMS), Baptist International, and the Anglican Church Ministry, later evolved into churches (Noah, 2011). It can be concluded that their activities then centred around evangelism, health, and humanitarianism. However, with the advent of independence in 1960, and the subsequent political developments in Nigeria, including over 30 years of military governance and the resulting human rights abuses and economic hardships, formal NGOs emerged to champion human rights, democracy, and anti-corruption efforts (Iheme, 2000; Babawale, 1997; Olorode, 1997).

2.7.2 Roles Undertaken by NGOs in Nigeria

Ideally, the goals of NGOs are to provide relief, engender social and economic development, flag human rights issues, intervene in humanitarian actions, address environmental matters, resolve conflicts, preserve culture, build democracy, analyze policies, conduct research, and provide information among other areas of public action (Ahmed & Potter, 2006; Lewis, 2010). However, Lewis (2007) contends that NGOs' roles can be categorized under three main components: implementer, catalyst, and partner. The implementer role entails mobilizing resources to provide goods and services to people in need. The catalyst role involves inspiring, facilitating, or contributing to improved thinking and action to promote social transformation. Lastly, the partnership role involves NGOs working with government, donors, and the private sector on joint activities (World Bank, 2000). In Nigeria, many local NGOs work in partnership with international NGOs to implement projects (Eze, 2023). However, despite it being a popular practice,

INGO and LNGO partnerships are under-researched in Nigeria, meaning the issues and dynamics that characterize their relationships in a project context are largely unknown (Onodugo, Odo & Onodugo, 2021). Not much is known about NGO partnerships in peacebuilding in Nigeria either, including the nature of their operations, their prospects, and their challenges (Adzande, 2022; Onodugo, Odo & Onodugo, 2021). In fact, according to the Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGOs), an amalgam of NGOs in Nigeria, there are eight areas that NGOs in Nigeria have significantly contributed to and majored in, including youth development, democracy, good governance, environment, health, research, and policy (Eze, 2023, p.13). Peacebuilding was not factored in, indicating that it has received less research attention and perhaps less operational activity in Nigeria.

2.7.3 Nigerian NGOs and Their Challenges

NGOs in Nigeria face many challenges, including a lack of funding and the capacity to attract direct funding (Onodugo, Odo, and Onodugo, 2021). They rely on project-based funding; thus, the inability to raise funds puts NGOs in an uncomfortable position where many compromise their values and principles to survive (Edigan, Ikhanoba, and Shaibu, 2018). NGOs in Nigeria also contend with corruption and a lack of trust from both citizens and the government (Edigan, Ikhanoba, and Shaibu, 2018; Onodugo, Odo, and Onodugo, 2021). Some citizens distrust NGOs, viewing them as self-serving, elitist, and corrupt, with many employees leading lives of affluence, leading people to believe they misuse resources meant for the poor. The government distrusts NGOs because they pressure it to be accountable, yet sometimes it believes that some NGOs represent foreign interests against regime or national interests (Aliero and Yelwa, 2020). Other constraints faced by NGOs in Nigeria include poor collaboration or inability to collaborate with government agencies, over-reliance on donors, inability to adequately partner with external actors, and an unstable political operating climate (Farida and Adisa, 2005). Additionally, they lack proper accountability to their funders and the communities they serve, and they possess inadequate knowledge in critical development sectors (Eze, 2023). Some NGOs are not properly and legally registered, which impedes their ability to partner with INGOs and donors, who prefer to work with standardized organizations (Eze, 2023). These constraints represent significant obstacles to NGOs in Nigeria in fulfilling their role of filling development gaps and amplifying the voices of the poor in development decisions (World Bank, 2000).

Many NGOs, including numerous INGO-LNGO partnerships, have intervened in the farmer- herder conflict since the early 1990s when the conflict became protracted. Sadly, there have been insufficient studies seeking to empirically interrogate the peacebuilding efforts related to the conflict (Adzande, 2022). Consequently, after many years of

attempting to build peace between the herders and the farmers, not much has been achieved in terms of sustainable peace and harmonious living between the two communities. Little is known about the NGO partnerships that have intervened to build peace within the community, the nature of their partnership, their engagements with the communities, or their results, challenges, and lessons learned. Adzande's (2022) recent study is a major attempt toward this. However, its focus was on the failure of a particular intervention from the perspective of the host community dwellers. This dissertation does not focus on the success or failure of any peacebuilding intervention but rather on the partnership relationship of an INGO-LNGOs that intervened in the conflict to build peace. The broad research questions seek to understand the nature of the partnership and its influence on the effectiveness of the intervention, as well as the institutional support received from the state, in response to the gap established by Adzande's work.

2.8 The Nigerian State and NGO-led Peacebuilding

This section examines the relationship between the state, NGOs, and NGO-led peacebuilding. It discusses the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Nigeria's institutional peacebuilding structure, its role within NGO-led peacebuilding, and the gap that this dissertation addresses.

The literature establishes that peacebuilding within a country, especially NGO-led peacebuilding, is never done in isolation from the state (Boutros-Ghali, 1992; Akande et al., 2021; Lotz & De Coning, 2010). In fact, peacebuilding, security, development, and the general protection of life and property of citizens are the responsibilities of the state (IPCR, 2017). Section 14 of the Nigerian Constitution specifically stipulates that the security and welfare of the Nigerian people shall be the primary responsibility of the Nigerian government (FGN, 1999). However, states sometimes abandon their responsibilities or perform them poorly, enabling the advent of NGOs to fill the gap (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015; Banks & Hulme, 2012). Nevertheless, regarding peacebuilding, it is not possible to carry out a successful intervention within a country without the active support of the state through its institutional peacebuilding structures and policies (De Coning, 2010). Sometimes states support NGO peacebuilders by creating an enabling political and secure environment; other times, the support may come through policies, information-sharing, collaborations, or oversight (Altahir, 2016).

Using a case study in Sudan involving the partnership between INGOs and LNGOs, Altahir (2016, p.8) shows that the state actively facilitated the partnership process. The Sudanese government ensured there was a tripartite agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the INGOs, LNGOs, and the government regarding the partnership, which

the government also signed. This was to ensure continuous open discussion, information sharing, and knowledge exchange, all geared towards strengthening the partnership between INGOs and LNGOs in Sudan (Altahir, 2016, p.7). The partnership agreement detailed the roles, responsibilities, and timeframe of the partnership and the mutually agreed-upon mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and measure project results. Additionally, the partnership agreement conformed to the prevailing laws and frameworks in Sudan and was made in collaboration with all relevant government ministries, whose representatives signed the document (Altahir, 2016, p.7). The agreement outlined both the INGOs' and LNGOs' roles and contributions to the project, including sustainability plans for the project, with respect to issues around the environment, good governance, and gender (Altahir, 2016, p.7).

Based on the case study in Sudan, the state is an important stakeholder in the actualization of an ideal partnership between INGOs and LNGOs and in ensuring project effectiveness. Effectiveness in project implementation involves achieving project objectives, ensuring stakeholder satisfaction (including that of beneficiary communities), delivering quality outcomes, adhering to timelines, milestones, and budgets, and considering the long-term sustainability of the projects and their impacts (Baccarini, 1999). It is no surprise, then, that Altahir (2016, p.4) argues that “international development organizations” require institutional contributions from the host country to meet requirements, whether in their partnership relationships with LNGOs or in the local implementation of projects. This aligns with the arguments of other scholars like Lotz and De Coning (2010) and Akande et al. (2021) concerning peacebuilding, emphasizing that peacebuilding can only be sustainable if, while utilizing international contributions, it is locally rooted, led, and supported, reflecting local knowledge, and importantly, conforming to the national policies and frameworks of the country involved.

Regarding Nigeria, NGO-led peacebuilding, and institutional peacebuilding structures or governance, the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was established in 2000 as Nigeria’s institutional response to conflict and peacebuilding (Babatunde, 2017). The IPCR serves as Nigeria’s think tank, resource center, and institutional body responsible for issues related to peace and conflict. The IPCR engages in conflict research, conflict intervention, and advises the government on policy options for addressing conflict and peacebuilding interventions (IPCR, 2017).

The IPCR conducts an annual conflict assessment of all six geopolitical regions of Nigeria to understand the conflict drivers in each region, the dynamics, gaps, and recommendations, and how they can be addressed. It has consistently done this over the

years and has published these findings in volumes, in collaboration with stakeholders like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (IPCR, 2017).

One of the major achievements of IPCR's efforts in containing conflicts and building peace in Nigeria is the design of the Niger Delta Amnesty program in 2009 (Okonofua, 2016). The Niger Delta Amnesty program is a peacebuilding intervention through which Niger Delta militants were persuaded to drop their arms, rehabilitated, empowered, and reintegrated into their communities, arguably ensuring the return of peace to the conflict region (Ajibola, 2015; Okonofua, 2016).

The IPCR also collaborates with, and has collaborated with, numerous stakeholders, development agencies, and INGOs, both locally and internationally, in carrying out its duties. It has partnered with organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department for International Development (DFID), now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Women, Search for Common Ground, the Dutch Embassy in Nigeria, and many others in addressing conflict and peacebuilding challenges in Nigeria (Babatunde, 2017). Unfortunately, the Institute faces challenges, including bureaucracy, inadequate funding, staff lacking adequate capacity, and a confused legal framework for peacebuilding. The Nigerian National Peace Policy (NPP), which is the policy framework that outlines the state's institutional commitment to peace, peace processes and procedures, engagement with non-state actors, operational and structural conflict prevention measures, and policies related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions aimed at preventing escalation and recurrence of violence in Nigerian communities, including synergy with NGOs, has remained a draft document since 2009 (IPCR, 2015, p.15). Neither the Federal Executive Council nor the parliament has deemed it important enough to sign it into law (Olalekan, 2023).

Thus, since 2009, there has been no active operational peacebuilding framework in Nigeria (IPCR, 2009), even though the institution, the IPCR, exists. Therefore, while the institution for peacebuilding support and coordination is present in Nigeria, the enabling law is absent. How, then, are peacebuilding NGOs supported institutionally, and under what framework have they been carrying out their projects, as suggested by Akande et al. (2021) and Lotz and De Coning (2010)? Meanwhile, peacebuilding led by non-state actors, INGOs, and LNGOs continues in Nigeria, producing varied results. What is not established empirically in the literature is how these peacebuilding initiatives, especially those driven by INGOs, have been supported or otherwise by the institutional peacebuilding structure

and peacebuilding policy framework in Nigeria, and what implications such support or lack thereof pose to an intervention. Babatunde's (2017, p.48) study evaluated the activities of the IPCR against its mandate between 2004 and 2014, which substantially covers the period of the case study intervention used in this dissertation and concluded that the "national peacebuilding environment is characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability." Babatunde's study focused on the activities that the IPCR carried out during the mentioned period, in line with its establishment mandate, but did not address how an NGO-led peacebuilding intervention is supported or otherwise within the prevailing institutional peacebuilding structure in Nigeria. The study was silent on how the prevailing institutional peacebuilding policy climate impacts a non-state actor peacebuilding initiative in Nigeria. Thus, there is an existing gap in understanding how an NGO-led peacebuilding intervention is supported or otherwise in Nigeria. This study responds to this gap by examining the nature of the peacebuilding intervention carried out by an INGO-LNGO partnership and how well or not the state supports the intervention institutionally. Specifically, broad research question number three (RQ3) aims to understand how the institutional peacebuilding and policy context engaged, supported, or hindered the NGO partnership and their intervention in the communities, in response to the literature (Lotz and De Coning, 2010). This will contribute to the literature on how the Nigerian institutional peacebuilding structure and policy framework relate to INGO/LNGO peacebuilding partnerships and their interventions in Nigeria, since no previous study has addressed this. Given the confusing peacebuilding climate in Nigeria, as illustrated in the literature and summarized by Babatunde (2017, p.48) as unclear, volatile, and ambiguous, this dissertation seeks clarity and understanding of how it either helps or hinders NGO-led peace interventions in Nigeria. It argues that NGO-led peacebuilding without the active support of an institutional peacebuilding structure within the country will be constrained in terms of effectiveness.

To further situate the INGO-LNGO partnership within the broader socio-political and cultural landscape of peacebuilding in Nigeria, the next section engages with the concepts of *local voice*, *community*, *postcoloniality*, and *everyday international relations*, offering critical lenses through which the dynamics of partnership can be better understood and contextualized.

2.9 The Local Voice, Community, Postcoloniality and the Everyday International Relations

This section examines these interconnected concepts in relation to the research focus, highlighting the underlying issues and gaps that inform this dissertation. Each concept offers critical insights into the nature of INGO-LNGO partnerships in conflict-affected contexts. The discussion begins with an exploration of the local voice, which is central to

this dissertation as it reflects the contributions of local actors—including the state, LNGOs, and host communities—to the peacebuilding project.

2.9.1 The Politics of The Local Voice

The “local voice” in peacebuilding underscores the importance of active participation and leadership by local communities in shaping peace initiatives. Rather than positioning local actors as passive recipients of externally designed interventions, this approach emphasizes the critical value of their lived experiences, cultural competencies, and contextual knowledge in ensuring relevant and sustainable peacebuilding outcomes (Peace & Justice Network, n.d.; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). By advocating for community-led strategies, the local voice challenges dominant top-down peacebuilding models, calling instead for the localization of agency and decision-making (Mac Ginty, 2011; Donais, 2009).

However, the notion of the "local" is not without conceptual and practical challenges. If not critically examined, it can become an essentialized, static construct that overlooks the heterogeneity and internal dynamics of local communities (Hirblinger & Simons, 2015). Misunderstanding or romanticizing the local voice as a singular, unified actor can have far-reaching implications—from flawed community engagement and skewed project design to suboptimal peacebuilding outcomes (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). As Hirblinger and Simons (2015), Obradovic-Wochnik (2020) argue, the local voice is not a fixed reality but a contextually produced and politically mediated representation, shaped by interactions with international and national actors.

In conflict-affected contexts like Nigeria, where power asymmetries are often stark, the recognition and integration of the local voice within INGO-LNGO partnerships is especially critical. It embodies local agency, articulates community interests, and influences both project utility and peacebuilding outcomes. Furthermore, in such contexts, the question of “who” represents the local is not straightforward. In Nigeria, local voices are often expressed through a triangulation of actors—the state, LNGOs, and host communities themselves. This raises important empirical and theoretical questions: Is the local voice singular or plural? How are these voices negotiated, amplified, or silenced in peacebuilding partnerships?

This dissertation, therefore, presents an opportunity to explore how local voices are identified, harvested, and operationalized in project design and implementation. It also interrogates the contextual and political dynamics that shape local voices in INGO-LNGO peacebuilding partnerships.

2.9.2 Community as Contested Spaces and Collective Agency: Reimagining Community in Peacebuilding Practice

Community, understood both as a geographic socio-political entity and a social construct, plays a central role in peacebuilding interventions. It influences how partnerships are perceived, negotiated, and sustained, as well as how their interventions unfold on the ground.

Scholars have long debated the nature of community, illustrating its complexity, contested meanings, and evolving definitions (Williams, 2002; Neely, 2011; Garcia, Mizrahi, & Korazim-Kőrösy, 2022). Tönnies' (1887 cited in Bruhn 2005) classical differentiation between Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society) laid an early foundation, contrasting traditional, emotionally bonded communities with more rationalized, contractual social structures. However, as Brint (2001) argues, such dichotomies often oversimplify the lived realities of modern communities, where elements of both tradition and change, emotional attachment and institutional organization, coexist in dynamic ways.

Bruhn (2005) expands on these debates by arguing that conceptions of community are deeply tied to social connections, identity, and belonging, but also to fragmentation and exclusion. He highlights the tension between idealized notions of community as cohesive and inclusive versus the reality of communities as contested spaces where individuals experience varying degrees of belonging and marginalization. This view aligns with Cleaver (2007), who underscores the internal inequalities and power structures within communities, challenging the assumption that collective action is inherently equitable or beneficial for all members. Similarly, Cleaver and Toner (2006) highlight the adaptive nature of community-based governance, shaped by local traditions, institutional frameworks, and external influences.

Garcia et al. (2022) further emphasize the complexity of community participation, noting how professional perspectives often dictate who is included in decision-making processes and who is excluded. Likewise, Traill (2020) illustrates how urban communities in Glasgow are shaped by tensions, disruptions, and the strategic deployment of community narratives for political and developmental purposes. These discussions resonate with Bruhn's (2005) argument that communities are not only sites of social cohesion but also arenas of negotiation, conflict, and shifting alliances.

From a practical standpoint, the adaptive and negotiated nature of community is particularly relevant in peacebuilding efforts, where community-based interventions must navigate historical legacies, governance structures, and external influences (Frank & Smith, 1999). Frank and Smith (1999) highlight the importance of building community capacity, rather than assuming an inherent cohesion among residents. Likewise, Rutazibwa (2019) critiques externally driven humanitarian and development interventions

for failing to recognize local agency and indigenous forms of solidarity, reinforcing the need for a more decolonized and contextually grounded understanding of community engagement.

In light of these perspectives, this dissertation conceptualizes community as a dynamic and multi-layered construct shaped by social, historical, and political forces, rather than as a static or homogenous entity. The project host communities in Nigeria exemplify these complexities, revealing how peacebuilding initiatives unfold within contested spaces marked by negotiation, shifting power relations, and evolving social ties. This study offers a contextualized examination of community dynamics as sites of local power relations, collective agency, and competing interests, with particular attention to how local voices are expressed and positioned within the design, implementation, and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions (Barnes, 2006).

2.9.3 Postcolonial Reflections on Peacebuilding Partnerships

The dissertation leverages postcolonial literature to interrogate how colonial legacies continue to structure power relations through Western-dominated norms, institutions, and knowledge systems (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007; Loomba, 2015). In the context of INGO-LNGO partnerships in Nigeria, postcolonialism is not only relevant for exposing the structural asymmetries between international and local actors but also essential for deconstructing how historical processes of colonization have shaped the global architecture of development and peacebuilding (Escobar, 1995; Ziai, 2016).

These studies provide a critical framework to challenge the presumed neutrality and benevolence of international development and peacebuilding interventions, revealing how such practices often perpetuate paternalistic and hierarchical logics (Duffield, 2007). For instance, Rutazibwa (2010) critiques the European Union's self-representation as an "ethical intervener" in Africa, arguing that such narratives reproduce colonial hierarchies under the guise of partnership and humanitarian concern. In subsequent work, Rutazibwa (2018, 2019) advocates for the decolonization of development and peacebuilding thinking, calling for the dismantling of Eurocentric assumptions embedded in international aid frameworks.

These postcolonial critiques are especially salient for analyzing INGO dominance in peacebuilding partnerships, where discourses of "collaboration" and "capacity building" often obscure deeply embedded power asymmetries that marginalize local actors and limit genuine local ownership (Abnett, 2024; Cravo, 2018). In Nigeria, postcoloniality illuminates how INGOs often enter peacebuilding spaces wielding disproportionate financial, epistemic, and institutional power, positioning LNGOs primarily as implementers rather than equal strategic partners (Peace Direct, 2021, 2023). Moreover, liberal

peacebuilding models—frequently exported by Western institutions—are operationalized through hierarchical partnership structures that may be ill-suited to the socio-political complexities and priorities of local contexts (Adzande, 2022; Richmond & Mitchell, 2012).

Beyond the realm of NGO partnerships, postcolonialism also provides tools for examining the historical structuring of Nigerian communities. The colonial legacy of arbitrary borders, indirect rule, and the codification of ethnic and religious identities has created enduring fault lines, particularly in North Central Nigeria, where this study is situated (Falola, 2024; Mamdani, 1996). British colonial administration imposed artificial boundaries that disregarded pre-existing ethnic, cultural, and political configurations, forcibly grouping diverse communities without regard for historical cohesion (Ochonu, 2014). Indirect rule further entrenched divisions by privileging selected traditional authorities, often reinforcing social hierarchies and intergroup rivalries. These colonial legacies continue to shape patterns of local governance, intergroup interaction, and the ways communities engage with external actors, including peacebuilding organizations (Branch, 2011; Ake, 1996).

Against this backdrop, this dissertation assesses the nature of INGO-LNGO partnerships in peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria. It seeks to explore how structural inequalities inform present-day collaboration, how agency is negotiated between actors, and to what extent local contexts are capable of influencing or reshaping externally driven peacebuilding agendas (Mac Ginty, 2011; Lee, 2013). By foregrounding postcolonial critiques, the study challenges dominant development paradigms and highlights the need for more equitable and locally grounded peacebuilding practices.

2.9.4 Everyday International Relations and Its Relevance to INGO–LNGO Peacebuilding Partnerships in Nigeria

The concept of everyday international relations (everyday IR) offers a critical lens through which to understand how international politics is not only constructed by state actors and elite institutions but also enacted and experienced through the routine, localized, and often mundane practices of ordinary people. This scholarly “everyday turn” in IR challenges the discipline’s traditional state-centric and elite-focused foundations, contending that the “international” permeates the most ordinary aspects of human life, thereby rendering the personal and the local inherently global and political (Acuto, 2014, p. 2).

Acuto (2014) argues that “there is a relationship between the international context or IR and the commonplace realities we all partake of in our homes” (p. 346), advocating for attention to spatiality, habit, and micro-practices as crucial to understanding global politics. Power (2012) similarly critiques the longstanding binary between domestic and international realms, emphasizing the entanglement of local and global interactions in

everyday life.

Croft and Vaughan-Williams (2017) describe this scholarly shift as “the everyday turn” in IR (p. 21), a move towards illuminating “non-elite constructions, meanings, and experiences” and their relevance to international political processes (p. 22). Solomon and Steele (2017) further define this space as “micropolitics”—those aspects of social life that evade traditional, state-centric IR frameworks (p. 268).

Björkdahl, Hall, and Svensson (2019) advocate for challenging the elite-centric bias in International Relations (IR) by collapsing the macro–micro divide, arguing that “the everyday is the real site of international politics.” Within this conceptual framework, the lived experiences of individuals in conflict zones, peacebuilding communities, and development contexts are elevated as critical sites of analysis. This perspective draws attention to the ways in which global political dynamics manifest in everyday life—for instance, how the Russian war in Ukraine influences consumer experiences in UK supermarkets, how the Israeli–Hamas conflict reverberates through public demonstrations on the streets of Nigeria, or how African migrants, driven from their homelands by poor governance and structural poverty rooted in colonial and neo-colonial legacies, find themselves trapped in the Sahara on their way to Europe. These examples underscore the interconnectedness of global and local politics, positioning everyday life as a central arena where international relations are experienced, negotiated, and contested (Croft and Vaughan-Williams (2017, Solomon and Steele, 2017).

A growing body of scholarship continues to enrich this agenda. Acuto (2014) explores the politics of waste and garbage management as everyday IR. Selimovic (2018) focuses on women’s everyday peacebuilding practices in post-conflict Bosnia, while Ozduzen (2020) analyzes everyday resistance and gender norms through Twitter discourses on divorce in Turkey. Lis Philipsen (2020) theorizes the “everyday of intervention” from a practitioner’s perspective, and Richey (2018) introduces “everyday humanitarianism” to account for individuals engaging in humanitarian acts beyond institutional frameworks. Tellidis and Glomm (2020) examine street art as a site of everyday political expression. Beattie (2019) investigates the role of emotions in shaping everyday practices in IR, and Beattie and Bird (2022) argue for the inclusion of youth and children in international political analysis. Their pointed question—“Who is excluded from the everyday international?”—highlights the marginalization of certain actors and urges a more inclusive, expansive approach to studying IR (Beattie & Bird, 2022, p. 109).

This question is especially critical in light of INGO–LNGO peacebuilding partnerships. While the “local turn” and the “humanitarian turn” in peacebuilding have attempted to

foreground local agency and community priorities, they often fall short of examining the operational everyday dynamics of INGO–LNGO partnerships at the micro level. Specifically, the ways in which these partnerships engage local communities, faultily conceptualize, incorporate or overlook local voices, and mediate the translation of liberal or hybrid peacebuilding frameworks into practical interventions remain under-researched.

Thus, despite the analytical advances brought by the everyday turn in IR, a notable empirical and conceptual gap persists: the everyday dynamics of INGO–LNGO partnerships in peacebuilding, particularly in contexts such as Nigeria. These partnerships are not abstract or purely bureaucratic—they are embedded in the daily realities of communities and shaped by the historical, political, and cultural contexts of their environments.

This dissertation responds to that gap. It empirically investigates how liberal and hybrid peacebuilding frameworks, mediated through INGO–LNGO partnerships, are operationalized within Nigerian communities. It examines how "local voices"—conceived as expressions of agency, interest, and priority by community members—are identified, harmonized, or sidelined in project design and implementation. Furthermore, it interrogates the power relations and contextual dynamics that structure these engagements. By foregrounding these micro-level processes, the dissertation contributes to everyday IR literature by highlighting how global peacebuilding logics are materialized through partnership relations and everyday interactions in conflict-affected contexts. This approach reveals how the global and the local continuously co-produce each other through the politically charged, routine practices of everyday peacebuilding.

2.9.5 Summary, Synthesis, and Identified Gaps in the Literature

The literature on INGO–LNGO partnerships, local agency, postcolonial critiques, and everyday international relations offers valuable theoretical and empirical insights, particularly in the context of development and peacebuilding interventions in the Global South. However, several significant gaps persist—both conceptually and empirically.

Scholars have shown that partnership relationships between Northern INGOs and Southern LNGOs are often marked by asymmetries in power, decision-making, and resource control, despite discourses of collaboration and capacity building (Miles, 2017). Yet, empirical research exploring how these power dynamics play out in specific project contexts—especially within peacebuilding interventions—is limited. Most existing studies focus on broader development NGOs, such as health or rights-based organizations, with a notable dearth of research on NGO peacebuilding partnerships in Africa, particularly in Nigeria (Muller-Bloch & Kranz, 2014). This represents a major gap in the literature on both

NGO partnerships and peacebuilding.

Moreover, while existing studies have critiqued the exclusion of local voices in INGO-led interventions, there is limited empirical understanding of how communities are actually engaged—or excluded—as stakeholders in peacebuilding initiatives. Questions remain regarding how local voices are identified, negotiated, and operationalized in project design and implementation (Miles, 2017). This reflects a broader gap in literature related to agency, representation, and the role of community dynamics in shaping peacebuilding outcomes.

In addition, the intersection of postcolonial legacies and everyday international relations remains underexplored in relation to INGO–LNGO peacebuilding partnerships. While scholars like Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007), and Rutazibwa (2010; 2018; 2019), have theorized how colonial power structures continue to shape global development and humanitarian frameworks, there is still a need for empirical studies that examine how these legacies manifest in everyday interactions and operational relationships between international and local actors in specific contexts. Likewise, the everyday turn in IR (Croft & Vaughan-Williams, 2017; Solomon & Steele, 2017) and scholarship on community-based peacebuilding (Haider, 2009; Akande, Kaye and Rukuni, 2021) underscore the importance of micro-level practices and localized agency, yet these dimensions are rarely examined through the lens of postcoloniality within partnership structures.

Furthermore, despite numerous peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria—particularly in response to the ongoing farmer-herder conflict—there remains an absence of focused research on how NGO-led interventions interface with national peacebuilding structures. Since 2009, the lack of a coherent national peacebuilding policy framework has been widely acknowledged, yet few, if any, studies have explored how INGOs navigate this institutional vacuum or how the absence of state support affects the sustainability and legitimacy of non-state-led peace initiatives (Robinson, 2011). This oversight presents another critical empirical gap.

In summary, the literature suggests three core knowledge gaps:

1. Empirical Analysis of Power Relations in Practice: There is insufficient research on the nature of INGO–LNGO power relations within specific project contexts, and how these dynamics affect peacebuilding project effectiveness and community impact (Miles, 2017). While power asymmetries are acknowledged, little empirical work captures how

these relations are negotiated in everyday interactions, which often reflect broader hierarchies in the international system.

2. Community Integration and Local Voice: Although the exclusion of local voices has been broadly noted, there is limited understanding of how communities are integrated into peacebuilding initiatives and how internal dynamics of representation and participation are managed (Hirblinger & Simons, 2015; Richmond, 2011). Few studies explore how local actors/communities assert agency in these processes, particularly in relation to local dynamics and the politics of inclusion or exclusion—gaps that this study seeks to address by leveraging postcolonial and everyday international relations perspectives.
3. Institutional and Policy Context: No study to date has empirically demonstrated how INGO-led peacebuilding initiatives function within Nigeria's broader peacebuilding architecture—or how the absence of a national peace policy framework influences NGO-led peace efforts (Robinson, 2011). This leaves unresolved how institutional voids and regulatory ambiguity shape both the strategy and sustainability of peacebuilding, particularly from the perspective of locally grounded actors.

2.9. 6 Contribution of the Current Study

This dissertation responds to these gaps by offering a context-specific, empirically grounded analysis of an INGO–LNGOs partnership in peacebuilding intervention in Nigeria. It investigates how this partnership operate within communities, interact with state actors, and engage local voices to foster more equitable, effective, and sustainable peacebuilding outcomes. By exploring the translation of liberal and hybrid peacebuilding frameworks into everyday practices, the study reveals how historical, political, and postcolonial dynamics continue to shape development partnerships and peacebuilding interventions in the Global South.

The study specifically addresses three main research questions (RQs):

- RQ1 examines the nature of the partnership relationship between a Northern INGO and two Southern LNGOs in Nigeria within the context of a peacebuilding intervention, relying on authentic partnership principles as measuring parameters.
- RQ2 explores how the nature of this partnership shapes interaction/intervention effectiveness with communities, focusing on the negotiation, inclusion, or exclusion of local voices and outcome.
- RQ3 investigates how the INGO-led peacebuilding intervention interfaces with Nigeria's institutional peacebuilding architecture and policy environment.

Through this multidimensional inquiry, the study advances scholarship on everyday

international relations, decolonial thought, and development partnerships by centering the agency, lived experiences, and contextual knowledge of local actors within the political and operational landscapes of global peacebuilding.

Following the review of relevant literature on INGO-LNGO partnerships and peacebuilding in Nigeria, and the identification of research gaps that informed the structuring of the research questions, the next section will present and discuss the conceptual framework adopted for this study, which includes Alan Fowler's authentic partnership principles, institutional peacebuilding structure and effective peacebuilding.

2.10 Conceptual Framework: Authentic Partnership Principles (APP), Institutional Peacebuilding Structure (IPS) and Effective Peacebuilding

This section establishes the conceptual framework adopted in this dissertation, which informs the analysis in response to the main research questions. Alan Fowler's (1998) Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) are adopted as the analytical conceptual framework within the context of a state's institutional peacebuilding structure to deliver effective peacebuilding. The discussion begins with the justification for adopting the APP and the contribution of this dissertation to it.

The justification for adopting Fowler's Authentic Partnership Principles as a framework in this dissertation is that, taken holistically, they represent principles that can help NGOs in partnership relationships attain a balance of power, optimize their capacities, and maximize the chances of achieving their partnership objectives. These principles represent a partnership that is "premised on trust and solidarity and not contracting" (Fowler, 1998, p. 7). I argue that this approach is the most effective for successful peacebuilding interventions because each party has an equal stake in the process and contributes to the maximum extent. They also help to distinguish between an ideal partnership between an INGO and an LNGO and an inauthentic partnership or any other type of relationship.

Furthermore, this dissertation makes two important contributions to Fowler's APP by adopting it. First, it unifies various submissions by Fowler (1998, 1992, 1997, 2000a, 2000b) into a cohesive framework, providing an analytical lens for evaluation. Second, it adapts the APP to a peacebuilding NGO partnership, connecting it to an institutional peacebuilding structure to generate effective peacebuilding outcomes.

In critically appraising the framework, it is important to note that it has not been previously used or documented as a framework, leaving a gap in the literature. Consequently, to my

knowledge, it has not been tested in a real-world INGO-LNGO partnership against factors such as funding, and individual or organizational agency, to empirically validate its strengths and claims. However, the APP is not used in isolation in this dissertation. Instead, it is integrated into a broader peacebuilding synergy within a state, where any flaws can be mitigated by an active institutional peacebuilding structure (IPS) within this collaborative approach to peacebuilding in the communities. Nevertheless, the dissertation asserts that NGO partnerships based on the APP represent the best prospects for successful community peacebuilding in an NGO-led peacebuilding context within a state.

2.11 Fowler's Authentic Partnership Principles (APP)

In reality, what does an authentic partnership between INGOs and LNGOs entail? What principles or characteristics guide it? The literature review highlighted various attempts to define such a partnership and their shortcomings. This dissertation builds on Fowler's Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) as a conceptual framework to analyze the ideal INGO-LNGO partnership relationship and the project data in response to the research questions.

As one of the most prominent voices in the discourse on partnership relationships between INGOs and LNGOs, Fowler (1992, 1997, 1998, 2000a, 2000b) outlined various qualities of an "authentic partnership" between INGOs and LNGOs. However, for analytical clarity, these qualities are compressed into six key principles in this study: *common goals mutually set by the partners, mutuality in contributions, respect for the autonomy of each organization, respect for each partner's identity, respect for each partner's position outside the partnership, and equality of the parties involved in decision-making.*

Taking cognizance of the principles of authentic partnership as articulated, Fowler (2000, p.6) offers a more comprehensive explanation of the concept of partnership as a "codeword to reflect humanitarian, moral, political, ideological, or spiritual solidarity between non-governmental development organizations in the North and South that join together to pursue a common cause of social change." The key point in Fowler's articulation of a partnership relationship is that it not only acknowledges the collaboration of organizations pursuing a common goal but also details how this collaboration should be conducted and the principles that should guide it. I begin with the principle of common goals mutually set by the partners.

Common goals mutually set by the partners: The principle of common goals mutually set by partners emphasizes that, based on a shared vision, all parties in a partnership must collectively define the objectives of the collaboration or project (Danish Refugee Council, n.d.). These goals should be clearly articulated, jointly agreed upon, and owned by all

partners involved. It is essential that the goals are not unilaterally determined by one partner and imposed on others due to power imbalances. When such imposition occurs, the relationship ceases to function as a true partnership. Since this dissertation examines a partnership organized around a specific project, it will explore how decisions regarding project outputs and goals were made. Did these decisions reflect the collective views of the partners? Were they reached mutually, or were they unilaterally imposed? The dissertation argues that if decisions were imposed by one partner, this signals an unequal relationship where one party dominates. In such cases, the subordinate party functions more as an agent rather than an equal partner, while the dominant party assumes the role of the principal. Relationships characterized by principal-agent dynamics are inherently unequal and transactional, lacking the mutuality that defines a true partnership.

Furthermore, this dissertation is also aware that at the macro level, in international relations, Western regional blocs like the European Union (EU) often position themselves as normative and ethical models, particularly in their interactions with Africa. The EU prides itself on embodying values such as governance, human rights, regionalism, solidarity, the rule of law, and equitable partnerships. However, in practice, these relationships often reflect a power imbalance. Agreements such as the 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP)-EU agreements, and other Euro-African engagements often reveal Europe's tendency to impose its values and views on Africa (Rutazibwa, 2010; Langan, 2022). This broader climate of unequal power dynamics at the macro level significantly influences micro-level interactions, including those between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating within these regions. The dissertation aligns with Fowler's perspective that where such power imbalances exist, the relationship cannot truly be called a partnership. Instead, it reflects a dynamic where one party asserts dominance, undermining the principles of mutuality and equality that are fundamental to authentic partnerships.

Mutuality in contributions: Mutuality in contribution is crucial for successful partnerships. After setting shared goals, it is essential for partners to collectively agree on each partner's contributions. The size or nature of the contributions is less important than reaching a consensus on what each partner brings to the table. For instance, if one partner is funding a project while another is responsible for its implementation, it is vital to ensure that this arrangement does not lead to one partner having unilateral decision-making power based on their contributions, as this would effectively nullify the partnership. This dissertation will seek to understand the specific contributions of each partner to the project goals, whether these were mutually agreed upon, and if any partner feels undermined by the other based on this influence. The dissertation argues that when a partner, due to the size of their

contributions or their position, makes unilateral decisions on behalf of others, that relationship cannot be considered a true partnership.

Respect for each partner's identity: Respecting the identity of each organization involved in a partnership is equally important, even though they are working together toward a common goal. A partnership is a loose association of independent NGOs, not a merger. Each organization still seeks to maintain its own identity and independence. If one partner deliberately excludes the others from being listed in important documentation, denies them visibility, acknowledgment, or involvement, it goes against the principles of partnership. Similarly, if one partner's name and logo are the only ones displayed on jointly implemented project sites, this does not represent a true partnership but instead gives the impression that one organization is dominating the partnership (Danish Refugee Council, n.d.). Through the analysis of project documents, this dissertation will explore how partners are presented in their project documents. Additionally, through community perceptions, it will establish how the partners are publicly presented and represented. This presentation and representation will help determine how the partnership managed and represented each partner's identity within the relationship. The assumption is that if a partner dominates the visibility space of the partnership, excluding others, the relationship is not an ideal partnership.

Respect for the autonomy of each organization: similarly, each partner's autonomy must be recognized and respected. As each partner independently pursues their own tasks within the partnership, it is important that they are respected and trusted to competently and efficiently complete their tasks based on agreed indicators. This is why competence, capacity building, and assessments are part of the initial phase of partnership recruitment. Once a partnership has been agreed upon and the partners are in the field, one partner should not undermine another by taking over responsibilities previously allocated to another partner, whether in the name of superior staff capacity, technical knowledge, or under the guise that the partner's staff are incompetent. Fowler (2000, p.4) argues that "partnership requires an acceptance of the principle that a local organization has the right to set the final agenda for its own work." If there is an obvious demonstration of gross incapacity likely to derail the partnership's goals, there should be an inclusive, earlier-agreed mechanism to collectively address this. This dissertation will seek to establish the level of trust and independence each partner enjoyed while implementing their portion of the tasks by examining how each carried out its responsibilities. The argument here is that if a partner is not trusted enough to be given the autonomy to handle their tasks, then they are not true partners. They likely had no agency, capacity, or clout in the relationship, and as such, that relationship cannot be seen as a partnership. It is more akin to a principal-

agent relationship, which is unequal by design. Partners should be autonomous in task implementation, not micromanaged.

Respect for each partner's position outside the partnership: additionally, the partnership should respect each partner's autonomy and position outside of the partnership. Fowler (2000, p.4) contends that a "partnership must not alter the basic priorities related to the identity, vision, and values of any of the [partnering] organizations." On the contrary, a true partnership should offer mutual support for all aspects of each partner's work and well-being (Fowler, 2000, p.5). Thus, an organization should not have to compromise its values because of its involvement in a partnership. This dissertation aims to evaluate the partnership by examining the partners' perceptions, experiences, and challenges, and assessing whether the partnership has led to their improvement. The underlying assumption is that if the partnership has diminished their values or compromised their identity, it may not represent an ideal partnership.

Equality of the partners in decision-making: finally, equality in decision-making is essential in partnerships, regardless of the partners' varying sizes and capacities. When all partners have an equal say, it ensures efficient and optimal utilization of their capabilities. Conversely, if one partner dominates decision-making, it may lead others to withhold their best efforts. Unequal partnerships can negatively impact the delivery and effectiveness of a jointly implemented project. Just as with setting common goals, this dissertation will seek to establish how core project decisions, such as regarding outputs, were made. Were these decisions made mutually, reflecting each partner's views and status as equals in the partnership? The literature indicates that INGOs sometimes pursue specific objectives and engage LNGOs solely to facilitate the achievement of these goals, without allowing LNGOs substantial input in articulating or shaping them (Altahir, 2016). This dissertation acknowledges that such arrangements are acceptable provided all parties are aware of the nature of the relationship and understand that it does not constitute a true partnership. It argues that, in a genuine partnership, goals should be collaboratively formulated rather than unilaterally predetermined by one party, with others merely endorsing decisions without meaningful contribution, as seen in the case of the EU and African countries across various partnership areas (Rutazibwa, 2010; Langan, 2022; Oelgemöller, Lenoël, and Black, 2024). With regard to migration policies in West Africa, for instance, Oelgemöller, Lenoël, and Black consider the input of African countries to be, at best, tokenistic and limited to merely aligning with the predetermined agendas of external actors, including the EU. Ideally, however, partnership project goals should be collaboratively articulated and established through mutual agreement. This dissertation also argues that, since this is a project partnership, the outputs should naturally evolve

from a community engagement needs analysis and should be mutually agreed upon by the partners. If a predetermined objective of one partner overrides a needs analysis generated from the community, it raises concerns about the integrity of the partnership. Furthermore, if one partner does not feel they have equal stakes in the relationship, it indicates that the arrangement does not constitute a true partnership.

On a general note, it can be surmised that authentic INGO-LNGO partnerships involve independent NGOs that have mutually chosen to collaborate, not by merging into one entity or being subsumed by each other as an extension, but by each bringing its unique, independent, yet mutually agreed-upon capacity to complement one another in pursuing a common goal. In doing so, the partners operate on equal terms in both positions and decision-making (Fowler, 1998; Howell & Pearce, 2001). They pursue common goals, mutually set by the partners, using a mutually agreed process. There is mutual agreement on each partner's contributions, and although it is a partnership, there is reciprocal respect for each partner's autonomy and identity.

However, while this ideal framework for partnerships emphasizes mutuality and equality, critics argue that INGOs often struggle to demonstrate that they genuinely practice such principles in reality. As Rutazibwa (2018, 2019) highlights, the structural and epistemic inequalities embedded in international development and humanitarianism make it difficult for partnerships to be truly equitable. INGOs, even when well-intentioned, often operate within institutional frameworks that inherently favour their perspectives, resources, and decision-making power, subtly shaping partnerships in ways that reinforce dependency rather than fostering authentic collaboration. This raises questions about whether partnerships can ever truly operate on equal terms when one partner often holds greater access to funding, international legitimacy, and agenda-setting influence.

This dissertation argues that partnerships, including those organized around a project, which are not aligned with the Authentic Partnership Principles (APP), cannot be regarded as authentic partnerships. In peacebuilding contexts, particularly within communities and under a state's institutional peacebuilding structure, such partnerships may struggle with project delivery and effectiveness. As Rutazibwa (2018) argues, international interventions often impose externally driven approaches on local actors, limiting their agency and reinforcing hierarchical relationships. If partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs are to be truly transformative, they must actively resist these tendencies by ensuring that local organizations maintain genuine autonomy in setting priorities, defining success, and leading implementation, which are the ideals that the APP promotes.

Having discussed the APP and outlined how they will be identified in the data to address

the research questions, this section conceptually demonstrates how NGOs that engage in authentic partnerships are better positioned to achieve successful peacebuilding outcomes, particularly with the support of the state through its Institutional Peacebuilding Structure (IPS). To advance this argument, the first step is to conceptualize an Institutional Peacebuilding Structure (IPS).

2.12 Institutional Peacebuilding Structure (IPS)

An Institutional Peacebuilding Structure refers to the framework established by a country to promote, coordinate, and support peacebuilding activities or initiatives within its territory, particularly those led by NGOs. It also encompasses the peacebuilding policies and frameworks designed to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are effective, accountable, and inclusive (Lederach, 1999; DFID, 2010). This dissertation argues that a peacebuilding intervention led by an authentic NGO partnership and supported by the state will be more effective than one led by inauthentic partnerships. The next step is to demonstrate how this is achieved.

This section advances reasons why peacebuilding NGOs operating under the Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) are likely to be more effective in peacebuilding, particularly when leveraging the support of the state, compared to those that are not and do not.

Firstly, in an ideal partnership where each partner is equal, the likelihood of project sustainability plans being abandoned is slim. This is because when international partners eventually transition out, the local partners will naturally continue supporting the sustainability plans long-term to ensure optimal utilization of value. As long as they have equal stakes in the intervention, they will take ownership of it, remain responsible for it, and ensure its sustainability (Altahir, 2016). Some may even use it as a promotional tool and a legacy project to enhance their visibility and credibility. The state, through its Institutional Peacebuilding Structure (IPS), should also provide supportive assistance.

Secondly, in an ideal partnership, the likelihood of projects being imposed on communities is reduced because LNGOs, who are closer to the communities and understand their needs, will not accept such impositions if they have equal power at the decision-making table. An empowered local partner will protect local interests. While arguments can be made about corruption and compromise, which are often concerns in Africa, not having the opportunity to do what is right is also a form of corruption. Some may yield to corruption, but a significant majority will want to do the right thing if given the opportunity. Effective peacebuilding aims to achieve sustainable peace by addressing the roots of conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). To establish the root causes of conflict in a peacebuilding intervention, implementers must engage with communities to understand their

peacebuilding needs. NGO peacebuilders then use this needs analysis to design project outputs. An empowered local voice at the decision-making table, which an ideal partnership offers, will ensure that the community's wishes are respected. The state can assist by having a framework for community engagement to facilitate this process. This framework is to ensure that communities are at the centre of determining their peacebuilding needs (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). The framework should detail the community governance structure, stakeholder mapping, and how they can be engaged to determine their peacebuilding needs. The IPS should also participate in these engagements to ensure that community interests are protected. It is the state's responsibility to protect human rights, and community rights are human rights (Osei-Kuffuor, 2022). It has been noted that peacebuilding systems can only be successful and sustainable when the host society owns, sustains, and consolidates the peacebuilding processes, with external support (DeConing, 2012; Altahir, 2016). This is only possible in a peacebuilding project implemented through an ideal partnership, where an empowered LNGO can take on this role and be actively supported by the host state through its institutional peacebuilding structure. If there is no project imposition, then communities can have their say in the intervention through engagements, and the goal of peacebuilding can be achieved. Effectiveness is also measured by community satisfaction (Baccarini, 1999).

Furthermore, in an ideal partnership, there is autonomy and trust in each partner's task implementation. This autonomy fosters confidence and enthusiasm among partners to deliver their activities, knowing the project is theirs and that they have an organizational reputation to uphold. This opportunity leads to creativity and innovation on the part of the partners, as NGOs are known for their resourcefulness in delivering on their mandates. The fact that they are solely responsible for their activities without an overbearing influence second-guessing their capacity is sufficient motivation to do things right. Fowler (2000, p.4) argued that local partners need the assurance that they can own their tasks and set their agendas. Conversely, when LNGOs work under constant oversight, lacking confidence, and having no strong stake at the table, they cannot give their best. This situation is further complicated if the LNGOs realize that the relationship is purely transactional, with no prospects for growth, commitment, or genuine concern, which is a significant concern for LNGOs in Africa. These LNGOs are not structured like businesses to make a profit, though they have overhead costs, staff to maintain, and operational expenses such as rent, internet, utilities, and security. These costs are vital to their active participation in any activity. In an unequal relationship where LNGOs are mere project implementers or subcontractors, the funds allocated are often solely activity specific. How, then, do they cover operational expenses, maintain staff, and ensure continuity? This dilemma often

results in many LNGOs in Africa remaining in a perpetual ad hoc state, characterized by poorly trained and underpaid temporary staff, the absence of a dedicated physical office—sometimes operating out of residential homes— and a lack of core specialization or areas of strength, as they shift from one focus area to another. Driven by the need to secure funding for survival, these organizations may be willing to compromise their mission, leading to numerous studies criticizing African NGOs for lacking capacity (Onodugo, Odo, & Onodugo, 2021; Edigan, Ikhanoba, & Shaibu, 2018). This situation reflects a survival strategy adopted by LNGOs in response to their establishment as nonprofits that must then operate as subcontractors without adequate consideration for their own organizational sustainability. This precarious funding environment often leads LNGOs to cut corners and manipulate accounting practices to preserve some funds necessary for their continued existence. It has been noted that most LNGOs in the Global South rely heavily on external funding for their sustenance (Edigan, Ikhanoba, & Shaibu, 2018). However, the underlying dynamics of this dependence are not sufficiently discussed. In an ideal partnership, LNGOs are regarded as equal stakeholders who collaboratively consider the broader scope of the project, including funding allocations for both project activities and overhead costs. Such an approach facilitates greater stability and certainty. In peacebuilding interventions, the instability of an LNGO can become a liability, thereby impeding the overall process.

In addition, LNGOs as subcontractors offer nothing beyond what they were paid for, and sometimes even less. If LNGOs are mere contractors, they are only in it for the money, and they cannot be expected to provide sincere contributions to the project. For them, as subcontractors, the project does not offer organizational growth, visibility, or long-term financial sustenance. Beyond the transactional activity fund, there is nothing else. Most LNGOs would backtrack on their full commitment to the project to continue searching for the next funding source for sustenance. This raises concerns about the much-talked-about local input and local knowledge necessary for successful intervention. In a peacebuilding project where the goal is to build sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and leveraging local knowledge, this approach is counterproductive. This is a significant drawback for a peacebuilding intervention and will negatively impact its delivery to communities, as the intervention may not be able to maximize local input to achieve its goals, regardless of the amount of funding invested and the good intentions behind it.

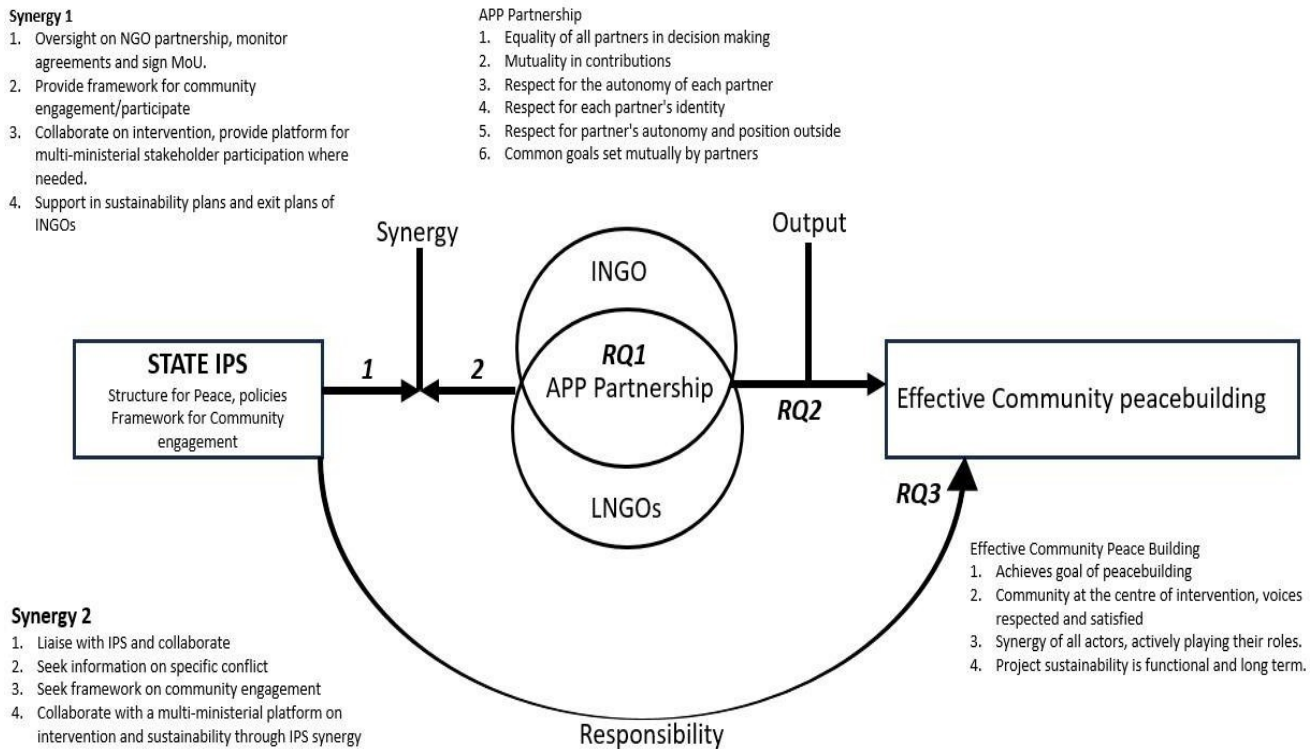
Furthermore, the state's role through its IPS is complementary, aimed at helping NGOs achieve their goals. Peacebuilding involves many stakeholders, both external and internal, and the IPS's role is to coordinate and support these actors. In a partnership, the IPS must ensure that peacebuilding partnerships remain authentic and accountable. Additionally, it

is crucial that communities are placed at the center of their own peacebuilding efforts (Akande et al., 2021). One way to achieve this is by having all parties sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) (Altahir, 2016). Similarly, the IPS should ensure adequate security is provided through collaboration, as post-conflict peacebuilding requires a certain level of security and stability to be effective (DeConing, 2012). By working in synergy with NGOs, the IPS can also facilitate a multi- stakeholder, inter-ministerial support system to address any necessary aspects of the project.

The state's IPS is the glue that holds each stakeholder accountable to the state and the goals of the project. While this dissertation asserts that peacebuilding is not a standalone activity that any NGO or NGO partnership can initiate, design, and implement on their own without the active support of the state's IPS (Altahir, 2016), it argues that peacebuilding NGOs operating within an ideal partnership offer the best chance for successful project delivery and effectiveness.

The relationship between an NGO partnership based on APP and the IPS is illustrated in Figure 1. This figure is the researcher's adaptation, informed by the works of Lotz and De Coning (2010) and Akande et al. (2021), which emphasize the role of the state, its policies, and frameworks in peacebuilding interventions, as well as Fowler (1998, 2000), who advocates for authentic INGO/LNGO partnerships.

Figure 1: NGO APP Partnership, IPS and Effective Community Peacebuilding



The **State IPS**, as shown in Figure 1, represents the state's structure for peace, peace policies,

and frameworks, including community engagement. It is responsible for ensuring peace within communities. In this framework, the State IPS fulfils this role by collaborating with other actors, including NGO partnerships (based on APP) engaged in peacebuilding interventions in the communities (**Synergy 1**). Additionally, it has a direct responsibility to the communities to ensure peacebuilding interventions are carried out inclusively and effectively to achieve productive peacebuilding outcomes (**Responsibility arrow from the State IPS to Effective Community Peacebuilding**).

In Figure 1, the **Synergy 1** arrow from the State IPS to the NGO partnership based on APP signifies the roles and responsibilities the state, through the IPS, should undertake in collaboration with the APP partnership. The State IPS should engage the APP partnership as part of its peacebuilding role in the country. In this engagement, the State IPS provides oversight to ensure that the NGO partnership operates as a true partnership. It monitors their agreement or MOU and serves as a countersigning observer. The State IPS also provides a community engagement framework for the NGO partnership (APP) to use when assessing the peacebuilding needs of communities. It participates as an observer in this process. Furthermore, the IPS collaborates with the NGO partnership in the intervention itself, including developing sustainability plans, and facilitates the involvement of any relevant ministries or government agencies. The IPS acts as the glue, connecting all necessary and involved stakeholders to achieve the goal of effective peacebuilding.

Synergy 2, the arrow from the APP partnership to the State IPS represents what the APP partnership should seek from the State IPS. This indicates that while the State IPS has a responsibility to collaborate with the APP partnership for effective peacebuilding, the APP partnership is equally obligated to establish synergy with the State IPS, recognizing that peacebuilding cannot occur in isolation from the state, as it is both structural and relational. In this collaboration, the APP partnership will seek to liaise with the State IPS to obtain information on specific conflicts, access existing community engagement frameworks, and collaborate with relevant ministries and agencies as needed for the peacebuilding intervention or its sustainability through the IPS.

Responsibility: the arrow from the State IPS to Effective Community Peacebuilding signifies that the state, through the IPS, is responsible for ensuring that peacebuilding interventions achieve the goal of sustainable peace within communities. This responsibility includes ensuring that communities are central to the peacebuilding interventions—meaning their voices are heard and respected in the program design. Furthermore, all relevant and necessary peacebuilding actors and stakeholders must be actively involved and fulfil their roles, while project sustainability plans must be functional and long-term. This is the essence of effective peacebuilding, and it is the path to sustainable peace for communities.

APP Partnership: as conceptualized by Fowler (1998) and adopted in this dissertation refers to NGO partners forming a partnership based on mutuality and equality in decision-making, as outlined by the six authentic partnership principles. These principles include (1) equality of all partners in decision-making, (2) mutuality in contributions, (3) respect for the autonomy of each partner, (4) respect for each partner's identity, (5) respect for each partner's position and autonomy outside the partnership, and (6) ensuring that partnership/project goals are mutually established by all partners.

Output: This refers to the expected result in an integrated peacebuilding scenario where the APP partnership is established, the State IPS is functioning as anticipated, and there is synergy (1&2) between them, with each fulfilling its responsibilities. The expected outcome is effective community peacebuilding.

The dissertation's main research question (RQ1) seeks to understand the nature of the partnership relationship between the INGO and LNGOs in a peacebuilding project. Is it an ideal partnership or an unequal one? The Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) framework is adopted to determine this by applying the identified criteria. A partnership is considered ideal if it meets the APP. The dissertation argues that the nature of the partnership will influence the intervention. Consequently, RQ2 seeks to establish how the nature of the relationship influences the intervention's effectiveness. The dissertation contends that ideal peacebuilding partnerships offer the best prospects for a successful peacebuilding intervention, while an unequal partnership negatively impacts project delivery and effectiveness in jointly implemented interventions. The APP framework is also applied to establish this. Furthermore, RQ3 focuses on the state's IPS to understand how it supported the peacebuilding intervention in the communities. Noting that the state has a responsibility to ensure peace in the communities, and supporting NGO peacebuilding interventions is part of this responsibility. This dissertation argues, in line with Nascimento (2017), that the synergy or lack thereof between external actors and national actors—in this case, the IPS— will determine the success or failure of the intervention. The APP framework is used as an analytical lens for the data in response to the research questions.

2.13 Summary

This section discussed the APP within the context of a state as the analytical conceptual framework adopted for the dissertation. The section highlighted its principles, identifiers, and applicability in the study. It also justified its usage and acknowledged potential shortcomings.

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature on INGO-LNGO partnerships and peacebuilding in Nigeria, identifying the gaps that informed this study, as well as developing the conceptual framework adopted for the analysis. The next chapter will examine the issues and dynamics

of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA AND THE STATE OF PEACEBUILDING

3.1 Introduction

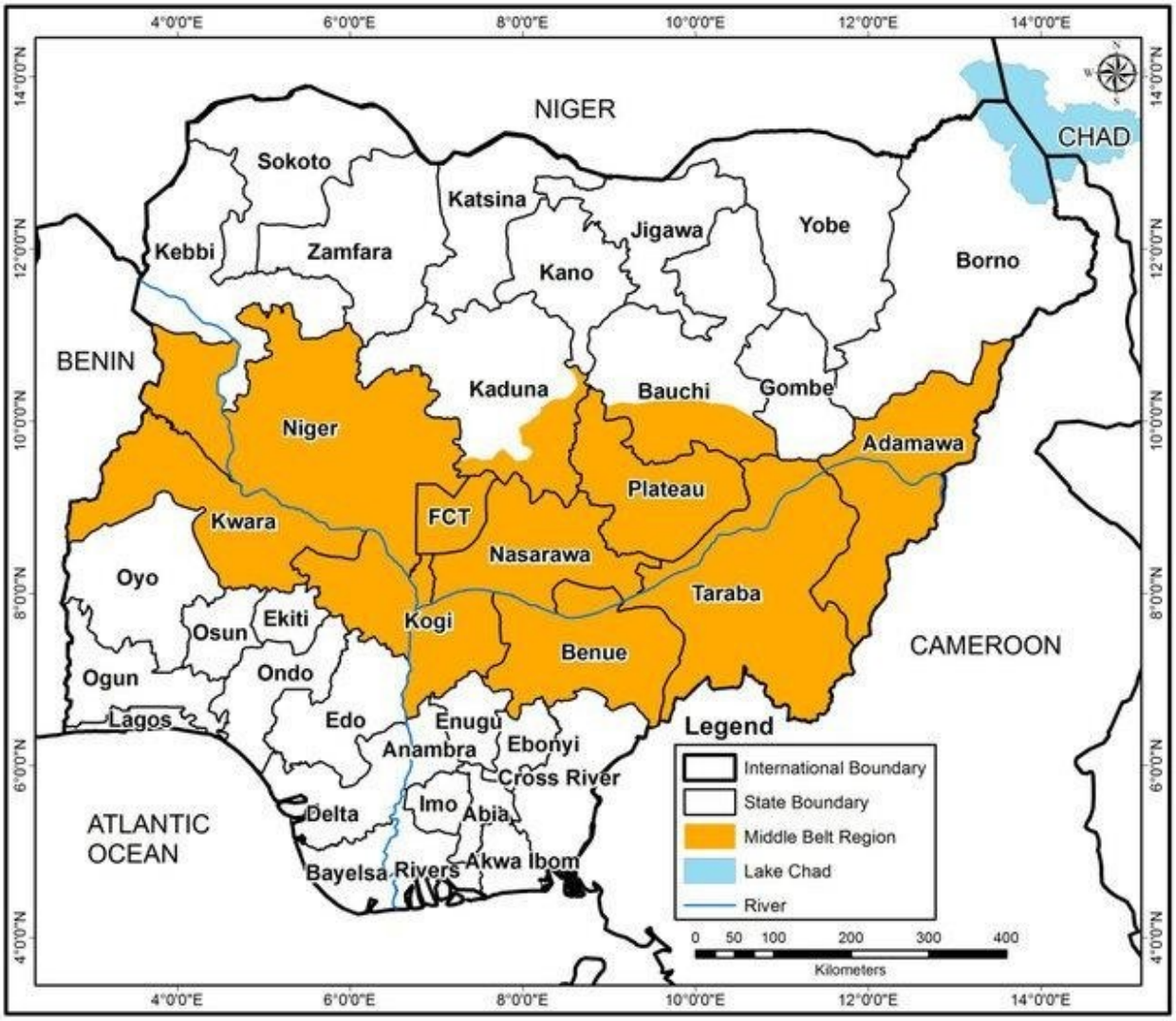
This dissertation uses a peacebuilding intervention in the farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria as a case study. Therefore, it is important to understand the issues and dynamics of this conflict in Nigeria as a background to the discussions. In this chapter, I highlight the evolution of the farmer-herder conflict, its various dimensions and manifestations, drivers and enablers, and its destructive implications for Nigeria's development. I also discuss the attempts by various stakeholders, including the government, to contain the conflict and the reasons for implementing peacebuilding interventions. The chapter begins with a brief description of Nigeria and the North-Central zone.

3.2 Brief Overview of Nigeria and the North Central Zone

Nigeria, located in West Africa, is the most populous black country in the world, with a population of 173.938 million. Unfortunately, it is also one of the less developed countries (Pontianus & Oruonye, 2014). Nigeria gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. The country is multiethnic and multireligious, although Christianity and Islam are the most dominant religions. Nigeria faces numerous violent conflicts, with its fault lines of ethnicity and religion continuously contributing to the persistence of these conflicts (Tuki, 2023).

The North-Central region, also known as the Middle Belt of Nigeria (Figure 2), is the research setting for this dissertation. It lies between Nigeria's far North and South and is distinct from other parts of Nigeria in many ways. Unlike the homogenous Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri-dominated North-West and North-East, or the Igbo and Yoruba-dominated South-East and South-West, the North-Central region is multiethnic. It is home to a multitude of different indigenous ethnic groups living side by side. These groups include the Tiv, Bassa, Egbura, Birom, Anguta, Idoma, and many others (Jonah & Tari, 2015). However, over the years, other Nigerian groups, including the Fulanis, have mixed with the indigenous North-Central groups. Due to a lack of genuine integration and a conflictive constitution, indigene-settler contestations have become prevalent in the region. The North-Central region of Nigeria is one of the areas where the contestation of Nigerian citizenship and the associated rights, including access to land and water, as well as political and economic opportunities, have led to group conflicts and violence (Oyeweso, 2021; Itumo, 2014; Egbefo, 2015).

Figure 2. Map of Nigeria showing the North-Central region (coloured orange)



Source: Jonah and Tari (2015).

3.3 Nigeria and a History of Violent Conflicts

Nigeria is a conflict-prone country. Its history is littered with violent conflicts of various kinds that not only disrupt social, economic, and political development but also perpetually threaten the country's existence (Albert, 2012). In the North-East and North-West, Nigeria is challenged by destructive Islamic extremist groups like Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Dawah Wa'l-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, its splinter group Ansaru, and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), along with bandits and commercial kidnappers. Boko Haram ideologically opposes Western influence, especially education (Adibe, 2014). In the neighbouring North-Central region, the farmer-herder conflict intertwines with diverse ethnic conflicts, resulting in death, destruction, displacement, and various forms of social dislocation, including out-of-school children

and the sheltering of displaced citizens in camps for internally displaced persons (IDP camps) (IPCR, 2017). In the South-West, thuggery and organized touting are existential menaces that obstruct everyday life. The South-South faces organized criminality related to oil bunkering and militancy. The South-East is ravaged by a combination of self- determination struggles led by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and the Eastern Security Network (ESN), along with general insecurity caused by groups like the Unknown Gunmen (UGM), leading to high-profile killings and kidnappings (Lawal, 2024; Nwangwu, 2023). These various forms of insecurity and conflict pull dangerously at the heart of Nigeria, but the farmer- herder conflict has proven to be the most lethal in terms of intensity, spread, destructiveness, and lives claimed (Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2020).

3.4 The Evolution and Causes of the Farmer-Herder Conflict

This section highlights the nature of the conflict, its historical roots, and its drivers.

The farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria is primarily between predominantly Muslim Fulani pastoralist herders from the core North and crop farmers across the country. This conflict is a national problem in Nigeria, affecting every part of the country because Fulani herders are spread throughout the nation and are competing with local farmers for land and water to feed their herds amidst a lack of effective governance (Dimelu, Salifu, & Igbokwe, 2017; Nassef et al., 2023). The conflict is exacerbated by the fact that most Nigerians are subsistence farmers who rely on their land for survival. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) of Nigeria, more than 70% of Nigerians work in agriculture, including crop farming, cattle rearing, and fisheries (FAO, 2022; FMARD, 2016).

In the North-Central region, which is the focus of this study, the conflict is between Fulani herders and indigenous groups, who are mostly Christian crop farmers (IPCR, 2017). This conflict has both religious and ethnic dimensions, making it particularly volatile (IPCR, 2017). The main cause of the conflict is competition for access to the fertile farmlands and water in the North-Central region, which pits herders against crop farmers as the cattle often destroy crops (Baba & Abeysinghe, 2017). In Nigeria, there are no regulations on the movement of cattle, so pastoralists move their herds from place to place in search of pasture. Many rural communities in the North- Central region rely on crop farming, cultivating crops such as maize, yam, millet, Irish and sweet potatoes, carrots, and more for sustenance.

In terms of community organization, these farming communities are often organized as quasi-independent entities with their own indigenous traditional governance structures, typical of the average Nigerian rural community. Non-indigenous Nigerian citizens are not always part of the governance structure but may choose to organize themselves under a chosen leadership for group interests. Therefore, in most rural farming communities, Fulani herders are organized under the Miyetti Allah, the umbrella body of Fulani herders in Nigeria. It is often headed by an Ardo, the leader of the herders in a community. In almost all rural farming communities, there are Fulani settlers who have lived in the community, though not always integrating with the indigenous farming groups. There are also pastoralist Fulanis who move their cattle in search of pasture. Ironically, while the settled Fulanis have found ways to live in relative peace with the indigenous groups, the same cannot be said of the pastoralist Fulanis whose cattle continue to devastate people's farms. This is the organization and reality in most of the farming communities where this conflict is taking place in the North-Central region (Jonah & Tari, 2015). Thus, the farming communities are not static in terms of the social, ethnic, or religious composition of the people who live there. They are fluid, dynamic, socially constructed, and serve as arenas of power dynamics where individual and group interests interact and conflict (Owakoyi, 2019; Cleaver, 2007; Cleaver and Toney, 2006; Walsh and High, 1999).

Many ethnic groups in Nigeria harbour distrust toward the Fulanis (Duru, 2021; Chinweizu, 2015). This distrust is rooted in history, particularly in the violent expansionist tendencies of the Fulanis, exemplified by the 1804 Usman Dan Fodio Islamic jihad, which helped to dethrone many traditional political institutions in Nigeria and replaced them with Fulani emirate rulers (Olumba, 2023; Chinweizu, 2015). That is to say in some North Central communities, including the farming communities of this research, there are Fulani Emirs presiding over traditional authorities parallel to the indigenous traditional authorities. Sometimes this leads to clashes and disputes, contributing to the distrust and suspicion between these groups. This distrust makes it difficult for the wholehearted acceptance of herdsmen in communities indigenously populated by other ethnic groups. This issue is exacerbated by the Fulanis' refusal to assimilate or integrate with other communities, preferring to maintain their unique cultural and economic practices and mostly living in isolation (Okello et al., 2014). This is a major issue in every indigenous farming community in Nigeria where the Fulani reside, particularly in the North-Central region, where the indigenous population is of a different ethnic and religious background (Okello et al., 2014). The North-Central region, due to its multi-ethnic composition, is a hotbed of ethnic conflict and violence in Nigeria, with at least one-third of all ethnic conflicts in Nigeria occurring there since 1999 (Nwaneri & Ukandu, 2019, citing Alubo, 2006). It is also the region where the contestation of citizenship rights tied to indigeneity and the identity

politics of inclusion and exclusion are most intense in Nigeria (Nwaneri & Ukandu, 2019, citing Alubo, 2006, p.34). The farmer-herder conflict is not a phenomenon of modern Nigeria; it has historical roots.

The farmer-herder conflict is one of the oldest conflicts in Nigeria, predating the country's independence. However, Blench and Dende (2003, p.6) contend that during the colonial period, the conflict between herders and farmers was not as violent, widespread, or intense as it is today. Conflicts were mainly at the interpersonal level and were managed with the policy of dedicated "Forests" and "Grazing Reserves," easily addressed by village heads in the community or by the law courts. At that time, Nigeria's population was not as large as it is today, which put less pressure on the land for agriculture and development. Insecurity was not a major issue, and herders did not need to bear arms to protect themselves and their herds against rustlers. The ethno-religious fault lines that accentuate the conflict today were also not as pronounced.

However, the farmer-herder conflict has escalated and become highly destructive since the early 1990s due to factors such as increasing settler-indigene conflicts, desertification, infrastructural development and pressure on land, population growth, an increase in herds, porous borders, violent conflicts in the Sahel region, the proliferation of arms, deepening ethnic and religious divisions, land laws and ancestral claims over land, and the inability of the Nigerian government to contain the conflict through security measures or policy interventions (Brottem, 2021; Okoli & Lenshie, 2018; Nwaneri & Ombugadu, 2019). Okoli and Lenshie (2018) single out the widespread governance deficit in Nigeria as a significant contributor to the persistence of the conflict. This includes the government's inability to effectively control external borders with neighbouring countries like Niger and Chad, through which transnational pastoralists enter Nigeria. Gun-wielding pastoralists, in particular, tend to be transnational. (Adewale, 2021). Nomadic migration and herding as an economic activity within Nigeria are unregulated and informal (Adewale, 2021). Consequently, herders operate without regulatory oversight. Many scholars argue that the lack of governance in herding fosters conflict and insecurity (Ali, 2017; Olaniyan & Akinyele, 2017). Some also contend that the ungoverned nature of herding in Nigeria has made it a haven for violent crimes such as kidnapping, resource theft, rape, and robbery, including the use of sophisticated weapons like AK-47s, which have become synonymous with herdsmen (Uwujire, 2017).

Some studies assert that the term "herdsmen" in Nigeria now represents a mercenary franchise used by various criminal enterprises to cover their illegal activities (Okoli & Lenshie, 2018; McGregor, 2014). Herdsmen have been implicated in insurgency and

terrorism in North-East and North-Central Nigeria (Olayoku, 2014; McGregor, 2014). Okoli and Lenshie (2018) describe herdsmen as a mercenary armed group available for hire by conflicting groups to fight their wars within communities. Some of these community wars are religious, while others are ethnic. A notable example is the Eggon (Ombatse-Fulani) crisis in Nasarawa State between 2014 and 2015 (Okoli & Lenshie, 2018). Additionally, in Plateau State, Boko Haram has been reported to bomb Christian farming communities in support of herders. However, some scholars argue that herders have no relationship with extremists and are, in fact, victims of extremist ideologies like everyone else (European Parliament, 2024; Okoli & Lenshie, 2018; Brottem, 2021). Thus, the farmer-herder conflict is as complex as Nigeria's broader security challenges, which are multidimensional in nature.

Additional factors responsible for the high concentration of the conflict in the region include the previously mentioned history of hostility between the Fulanis and the indigenous groups of the North-Central region. Many indigenous groups view the activities of herders as a continuation of Usman Dan Fodio's expansionist jihad, leading them to resist intensely as a matter of religious, political, and economic survival. Other contributing factors include central and local politics, indigene-settler politics, the fact that indigenous people are entitled to land within their ancestral communities under the Land Use Act, which is held on their behalf by the state governor, and inactive governance on the matter. Inactive governance in this context refers not only to the lack of national laws regulating herding but also to the inability of the government, through security agencies, to properly investigate the long-standing communal clashes between herders and farmers in different communities, to differentiate between crimes and conflict, between perpetrators and victims, and to bring perpetrators to justice (Amnesty, 2017). This failure to address grievances resulting from clashes naturally leads to retaliatory attacks (Nwaneri & Ombugadu, 2019).

Although this conflict has spread throughout Nigeria and become intertwined with local dynamics, its intensity is highest in the North-Central states of Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, and Kaduna, the research states, where death and destruction continue unabated (Kwaja & Adeomola-Adelehin, 2018). Furthermore, the North-Central region is closest to the far North, where most of the migrant pastoralists originate or where transnational migrant pastoralists enter Nigeria through porous borders. The lush green vegetation of the North-Central region makes it attractive to cattle herding, leading many herders to prefer grazing there. The farmer-herder conflict has negatively impacted Nigeria in many ways, which will

be the focus of the next section.

3.5 The Effects of the Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria

The first and most obvious effect of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria is the thousands of Nigerians killed and displaced since 2009, when the conflict became violent and widespread (Akinkuolie, 2018). Unfortunately, while there are no official figures from the government on the conflict—nor is the Nigerian government interested in conflict data, nor do they invest in it or use it for policy decisions (Nwaneri & Uwakwe, 2018)—other sources provide data for different years. The Institute for Economics and Peace (2015) reports that about 1,229 people were killed by Fulani herdsmen in 2014 (IEP, 2015). In 2016, the number of deaths rose to 2,500 according to the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2017). Between January 2016 and October 2018, about 3,641 people were killed in the conflict (Amnesty, 2018). Brottem (2021) contends that 2,000 people were killed in 2018 alone. In one night, about 500 people were killed in the farming communities of Dogo Na Hauwa in Jos South in 2010 (Nossiter, 2010). In May 2015, over 100 farmers and their families were killed in Tse-Gua Local Government Area of Benue State (Kwaghga, 2018). Studies show that in the last decade alone, about 10,000 lives have been lost in the conflict and about 60,000 people have been displaced as a result (Baderinwa, 2019, p.7; Egbuta, 2018). One

study indicates that about 300,000 people have been made homeless by the farmer-herder conflict so far, highlighting how devastating it has been (Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2020, p.4). Based on the number of casualties, Fulani herdsmen were designated as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world, behind Boko Haram, ISIS, and the Taliban, in the 2015 Global Terrorism Index Report (IEP, 2015). However, by 2020, another study rated Fulani herdsmen as deadlier than Boko Haram in terms of the number of people killed (Chiluwa & Chiluwa, 2020, p.4). A comprehensive number of clashes between herders and farmers, along with the number of deaths in the four case study states, is presented in Chapter Six as part of the analysis.

Beyond the deaths, the farmer-herder conflict also impacts Nigeria in terms of food security (Nnaji et al., 2022). Agriculture contributes about 24% to Nigeria's GDP (Baca, 2015) and, as earlier pointed out, over 70% of Nigerians depend on subsistence farming for their livelihood. The continued violence in farming communities has led to serious insecurity, making people afraid to go to their farms (Akinkuolie, 2018). Many farming communities, such as Agatu and Guma, have been deserted and turned into humanitarian zones as social and economic activities are crippled (Okere, 2023). Many of the displaced and dislocated people have been removed from their ancestral homes and economic bases,

which are their farms (Enwelu, 2015). Many of them are in internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps, while others have moved to live with family members in other places away from home. The resultant effect is food insecurity (Amadi, Igwe, & Ukachikara, 2019).

The conflict also affects child education, particularly leading to an increase in the number of children out of school (Kwaghga, 2018; Adekunle & Adisa, 2010). Nigeria currently has the highest number of out-of-school children globally, according to UNICEF (Ndanusa, Abayomi, & Harada, 2021). Many displaced children, those in transit, and those in IDP camps have their schooling disrupted.

The conflict also intertwines with ethnic fault lines to produce wider conflict dynamics, as seen in Plateau State, where what started as a minor misunderstanding over a Friday Muslim prayer in 2001 snowballed into a major citywide conflagration between the Fulani and indigenous groups in Jos, such as the Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere (Nwaneri & Ombugadu, 2019). This led to the demographic remapping of the city, with Muslims moving to parts of the city where they are in the majority and Christians doing the same (Nwaneri & Ombugadu, 2019). Thus, the conflict poses a challenge to Nigeria's national security (Asogwa & Okafor, 2016) and individual households (Sadiq, 2021).

There are also significant losses on the part of the pastoralists, affecting their businesses and families, though attention is rarely paid to their losses (Nwaneri, 2020). According to the International Crisis Group, the pastoralists own 90% of Nigeria's national herds, which amount to about 19.5 million to 20 million cattle, 975,000 donkeys, 28,000 camels, 72.5 million goats, and 41.3 million sheep. This livestock represents 30% of total agricultural output in Nigeria, contributing 6% to 8% of Nigeria's GDP (ICG, 2017). Out of this, 64,750 cattle were stolen, and about 2,991 herders were killed within the North-Central region in 2013 alone (Egwu, 2016). However, as argued earlier, no government agency in Nigeria has calculated the costs of this conflict since its inception. Therefore, no one knows the full extent of the losses herders have suffered in terms of cattle or lives since the start of the conflict, nor the impact of these losses on the Nigerian economy. Nonetheless, the conflict clearly disrupts pastoral farming (Ifidon & Ahiauzu, 2005).

Peacebuilding interventions, including the case study, have responded to address the root of this conflict and these destructions and dislocations.

3.6 Attempts to Address the Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria

Historically, the Nigerian state has made attempts to contain the farmer-herder conflict, either through policy measures or by using security agents (Kratli & Toulmin, 2020; Kwaja & Ademola- Adelehin, 2018). However, none of these interventions seem to have been

successful in addressing the issues (Ilesanmi et al., 2023; Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

At independence, Nigeria had four regional governments: the Northern, Western, and Eastern regional governments. The Northern regional government responded to the conflict by creating Grazing Reserves in 1965 (Abdullahi, Daniel, & Aliyara, 2015; Ingawa, Tarawali, & Kaufmann, 1989). These reserves were intended to house cattle within exclusively designated areas. However, the administration of the Reserves soon faced numerous challenges: herders not finding enough pasture for their herds, a surging population without corresponding economic opportunities (many turning to subsistence farming as a survival strategy, thereby putting pressure on the land and encroaching on the Reserves), urbanization and infrastructural development massively impacting the Reserves' land, the breakdown of facilities, the spread of animal diseases without adequate healthcare, and banditry without security to protect herders and cattle. With the government showing no signs of commitment to managing the Reserves effectively, protecting them from urban encroachment, or providing needed amenities, the herders began resorting to migratory herding, and many of the Reserves fell into disuse (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Additionally, the government also responded to this conflict by deploying security agents, specifically a combination of the military and the police, primarily to quell the violence and contain the killings. Nigeria's default response to conflict is the deployment of security agents (Kratli & Toulmin, 2020). Presently, the Nigerian military is deployed on the streets of 30 states (Oriola, 2021) or, according to other sources, all 36 states (US Congress, 2022) to maintain internal security. However, using security agents to contain the farmer-herder conflict has not been successful, as they have faced heavy accusations of dereliction of duty, corruption, and collusion, thereby worsening the conflict (Kratli & Toulmin, 2021; CDD, n.d.). For instance, in Dogo Na Hauwa, a small farming community in Jos South, about 500 people were killed in one night without the protection of security agents who had been stationed there just a few days before the assault. A few hours before the killings, the security agents were called out of the community by their command-and-control units. No one was subsequently indicted (Jude, 2010; Aleshiloye, 2010). In other locations, security agents have been accused of crimes and human rights violations, including extortion, torture, rape, and molestation (CDD, n.d.). These actions have bred resentment and backlash, with communities protesting them (Ayuba et al., 2010).

In 2013, the Nigerian government joined the African Union's Great Green Wall Initiative, which set out to plant trees along 8,000 kilometers (about 4,970 miles) of the southern Sahel to combat desertification. Desertification is one of the climatic challenges driving herders from the far North to the North Central region. The government established the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA) to combat desertification. However, it is unclear how effective this initiative was or how much it contributed to addressing the farmer-herder conflict. The initiative has been plagued by inadequate funding, delays, and other challenges (Orakwue, 2020).

In 2015, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) introduced a livestock development plan aimed at creating grazing reserves and cattle routes throughout the states. A budget of 100 billion naira (equivalent to 300 million USD) was allocated to this initiative. Unfortunately, the plan was unsuccessful, as stakeholders did not support it, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2017).

Furthermore, in 2016, the National Assembly, under President Buhari, attempted to reintroduce Grazing Reserves at the national level through the National Grazing Reserves Establishment Bill of 2016. Some state governors and ethnic nationalities opposed the bill because it contradicted the Land Use Act of 1978, which handed over all lands to the governors of the 36 states of Nigeria to hold on behalf of indigenous populations (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). The attempt was ultimately unsuccessful.

In addition, there have been responses from other levels of government, particularly at the state level, where many governors took the initiative to outlaw open grazing in their respective states (Brottem, 2021). The idea was to halt the indiscriminate migratory nature of herding, forcing the herders to transition to ranching, which would mean less incursion into people's farms and less friction and violent conflict. Some of the states that signed this law include Ekiti, Benue, and Taraba in 2017. However, these laws faced opposition from the national umbrella body of the Fulani herders in Nigeria, the Miyetti Allah, and the federal government, which controls the police and was not inclined to enforce the laws (Al-Mashrur, 2023). Consequently, the government has been unable to contain the conflict through either policy or security interventions (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Various stakeholders have also attempted to build peace between herders and farmers. These stakeholders include traditional authorities in Nigeria (Vande, 2019), the United Nations through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human

Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Other organizations involved include the Red Cross and many international NGOs (INGOs) (CDD, n.d.). However, the CDD report suggests that much of the peacebuilding attention has been focused on farming communities while excluding herders, thereby fostering a sense of alienation among them (CDD, n.d., p.4). The conflict's protracted nature and its constantly increasing intensity also suggest that these peacebuilding efforts have not been successful. To compound this problem, there is a lack of empirical studies on the various peacebuilding efforts in the farmer-herder conflict, making it difficult to identify what has worked or what has not, and to make necessary adjustments (Adzande, 2022).

3.7 Conclusion

The trajectory of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria has been marked by bloodshed, pain, sorrow, displacement, governance deficits, missteps, mismanagement, and a lack of clarity in peacebuilding efforts. This is despite the significant resources and efforts committed by various stakeholders, including the government, as highlighted here. Therefore, it can be argued that peacebuilding efforts have not addressed the root causes of this conflict nor achieved sustainable peace. Additionally, the literature has not empirically examined the roles of peacebuilding actors in the conflict, which is why this dissertation investigates an NGO partnership within the conflict, aiming to understand the nature of the relationship, how the nature of the relationship impacts the effectiveness of their jointly implemented intervention, and how the intervention fared within the institutional peacebuilding and policy climate in Nigeria. This chapter has provided a historical context for the conflict, identified the parties involved, examined the factors enabling it, and discussed its effects on Nigeria. It has also highlighted the various efforts to contain the conflict and build peace. This dissertation examines one such effort.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology employed in the dissertation. As established in Chapter One, the dissertation investigates the partnership relationship between an INGO and two LNGOs in Nigeria. It specifically examines a peacebuilding intervention they implemented in the farmer-herder conflict in North Central Nigeria from 2012 to 2016. The intervention was designed to reduce violent conflict and its associated impacts and to increase economic opportunities in the affected communities. It was implemented in 19 farming communities across four states in the region. The aim of the study is to understand the nature of the relationship between the INGO and the two LNGOs, and how this relationship has shaped the intervention's effectiveness. Furthermore, it also aims to identify the nature of institutional support the intervention received from the Nigerian state. Three corresponding broad research questions guided the research, as explained in Chapter One. This chapter discusses how data was collected from the stakeholders in response to the research questions, the research decisions taken, and the justifications for those decisions.

The chapter begins by presenting the philosophical paradigm used in the study and justifying its selection. It examines the chosen research design and explains why it is the most appropriate, considering the nature of the research and the questions driving it. The chapter then discusses the research tools used for primary data collection and justifies their selection. It also details how I gained access to the participants, conducted the interviews, and the research decisions made in the field. Finally, the chapter discusses the data analysis method and addresses issues related to ethics and validity.

4.2 The Philosophical Foundation of this Study

This dissertation is approached from an interpretivist social-constructivist perspective, which considers the social context, interaction, perceptions, history, and culture in creating knowledge and reality (Burr, 1995). The interpretivist perspective "takes human interpretations as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world" (Chen & Bu, 2011, p. 1), while social constructivists believe that reality is socially constructed, considering daily interactions and power relations (Chen & Bu, 2011). As an approach, the interpretivist-social constructivist perspective aims to comprehend the "lived experience" of social actors from the standpoint of the research participants (Chen & Bu, 2011, p. 2). This approach is considered most appropriate for this study because it enables me to interpret and construct the nature of the partnership relationship, its influence

on the intervention in the communities, and the available institutional support based on the lived experiences of the actors.

The positivist approach was deemed unsuitable for this research because the research questions required data on participants' lived experiences within their natural environment to construct their reality of partnership relationships and how these relationships impact jointly implemented projects in the communities. This study involves contextual factors, perceptions, emotions, feelings, cultures, and histories—elements that positivism does not account for, as it emphasizes measurability and absolutism (Kivanja & Kuyini, 2017). Positivist approaches are not appropriate for the research questions this dissertation examines because they deal with human attributes, real- life, and everyday experiences, contextual factors, the meaning and purpose people ascribe to behaviours (Healy & Perry, 2000; Cotty, 1998; Snape & Spencer). The ontological and epistemological standpoint of the interpretivist social-constructivist perspective challenges the realist worldview, which posits that there is an independent world separate from social actors and how they think about it (Elder-Vass, 2012). Instead, interpretivist social constructivists believe that researchers should engage with the people involved, interpret, and construct their reality based on their lived experiences and how they perceive it within their social, cultural, and historical context (Nicholls, 2009). In short, interpretivist social-constructivists do not see social realities as objectively quantifiable but as subjectively interpreted and constructed from the perspective of the participants (Lee & Lings, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Cunliffe, 2011; Bryman, 2004).

Furthermore, I argue that the nature of the overarching research question of this study and its aim cannot be addressed without actively engaging the social actors to understand their lived experiences within their social, cultural, and historical context. This dissertation, as established in the introduction, deals with organizational and human relationships, perceptions, power relations, and dynamics rooted in history and nuanced by multiple emotions. The chosen philosophical stance is intended to tell the everyday story of the participants in its truest essence, representative of their perceptions, with all the emotions, tensions, and nuances (Blaikie, 2000). Interpretivist social constructivists tend to associate more with qualitative research, though not exclusively (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The next step is to unpack the research design.

4.3 Research Design: Qualitative Research

This dissertation employs a single case study and is qualitative by design. The qualitative nature of the research is guided by my philosophical (ontological and epistemological)

standpoint. A qualitative approach is primarily used when the researcher seeks answers to research questions that address the “whys” and “hows” of social reality (Ugwu and Eze, 2023). This dissertation is concerned with the “whys” and “hows” of the partnership relationship between an INGO and LNGOs in their peacebuilding intervention in Nigeria. The study aims to understand how the involved organizational partners operate and perceive the “partnership relationship,” how the relationship impacts their jointly implemented project in the communities, and how the intervention was supported by the Nigerian state. The research seeks answers to these “how” questions from the actors within their environment and explores why they hold such views. The nature of the inquiry determined the approach, corroborating Leander’s (2008, p. 23) assertion that “the method a study uses cannot be dissociated from its research questions.”

In more detail, qualitative research is known for providing “richly detailed insights and contextual explanations” of social problems (Lanka et al., 2020, p. 2). Creswell elaborates on qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1994, pp. 1-2). Yilmaz offers a more nuanced and comprehensive view of qualitative research as “an emergent inductive, interpretive, and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations, and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal, in descriptive terms, the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world” (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 312). A synthesis of Lanka et al., Creswell, and Yilmaz’s positions on qualitative research indicates a research approach that employs rich, detailed narratives and contextual explanations of societal problems, either at the individual or group levels, through inductively produced texts in conversations and interactions with social actors in their natural environment. At the heart of this process is the researcher, who must actively engage with people in their natural settings to understand what they feel about their lived experiences and why.

In essence, it is not just about how people perceive their lived experiences but also the potential multiple reasons why they hold such views. This is why this study chose non-constricting and non- restrictive open-ended semi-structured in-depth interviews as the principal tool for primary data collection. This method was selected to investigate the nature of the partnership relationship between an INGO and its local partners, to understand how the relationship impacts the effectiveness of their joint project in the communities, and to explore how the intervention was supported (or not) by the state. I believed this tool would not only actively engage the NGOs, communities, state, and expert participants to understand what they feel about their lived experiences but also why

they feel the way they do, as it allows participants the flexibility to express themselves freely. This will be explained in detail later. In the meantime, it is important to explain why the study used a case study approach.

4.4 Case Selection

To address the dissertation's three broad research questions (RQs 1-3)—understanding how the NGO partners related to and perceived each other in the context of the peacebuilding intervention, the impact of the nature of the relationship on the intervention's effectiveness, and how the broader institutional peacebuilding structure and policy context supported or hindered the intervention— the dissertation employs a case study of a peacebuilding intervention run by an INGO in partnership with two LNGOs. The intervention focused on the farmer-herder conflict in the North Central region of Nigeria and ran from 2012 to 2016.

This approach is based on a gap identified in the literature, which shows that peacebuilding in Africa—particularly in Nigeria and in the context of the farmer-herder conflict—has not been sufficiently covered in the INGO-LNGO partnership debate (Adzande, 2022; Onudogu, Odo, and Onudugo, 2021). The case study was chosen for its potential to generate rich and detailed data about a specific real-life situation (Lanka et al., 2020). The case study in Nigeria provides an opportunity to understand how an INGO works in partnership with LNGOs in practice, the nature of their relationship, and how they perceive it. It also offers a chance to determine whether the relationship operates as a true partnership or as a contractor-contractee or subcontractor relationship and whether the nature of the relationship impacts the intervention's effectiveness. The literature has established that the impact of partnership is problematic and under-researched in different development sectors and geographical locations such as Africa (Contu and Girei, 2014; Brass et al., 2018; Banks, Schulpen, and Brockington, 2020; Koch and Rooden, 2024; Banks et al., 2015; Kareithi and Lund, 2012; Banks et al., 2024; Clarke, 2021).

The chosen case provides an opportunity to empirically address the partnership paradox in the context of peacebuilding in Nigeria, in response to the literature. Although it applies to a specific case study, it is realistic enough to advance knowledge on the issue. Additionally, the chosen case study will help us understand whether the nature of a peacebuilding partnership between an INGO and LNGO can impact the effectiveness of their joint project. The literature has argued that the effect of partnerships can be problematic and highlighted the need for further research in specific development sectors to establish this (Contu and Girei, 2014; Banks, Schulpen, and Brockington, 2020).

Equally, the case study offers a window into peacebuilding in the farmer-herder conflict, providing insights into the actors and their roles in peacebuilding, which the literature suggests is under-researched (Adzande, 2022). The chosen case study addresses these gaps and provides an opportunity to enrich our knowledge on peacebuilding partnerships, the nature of these partnerships, and how the nature of the partnership influences peacebuilding in Nigeria—a topic not sufficiently explored in the literature. The dissertation argues that the nature of a peacebuilding partnership influences the success of jointly implemented peacebuilding projects. The case study will help advance empirical knowledge on how the nature of peacebuilding partnerships affects their interventions in Nigeria and Africa.

In addition, the chosen case study will also provide data on institutional support for INGO-led peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria, which until now has been under-researched. Thus, this study significantly contributes to the literature on peacebuilding partnerships and effectiveness, NGO-led peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria, the institutional peacebuilding structure, and peacebuilding NGOs' involvement in the farmer-herder conflict.

Case studies are known for their empirical nature and real-world contexts. They are in-depth empirical investigations of contemporary phenomena in their real-world contexts (Yin, 2014). The strength of the case study approach lies in its ability to yield rich data on a specific real-life situation (Lanka et al., 2020), which allows for a clearer understanding of the specific issue within its unique context and circumstances. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) argue that researchers use case studies to gain in-depth knowledge about a particular real case because "case studies are immersions into real-life scenarios" (Dawidowicz, 2011, p. 2).

The chosen case study is significant because one of the ever-present arguments against case study research is the non-generalizability and extrapolation of its findings (Weng, 2019). While this is a valid argument, it overlooks the primary focus of a case study, which is to draw attention to an existential reality within a specific context, group, community, situation, or culture. This reality might also exist in many other similar cases and circumstances but may not be universally applicable (Kivunja and Kiyini, 2017). While I argue that the findings of this dissertation may apply to many similar situations, I do not believe they represent the reality of every INGO-LNGO partnership on project implementation in Africa, not even in peacebuilding projects. Case studies, especially single-case studies like this one, are primarily used when the researcher seeks to produce "deeper context-dependent knowledge on a given topic" (Lamont, 2022, p.210). This

contrasts with multiple case studies, which are used when the researcher seeks to compare social realities or identify differences and similarities (Gustafsson, 2017). However, this dissertation, as a single case study, is not a comparison study but is focused on producing rich data on a particular case. Therefore, a single-case study was chosen as the appropriate research design because it yields rich data and understanding of this specific situation.

Furthermore, case studies are valuable in grounded theory research as they allow new insights to emerge from collected data without the researcher imposing theoretical assumptions (David and Sutton, 2011). This dissertation employs an inductive approach, refraining from imposing preconceived theories and instead allowing the data to guide the development of themes, conclusions, and potentially new theories (Van der Walt, 2020). As Flyvberg (2011) noted, social constructivist researchers do not begin their work with a theory but rather inductively generate patterns of meaning from data collected in the field.

4.4.1 Case Selection: Nigeria and Four States in the North Central

This section justifies the selection of Nigeria, specifically the North-Central zone, as a case study. It also explains why four states (Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, and Nasarawa) within that zone were chosen as case studies.

Nigeria was selected because the literature identifies it as one of the regions where the contentious and paradoxical partnership relationship between INGOs and LNGOs in peacebuilding has not been thoroughly studied (Onudugo, Odo, and Onudugo, 2021). This is despite the significant number of INGOs operating in partnership with LNGOs in Nigeria. Research questions 1 and 2 (RQs 1-2) address the insufficient research on INGO-LNGO partnerships in peacebuilding in Nigeria. The dissertation's objectives of understanding the nature of the partnership relationship between INGO-LNGO actors and how the nature of their relationship influences the effectiveness of the project are also explored here.

Nigeria is further considered because, in addition to having a history of violent conflicts necessitating peacebuilding partnerships and interventions, it is one of the regions in Africa where the farmer-herder conflict is particularly explosive and destructive in terms of death, displacement, and disruption of social and economic life (Kratli and Toulmin, 2020). Unfortunately, peacebuilding interventions related to this conflict are under-researched (Adzande, 2022). Thus, data from a case study in Nigeria not only fills a gap in the literature but also offers an opportunity to review existing practices.

The four states (Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, and Nasarawa) were chosen because, apart

from being the locations where the intervention took place, these states are the epicenter of the farmer-herder conflict. They have recorded the highest number of clashes between farmers and herders, as well as the most significant incidents of death, displacement, and dislocation (see Chapter 6, Section 6.6). Consequently, they have also hosted numerous interventions aimed at containing the conflict and building sustainable peace. Therefore, it is appropriate to select a case from this region to understand the dynamics (CDD, n.d.).

The intervention investigated in this research was carried out in 19 farming communities across the four states. The peacebuilding intervention, conducted between 2012 and 2016, was led by an INGO in partnership with two LNGOs in response to the prevailing humanitarian crisis in the region caused by the farmer-herder conflict (Kwaja and Adeomola- Adelehin, 2018). The intervention aimed to reduce violence between farmers and herders in these communities and to increase their economic activities. To achieve these two objectives, the project was structured around three outputs: (1) increasing the capacity of local leaders to resolve community conflicts in an inclusive and sustainable manner, (2) enhancing cooperation across conflict lines and boosting economic activities, and (3) supporting long-term policy solutions through research. The third output was not covered in this research because it was not part of the partnership's implementation; the INGO handled it directly. The various projects implemented under the intervention included building the capacity of local leaders in dispute resolution, interest- based negotiation, and mediation. The economic projects included the construction of joint livestock and produce markets, rice and garri processing centers, solar and manual boreholes to supply water, grinding machines, joint farming initiatives among women from both groups, and bead making. All these efforts were aimed at creating sustainable peace, according to the theory of change. The project had a budget of $5.44 million and was funded by an official funding agency from the Global North.

4.4.2 Case Selection: Why this Peacebuilding Intervention, the INGO and Two LNGOs

This section justifies why this specific case involving a particular INGO and LNGOs is chosen as against others.

Even though there are many INGOs participating in peacebuilding with LNGOs within the farmer-herder conflict in North Central Nigeria, this particular case study was chosen because the INGO is a large Northen organization with global presence in 36 countries and boosting of global revenue up to $600 million. They have been in Nigeria for more than two decades and have worked in different sectors of Nigeria's development, including peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, community youth and women empowerment and

development. It is one of the largest funders of peacebuilding in Nigeria, with presence across the country, implementing most of its projects with LNGOs. It portrays a picture of an ideal INGO implementing peacebuilding projects in partnership with LNGOs. The case study intervention is large by all standards, involving four states, 19 communities and one of the foremost in the farmer-herder conflict with high expectations. The INGO and LNGOs are not mentioned by name in this dissertation due to ethics approval conditions, as I explained in 5.7. The two LNGOs are also national NGOs with good reputations and track records, so it is a perfect picture of a partnership relationship between an INGO and LNGOs, implementing a very important project in a strategic sector and worthy of studying.

The farmer-herder conflict was chosen because large investments, including resources, and programmatic interventions, that is, different intervention programs by both local and international NGOs, have been committed to it without visible results. It was chosen because the farmer-herder conflict as pointed out in chapter four of this dissertation, and proven in chapter seven, section 7.6, is at present, the biggest conflict in Nigeria in terms of intensity and deaths. The conflict has been theorised and retheorised over time without practical improvement (Kratli and Toulmin, 2020). Perhaps what is required is less theorization and more of empirical insights on the conflict, which is why I argue that the data from this case will not only fill a literature gap, but it will also help inform policy and practice decisions in peacebuilding around partnerships and the farmer-herder conflict. Therefore, by choosing the farmer-herder conflict, this dissertation responds to the lacuna in literature of peacebuilding, peacebuilding actors and their activities in the farmer-herder conflict being under-researched (Adzande, 2022). Research question number 2 (RQ2) is situated here showing the NGO partnership and how they effectively implemented the project or otherwise in the farmer-herder conflict.

The next step is to introduce and justify the primary data collection tools.

4.5 Primary Data Collection Tools

Qualitative research employs a range of tools such as observations, qualitative interviews, and text and documentary analysis for data collection (Bryman, 2016). Through these methods, the qualitative researcher seeks to construct social reality (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Accordingly, this study set out to use open-ended, semi-structured qualitative interviews (in-depth interviews), non- participant observation, and a critical review of project documents, including conflict data from the *Nigerian Watch* database, as primary data collection tools. The project documents include policy briefs, project reports, and publications from the stakeholder organizations involved: the INGO, the institutional

funder, the two LNGOs, and the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR).

I argue, in line with the naturalist philosophy, that rich and detailed data can be generated by engaging the different actors involved in the project in in-depth qualitative interviews (open- ended), where each partner can speak freely to interpret and construct reality in the work. In the literature, the interpretivist-constructivist approach to understanding reality involves learning what people make of their world: how they interpret their world, how they perceive their experiences, and what meanings they ascribe to events and happenings around them. In the words of Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, and Snape (2013:14), the interpretivist-constructivist approach "focuses on understanding lived experiences from the point of view of those who hold them." Furthermore, in- depth interviews allow social actors the freedom to express their lived experiences without restraint.

As pointed out by Snape and Spencer (2003), the interpretivist social-constructivist researcher is more inclined to rely on qualitative tools such as in-depth interviews due to their capacity to generate rich and detailed data, which aids in the construction of social reality (Yilmaz, 2013; Lanka et al., 2020). Morrison (2015) and Bryman (2016) would, in fact, argue that an in-depth interview is the most common tool of data collection in qualitative research and, when properly conducted, is a very powerful way of gathering detailed data. Indeed, interviews can give a researcher access to the "thoughts," "reflections," "motives," "experiences," "memories," "understandings," "interpretations," and "perceptions" of the interviewee on the topic under discussion (Seidman, 2013, p.7). However, interviews do not merely reveal people's perceptions of their reality but also the reasons behind those perceptions (Morrison, 2015). Qualitative interviews are flexible, allowing interviewees to go beyond the questions asked, to speak in-depth about the reasons and emotions that help to tell their stories from their perspectives (Bryman, 2016).

Nevertheless, beyond yielding rich and detailed data, in-depth interviews are one of the few tools of data collection that provide an opportunity for direct interaction and bonding between the researcher (interviewer) and the interviewee. According to Roller (2020), the closeness between the researcher and the interviewee during the interview session helps them bond, build friendship, and establish a form of relationship to the extent that the credibility of the data generated by the process is enhanced through the reduction of response biases and misunderstandings of the questions and answers. The credibility of the interview data, resulting from the bond between the researcher and the participant, is crucial considering that the interpretivist–constructivist researcher's goal is to understand the "world of human experience" by relying on the "participant's views of the situation being studied" (Chen, Shek, and Bu, 2011, p. 130).

Consequently, my interviewees were purposively selected and comprised selected management staff of the INGO, the institutional funder, the implementing LNGOs (LNGO 1 and LNGO 2), some development experts, officials from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria (IPCR), an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the community leadership of the host communities of the projects in Kaduna, Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa states. A detailed explanation justifying the appropriateness of the chosen interview participants is provided in the subsection "Organizing the fieldwork." I also address the issues surrounding the interview protocols and how the interviews were conducted later in this chapter. Meanwhile, since documentary evidence was also used as part of the primary data, it is important to discuss the benefits and relevance of documentary evidence as a tool suitable under the interpretivist- constructivist approach.

Documentary evidence or texts are part of the data interpretivist-constructivists work with to construct reality (Van der Walt, 2020; Adom, Yeboah, and Ankrah, 2016). Bowen (2009) acknowledges that organizational and institutional documents have been valid data sources in qualitative research for years. These documents include "advertisements, agendas, attendance registers, minutes of meetings, manuals, background papers, books, brochures, diaries, journals, letters and memoranda, maps, charts, newspapers, press releases, program proposals, organizational and institutional reports, and photo albums," which the researcher can review as part of their findings (Bowen, 2009, p.3). Specifically referring to politics and international relations as a discipline, Benoit (2020, p.506) expands the list to include "legislative debates, party manifestos, committee transcripts, candidate and political speeches, lobbying documents, court opinions, and laws," and contends that "texts" have become "pervasive" and, if processed well, can provide a rich source of data to understand issues, dynamics, and developments in the discipline. In line with Bowen and Benoit's positions, I reviewed the project reports and publications of the case study INGO, the institutional funder, and the implementing LNGOs to understand the nature of the projects, map all the stakeholders involved, establish initial contacts with some participants, and design the best approach to interviewing them based on the information I gathered (Hunter, 2011). I shall discuss the interview protocol under the section titled "Organizing the fieldwork." Additionally, I explored the farmer-herder conflict data from the *Nigerian Watch* database, as mentioned earlier, to complement the collected data and support the analysis in Chapter Six. The *Nigerian Watch* database is run by the Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique, that is, the Institute for Research in Africa at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan in Nigeria. The *Nigerian Watch database* monitors violence, conflicts, and human security in Nigeria and collects data from multiple channels, including systematic analyses of ten national dailies, reports from human rights

organizations, and the Nigerian police.

In relation to the main research questions, to answer Research Question 1 (RQ1), which seeks to establish the nature of the partnership relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs in the project, I interviewed representatives from the INGO, the funder, and the two LNGOs about their relationships within the intervention. Additionally, I interviewed development experts who have managed NGOs and worked for INGOs in Nigeria and who are experienced in partnership issues between INGOs and LNGOs in Nigeria, to complement the data collected from the NGOs. I also explored project documents and policy briefs from the NGOs to enrich the data. All interviewees spoke from their lived experiences.

To address Research Question 2 (RQ2), which aimed to understand whether the nature of the relationship between the INGO and LNGOs impacted the effectiveness of the peacebuilding intervention in the communities, I interviewed representatives from the INGO, the funder, the two LNGOs, the project host communities, and the development experts. The NGOs provided insights into how the project was conceived, designed, implemented, and how their partnership is run, as well as the sustainability plans for the project. They also addressed issues related to community engagement. The host communities shared their perspectives on engaging with the NGOs, project design and implementation, sustainability plans, the benefits of the project, and their perceptions of the NGOs. The development experts offered valuable experiential insights on INGO-LNGO partnerships in Nigeria and jointly implemented projects. This data was complemented by project documents and data from the *Nigerian Watch* database.

Furthermore, to answer Research Question 3 (RQ3), which sought to examine how the institutional peacebuilding structure supported or hindered the peacebuilding intervention, I interviewed representatives from the IPCR, the INGO, the LNGOs, the funder, and the host communities. The NGOs and funder shared their experiences related to working with the IPCR on the project, and the IPCR responded to questions about supporting NGOs and peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria. The host communities shared their lived experiences in relation to the NGOs and the state. This data was complemented with information from project documents.

The interviewees not only offered insights based on their lived experiences but also explained why they held such views, thereby enriching the data in response to the research questions and aiding in the realization of the stated objectives. This further

justifies the use of a qualitative approach (Morrison, 2015).

4.6 Organizing the Fieldwork

By fieldwork, I refer to the various but related activities undertaken in the process of preparing to collect primary data, including reaching research participants, interacting with them, and analysing the collected data (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991). At the level of Ph.D. research, this process is complex and involves many stages, including acquiring a project notebook to begin jotting down ideas, issues, and developments about organizing the fieldwork; sketching the plan and timelines in the notebook; designing the tools to be used; arranging logistics; mapping the locations; seeking ethical approval; reaching out to stakeholders and gatekeepers to map the interview participants; conducting the interviews; transcribing the interviews; coding; and analysing the data. Of utmost importance is the fact that the nature of the study, the research questions, and the research design largely determine how fieldwork is organized (Lamont, 2022). However, there is always a need for flexibility and open-mindedness on the part of the researcher in carrying out fieldwork due to the possibility of unexpected developments (Lamont, 2022; Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991). Therefore, I approached my fieldwork, and indeed the entire research, as a project with a project mindset, organizing around structures, timelines, and deadlines.

Going to the field for primary data collection is necessary to meet interviewees with lived experiences to address the research questions (RQs). Specifically, understanding the nature of the NGO partnership, exploring how the nature of the relationship impacts their project effectiveness, and how the intervention fared within the existing institutional peacebuilding structure in Nigeria. It is not possible to answer these questions and construct the social reality of these interviewees without engaging them in their natural setting and allowing them the latitude to share their views and the reasons behind them. Thus, the fieldwork was essential in addressing the research questions and would not have been possible without it.

4.7 Ethical Approval

The fieldwork journey of this study began in the first quarter of 2022 with the quest for ethics approval, a prerequisite for research at Aston University. My ethics application for this research focused on specific issues such as confidentiality, consent, the legal rights of participants, data protection, and the potential impact of my research on participating organizations, communities, and individuals. Additionally, because the research involved conflict and was to be conducted in an active conflict zone with significant security and

safety challenges (Moss, Acar, and Ulug, 2018), I was briefed on the safety of both participants and the researcher. After due consideration of all the issues, coupled with the prevailing travel restrictions caused by COVID-19, the ethics committee approved my research fieldwork under certain conditions.

First, the study needed to be anonymized—meaning that no participating organization or individual could be mentioned by name in the dissertation (Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger, 2015). This measure was taken to ensure there was no reputational damage. Beyond the ethics committee's requirements, I also had to use anonymity as a negotiation tool for interview access with some participating organizations and individuals. Other conditions for approval included obtaining the consent of the participants, disclosing their legal rights, prohibiting the use of pictures and video recordings during interviews, and ensuring the storage and protection of the collected data in accordance with the University's data protection guidelines. Lastly, the ethics committee removed observation as one of the primary data collection tools I had proposed and advised me to consider telephone/online interviews as a safer alternative to traveling to conflict communities for face-to-face interviews, which might endanger both myself and the participants.

Switching from a face-to-face interview to an online video interview does not result in significant differences in terms of output (Krouwel, Jolly, and Greenfield, 2019), so this was not a problem for me. However, there were challenges related to poor technology, unreliable electricity, low phone usage, and limited internet access in Northern Nigeria, my research site (Doctor, Alabi, and Jumare, 2012). Nevertheless, after much reflection, it became clear that the best approach was to reach out to the participants, identify everyone's specific challenges (such as no internet, unreliable power, or lack of an Android phone, which could affect the interview), and find creative solutions. This is what I did, as I explain later under "Field Notes and Recruiting Interview Participants."

4.8 Field Notes and Recruiting Interview Participants

Once ethical approval has been received from the home institution, the next step is to begin recruiting research participants (Lamont, 2022). However, in my case, before recruiting my interview participants, I started my field notes to help me organize the process more effectively. Field notes are essential for researchers, but their usage and functionalities are personal and can only be determined by the researcher (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018). Some researchers use their field notes to record personal thoughts, observations, research environment details, and participant information (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018). I used mine to collect information on the stakeholders I was going to encounter in the field, essentially to map all the stakeholders. I took notes on the research

environments, how best to reach the stakeholders in each locality, appointment dates and schedules, emails, and contact telephone numbers. This helped me to organize the process effectively, particularly with regard to recruiting research participants. Of immense benefit in recruiting my interview participants was my membership in the Forum on Farmer–Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN), a network of academics and practitioners from both governmental and non-governmental institutions, which I have been a member of since October 2017. The purpose of the Forum is to bridge the gap between peace practitioners and researchers, share views and experiences, and discuss the dynamics of farmer–herder relations in Nigeria with a view to seeking sustainable solutions. The Forum also examines areas of policy research, advocacy, and mobilization, providing a valuable platform for interdisciplinary exchange of ideas that generate evidence for multilevel policy influencing in Nigeria. It was funded by Search for Common Ground. I represented the Centre for Peace and Development (CEPAD) at Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria, on the Forum as the Centre's peacebuilding and project coordinator until 2020. The membership of FFARN is drawn from NGOs, academics, and the wider civil society in Nigeria, most of whom are based in the North Central region.

Secondly, I had lived, worked, researched, and traversed the North Central region since 2009. I leveraged my connections within FFARN and my personal contacts to establish initial connections with the interview participants. FFARN members, along with the people they directed me to in the communities, in addition to my personal contacts, served as gatekeepers in helping me reach my interview participants, softening the ground for initial conversations, and building rapport and trust thereafter (Moss, Acar, and Ulug, 2018). However, in choosing my research participants, I relied on several important criteria. This is what I will discuss next.

4.9 Mapping the Interview Participants, Coverage of Project Locations and Sample Size

The primary criterion that guided the recruitment of the research participants was the ability to adequately respond to the broad research questions: how the involved partner organizations perceive their partnership relationship, how they operate it in practice, and how the relationship shaped their joint peacebuilding interventions in terms of effectiveness in the communities. Additionally, the nature of institutional support received from the Nigerian state was also a factor. Participants were purposively chosen based on their ability to respond to the questions, either because they had lived the experience or based on their positions (Jackson and Andipatin, 2022). Therefore, all the partners in the funding chain—the INGO, the funder, the two implementing LNGOs, and the host communities—were earmarked for interviews. The organizations (INGO, LNGOs, and

institutional funder) were asked to respond to questions about their partnership relationship and its operational aspects on the project, while the host communities were asked to address issues around community engagement, relationship with the NGOs, project implementation, benefits, and sustainability. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) was included to address issues regarding institutional peacebuilding support for the intervention and peacebuilding governance in Nigeria. I opted to interview only senior management staff or senior project team members of the organizations, as they are expected to be knowledgeable about their organization's policies and operations. Senior management and project team members were also considered appropriate to speak on behalf of their organizations. In the host communities, I opted for the community leadership structure, where decisions and engagements with the community occur (Sargeant, 2012). I explain the community leadership structure further below. However, as highlighted above, the primary criteria for choosing interviewees were their lived experience and in-depth knowledge of the issues to adequately respond to the research questions (RQs).

All my interview participants were purposively selected based on lived experiences or positions occupied, in line with criterion purposive sampling, which is used by researchers to select individuals based on predetermined qualities, experiences, or characteristics (Palys, 2008). They were selected because I believed their lived experiences and positions would help address the research questions adequately. Criterion purposive sampling involves recruiting individuals who meet certain criteria as determined by the researcher or who have had specific life experiences deemed important for responding to the research questions. Palys (2008) lists nine different kinds of purposive sampling: extreme or deviant, case, typical, paradigmatic, maximum, theory-guided, critical, disconfirming, and criterion; of these, criterion sampling was chosen because it was the most appropriate. Other scholars like Negrin et al. (2022) and Shaheen, Pradhan, and Ranajee (2019) agree that sampling in qualitative research is not governed by rigid rules but by the purpose of the research, what the researcher considers useful to the objectives, what is credible, and what can be achieved within a particular timeframe and resources.

In line with this approach, the leadership of nine communities across four states in North Central Nigeria—Plateau, Benue, Kaduna, and Nasarawa—which hosted the projects were purposively selected for interviews. Each of these communities, like most in Nigeria, had a traditional community governance structure headed by the village head and including women and youth leaders. In addition to these three groups, I included the head of crop farmers and the head of cattle herders in the communities because they are the primary conflict actors, and the peacebuilding projects were designed to improve their

coexistence and economic well-being. Thus, the research targeted the village heads, the heads of farmers and herders, and the women and youth leaders for in-depth interviews in each host community. Since they were all impacted by the violent conflict and had engaged with the NGOs through the project cycle, their views were expected to reflect the true experiences in the communities (Sargeant, 2012).

The case study peacebuilding project was implemented in nineteen farming communities across four states in the North Central region of Nigeria. Although the nature of the projects and their implementation across the communities were consistent, I ensured that all four states were covered in the interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues. As shown in Table 2, I conducted interviews in nine communities across the four states. I considered nine project sites out of nineteen to be adequate and representative enough to fully understand the issues surrounding the projects in the host communities (Ellis, 2020). As acknowledged, qualitative sampling decisions are made with consideration of the research objectives, what is useful, credible, and achievable within the available time and resources (Shaheen, Pradhan, and Ranajee, 2019; Negrin et al., 2022). Unlike in quantitative research, where a suitably sized sample is required for generalizability, qualitative research does not require sampling all communities. In qualitative research, the emphasis is on rich experiential knowledge of the issues (Quatember, 2019).

Some of the host communities did not have all the members of the selected community leadership structure available. In some cases, post holders had died and had not been replaced or had been displaced or dislocated and had not returned. I had to work with what was available, as every community still had some semblance of leadership despite the missing positions. In most of the communities, about 90% of the community leadership was present, which I considered representative enough and an acceptable threshold (Quatember, 2019). A comprehensive list of research participants interviewed is provided in Table 2.

Furthermore, because there is a governance and institutional structure around peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria (Denney, Mallett, and Mazurana, 2015), the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), the agency that oversees peacebuilding and peace infrastructure in Nigeria, was included in the interviews. Their inclusion aimed to understand the policy and governance context of the interventions. The goal was to interview those at the management level, where critical policy decisions are made. Finally, five development experts with sound knowledge and experience of the NGO sector in Nigeria were included

as part of the interview participants to complement the data collected from the INGO/LNGOs. This served the dual purpose of providing a nuanced view and data validation. The five experts were former chief executive officers or directors of LNGOs in Nigeria and had many years of experience implementing joint peacebuilding projects with INGOs. Thus, they have extensive experience concerning the partnership relationship between INGOs and LNGOs in a project context in Nigeria (Jackson and Andipatin, 2021). Table 1 shows the proposed interview participants as well as the number that were eventually interviewed. The next step is to discuss in detail how I plan to respond to the three broad research questions.

Table 1 List of planned interview participants and actual numbers interviewed

S/N	Organization	Position	No proposed	No interviewed
1	INGO	Management/project team	2	1 interviewed
2	Institutional funder	Management/project team	2	1 interviewed
3	LNGO 1	Management/project team	2	3 interviewed
4	LNGO 2	Management/project team	2	2 interviewed
5	Benue state	Village head, woman leader, youth leader, head of farming, head of herders	5	7 interviewed (in 2 communities)
6	Nasarawa state	Village head, woman leader, youth leader, head of farming, head of herders	5	7 interviewed (in 2 communities)
7	Plateau state	Village head, woman leader, youth leader, head of farming, head of herders	5	4 interviewed (in 4 communities)
8	Kaduna state	Village head, woman leader, youth leader, head of farming, head of herders	5	4 interviewed (in 1 community)
9	Development experts	CEOs, NGO directors, program/project managers	2	5 interviewed
10	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IPCR)	Executive director/senior staff members	2	1 interviewed
			Total interviews	35

Table 2 Interview Table: List of Participants Interviewed

S/N	ORGANIZATION	POSITION	AGE	DATE	DAY	TIME	SEX	MODE
Participant 1	Inst. Funder	Conflict Program Specialist	53	5/10/2022	Wed	2:05 – 2:55 (45 mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 2	INGO	Deputy Chief of Party	50	27/06/2022	Mon	10:00 – 10:57 (57Mins)	Male	Microsoft Team
Participant 3	LNGO 1	Executive Director	51	27/09/2022	Tue	3:20pm - 4:10pm (50 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 4	LNGO 1	Finance officer	51	3/10/2023	Tue	10:00am – 10:20am (20 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 5	LNGO 1	Project officer	40	27/10/2023	Fri	Written response	Female	LinkedIn
Participant 6	LNGO 2	Program Manager	42	12/09/2022	Mon	10:00am – 11:00am (60 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 7	LNGO 2	Project Coordinator	48	27/09/2023	Wed	9:17am – 9:52am (35 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 8	Development expert	CEO LNGO	60	6/10/2022	Thu	1:00pm – 1:45pm (45 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 9	Development expert	CEO LNGO	46	29/19/2022	Thu	5:30pm – 6:15pm (45 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 10	Development expert	National Coordinator	60	03/10/2023	Tue	4:03pm – 4:20pm (17 Mins)	Female	WhatsApp
Participant 11	Development expert	Country Director	54	03/10/2023	Tue	12:00pm–12:18pm (18 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 12	Development expert	Director	55	05/10/2023	Tue	9:10am – 9:35am (25 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 13	Host community 1	Village head	65	11/09/2022	Sun	2:00pm – 2:50pm (50 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 14	Host community 1	Head, crop farmers	55	11/09/2022	Sun	4:05pm – 4:50pm (45Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 15	Host community 1	Head, headers	49	11/09/2022	Sun	6:00pm – 7:00pm (60 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 16	Host community 2	Village head	60	8/08/2022	Mon	1:00pm – 1:50pm (50 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 17	Host community 2	Youth leader	28	8/08/2022	Mon	2:10pm – 3:00pm (50 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 18	Host community 2	Head herder	57	8/08/2022	Mon	4:00pm – 5:00pm (60Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 19	Host community 3	Youth leader	27	15/10/2022	Sat	10:00am - 10:45am ((45Mins)	Male	WhatsApp

Participant 20	Host community 3	Women leader	56	15/10/2022	Sat	12:00pm – 12:55pm (55 Mins)	Female	WhatsApp
Participant 21	Host community 3	Herder leader	60	15/10/2022	Sat	2:00pm – 2:45pm (45Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 22	Host community	Farmers leader	62	15/10/2022	Sat	5:00pm – 5:50pm (50 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 23	Host community	Village head	64	9/07/2022	Sat	10:00am – 10:50am (50Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 24	Host community	Woman leader	50	9/07/2022	Sat	12:00pm – 12:45 pm (45Mins)	Female	WhatsApp
Participant 25	Host community	Header leader	54	9/07/2022	Sat	2:00pm – 3:00pm (60Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 26	Host community	Farmer head	60	9/07/2022	Sat	5:00pm – 5:45pm (45Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 27	Host community	Village head	63	13/08/2022	Sat	10:00am – 10:50am (50 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 28	Host community	Village head	54	10/08/2022	Sat	12:00pm – 12:45pm (51Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 29	Host community	Farmer head	51	7/09/2022	Wed	3:00pm – 3:55pm (55 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 30	Host community	Header head	60	7/09/2022	Wed	5:00pm – 6:00pm (60 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 31	Ministry of Interior	Director General	50	9/10/2022	Sun	5:00pm – 5:30pm (30 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 32	Host community	Village head	69	18/10/2023	Sat	10:00am – 10:20am (20 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 33	Host community	Herders head	60	18/10/2023	Sat	12:00pm – 12:15pm (15 Mins)	Male	WhatsApp
Participant 34	Host community	Women leader	54	19/10/2023	Sun	2:00pm – 2:25pm (25 Mins)	Female	WhatsApp
Participant 35	Host community	Head farmer	50	19/10/2023	Sun	4:00pm – 4:20pm	Male	WhatsApp

4.10 How I Responded to the Broad Research Questions and Applied the Conceptual Framework

In answering the first research question (RQ1), which concerns establishing the nature of the partnership relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs, the study identified the project decisions made by the actors in relation to each other, as well as the actors' perceptions of one another. This was done using Alan Fowler's (1998) Authentic Partnership Principles (APP), which include common goals set by the parties, mutuality in contributions, respect for the autonomy of each partner organization, respect for each partner's identity, respect for each partner's position, and equality of the partners in decision-making, as explained in Chapter Two. The data on project decisions and actor perceptions were collected through documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with the INGO, LNGOs, and the project funder, complemented by the views of development experts. Table 3 provides a template of how the APP was applied in the dissertation.

Table 3 Nature of Partnership Relationship Conceptual Framework

S/N	Project data (PD)	Authentic partnership principles (APP)
1	Examine how project goals and outputs were set. Find out if they reflect the collective views of the partners.	Common goals set by the partners
2	Understand the agreement on the specific individual contributions of each partner and see if any partner feels undermined by other partners in the project.	Mutuality in contribution
3	Analyse project documents to see how each partner is presented. Engage communities to see how each partner is publicly presented and projected.	Respect the identity of each partner organization involved.
4	Examine how each partner handled their individual task, to determine level of trust and autonomy	Each partner's autonomy is to be recognized and respected.
5	Assess each partner's feelings and perceptions about their experiences in the relationship.	Each partner's autonomy to be respected outside of the relationship.
6	Determine whether core project decisions were made equally.	Equality in decision making.

Furthermore, to address the second and third broad research questions (RQs 2–3), the study triangulated responses from in-depth interviews with the INGO, LNGOs, host communities, the funder, the IPCR (representing the Nigerian government), and documentary analysis. Documentary data included conflict data from the Nigeria Watch database. The INGO and LNGOs responded to questions pertaining to the nature of the project and its implementation, community

engagement, project sustainability plans, state support, and challenges. The community interviewees responded to questions about their engagement with the NGOs, how the projects have impacted their lives, and their perceptions of the projects and the NGOs. The funder discussed their experience in Nigeria, successes, and challenges. The interviewee from the state (IPCR) responded to questions about IPCR's interface with peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria and challenges within the agency. The conflict data from Nigeria Watch was used to support an argument on sustainable peace as an outcome of the intervention while responding to research question two (RQ2). The responses were complemented by the views of development experts who responded to questions about INGO-LNGO partnership relations in Nigeria generally.

Having established how I addressed the research questions, I will now discuss how I engaged the research participants and collected the primary data.

4.11 Engaging the Research Participants

After my gatekeepers (see 5.8) had made the initial contacts and facilitated my engagement with the participants (Chaudhuri, 2017), I began contacting them by phone to introduce myself and explain what I was seeking from them. The participants from the host communities were excited to share their stories, so I immediately advanced the discussion by informing them to expect my letter of introduction and consent form. However, my telephone conversations with the partner organizations involved, especially the INGO, were more challenging. Despite introducing myself, they wanted to verify who I was, where I was based, what my project was about, and what I was seeking to achieve. I addressed all their concerns and, as part of the negotiation for access, informed them that the study was anonymized, so there was nothing to fear. This seemed to reassure the contact I spoke with, as they requested a formal letter of introduction stating my request. I was unable to speak directly with the institutional funder because the provided phone lines were non-functional, so I sent an email instead. I wrote letters of introduction co-signed by my main supervisor to each of the other participants, officially requesting a study interview to support my Ph.D. dissertation.

In the letter of introduction to the interviewees, I introduced myself as a doctoral student in the Department of Politics and International Relations, College of Business and Social Sciences, Aston University. I explained the focus of my research and stated that the interview was intended to gather data for my dissertation. I also emphasized that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage of the interview. Additionally, I reassured them about the confidentiality and anonymity of participating organizations and individuals and informed them that the collected data would be stored securely in password-protected cloud storage at Aston University.

After making initial contact with all my research participants and receiving their approval to

proceed, excluding the institutional funder, I began sending the letters of introduction and consent forms to them. After a few weeks, I received the expected feedback and followed up with subsequent telephone conversations to discuss how the interviews would be conducted, agree on dates, and address the specific needs of each interview participant. I still did not receive any feedback from the institutional funder despite sending several reminder emails as suggested by my supervisory team. Their response eventually came four months later, confirming Manohar et al.'s (2018) view that flexibility, tenacity, and patience are required when dealing with interview participants.

However, in discussing and finalizing the specifics for conducting the interviews with participants from the host communities, the challenge of technology—especially low and erratic internet access in some of the communities—arose. The solution we agreed upon was for those affected to travel to the nearest city centres on the day of the interview to access the internet (Shih et al., 2021). We decided to use the WhatsApp platform as the medium for the interview, as it was more affordable in terms of data and accessible to the participants. Although this was a common practice in the communities, it presented the problem of transportation and data costs for the 22 participants in this group. To prevent poor rural people from incurring costs on my behalf, which might hinder their participation, I opted to cover the expenses for transportation and data. Fortunately, the Aston Modern Languages Research Foundation (AMLRF) granted me a modest research grant, which funded twelve of the participants. A sample of the letter of introduction and consent forms is attached as an appendix to the dissertation.

4.12 Anonymising the Interview Participants

As a result of the terms of the ethical approval, this study adopted a code name protocol to designate the research participants, both organizations and individuals, to reduce traceability. Therefore, the International Nongovernmental Organization at the center of the project and research is referred to as "INGO," the funder is referred to as the "Institutional Funder," or Funder, one of the implementing LNGOs is referred to as "LNGO 1," and the second is referred to as "LNGO 2." The host communities are simply referred to as "host communities" or described as "one of the host communities." The development experts will be referred to as "development experts" or "one of the development experts," as the case may be. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its agency, the IPCR, will be called by their names because they are not directly involved in the project, and the interview concerns policy and general oversight of peacebuilding partnerships in Nigeria. There is no direct or specific link to the project or case study that would make them traceable. The project will be referred to as "the project," although efforts will be made to describe it sufficiently to understand the issues and dynamics. All individual participants are simply referred to as "Participants" with a numerical suffix. According to Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015), in an anonymized study, a researcher can use pseudonyms to reference their research participants to prevent traceability and maintain the agreement on anonymity. (See also Shanks

and Paulson, 2022; Olumba, 2024). Many previous studies equally demonstrate that communities and organizations can be anonymized or represented with pseudonyms due to ethical reasons (Crow and Wiles, 2008; Ackerman, Eden and Pyrko, 2016; Verkoren and Leeuwen, 2013).

4.13 Developing the Interview Protocol and Conducting the Interview

Developing an interview protocol for a semi-structured interview is essential for a researcher to conduct productive interviews (Bryman, 2016). An interview protocol is more than just a list of tentative interview questions; it should also include procedural guides for before, during, and after the interview (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). The purpose of an interview protocol is to provide structure to the interview process (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). It may include, in addition to the interview question guide, a script of dos and don'ts, prompts, possible follow-up questions, and guidelines for collecting consent forms (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012).

In this study, I began with a question guide—a list of different tentative questions for each of my interviewee categories—because their circumstances were different, and my objectives varied for each group (Adams, 2015). I had different sets of questions for the INGO, the Institutional Funder, the community leadership, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the development experts, although there were one or two common questions across the groups. In any case, these questions were tentative, meaning I could expand on them during the interview and ask follow-up questions as needed.

Additionally, I chose to start with soft questions, introductions, and basic information. It is argued that starting with less probing questions helps the researcher gradually build the confidence and trust of the interviewees, which is crucial in qualitative research (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). I found this particularly useful when handling the most contentious question in my work, which concerns the perception of "partnership" within the funding chain. This question is contentious in the literature, with divergent views (Contu and Girei, 2014). Some scholars question whether it is a true "partnership" relationship, while others consider it a "principal–agent" relationship or a "contractor–contractee" relationship (Fowler, 1998; Altahir, 2016). It is a delicate question likely to evoke multiple emotions and could impact organizational relations if not handled carefully. Many interviewees might not feel comfortable responding directly to it. I approached this by asking related questions first, such as "Tell me about the relationship with [...] and how it was operated," before asking, "How do you perceive your partners in light of what you've described?" The idea was to help them feel comfortable enough to discuss the topic without tension (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012; Harrel and Bradley, 2009).

Another key point in my interview protocol was to always introduce myself, my affiliation, what I was studying, and why the interview was needed as a way of building rapport with the

interviewees (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012).

I also recognized the importance of preserving relationships with my interviewees. One technique I used was to always close each interview on a friendly note, thanking them profusely for their time, patience, and willingness to participate. I also reminded them that I might need to contact them again for a follow-up interview to seek clarity or request additional information (Adams, 2015).

Furthermore, I deliberately planned not to let the interviews last more than sixty minutes because, aside from being reasonable according to the literature (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012), the peculiarities of my situation made this necessary. Some of my interviewees would be speaking to me from outside their homes, so brevity was important to allow them to return home. Additionally, they would be using their handsets for the interview, which could lead to battery drainage, network issues, or other technological failures (De Villiers, Farooq, and Molinari, 2022).

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) also remind interviewers to ensure the interview location is quiet. While I noted and considered this, I did so alongside the security and safety of my interviewees due to the prevailing security situation in the research communities. However, my interviewees chose their locations as they deemed fit (Mwita, 2022).

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) further advise that interviewers should remind interviewees during the interview to sign and submit the consent form. However, since my interviews were conducted online, most of my interviewees had already sent the form via email before the interviews, so I simply acknowledged and thanked them for it. For the few who hadn't sent theirs beforehand, I politely requested it during the interview, and in all cases, I received the forms shortly afterward. Thus, all ethical requirements were fulfilled.

The literature emphasizes the need to audio record interviews to capture everything that was said (Jamsheed, 2014). In my case, I planned to use WhatsApp on my laptop for the interview and the audio recording function on my phone to record the sessions. I intended to transcribe the recordings manually, as this would allow me to deeply immerse myself in the data and begin identifying emerging patterns for coding and themes. Additionally, I recognized that most qualitative interview transcription apps do not accurately transcribe non-Western accents, which is relevant to my case.

I conducted all the interviews from the second quarter of 2022 until the last quarter of 2023. The primary reason for the extended duration was the need for follow-up interviews to clarify previously discussed issues and seek new information to adequately address the research questions and study objectives. Almost all the interviews were conducted on WhatsApp, except for two that were

conducted on Microsoft Teams and one that was a written response on LinkedIn. The duration of the interviews ranged from 35 to 60 minutes due to the reasons mentioned earlier. My primary concern during the conversations, especially with community leaders, was their safety, as they were speaking from public spaces (such as cyber cafes or computer centers in Nigeria where people use computers, buy internet access and data, check emails, and make or receive calls). This fulfilled

the ethical requirement of conducting online interviews to ensure everyone's safety. During some of the interviews, there were instances of internet network disruptions that resulted in temporary disconnections. However, the calls were reconnected within one to two minutes. The calls were audio recorded (Bryman, 2016), and I also kept a field notebook handy to jot down important points from the discussions, such as topics and issues I wanted to clarify or explore in-depth later. In the next section, I discuss how I transcribed the interviews.

4.14Transcribing the Recorded Interviews to Produce Verbatim Transcripts

Transcription, which is the conversion of voice or video recordings into analysable text (Mcmullin, 2023) or "the process of producing a valid written record of an interview" (Clark et al., 2017, p. 4), can be done in two ways: through audio-to-text technology or manually (Tessier, 2012). There are also current studies that are bypassing transcription to code their data directly from video or audio interviews (Vanover, 2021).

I wanted the transcript to be as accurate as possible to the thoughts and ideas expressed in the interviews, without errors (Creswell and Poth, 2017; King and Horrocks, 2010), despite some scholars arguing that a transcript is always a reconstruction of an interview and never the original (Skukauskaite, 2012; Vanover, 2021). I felt that if the transcription were done by a machine or an external person, especially someone unfamiliar with the culture or context, there could be inaccuracies. These inaccuracies could arise from a lack of understanding of certain words and the Nigerian context in which they are used, as well as misrepresentation of sounds, sighs, incomplete sentences, colloquialisms, accents, pauses, stutters, and cultural expressions, leading to distortion of meaning (Witcher, 2010). It has been noted that transcription errors can lead to errors in data collection, analysis, and the study itself (Clark et al., 2017).

Another important reason for transcribing the interviews personally was to minimize the exposure of my participants and research organizations, in keeping with the requirements for anonymity. Transcribing the interviews myself allowed me to replace the names of organizations and individual participants with pseudonyms, making it difficult to trace the data back to them (Widodo, 2014).

I knew this would be a time-consuming task (Vanover, 2021). However, the benefits outweighed

the cost, which is also why I decided to adopt a transcription-guiding protocol to standardize the process. Since there seems to be no uniform transcription standard, every researcher must decide what works best based on their specific circumstances (Mcmullin, 2023; Point and Baruch, 2023). The structure I adopted for transcription is naturalized transcription (Clark et al., 2017; Peraza, 2019). A naturalized transcript is a full verbatim transcript that includes everything, including stutters, mistakes, repetitions, and grammatical errors (Bucholtz, 2000; Clark et al., 2017). The purpose of adopting a naturalized transcription approach is to ensure content accuracy and capture as many details as possible from the interviews, representing the participants' thoughts and experiences (Clark et al., 2016).

Furthermore, I adopted some keys and features to simplify the transcription process based on the naturalized transcription approach due to the specifics of my research. These include using a sequential identification number for each participant in the transcript along with the date of the interview, labelling the interviewee as "Participant" and myself as "Interviewer" in the script, and writing exactly what was said in the interviews, including nonverbal communications such as pauses, stutters, laughter, sighs, repetitions, and grammatical errors. Lastly, I changed any personal or identifying information that could make it possible to identify the organizations or individual participants.

After transcribing the 35 interviews, I had 136 pages of verbatim transcripts, which greatly aided my coding and analysis. The next section discusses how the coding and analysis were conducted.

4.15 Coding and Analysis with NVivo Using Thematic Analysis

Coding is the first step in condensing or segmenting data into a manageable form for analysis in a project (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2013). It is considered an essential “tool in the process of turning raw qualitative data into a communicative and trustworthy story” (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019, p. 4). Coding involves the “assigning of labels or codes to different sections of text for easy organization, comparison, and analysis” (Akinyode and Khan, 2018, p. 5). Saldana (2015, p. 3; 2021, p. 5) described coding as a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” See also Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019). Coding is viewed as the early stage of data analysis, which is systematic and verifiable, and thus acceptable (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

I set out to code and analyse the primary data for this study using NVivo software because of its numerous advantages for qualitative research, including the easy management and organization of large volumes of data (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). NVivo was also used because it is well-

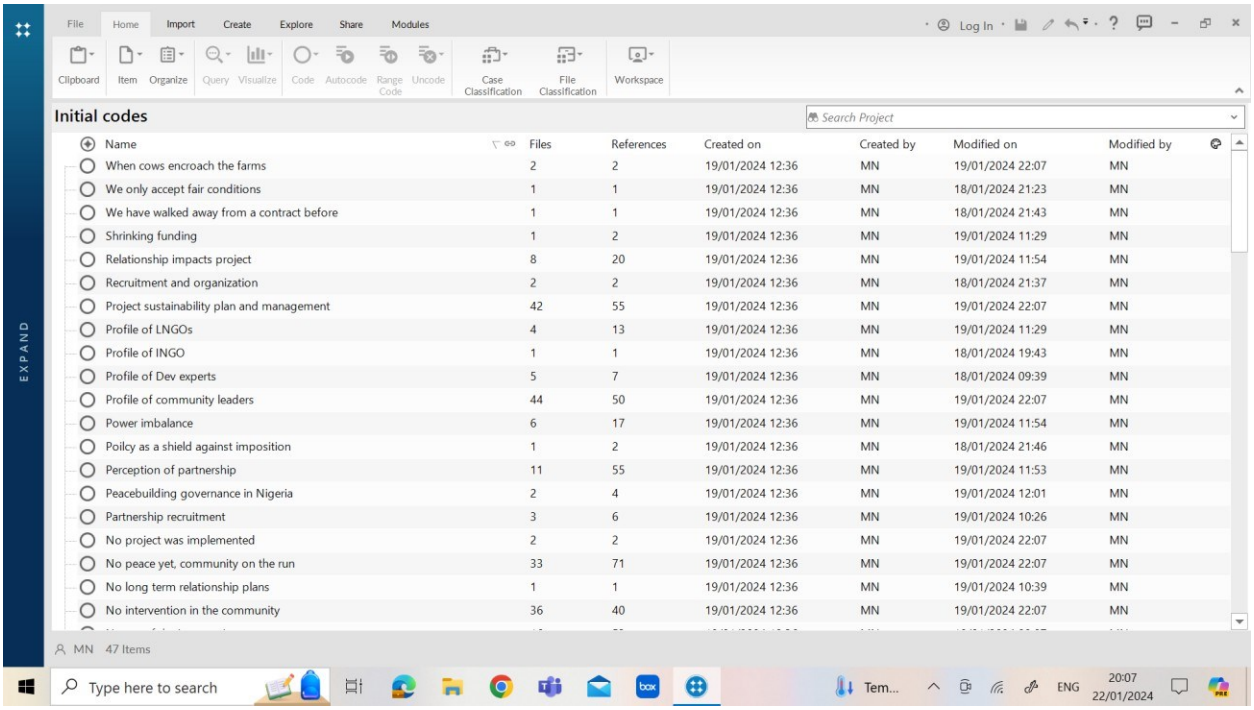
suited for qualitative research (Saldana, 2021). In doing this, I relied on Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis framework, which comprises: familiarizing oneself with the data, creating the initial codes, collating the codes with supporting data, grouping the codes into themes, reviewing and revising the themes, and writing up the narrative (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019, p. 4). It is important to note that these steps do not necessarily flow in a linear order but can be adapted as needed by the researcher (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019). This was the case in my study.

My data consisted of interview transcripts, documentary evidence from the four research organizations, and my fieldwork notes, which I converted into a readable text document (Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019; Saldana, 2021). I used inductive coding, as the study is qualitative and inductive by design, aiming not to impose predefined codes on the data but to generate codes from it. Inductive coding is best suited for exploratory studies without prior theory, as is the case with my study (Gehman et al., 2018). Additionally, inductive coding is the ideal approach when using the constructivist paradigm, as I did (Gioia et al., 2013).

First, all my transcripts were stored in the software as files. This resulted in six datasets, developed from the six interview groups: INGO, funder, LNGO, host communities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and development experts. For each of the datasets, the process began with a detailed and descriptive thematic approach to coding, where most of the sentences were coded with a summary of what was being said in the transcripts (Saldana, 2013). Thus, every piece of text was coded with a word or theme using open coding (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Gibbs, 2007, p. 56). Saldana (2021, p. 259) referred to this as "theming the data." However, Swami (2021) noted that the aim of thematic coding is to categorize patterns of meaning across the researcher's different datasets that respond to the set research questions. Open coding, however, means that pre-set codes were not used; rather, codes were generated from the transcript and continuously modified throughout the process (Maguire and Delahunt, 2016).

Additionally, to make it easier to distinguish between the codes, folders were created for each data source, so there were separate folders with initial codes for each dataset (Saldana, 2021). See Figure 3 for an example of initial codes.

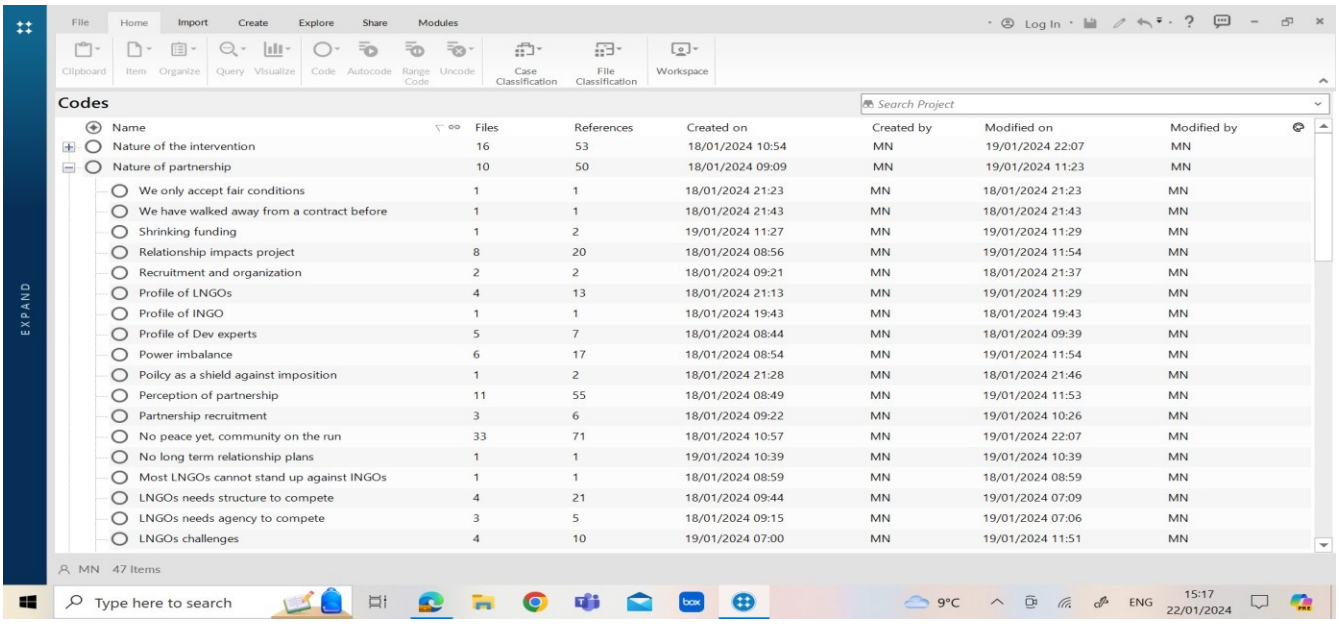
Figure 3, *Example of initial codes (screenshot from NVivo)*



Furthermore, the second cycle of coding, which is the next step, involves first trying to make sense of the data by re-reading the already created codes and their content. Another goal was to break down some of the more general and inclusive codes into more specific ones that would accurately summarize the data, in order to later develop a good understanding of the data that would result in theme development (Saldana, 2021).

To achieve this, the existing descriptive codes were first organized into a 'parent–child' relationship, which is a term used in NVivo to refer to the hierarchical organization of codes (see Figure 4) in a group, and these groups were based on the judgment as to what topics the various codes represent (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). At this stage, the organization of codes did not mean trying to create themes, but rather trying to make sense of the data further by introducing any common-sense way to group the large number of codes to make them easier to understand and evaluate (Saldana, 2021).

Figure 4: *An example of organizing the initial codes into a parent-child relationship (screenshot from NVivo)*



Within these groups, the codes were scrutinized and “cleaned up”, mostly to ensure there were no duplicates or several codes that were describing the same or similar things. If such codes were identified, they were “merged” into one code (Saldana, 2021). While codes that were generic and broad were broken down into more specific codes. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014 p14) refer to this as “pattern codes” where the researcher traces common ties among the codes, seeking common patterns or themes and pulling them together under one theme.

The above process was repeated within each separate coding folder before being copied and pasted to the final “thematic framework” folder in which attempts were made to finally merge all separate coding frameworks into one common framework. All codes were scrutinized, and their content reread multiple times, and questions were asked as to how this newly developed understanding of the data may contribute to answering the research questions and establishing the objectives of the study (Swami, 2021).

Based on this, as well as on cross and within-case comparisons, which is the detailed reading and analysis of the data both between the different participants as well as within each participant data, the codes were reorganized again to make sure that they now represent the themes running through the date (Saldana, 2015; Swan et al, 2017). The final thematic framework is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Full thematic framework*

Name	Files	References
1. Nature of the partnership among the actors		
Nature of the partnership	10	50
Community embeddedness and structure	14	43
Funder determines project themes and direction	9	18
Recruitment and organization of partners	16	63
2. Nature of projects implemented and impact on the communities		
Nature of the intervention	16	53
Community perception of the intervention	36	104
No peace yet, community on the run	33	71
Community relationship with NGOs	80	104
Impact of project on community	33	61
No intervention in the community	38	42
3. Issues and challenges of the intervention		
Challenges in the intervention	45	87
Community involvement in the project	40	70
Project sustainability plan and management	42	55
4. The relationship and the intervention		
Relationship impacts project	8	20
Power imbalance	6	17
LNGOs challenges	8	15
5. Improving INGO - LNGO relations and interventions		
Improving INGO - LNGO relations	4	5
Peacebuilding governance in Nigeria	6	8

As evident in Table 4, several topics were discussed in the transcripts, and the main findings from these discussions are outlined in the full thematic table. The first section on the table is “Nature of the partnership among the actors” and it describes how the relationship among the NGO actors worked and were perceived by them. This responds directly to the first broad research question. The second section “Nature of projects implemented and impact on the communities” highlights the different peacebuilding projects carried out under the intervention and their impact on the

communities. Section three “Issues and challenges of the intervention” outlined all the various issues and challenges the intervention encountered, including the sustainability plan of the project and the community engagement. Section four “The relationship and the intervention” discusses the partnership relationship and its influence on the intervention. Finally, section five “Improving INGO-LNGO relations and interventions” concludes by discussing various suggestions and recommendations on improving the partnership relationship, project implementation, community engagement, as well as institutional peacebuilding governance in Nigeria. Section two, three, four and five responds to broad research questions two and three. Having concluded the data analysis, the next step is to discuss qualitative data validity as it concerns this dissertation.

4.16 How the Data was Validated

In this section, I discuss the measures undertaken to validate the data in this dissertation (Bryman, 2016).

I used processual validity to validate the data in this dissertation (Hayashi et al., 2021). Processual validity involves the researcher being transparent about all the steps taken in the research, including those before, during, and after fieldwork. This is important because every stage in qualitative research impacts the quality of the final output (Hayashi et al., 2021).

Although there appears to be no scholarly consensus on the criteria for assessing validity in qualitative research (Hayashi et al., 2021; Mays and Pope, 2000; Sousa, 2014; Noble and Smith, 2015), many scholars are now resorting to “processual validity” or “methodological approaches” as a way to confirm the quality of their work (Hayashi et al., 2021; Lacey and Luff, 2009; Noble and Smith, 2015).

Consequently, I have outlined the philosophical standpoint that guided the study—interpretivist social constructivist and the corresponding methodology, qualitative case study, and provided justifications for them. In their conceptualization of processual validity, Hayashi et el (2021) points at transparency at five steps of the research process: Step A: Ex -ante field research involving activities in preparation for fieldwork, Step B: Data collection, Step C: Coding and analysis, Step D: Data triangulation and reflexivity and Step E: clear communication of the findings (Hayashi et al, 2021p3). Easterby-Smith et al (2002 p.55) explained it in detail:

“*It is very important for the researcher to explain how she gained access to the particular organization, what processes led to the selection of informants, how data was recorded, what processes were used to summarize or collate it, how the data became transformed into tentative ideas and explanations, and so on*”

Nevertheless, Lacey and Luff surmise that qualitative research can be assessed not only in terms of validity (suitability of research design, extent to which all relevant views are represented in the interpretations, and the adequate and systematic use of original data in the analysis) but also based on reliability. Reliability involves sufficiently describing the approach to and procedure for data analysis, justifying their appropriateness, clearly showing how themes were generated from the data, and making references to other studies in relation to the conclusions (Lacey and Luff, 2009, pp. 26–27).

Consequently, I have transparently demonstrated how the fieldwork was prepared, how access was gained to the participants and organizations, the selection processes, the challenges encountered, and how the data was recorded, manually transcribed, coded using NVivo, and analyzed, including attempts at triangulation using the development experts.

Having established the validity of the data in this dissertation, the next section will examine the researcher positionality in the work.

4.17 Researcher Positionality and the Dissertation

I am a Nigerian researcher and peacebuilding practitioner who lived and worked for more than ten years in the North Central region of Nigeria. During that time, I engaged in peacebuilding activities and collaborated with various local NGOs, gaining an intimate understanding of the region's dynamics, including its communities, cultures, and conflicts. My experiences included participating in and researching peacebuilding efforts in conflicts such as the Jos conflict in Plateau State, the Bazza-Egbura conflict in Nasarawa State, and the Bwari conflict in Abuja. These experiences significantly shaped my understanding of the dynamics, challenges, gaps, and opportunities of peacebuilding in Nigeria, particularly within the North Central region, as reflected in these publications (Nwaneri, 2020; Nwaneri & Ombugadu, 2019; Nwaneri & Ukandu, 2019).

However, since 2020, I have been a student in Europe, which inevitably distanced me from the day-to-day realities of the region. While I maintained connections through media reports and ongoing conversations with personal acquaintances and stakeholders, my physical absence meant I no longer experienced the local dynamics firsthand. This dual positioning—as someone deeply familiar with the region yet detached from its immediate realities—placed me in a unique insider-outsider position, influencing how I engaged with participants, interpreted data, and produced knowledge in this dissertation (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Bukamal, 2022).

As an insider, I shared national, cultural, and historical connections with the communities and stakeholders involved in this study. This proximity enabled me to navigate local contexts with relative ease, interpret nuanced social and cultural cues, and build trust with participants. Giwa

(2015) highlights how researchers from the Global South often bring an intimate understanding of their study settings, fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity. However, this familiarity also presented certain challenges. As Adu-Ampong and Adams (2020) note, participants often expect researchers who share their national or ethnic identity to inherently "know" certain aspects of the context. Such assumptions required careful negotiation to maintain a balance between cultural familiarity and academic objectivity.

Nevertheless, in some cases, the insider position provided clarity and depth during interview conversations. For instance, during an interview with a development expert discussing power imbalances between INGOs and LNGOs, the participant remarked:

"...*the civil society space especially in Nigeria is shrinking. And so funding is a challenge, what you find [is] a lot of people [LNGOs] doing is what a late colleague who I will not mention his name called 'Donor dancing'…Yes, because, they, with their fund will say what they want and we, wanting the fund will do what they want. So, we dance to their tune*." (Interview #10).

Following this remark, the interviewee laughed and, in the midst of the laughter, added:

"*You are a Nigerian, you understand nao*!"

The phrase "You are a Nigerian, you understand nao" is a common expression in Nigerian Pidgin English, widely understood by anyone who grew up in Nigeria. Here, the interviewee was signaling a shared understanding—that as a Nigerian, I should inherently grasp the realities she described. Her statement reflected the survival tactics adopted by many local NGOs in a context marked by economic hardship, government neglect, and stark power asymmetries between local and international actors. It conveyed the unspoken reality: foreign organizations, by virtue of their funding power, often dictate terms, and local actors, driven by survival needs, comply to secure necessary resources.

The interviewee's expectation that I would "understand" mirrors the experiences discussed by Adu-Ampong and Adams (2020) in their study of insider–outsider dynamics in Ghana. Their title, "But You Are Also Ghanaian, You Should Know," was drawn from real fieldwork interactions where participants assumed that, based on shared national identity, researchers should understand certain local issues without extensive explanation. As the authors argue, this reflects the power of shared national knowledge, identity, and cultural familiarity in shaping research encounters. However, they also caution that insider status is not absolute. As they observe, "sharing national identity [alone] did not automatically translate into shared experiences or unproblematic access" (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 8).

Thus, while national and cultural ties may facilitate access and rapport, they do not eliminate the

need for careful negotiation and contextual knowledge. Importantly, the authors emphasize that "being reflexive about our shifting positionalities [as researchers] allowed us to better interpret the meaning behind participants' narratives and silences" (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 10).

By remaining attentive to these fluid dynamics, I was able to leverage the advantages of my insider status while remaining critically aware of its limitations—including the potential for insider bias. I adopted several measures to mitigate the influence of insider bias throughout this dissertation. A key strategy was the practice of reflexivity, which involved a continuous process of reflecting on how my positionality, background knowledge, beliefs, sentiments, and personal experiences could influence the research process. I made conscious efforts to extricate myself from these influences to engage with the data holistically and objectively, as advocated by Dwyer and Buckle (2009). This process, according to Brannick and Coghlan (2007), fosters transparency and self-awareness. To further reduce bias, I employed member checking by following up with certain interviewees to validate my interpretations against their original expressions and experiences—ensuring that my analysis accurately represented their intended meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also applied triangulation to strengthen the validity of the findings by corroborating data through multiple sources and perspectives (Patton, 1999). As previously noted, one of the reasons for integrating development experts into the study was to provide an additional layer of verification and minimize the risk of individual bias. Moreover, I have presented key findings from this research at no fewer than five international academic conferences. These presentations offered opportunities for peer feedback, which, as Spall (1998) suggests, can reveal alternative interpretations and help surface potential blind spots in the analysis. Finally, this researcher positionality statement in the dissertation, which outlines my dual role as both an insider and outsider in relation to the study context and participants is essential for acknowledging potential biases and enhancing the transparency and credibility of the research process (Holmes, 2020).

My academic sojourn and relocation to Europe indeed positioned me as an outsider and conducting this research within the framework of international relations situated me within a global academic discourse largely shaped by theories and methodologies developed predominantly in the Global North. This positioning brought certain advantages, including equipping me with the theoretical foundations of international relations that underpin this research, such as the liberal and hybrid peacebuilding approaches that inform the operations of INGOs in their peacebuilding activities in the Global South. It also provided insights into the global power dynamics that empower INGOs in their relationships with LNGOs, the enduring colonial legacies that structured global hierarchies, the dichotomy between the developed North and the underdeveloped South, and the contemporary emphasis on "everyday mundane things" in international relations—a concept increasingly used by IR scholars to analyze the interconnectedness of global structures, national politics, and citizens' everyday lives.

Nevertheless, reconciling these global paradigms with the lived realities of the communities I studied proved both intellectually stimulating and methodologically challenging. As Bukamal (2022) and Yin (2023) argue, positionality is not a fixed binary but rather a fluid spectrum shaped by power dynamics, context, and the evolving nature of the research process. My dual role as both insider and outsider placed me within what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) term “the space between,” a liminal and reflective position that enabled me to critically engage with both local and global perspectives throughout the research journey.

Additionally, my professional background as a peacebuilding practitioner influenced my positionality. Having worked with various peacebuilding NGOs and institutions, I was well-acquainted with some of the issues, challenges, and opportunities within Nigeria’s peacebuilding landscape. This background sparked my initial curiosity about the relationship between the Nigerian state and international NGOs (INGOs) and may have influenced my perceptions during this research. To maintain objectivity, I remained conscious of these influences throughout my analysis. My networks, including the Forum for Farmer-Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN), were instrumental in gaining access to interviewees and host communities as I stated earlier, thus, further demonstrating the advantages of my insider perspective (Barnett and Weiss, 2008; Bebbington et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, one significant challenge I encountered during this research was the ethical requirement to anonymize interviewees, organizations, and communities. While I fully understood the necessity of safeguarding participants and institutions, I also experienced a personal tension: as a researcher who holds an insider–outsider positionality—familiar with the cultural and socio-political context yet bound by institutional academic frameworks—the process of anonymization often felt like a detachment from the lived realities I intimately understood. It stripped participants of the humanity and specificity that made their experiences impactful and actionable. This disconnect, at times, rendered powerful narratives abstract, diluting their potential to inform real-world peacebuilding interventions. My insider knowledge urged me to preserve the integrity of those voices, while my outsider role—as a researcher accountable to ethical standards set by my university—required full compliance with anonymity protocols.

I complied with these guidelines, understanding their role in ensuring participant safety. However, I also believe that anonymization, while ethically necessary, can be reimagined to better balance protection with public accountability and societal impact. A more nuanced approach—such as time-limited anonymization, where names and affiliations could be disclosed after a defined period—may honour both ethical imperatives and the transformative potential of applied research (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020; Giwa, 2015). Given that research in peacebuilding often engages with real individuals, institutions, and conflicts, this positionality-sensitive approach can strengthen

the bridge between knowledge production and meaningful societal engagement.

My research intersected international development and international relations as stated in the disciplinary positionality, engaging with global debates on aid regimes, partnership dynamics, and peacebuilding. A central focus of this study was the tension between INGOs and local NGOs (LNGOs) in the Global South. I explored whether these partnerships were equitable or reinforced neocolonial hierarchies and how state support—or its absence—affected the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. As Njoku, Akintayo, and Mohammed (2025) argued, researchers from the Global South play a critical role in challenging dominant narratives and centring local voices in global discourses.

To summarize, my positionality was shaped by a blend of insider and outsider experiences, professional expertise, and reflexive engagement with ethical and epistemological challenges. This dynamic positioning enabled me to contribute to a more inclusive and contextually grounded understanding of international relations and peacebuilding, bridging the gap between local experiences and global frameworks (Chandler, 2017; Richmond, 2011).

4.18 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodological approach used to explore the partnership relationship of an INGO's funding chain in the farmer-herder conflict in North Central Nigeria and how the relationship shapes the effectiveness of their peacebuilding intervention in the region. As well as the institutional peacebuilding support or otherwise, available for the intervention. It showed that the study was qualitative, using a case study approach, while adopting an interpretivist social-constructivist philosophical perspective. The data was collected through semi-structured participant's in-depth interviews and official organizational records and a database. Data was analysed with NVivo using inductive coding and relying on Braun and Clark's six-step thematic analysis framework. It also highlighted the researcher's positionality in the dissertation. The next chapter, chapter Five, is where I begin presenting the "Findings and Discussion" of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE
UNDERSTANDING THE PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INGO AND LNGOs IN THE PROJECT

5:1 Introduction

This chapter integrates the study's results with the discussion to address research question 1 (RQ1), which seeks to establish how the NGO actors perceived and related to each other in the project, as previously outlined. The dissertation aimed to investigate the nature of the partnership relationship within an INGO's funding chain through its peacebuilding intervention in the farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria, to determine how this relationship shapes the intervention's effectiveness. Additionally, it seeks to understand how the intervention was institutionally supported or not. Although the dissertation is guided by three broad research questions, this chapter discusses only the first, RQ1.

INGOs in partnership with LNGOs are significant actors in Nigeria's peacebuilding and have made remarkable contributions to it. However, INGOs' partnership relationships with LNGOs have faced much criticism in the literature yet remain insufficiently explored in Nigeria's peacebuilding literature.

The questions asked include the criteria each actor used in selecting the other, their perceptions and interactions, the power dynamics between them, and the application of authentic partnership principles in decision-making. This also covers the level of trust in each partner's ability to perform tasks, how partners are represented in documents and communities, the reciprocity of contributions, and their feelings about the partnership experience.

5.2 A Summary of Findings Responding to RQ1

The findings reveal that while the INGO and funder maintained a respectful and mutually beneficial partnership relationship grounded in their shared history, the INGO's relationships with the two LNGOs produced divergent outcomes. LNGO 1 perceived the relationship as relatively balanced, attributing this to its organizational structures and capacities. In contrast, LNGO 2 felt undermined and micromanaged within the partnership. Consequently, the partnership dynamics fell short of the criteria for an "authentic partnership relationship" as conceptualized by Alan Fowler's Authentic Partnership Paradigm (APP) (1998). These findings partially support earlier research suggesting that funding often results in power imbalances within NGO partnership relationships (Hulme and Edwards, 2015; Banks and Hulme, 2014; Wright, 2011; Morfit, 2011; Bano, 2012). However, the findings also demonstrate that an LNGO can strengthen its bargaining position in a partnership by leveraging its internal structures and capacities, particularly community embeddedness, local peacebuilding expertise, and robust networks of community actors.

Table 5 presents the full thematic framework of the study generated from NVivo, with the major themes and subthemes that respond to the overarching research questions.

Table 5: Full thematic framework

Name	Files	References
1. Nature of the partnership among the actors		
Nature of the partnership	10	50
Community embeddedness and structure	14	43
Funder determines project themes and direction	9	18
Recruitment and organization of partners	16	63
2. Nature of projects implemented and impact on the communities		
Nature of the intervention	16	53
Community perception of the intervention	36	104
No peace yet, community on the run	33	71
Community relationship with NGOs	80	104
Impact of project on community	33	61
No intervention in the community	38	42
3. Issues and challenges of the intervention		
Challenges in the intervention	45	87
Community involvement in the project	40	70
Project sustainability plan and management	42	55
4. The relationship and the intervention		
Relationship impacts project	8	20
Power imbalance	6	17
LNGOs challenges	8	15
5. Improving INGO - LNGO relations and interventions		
Improving INGO-LNGO relations	4	5
Peacebuilding governance in Nigeria	6	8

The analysis and discussion begin with an understanding of the nature of the partnership relationship and the actors involved.

5.3 The Nature of Partnership Relationship Among the Actors

The overarching question that led to the discussions in this section is centred on understanding the nature of the partnership relationships among the actors. It seeks to explore the criteria used in selecting partners, how project decisions were made, how tasks were carried out, the experiences of each partner, and how they represented, perceived, and interacted with one another. The section is a triangulation of interviewee responses and documentary analysis as indicated in chapter four. The section includes themes emerging from interviews. These include the organisational characteristics of the actors, partnership recruitment and organization, how the partners perceive and relate with each other, and how LNGOs need their own structures to balance power in relationships. While the themes respond to specific sub-questions, there are instances where other questions and responses are integrated and discussed to support the points being made. The section concludes with the application of the APP framework to the discussion and a highlight of the key findings. The first step is to identify the organisations involved in the case study.

5.3.1 Organisational Characteristics of the NGO Actors

The question here is to understand the organizational characteristics of the actors in the partnership because such background information was necessary in the quest towards constructing their relationship. The INGO which implemented the project is one of the leading global humanitarian organisations, with over four thousand staff operating in over forty different countries and reaching an average of thirty million people annually through projects. Its global revenue stood close to 600 million USD as of 2022. It has operated in Nigeria for more than twenty years and is one of the biggest funders of humanitarian initiatives in the country. Its mission is to provide “support to at-risk communities, address root causes of violent conflicts and alleviate the sufferings of people living in communities affected by conflicts and natural disasters through humanitarian interventions” (Interview #2, Document #13). Two local NGOs in Nigeria, LNGO 1 and LNGO 2, supported it in the project.

LNGO 1 is one of the biggest national NGOs in Nigeria, with offices in thirteen states, mostly in Northern Nigeria. It is a specialist peacebuilding and rural development NGO devoted to the welfare of pastoralists and farmers. It is an umbrella organization boasting about two hundred different locally registered pastoral associations, an active board of trustees and president, making it one of the largest NGOs in Nigeria. LNGO 1 has been in operation for over twenty years. In addition to consulting on pastoralist and farmers issues for the Federal Ministries of Water

Resources, Agriculture and Food Security, LNGO 1 was involved in numerous peacebuilding and rural development initiatives for pastoralists and farmers in Northern Nigeria prior to its engagement with the INGO on peacebuilding. Apart from its strong connections to government institutions and policymakers, one of its unique strengths is its embeddedness in rural communities. (Interview #3, Interview #4, and Interview #5, Document #10, Document #11).

LNGO 2 is a Nigerian NGO dedicated to improving the health and development of children, adolescents, and young people. It has operated for over twenty years and has offices in six states in Nigeria. It has a functional board and has been active with projects on HIV prevention, sexual reproductive health education, care for orphans and vulnerable children prior to the peacebuilding engagement. LNGO 2 is vibrant in the social media space with a very active website where it publicises its activities, reports and engagements. It is also embedded in the communities where it has projects but is not as spread out and rooted as LNGO 1. Thus, it has had no prior relationship with the pastoralist or farmer communities as LNGO 1 had (Interview #6, Interview#7; Document#6, Document#7, Document #8, Document#9).

The project was funded by an official donor from the Global North committed to sustainable development and the elimination of poverty. The funder serves as the official overseas development and aid agency of its home government. The funder is active in Nigeria providing development assistance in different sectors like governance, health, education and humanitarian assistance. Since the resurgence of multidimensional violent conflicts in Nigeria in the 1990s, including the farmer-herder conflict, the funder has demonstrated commitment to supporting measures to address conflict issues leading to instability. In the original project document, the funder resolved that its commitment to the intervention is because it offers “an entry point for addressing underlying drivers of community conflict, preventing the escalation of ethno-religious violence and incentivizing government, the private sector, and community members to take proactive measures to promote stability” (Document #3). It emphasised that its pledge in the project was to contribute towards a reduction in Nigeria’s internal conflicts and increasing stakeholder capacities to manage the tensions and create an enabling environment for economic growth and empowerment in the conflict prone communities. (Document #3, Interview #1).

Additionally, in the funder’s operational plans for Nigeria from 2011 to 2016, it was clear with its intentions: “Progress in Nigeria will only be achieved by reducing internal conflicts [...] addressing

the causes of fragility [...] between [the] ethnic groups [...] [the funder] will [thus] support conflict reduction and job creation initiatives [...]" (Document #1, Document #2). The funder, in alignment with the priorities of its home government, pledged to help reduce conflict and instability in Northern Nigeria, as doing so would, inter alia, help bring stability across the Sahel region, where the potential for terrorism is a major concern (Document #1 and Document #2).

Having identified the organizational actors in the project, the next step is to discuss the nature of the partnership and the perception of the partnership by different actors, starting with partnership recruitment and organisation.

5.4 Partnership Recruitment and Organisation

The question asked here is the criteria each actor used in choosing the partner. The task is to discuss partnership recruitment and its organization which is often not talked about in the INGO-LNGO partnership relationship literature, especially with regards to partnership goals and the nature of partnership. Every partnership has a goal set from the beginning by those who designed the partnership (Fowler, 2000a, 2000b), therefore, recruiting actors to the partnership is part of the measures for the accomplishment of a set goal. In this case, the funder is committed to supporting

the government of Nigeria in containing the farmer-herder conflict, as well as empowering the affected communities economically. Based on these commitments, the funder invited the INGO to bid for the project (Interview #2, Document #1, Document #2). It must be noted that the funder has worked with the INGO on previous projects in other places (Document #12), thus, there is some level of understanding between them prior to this intervention. Therefore, the thematic focus of this intervention as well as its goals were that of the funder, the INGO's role was to work out the specific outputs and implement.

The interviewee from the funder confirmed this while pointing out their criteria for choosing the INGO:

"*Well, just like every funding agency, we are guided by our thematic focus and budgets to address chosen issues. Our partnering organizations come in to implement as jointly agreed. But the project ideas originate from us because it is our government's assistance to solving the developmental issues as tracked here* (Interview #1).

And,

"*Well, we are always looking for track record, … (pause) capacity especially in specific thematic areas. We want those who have an established track record of achievements in the chosen thematic area. We look for organizations who share our value of quality, responsibility and commitment to humanitarian services. We work with organizations that are rooted in Nigeria and are familiar with the peacebuilding terrain*" (Interview #1)

Similarly, the recruitment of the two LNGOs by the INGO was aimed to promote these goals

without fundamental adjustment. The two LNGOs had no previous relationships with the INGO but were recruited to the partnership by responding to an open call by the INGO. They assisted the INGO in finetuning the proposal, fleshing out the specific outputs needed to achieve the already set goals (Interview #2, Interview #3 and Interview #6).

A key indicator of this issue is the response from the two LNGOs when asked why the intervention did not address land access between herders and farmers, the main driver of the conflict, despite "sustainable peace" being the project's goal. The two LNGOs seemed powerless in their response, implying they neither had the authority nor the influence to include it as an agenda item in the project, even though they recognized its importance for peace in the communities. A participant from LNGO 1 stated, "local NGOs understand the issues around the conflict but often do not have the means to address them. They can only apply to the thematic area and focus of the funding body. If they had funding themselves, they would address local issues locally" (Interview #3). This sense of powerlessness was echoed by LNGO 2, which stated, "Local NGOs do not have the capacity to embark on big projects like ranching, and INGOs do not seem interested" (Interview #6). It appears that their involvement and status as partners were merely instrumental, serving to implement predetermined goals without the capacity or opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the project. This is particularly concerning given the project's overarching aim to create sustainable peace between herders and farmers. The argument would thus be, that, considering the fundamental issue of land access to this conflict, is it possible to plan an intervention aimed towards containing it and achieving sustainable peace without addressing it? Subsequent evidence would further shed light on this issue.

Conclusively, it can be argued that while the funder and the INGO had a clear-cut criteria of choosing who to partner with in pursuit of their project objectives, the LNGOs did not have any, prior to the partnership. This initial frailty appears to be a symptom of other issues in the relationship, concerning strengths and weaknesses, power and powerlessness and in relationship to determining the nature of their relationship. Having established the partnership recruitment, the next is to respond to the question of how the actors perceived and related with each other.

5.5 The Perception of Partnership Amongst the Actors

The questions asked here include how the actors see each other, and how they describe their relationship with each other. What characterises the power relations between them, how do these manifest, and who makes the project decisions?

The point has been made that the funder and the INGO's relationship existed prior to the intervention. Thus, there is a prevailing relationship between them built over the years. The relationship is so strong that the INGO was invited to bid for the peacebuilding intervention under study based on it (Interview #2, Document #12). The issue here is not the legality of the act, it is

the fact that there is an existing relationship between the pair, strong enough for the funder to be convinced that it would help them reach their goals, as opposed to launching an open bidding process (Interview #2).

The funder considers the INGO as the "implementing partner" and the INGO considers the funder as the "funding partner" and the question can be asked what these terms mean in the context of a partnership relationship, of power, and projects. Despite the mutual respect and trust in each other's capacities developed over the years of working together, there appears to be a subtle undertone of power disequilibrium as can be seen in the adjectives each used to describe the other (Interview #2, Interview #1). Of course, the power relations between funding partners and implementing partners are well documented in the literature (Edwards and Hulme, 1998). Thus, despite the INGO acknowledging that the relationship with the funder was cordial, professional, respectful and mutual, stressing that "we need each other to achieve our collective goals"; however, it also acknowledged that it is a relationship of unequal partners:

"*Well, a partnership is not necessarily equality. It is a fact that the condition of engagement were mutually agreed on. It doesn't matter whether one party has 60% power in the relationship, if the terms are mutually on, it is a partnership. A partnership can be partnership even if the power influence is 60% to 40% as may be our case, it all depends on agreements. If we don't have a problem with the donor conditions, then it is not a problem. If the wife agrees to stay at home while the husband works to give her money then it is not a problem, provided it is mutually agreed on. For me it is partnership, not master-slave relationship. However, there are situations where implementers face challenges because of one or two rigid stands of donors*" (Interview #2)

So, from the response, the INGO agrees that its partnership relationship with the funder is a relationship of "unequals". The INGO participant also agreed that project decisions were determined by the funder, "[the INGO]'s decisions on projects are largely determined by donor decisions and interests in specific issues, areas, specific regions, or demography," as well as the "final say in cost" (Interview #2). Nevertheless, it is important to state that while organisations of unequal strength and resources may be in all kinds of collaborative relationships, wielding unequal powers, in a real partnership relationship, there is equality of power in decision making among the partners (Fowler, 2000, Altahir, 2016). This, therefore, confirms the overwhelming influence of the funder on the INGO and the intervention itself. It can be argued that this influence cascaded downwards and may have helped shape the relationship of the INGO and the LNGOs in the project cycle.

Furthermore, the INGO's relationship with the LNGOs is somewhat different and had a varied outcome as well. To start with and as stated, there were no previous relationships, and the partnership recruitment started with an open call by the INGO. Among the many applications, LNGO 1 and LNGO 2 were chosen. LNGO 1 was chosen because of their strong roots, links, and embeddedness in the herding and farming communities, and track record of working with them for years. They were chosen because of their presence and spread in the Northern states and

communities where the projects were planned. LNGO 2 was not into peacebuilding nor had strong links with the herding and farming communities as LNGO 1; but was chosen because they had a presence in Benue state, one of the proposed project states, and were also identified as having potential. The INGO interviewee explains the criteria:

"*We looked at which organisation has the connection and wherewithal to work with farmers and herders. The experience over time. The presence of the organisation in the communities or localities, do they have previous experiences? Do they have potentials for local ownership, sustainability, capability in terms of own resources, personnel? [LNGO 1] was there. [LNGO 2] was not into farmer herder per se, but they were identified as having potential and they were on ground in Benue*" (Interview #2).

The interviewees from the two LNGOs also agreed with this position while highlighting their strengths in the relationship, "I think our expertise and experience in peacebuilding, especially farmer-herder conflict. Our knowledge of the conflict dynamics and local communities is top-notch" and "Yeah... (pause) I will say that one thing is ... (pause), we have a physical presence in those places, states, (pause) I think it happened in Nasarawa and Benue states. That time, we have offices there" (Interview #5; Interview #7).

Thus, it is evident that the INGO ab initio established explicit criteria for the partnership recruitment, whereas the same cannot be said of the LNGOs. The LNGOs did not have markers for prospective partner INGOs explicitly spelt out. Although LNGO 1 would argue that their policy is always the overriding principle in their engagements with potential partners, which shields them against unfavourable conditions in a partnership (Interview #3). However, the evidence in this relationship showed that this was not always the case. Probing further on this, an LNGO 1 interviewee admitted they do not actually have specific policies guiding their relationship with partners, but their organisational operational policies do aim to protect them against exploitative partners:

"*Actually, we don't have policies guiding our relationship with INGOs. We only have our policies, guiding how our organization would be run. They are also the policies we also use whenever we engage with any donor. Like our personnel policies, we can share them with donors to know that is how we operate. We also have our account and finance policy, our procurement policy and all other policies that guide how the organisation would be run. But we don't have a specific policy guiding how we interact with INGOs*" (Interview #3).

The INGO, therefore, clearly had determining criteria for the partnership relationship, which leads to the question of how it perceived the LNGOs. The INGO sees them as "local implementing partners" which again carries certain implied power relations that are not often sufficiently discussed. The INGO worked with the two LNGOs on the project prior to the final approval. It had some presentations at the funder's office with the LNGOs before the papers were signed. However, these were fine tunings, sorting out logistical and implementational details as noted earlier. The reality, however, is that to a large extent and as they are described, the LNGOs are

not more than project implementers or contractors, just as the INGO interviewee remarked unassumingly, “We implemented [the project] with local implementing partners (LNGO 1 and LNGO 2). We sub-grant to them. This is part of the local ownership for sustainability” (Interview #2). In other words, the LNGOs are local subcontractors, considered as part of measures for local ownership of the project. A development expert, who is a country director of an LNGO, with sufficient LNGO-INGO relationship experience in Nigeria, but was not involved in this case study project, agreed with the conclusion above:

“*The INGOs always come with their ideas and activities, and they influence what happens, they decide who they work with, the local NGOs are submissive because they want grants, they want activities, they want projects and the INGOs have better access to funding, better access to donor agencies, and are more regarded within the donor community than local partners. And mostly, INGOs are the ones who dictate who they partner with, they determine the terms of the partnership, they determine who they subgrant to, the terms of the subgrant to local NGO and because of this position, they stand at the top of the pyramid and they are the ones who dictate and decide what works and what doesn't work*” (Interview #11).

So, in the view of the INGO, the LNGOs are subcontractors who are principally engaged in the project to implement assigned contracts and be paid for it. It is purely transactional. They were engaged in the project as part of the INGO’s effort to give the intervention some semblance of local ownership flavour. To give the impression that local NGOs are also involved in the intervention as stakeholders, but clearly, they were contractors. So far, they have had no concrete partnership input in the intervention apart from helping the INGO fleshing out the already worked out program between it and the funder. Therefore, to emphasize, they were not partners in practice in the eyes of the INGO, even though, the same INGO portrays and describes them as partners, even listing them as “partners” in the documentations (Document #4). This is consistent with the literature (Altahir, 2016, Fowler, 2000a) about the paradox of INGO-LNGO partnership in practice in the Global South in different sectors. This dissertation confirms that it does exist in peacebuilding as well. It also confirms Contu and Girei’s (2014) argument that LNGOs are used to buy local legitimacy of INGO interventions in the Global South. As is evident here, part of the reason why they were contracted is to create the impression of the involvement of local NGOs, but to what degree are they involved? Subsequent evidence will tell.

The way in which the LNGOs perceived the INGO is equally important. It has been stated that the LNGOs were involved in fine-tuning the project and participated in discussions around it alongside the INGO before commencement, although these have proven not to have any substantial impact on the project as conceived. LNGO 1 was mentioned in the original project proposal document as a local partner working with the INGO in the project, meaning that its level of involvement may have been higher compared to LNGO 2 (Document #3). LNGO 1 implemented the components of the projects in two states (Kaduna and Plateau); while LNGO 2 implemented in two other states

(Benue and Nasarawa). LNGO 1 as noted earlier is a national specialist peacebuilding and rural development NGO dedicated to the cause of herders and farmers and thus comes with a significant pedigree on issues of local peacebuilding among the herding and farming communities. Consequently, it appears it had the confidence of the INGO to manage its own components of the project with less interference from the INGO, a privilege which LNGO 2 seemed not to have enjoyed. As acknowledged previously, LNGO 2 was a newcomer to peacebuilding and issues around herders and farmers. The perceptions of the LNGOs depicting their experiences in the relationship also differ.

LNGO1 believes that its relationship with the INGO was a partnership relationship and argues that decisions were "jointly agreed on by both organizations", insisting that "what brought about the partnership was that everybody had something they are bringing to the table. They have their own areas of expertise, we have our own areas of expertise, so we put our heads together and agreed on how to implement" (Interview #3). LNGO 1 affirmed it only accepts conditions favourable to it in a relationship, "We only accept conditions that are fair to us and in line with our policies and principles" (Interview #3). It insists it was not undermined in the relationship, speaking strongly about its policies, community embeddedness, peacebuilding expertise and structures as a bulwark against INGO imposition:

"*Every organization has its own policy, and we have ours too, whenever we engage any organization, we are guided by our policies first. When you don't have a policy guiding how you do your thing that is when the international partner will dictate to you what to do. Once you have your own, they only look at it and see how they work around it or work with you on it, not to impose things on you, our relationship with [the INGO] is such that they are always trying to see how they make their policies align with ours. For us, we don't have imposition issues, we have a functional structure, national spread and a competent technical team of experts, we were part of the project design and we implemented it, we don't have that kind of problem. I know that some INGOs impose unsuitable conditions on local NGO partners, especially the French INGOs unlike so many English INGOs, however, this hasn't been our experience because we have a formidable team and would not tolerate imposition. We would rather walk away from the project"* (Interview #3).

LNGO 1 argued that though its capacity to raise some funds for its projects may have been inadequate for its operations, it would always walk away from unfavourable conditions in a partnership relationship:

"*Even though we don't have adequate internal resources that can sustain the organization for a long period of time [...] we find that some donors are not the type of donors to work with, maybe because their terms of reference or conditions are unfavourable, like for instance working for them and the name of your organization will not be acknowledged in any way. So we try to avoid those type of donors*" (Interview #3).

LNGO 1 confirmed it walked away from a project relationship on account of unfavourable terms:

"*Yes, there is a contract that [LNGO 1] walked away from. We had even reached the final stage*

of the contract negotiation. But when we read the terms, we found that they were not suitable. The terms were: (1) Everything we will do would be credited to them and (2) The name of our organization will not be mentioned, only theirs would. So we decided that if we are implementing a programme for them and at the end the name of our organization would not be mentioned, it means we are not improving our profile. When we asked for the conditions to be looked into but they insisted that was how they operate. We then decided we were no longer interested in the project if that is how they operate. They can go and look for other partners to implement the project" (Interview #3).

So, we see LNGO 1 assert that it had an equal partnership relationship with the INGO based on its structures, which it believes gives it bargaining power. LNGO 1 listed these structures as policy, functional structure, national spread, and a competent technical team of experts. This is significant because it shows LNGOs can also boost their own competitive power to become relevant in the relationship with INGOs, which seem to contradict the largely held assumption that power in the relationship is exclusively dependent on funding (Altahir, 2016). Nevertheless, despite the strong posturing of LNGO 1 in the relationship based on their policies and structure, some aspects of the engagements fall short of an ideal partnership relationship.

The first pointer to this is the obvious closure for local input in the program design despite the outward posturing. LNGO 1 participated in the program design, acknowledging that creating alternative grazing fields for herders would permanently resolve the conflict but could not get the partnership to consider it. Interviewees argued that if they had the funding itself, they would address these issues locally. The implication of that statement is that there is an issue with the program as designed and implemented. This then begs the question of why LNGO 1 participated in it despite being faultily designed? Why participate as a local partner if the space for local input is already closed against you? The question that begs for answer is thus, can a peacebuilding intervention bring peace between conflicting parties by addressing the symptoms of the conflict and not its roots? Subsequent realities during the intervention and afterwards would validate this concern.

The second issue is the fact that almost in all the host communities of the project, the interviewees seem to know only the INGO and not the LNGOs. The reason for this is that in their engagement with the communities, the LNGOs represented the INGO and had the INGO's banners everywhere with their logo. The documents of engagement with the communities also carried the name and logo of the INGO as the project implementer. As a result, eight years later, the host communities have little memory of the LNGOs (Interview #24, Interview #30, Interview #28, Interview #25). Even though the project report as published have the names of the LNGOs as local partners (Document #4); however, being invisible in the communities of the intervention is clearly a breach of LNGO 1's "principle of visibility."

In addition, during the fieldwork, I requested some documents from LNGO 1 like annual reports during the years of implementation and was told the INGO would have to give approval before such documents were released to me (Interview #4). This is eight years after the project was completed, even though LNGO 1 and the INGO continue to partner on other projects. This does not show autonomy or independence of action as prescribed by Fowler (1998) as a prerequisite for authentic partnership. The appearance is that of an organization that seemed like an extension of another.

On the other hand, LNGO 2 seems to have had a very different perspective on the relationship experience from LNGO 1. First, it acknowledged that the INGO designed the project even though they were represented in the process (Interview #6). Then, it saw itself as an implementing partner: "We as partners were responsible for the implementation of the project, while [INGO] brought funding of the project and technical advice and capacity building" (Interview #6).

It claimed it was closely supervised in the relationship in terms of being told what to do at every stage of the project:

"*We were micromanaged and told what to do at every stage by the INGO. They told us the vendors to use at the communities, hotels, and transport companies. They arranged for their project person to visit us frequently and work with us to ensure we follow the project plans*" (Interview #6)

However, another interviewee from LNGO 2 saw this as being carried along and working closely with their funder to ensure project goals are achieved:

"*But working with [the INGO] was smooth because they carried us along as SR*[1] *and in most of the activities they gave us technical support. They really supported us in implementing the project activities. And they had their physical presence in almost all activities. You can see them in all our programs and activities, especially when we are having conflict resolution and prevention meetings, community dialogues, trainings [...] sometimes they will clarify some of the questions that the participants may have about the project and [...] some other concerns or issues"* (Interview #7).

The interviewees admitted that LNGO 2 had issues with staff not having the requisite capacity for the peacebuilding project, as well as many staff leaving the organisation, leading to communication issues with the INGO on the project and requiring close supervision and training (Interview #7, Interview #6). As stated earlier, LNGO 2 has not been involved in peacebuilding projects as its focus was on health. Thus, the INGO built its capacity in this regard, "Although [LNGO2] has not implemented any peace project before we got this project, it was [the INGO] that trained and built our capacity to embark on such project. Before now we focus on education, orphans and vulnerable children" (Interview #6). "[The INGO] actually built the capacity of [LNGO 2] on conflict management" (Interview #6).

[1] "SR" subgrant receiver. LNGO 2 refers to itself as a subgrant receiver and refers to the NGO as the "PR", that is, the principal grant receiver.

Also, when asked about their experience with power asymmetry in the relationship with the INGO, an LNGO 2 interviewee responded in a manner suggestive of a weak partner who has also come to terms with that position in a relationship and is unable to help it:

"*Eh...(laughs). Well, there is this feeling that no matter how well or good you are in doing your work. If you still remain that local organisation, that is how you will be treated and looked at...(laughs). No matter how well you do the work, there is this feeling, em em, you know international organisations give funds to local or indigenous organisations. Everybody knows that indigenous organisations are the ones doing the work, but when it comes to taking the credit for the work it goes to the PRs most times, the international organisations because the fund comes from them. You as a local organisation, you are getting your grant from the PR, you will be doing what they expect you to do, you will be loyal to them. Sometimes, despite the loyalty and the work and everything, they feel you are not doing what you are supposed to do*" (Interview #7).

Lastly, LNGO 2 also had issues with the INGO paying higher transport fares to the same participants it had previously paid lower fares to:

"*Another important thing I want you to know is this, when you are implementing projects in the communities, you go as a local NGO and you give people that came for the programs transportation of three thousand naira, when your PR comes to implement with the same participants, they will give them transport of ten thousand naira, what are they showing to them? They are showing that they are giving you more money and you are giving less. This is a very challenging working situation together on programs. If SR gives ten thousand transport to participants, PR should do same and not give higher for the same distance. There should be consistency. The people will start looking at you like maybe you are not giving them the correct amount from what your PR disbursed for you to give them*" (Interview #7)

This action undermines the LNGO in front of the participants. But more importantly, it shows a lack of mutual approach, synergy, and trust between the INGO and the LNGO, which would be markers for real partnership (Fowler, 1998).

What then could account for the different experiences of the LNGOs in the partnership relationship? There is no doubt that both LNGOs are big national NGOs in Nigeria, with capacities, visibility and community embeddedness. Both also have a strong advocacy influence on state institutions, having made advocacy representations and consulted for parliament, ministries, and departments of government (Document #11). An interviewee from LNGO2 noted that: "One of our uniqueness is working in partnership with the communities and beneficiaries in terms of project design and implementation. And then, working closely with [...] the local authorities, ministries, departments and parastatals" (Interview #7). To further strengthen their case for community embeddedness, the interviewee cited how in one of their programs in the communities on gender-based-violence (GBV), they relied on the community's existing structures to create a community-based response to address GBV issues within the community. And the scheme has lasted because it was community-structured and driven (Interview #7).

However, despite LNGO 2's credentials of community embeddedness, LNGO 1 was more rooted in the communities, especially the rural farming and herding communities where the projects are implemented. They have more spread across states, covers the entire North-East, North-West and North Central. They are also a specialised NGO focusing on herders and issues around herders; "We are basically the best, the first and the last in dealing with conflicts between herders and farmers" (Interview #5). Another interviewee added, "Anything that has to do with farmers-herders conflict, we are on top of the issue because we have the capacity, we have gotten three different recognitions and recommendations from international organizations and donors because of our work and network" (Interview #3).

In addition, LNGO 1 contended that its ability to bridge the language barrier in the Northern rural communities was also a strength that counted for its favour: "Apart from our wide structures in many states...we try as much as possible to make the communities part of the project and structure of the organization...we look at the language barrier... if we are implementing a project in Benue state and we have Tiv and Idoma speaking groups managing the project...[donors] are impressed to see that part of the team speaks the local languages of the communities where the project is being implemented, be it Fulfube, Idoma, Igala, Igbira and different other languages" (Interview #3). For context, there are over four hundred and fifty different languages spoken in Nigeria, many of these are in Northern Nigeria (Danladi, 2013).

Also, while LNGO 1 could highlight its policies as a bulwark against imposition by INGOs, (Interview #3), LNGO 2's respondent confirmed that at the time of the project implementation, LNGO 2 had no policy guiding its engagement with INGOs, but rather followed the policies of the INGO (Interview #6).

Added to this is the fact that the intervention was a peacebuilding project. As mentioned earlier, while LNGO 1 was a foremost peacebuilding NGO focused on herders and farmers, LNGO 2 had not been involved in any peacebuilding projects, nor did they have the peacebuilding expertise prior to the intervention. Their peacebuilding capacity was built from scratch by the INGO in the course of the project. This explains why LNGO 1 was listed in the original project document and why LNGO 2 was not listed, and why the INGO seems to have had more confidence in them during the implementation. It may also account for why the relationship with the INGO continued beyond the intervention.

5.6 LNGOs Need Own Structures to Boost Their Bargaining Power in a Partnership Relationship

This theme emerged out of the interview, being a response to the question of how LNGO 1 had related with the INGO. It is discussed here because it is very relevant to the issue of INGO-LNGO

partnership in the Global South, especially in terms of what LNGOs need to do to be able to boost their competitive edge in the relationship with INGOs. This has significant implication on the literature on INGO-LNGO partnership relationship where a lot of emphasis has been placed on INGOs in the search to rebalance power between INGOs and LNGOs in partnership relationship (Altahir, 2016). With LNGO 1 relying on their structures to gain some leverage, no matter how small, to the point where they could walk out from unfavourable partnership conditions means it does work and may be one of the options for LNGOs to addressing the power imbalance. This should contribute to the literature on the INGO-LNGO partnership paradox.

5.7 Application of the Authentic Partnership Principles: The INGO and LNGOs do not have an Equal Partnership Relationship

Fowler's Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) include common goals set by the partners mutually, respect for the autonomy of each partner, mutuality in contributions, respect for each partners identity, respect for each partner's position outside and equality of partners on decision making as discussed in chapter two. The APP are employed as a framework to examine specific decisions within the relationship to determine its nature.

1. Regarding common goals set by the partners mutually, the determining factor is to understand how project goals and outputs were established and whether they reflect the collective views of all partners. LNGO 1 argues that the goals were jointly created and agreed upon by both organizations. They insist that the foundation of the partnership was that each party had something to contribute. According to them, the INGO brought its expertise, and LNGO 1 contributed theirs. Together, the partners collaborated and agreed on how to implement the project (Interview #3). On the surface, this suggests a mutually set and agreed-upon set of common goals. However, LNGO 1 then remarked that if it had direct funding, it would approach the intervention differently, indicating that the established goals did not fully reflect its independent views. LNGO 2, on the other hand, claimed that the INGO designed the project and set the goals, although LNGO 2, like LNGO 1, was represented in the process (Interview #6). LNGO 2 also expressed a different view of the project goals, implying that it did not perceive the relationship as a true partnership. Consequently, the project's theory of change, as reflected in the design and without fully considering a needs analysis, does not seem to adequately incorporate the perspectives of the two LNGOs on how they would approach the project if they had the capacity to do so (Interview #3; Interview #6). This creates a dual critique of the parties involved. First, it reflects poorly on the LNGOs for continuing with a project they are not fully aligned with or convinced by. This appears more like a case of funding considerations outweighing objective conviction, or possibly a lack of agency and capacity to persuade the INGO to adopt their perspective. On the other hand, it portrays the INGO as not a partner but a

principal with unilateral goals, undermining the principles of mutually agreed-upon common goals and equality in decision-making among partners. This also highlights a broader issue in everyday international relations and developments, where local actors often have limited voice in shaping projects designed ostensibly for their benefit (Mac Ginty, 2011), and where the daily practices of aid relationships frequently contradict the language of partnership and inclusivity (Abnett, 2024; Sending, 2015).

2. In examining the mutuality of contributions between partners, the dissertation investigated if there was consensus on the specific roles of each partner and whether any felt marginalized. LNGO 1 reported that there was mutual agreement regarding the distinct contributions of each party, asserting that it did not feel undermined within the partnership. Furthermore, it emphasized that it would only accept terms that were equitable and aligned with its internal policies and principles (Interview #3). Nevertheless, LNGO 1 acknowledged that local NGOs typically conform to the thematic direction and priorities set by the funder. In contrast, LNGO 2 indicated that, as an implementing partner, its primary responsibility was project execution, while the INGO contributed funding, technical advice, and capacity-building support. LNGO 2 asserted that this division of roles was mutually agreed upon by all parties. However, given LNGO 2's admission that it effectively functioned as a subcontractor and that the INGO defined the project goals—despite LNGO 2's involvement in the process—its acceptance of this arrangement can be interpreted as a commercial decision rather than one grounded in true partnership. These dynamics underscore the tension between the formal discourse of partnership and the practical reality of hierarchical relationships in the development field (Lewis & Mosse, 2006), where local actors' autonomy is frequently shaped by donor-driven agendas.

3. Furthermore, regarding respect for the identity of each partner organization involved in the relationship, the project documents were analysed. LNGO 1 was included in the original project proposal as a partner (Document #3), while LNGO 2 was not. However, subsequent documents presented both as partners (Document #4). In the host communities, however, the banners and engagement materials only displayed the INGO's logo, excluding those of the two LNGOs. This suggests that the LNGOs were denied visibility and that their identities were disrespected, indicating an imbalance in the partnership, with one partner dominating the relationship. While there may not appear to be anything inherently wrong with the INGO's logo and name being prominent in the engagement materials and banners within the communities, the fact that it was the only one displayed in a jointly implemented project under a partnership indicates that the partnership is not ideal. The result is a loss of visibility for the LNGOs in some communities, where residents could only recall the name of the INGO. The APP framework emphasizes the importance of respecting the identity and autonomy of each

organization in a partnership. It clearly states that when one partner excludes another from important documentation or visibility, it creates the impression of dominance by one organization, reflecting an unequal partnership. This erasure of local presence and visibility not only compromises the community's ability to engage with locally embedded actors but also undermines everyday peacebuilding processes, which rely on trust and recognition of local institutions (Mac Ginty, 2014).

4. Regarding the principle of respecting each partner in handling their individual tasks, LNGO 1 was respected and given the autonomy to manage its tasks independently, demonstrating a high level of trust. LNGO 2, however, was not afforded the same trust and was micromanaged throughout the intervention processes. First, since LNGO 2 lacked staff with expertise in peacebuilding, the INGO trained their staff and built their capacity in this area, enabling LNGO 2 to claim peacebuilding as part of their expertise subsequently. Second, the INGO sent personnel to work with LNGO 2's staff to ensure strict compliance with the project plans and goals during implementation (Interview #6). The INGO directed them on which vendors and hotels to use, and logistics. Moreover, it undermined LNGO 2 by paying participants a higher rate than what LNGO 2 had agreed with attendees, without consulting LNGO 2 (Interview #7). There is a nuanced way to view this situation. One interpretation is that the INGO, through close supervision of LNGO 2's activities, may have observed that LNGO 2 was short-changing the attendees by paying less than what was agreed and took steps to address it. The literature has identified corruption as an issue associated with NGOs in Nigeria (Smith, 2010). However, addressing this directly with the attendees, without first resolving the matter with their partner, is an indictment of the partnership. It undermines the principles of equality in decision-making, casts doubt on mutual respect and defeats the notion of a jointly crafted common goal. This action reflects a lack of trust in the decisions made by LNGO 2 and highlights the ineffectiveness of the partnership's grievance resolution mechanisms. It suggests that this relationship is not a true partnership. While LNGO 2's transition from health to peacebuilding may have been a valuable learning experience, allowing it to develop and grow, the downside is that this relationship revealed itself to be unequal and not reflective of a true partnership. It resembled a principal–agent relationship, where the principal (the INGO) adopts an agent (LNGO 2), empowers or structures it to fit its purposes, and then deploys it to carry out its bidding. In such relationships, agents typically do not exercise true agency because the relationship is purely transactional; they merely do what they are paid to do. This dynamic does not represent a partnership. It fails to uphold the principle of respecting each partner's autonomy, nor does it demonstrate trust in their ability to deliver on mutually agreed-upon tasks or goals. This is an indictment of the partnership's credentials. These limitations raise important questions about the

inclusion of local voices in programming processes, and how the daily exercise of control and oversight by international actors can erode local ownership of peacebuilding efforts (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

Consequently, it is hard to see this relationship as a partnership instead of a contractor-contractee or subcontractor one. Having established the nature of the relationship, the dissertation will explore how it impacted the communities significantly. This is discussed in Chapter Six.

5.8 Highlights of Key Findings

This section highlights the key findings of the chapter in relation to broad research question number 1 (RQ1). The chapter sets out to establish the nature of the partnership relationship between an INGO and two LNGOs in a peacebuilding intervention using the APP framework. The following are the key findings:

1. The relationship between the INGO and the two LNGOs appear inauthentic in practice, contrary to the outward posturing. This is the submission when examined against the authentic partnership principles.
2. LNGOs need to build their own structures to be able to boost their bargaining power in partnership relationship with INGOs in the Global South. These structures include, having policies, being embedded in their communities, having employees with local language skills, national geographical spread, having competent technical team of experts in the core area of their operation, in this case, peacebuilding.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter integrated the findings and discussions and answered research question number 1 (RQ1). Research question number 1 sought to establish the nature of the partnership relationship between the INGO and two LNGOs in a peacebuilding intervention. The chapter concluded that the partnership relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs is not authentic. The chapter used the authentic partnership principles framework to establish this. The chapter also submits that LNGOs may be able to boost their bargaining power in a relationship with INGOs if they invest in building up their structures. The next chapter looks at the peacebuilding interventions in the communities.

CHAPTER SIX

DOES THE NATURE OF PEACEBUILDING PARTNERSHIPS SHAPE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTION?

6:1 Introduction

This chapter combines the study's findings with discussion to answer broad research question number 2 (RQ2), investigating if the nature of INGO-LNGO peacebuilding partnership relationship influences the effectiveness of its jointly implemented peacebuilding intervention. The previous chapter established the nature of the partnership, and this chapter seeks to understand if the nature of the partnership has any bearing on the effectiveness of their joint project.

The literature agrees that the effects of INGO-LNGO partnership is problematic but concedes that this is insufficiently researched within case studies and specific contexts in Africa (Contu and Girei, 2014).

The research questions animating the section includes what the nature of the intervention or projects implemented were and impacts on the communities, how the communities were engaged in the project, were they involved in program design and implementation, what were the benefits of the projects to the community, what were the challenges, how were the projects sustained, and how did the nature of the partnership impact the effectiveness of the intervention? The themes discussed included those asked in the questions and those emerging from the interviewee responses. These include, the nature of the projects implemented and impacts across the communities, the level of engagement with the communities by the NGOs, government neglect of conflict communities, benefits of the intervention, issues and challenges in the intervention, project sustainability plan and management, the partnership relationship and the intervention, application of the APP and highlights of the key findings. As indicated in chapter four, the responses were triangulated from interviews, project documents and data from the *Nigerian Watch* database. In essence, to establish how the partnership's nature impacted the intervention's effectiveness, this section looked at the interventions and how the NGOs implemented them.

6.2 Summary of Findings Responding to RQ 2

The findings reveal that the intervention contributed immensely to building the conflict prevention and mediation skillset of community leaders in the 19 communities across the 4 case study states. In addition, the intervention also built economic infrastructure for them to address their social and economic needs, which is consisted with earlier studies that NGOs contribute significantly to addressing development and humanitarian challenges in Africa (Altahir, 2016). However, the data also demonstrated how the nature of the relationship between the INGO and LNGOs impacted the intervention’s effectiveness, how the community voices were excluded in decision making leading

to a faulty theory of change and imposition of projects, and the intervention ultimately failing to establish a long-lasting peace between the farmers and the herders in the communities and in the four case study states.

Table 6 is the full thematic framework of the study generated from NVivo, with the major themes and subthemes that respond to the overarching research questions. It is here as a dashboard to guide the discussions.

Table 6: *Full thematic framework*

Name	Files	References
1. Nature of the partnership among the actors		
Nature of the partnership	10	50
Community embeddedness and structure	14	43
Funder determines project themes and direction	9	18
Recruitment and organization of partners	16	63
2. Nature of projects implemented and impact on the communities		
Nature of the intervention	16	53
Community perception of the intervention	36	104
No peace yet, community on the run	33	71
Community relationship with NGOs	80	104
Impact of project on community	33	61
No intervention in the community	38	42
3. Issues and challenges of the intervention		
Challenges in the intervention	45	87
Community involvement in the project	40	70
Project sustainability plan and management	42	55
4. The relationship and the intervention		
Relationship impacts project	8	20
Power imbalance	6	17
LNGOs challenges	8	15
5. Improving INGO - LNGO relations and interventions		
Improving INGO-LNGO relations	4	5
Peacebuilding governance in Nigeria	6	8

The discussion starts with the nature of the project implemented in the communities and their impact on the people.

6.3 The Nature of the Projects Implemented and Impact on the Communities

The questions asked here included what the nature of the projects implemented are, where they are located, what they are about and how they have helped the communities. The objective is to understand the nature of the different peacebuilding projects implemented across the communities under the intervention and their impacts on the people.

The case study peacebuilding intervention was carried out from 2012 to 2016 in four states in the North-Central region of Nigeria, namely: Plateau, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue. It was designed principally to reduce violent conflicts in the four states and increase economic activities and was anchored on three main outputs: (1) to increase the capacity of local leaders to resolve community conflicts in an inclusive and sustainable manner, (2) increased cooperation across conflict lines around economic activities; and (3) support long-term policy solutions through research[2] (Document #3, Document #4). Ultimately, the intended impact of the intervention programme was the "reduction in the number of violent incidents of pastoralist/farmer conflicts in target North-Central states" (Document #4, p.4). The cost of the project was about $5.44 million, and it was implemented in 19 communities across the 4 states. These communities were farming communities with itinerant herder groups making them conflict flash points of the farmer-herder conflict in the region.

The different project implemented included training local leaders in dispute resolution, interest-based negotiation and mediation. The economic project included the construction of joint livestock and produce markets, rice and garri processing centres, solar and manual boreholes, grinding machines, and enabling joint farming among the conflicting groups. There is also bead making, which was implemented in a community in Plateau state. (Document #3, Interview #18, Interview #17, Interview #22, Interview #21, Interview #19, Interview #30, Interview #19, Interview #27, Interview #28, Interview #32, Interview #35, Interview #13, Interview #25).

The dispute resolution training, alongside the training on negotiation and mediation were designed to "build [the] capacity of local leaders to resolve community conflicts in an inclusive, and sustainable manner in each intervention site and working closely with these leaders as they use their skills to resolve disputes and negotiate agreements". The economic projects were targeted at "increase[ing] cooperation across conflict lines around economic activities and natural resource management". (Document #3). The assumption was that through these projects there will be an increase in economic opportunities as well as increased cooperation between farmers and the pastoralists and between Christians and Muslims in the target communities (Document #3). In other words, the integration of the conflict mitigation and joint economic projects were to "address

the underlying drivers of conflict, while providing tangible development results to communities" towards building sustainable peace and economic prosperity (Document #3, Document #4, Interview #2).

Referring to the conflict prevention and negotiation trainings and the economic projects, an interviewee, the executive director of LNGO 1 confirms that the two outputs of the intervention were meant to address peace and livelihood issues among the herders and the farmers, "One component of the project was to restore peace between the communities and another component was to restore their collapsed economy" (Interview #3). On their part, an interviewee from LNGO 2 summed up the impact in the communities, "It promoted peaceful co-existence among the various communities of farmers and herders as their capacity to resolve conflict themselves was built" [while] "The economic project impacted economic life of the people, rice and cassava became cheaper through reduced cost of business and generating income for the communities" (Interview #6).

However, while some aspects of this claim are correct, some are not, as data from the communities showed a divergence of results. A final impact evaluation of the project assessed it as successful, while the INGO and LNGOs themselves rated it as 90% successful. (Document #5, Interview #3). The impact of this project on the communities and states will be discussed in detail, meanwhile, the next step is to understand how the NGOs engaged the communities in the intervention. It is necessary to understand the engagement between the NGOs and the communities as a background to the intervention in the communities.

6.4 Community Involvement in the Projects

The questions being responded to here include, how the communities were engaged in the project, were they consulted before the project was designed, were they involved with its implementation, sustenance and completion? The research sought to establish the level of community involvement in the project.

The INGO, alongside the LNGOs affirmed they had enough consultations and engagements with the communities to establish what their peacebuilding needs were before designing and implementation. In fact, the INGO claimed that local consultants and enumerators were recruited from the respective communities to be able to identify the local needs of their areas. And the collected data were then further validated through stakeholder consultations before usage. The INGO interviewee asserted that "we identify and train local enumerators who go to collect data from their communities, sometimes validated through stakeholder consultations before usage. We put all the needs and contexts in scale and prioritize the order to follow" (Interview #2).

This position was corroborated by an LNGO 1 interviewee, but with a slight modification, the engaged consultants were local experts who supposedly had a good knowledge of the communities

but were not necessarily indigenous to the affected communities:

"*We do need analysis, we engage some people in the communities or people (experts) who have information on the communities, researchers, consultants to map information, and stakeholders, to understand situations before engagement. As I said, we use a multipronged participatory approach. We do go to them for their input, what do they want, where and when*" (Interview #3).

The interviewee from LNGO 2 confirmed that a multipronged approach, including focused-group-discussions and actor mapping were used to determine the needs of the communities:

"*We conducted baseline study...the baseline focused on those communities with volatile farmer and herders conflict...the need analysis showed or gave justification for the project in those communities. Remember there was data collection and analysis, Focus Group Discussion, baseline and actor mapping*" (Interview #6).

Engaging project communities using multichannel approaches to determine their needs is standard practice if the engagement seeks to know what they need and not to sell an idea of what has already been planned for them. The responses across the communities do not quite agree with the position of the NGOs suggesting that perhaps the initial engagement to establish a baseline was not properly done. Most of the community interviewees were of the view that the INGO already planned what it wants to do for them. Nonetheless, they accepted this. They agreed they were consulted from the beginning, but it was to get them to accept the project, not necessarily to identify what they wanted: "[the INGO] consulted our community. They asked us to show a place where the project would be built and the community did...Yes, they came with the idea and asked us, so we agreed on it" (Interview #22). Many other interviewees concur: "They spoke to us about what they want to do and we agreed with them" (Interview #30), "The community did not decide on what project to have. They came and told us what project they have for us and we agreed. So I can say we were consulted" (Interview #25), "They told the community what they want to do and the community accepted it" (Interview #35), "The told us what they want to do for us and we agreed" (Interview #24), "When they came up with the project idea, the community felt it was good and agreed, yes, we were consulted" (Interview #26). "Yes, they told us all the things they wanted to do for us and we accepted" (Interview #32). "They proposed what they want to do for the community and the community accepted...they already know what they want to do for us and came here with it and we agreed. But we were part of the implementation" (Interview #25).

To further confirm the validity of the claim that they did not decide the projects but accepted what was put on the table for them, many of the interviewees maintained that the communities were not a part of the project design but actively participated in its implementation: "We did not design the projects but we cooperated with them. Yes, we worked with them" (Interview #32), "We did not plan the project, the NGO did it but we liked it and agreed with them. We were involved in day to day running of the activities during that time" (Interview #29), "I have the documents that lead to the design and building of the project. I know the chiefs who signed the documents. They came

with the idea to build us a rice mill and we agreed" (Interview #23), "Hmm ... (pause) from my own understanding, the community was not part of the project designing because they already designed it before bringing it here but the community joined in the work and monitored it" (Interview #35), "Well, the community did not design the project, no. The community did not also build the project, [the INGO] did but the community monitored everything and participated" (Interview #33). "What happened was that after putting the people together, they saw the need to do something that would facilitate lasting peace among the people. That was why they did what they did for the community. It was not that they sought the consent of the community" (Interview #28).

So, this shows effectively that even though the communities were engaged, first, through consultants who met them on behalf of the INGO, and collected information on their peacebuilding needs, and secondly, through a multichannel direct interface with the NGOs, where they made their views known, the NGO partners still did not reflect the views of the community in the project design output. Although, these views were captured in the need analysis and acknowledged by the NGOs in their responses (Interviews #3, #6, #2), they had little bearing on the outputs of the program as designed and this had deeper implications for the intervention especially on the goal of the project. The peacebuilding need analysis is a critical product of engagement between NGOs who are seeking to implement peacebuilding intervention in a community and the community. It captures the peacebuilding needs of the community as listed by them and represents their active voice in the intervention. If the need analysis is followed transparently and faithfully in program design, the communities will feel a sense of inclusion, being a part of the intervention in their community. Communities being at the centre of their developmental needs is now accepted as the global standard in development and localisation and adopted by the UN, World Bank and development agencies (World Bank, 1998a). However, when the need analysis is faulty, manipulated or not followed, there is a likelihood that the developmental need that gave birth to the intervention will fester after the intervention had ended, meaning that the intervention did not address it.

Nevertheless, the communities affirmed they were happy to have accepted the projects from the INGO, and other NGOs operating in some of the communities, as the Nigerian government and other levels of government seem to have abandoned them. Interviewees stressed that no government has intervened within their community: "No government gave us assistance. It was only [the INGO] that assisted us through the NGO" (Interview #17), "Honestly we did not get any assistance from anyone except God… No any NGO or government brought us assistance to recover from the conflict" (Interview #18), "No assistance from government since these crises" (Interview #21), "We have not seen any government here. [The INGO] came and built a rice processing mill for us" (Interview #25), "No one comes to our rescue" (Interview #14), "There has

been no government intervention" (Interview #27).

In addition, an interviewee from one of the host communities in Kaduna admitted that some government officials had been to the community at some point to ask questions about the conflict, but they never returned nor assisted the community (Interview #34); and another from Plateau suggested that, on account of the government's lack of intervention, perhaps they had an interest in the conflict: " Government has never intervened. It seems the government has an interest in the conflict. Its only NGOs that have been assisting" (Interview #30).

6.5 No Government Gave Us Assistance

This issue of Nigerian government abandoning conflict communities emerged from the interviews. Some of the community interviewees ended up talking about government abandonment while talking about their engagement with the NGOs, to justify why they are happy to accept the projects from the NGO, even as the NGOs seemingly imposed the projects on them. Government abandonment of conflict communities to contain with the multidimensional cost of conflict in their localities by the Nigerian state is well documented in the literature (Nwaneri and Ukandu, 2019; Nwaneri and Uwakwe, 2018). It is a very important topic to the discussions in the dissertation, especially relating to the interface between peacebuilding NGOs and the state. It is the dereliction of peacebuilding responsibilities by the state and its absence in conflict communities that creates the void NGOs try to fill. It is thus incumbent on the state to at least support NGOs to be able to do so effectively. How and whether this is done is the answer research question number 3 (RQ3) is seeking.

Having looked at the level of involvement of the communities in the project, the dissertation will now examine the impact of the project on the communities in details.

6.6 Benefits of the Intervention to the Communities

The question guiding the discussion is what the benefits of the different projects were (training in conflict prevention, dispute resolution, negotiation and mediation, construction of boreholes, food processing mills, grinding machines and joint farming) to the communities. The aim is to understand how the communities benefitted from the intervention. The discussion starts with the search towards communal peace which the different projects were meant to achieve.

6.7 The Search for Communal Peace Amidst Unaddressed Conflict Roots

Over 700 local leaders were trained across the communities on dispute resolution, interest-based negotiation and mediation and they were able to resolve about 400 local disputes that ordinarily could have snowballed into bigger conflagrations considering the tensed atmosphere of the localities (Document #4). The types of disputes resolved include encroachment into lands, competition for lands, crop destructions, cattle rustling and cattle killings. The trained local leaders

also reportedly became more confident in handling conflict-related negotiations (Document #4). The essence of training community leaders in dispute resolution, negotiation and meditation was for them to be able to use the acquired skill to resolve interpersonal disputes and disagreements between individual farmers and herders within the communities in their daily engagements. These individual disagreements are often the immediate triggers of inter-communal conflicts. Thus, in some of the host communities, the intervention helped to bring peace. Some interviewees alluded to this. With reference to two neighbouring communities in Benue state where the program was implemented, an interviewee responded, “They tried their best to make sure that peace reign[s] in these two communities and they have done this for [...] almost three years of which they discovered that the tempers were able to cool” (Interview #10). Another interviewee acknowledged the impact of the intervention on peace in their community and described it further:

‘‘The project has helped the community by bringing the community together; by bringing sustainable peace, because the people have learned to love together, they have now seen the value of peace and living together in unity. So, for instance, the farming project brought the women from both sides together and when they were farming together, they were no longer discussing Islam or Christianity [...] The projects have helped in shaping our thinking. We no longer look at each other as first class or second class, religious or irreligious. Because of that project, we have adopted the policy of consultation [...] we have developed a habit of consulting among ourselves [...]” (Interview #27).

Other interviewees concurred that some kind of peace and good relationship between the farmers and herders has returned to their community. “The farmers and herders individually have the numbers of each other and have been communicating. As a result, there is mutual communication, thereby building cordial relationships” (Interview #30, see also Interview #32, Interview #35, Interview #16, Interview #10, and Interview #30). Another interviewee added that apart from peace, it also brought love and unity amongst the conflicting groups, “The project has helped the community by bringing the community together; by bringing sustainable peace because the people have now learned to love together, they have now seen the value of peace and living together in unity” (Interview #27).

Thus, the intervention did bring some level of peace to some of the communities. However, this was not sustainable as some of these communities later erupted in cycles of conflicts. Some of the communities witnessed conflicts while the projects were still being implemented, others after the projects had been completed leading to desertion of some of the communities by the residents, insecurity and even abandonment of the projects to the extent that some of the project machines were stolen. In some communities, the projects were never implemented due to insecurity resulting from conflict. These will be elaborated later, under the issues and challenges of the intervention.

However, as it concerns communal peace, which was a major goal of the project, not just in the host communities but in the entire four states of the region where the intervention took place,

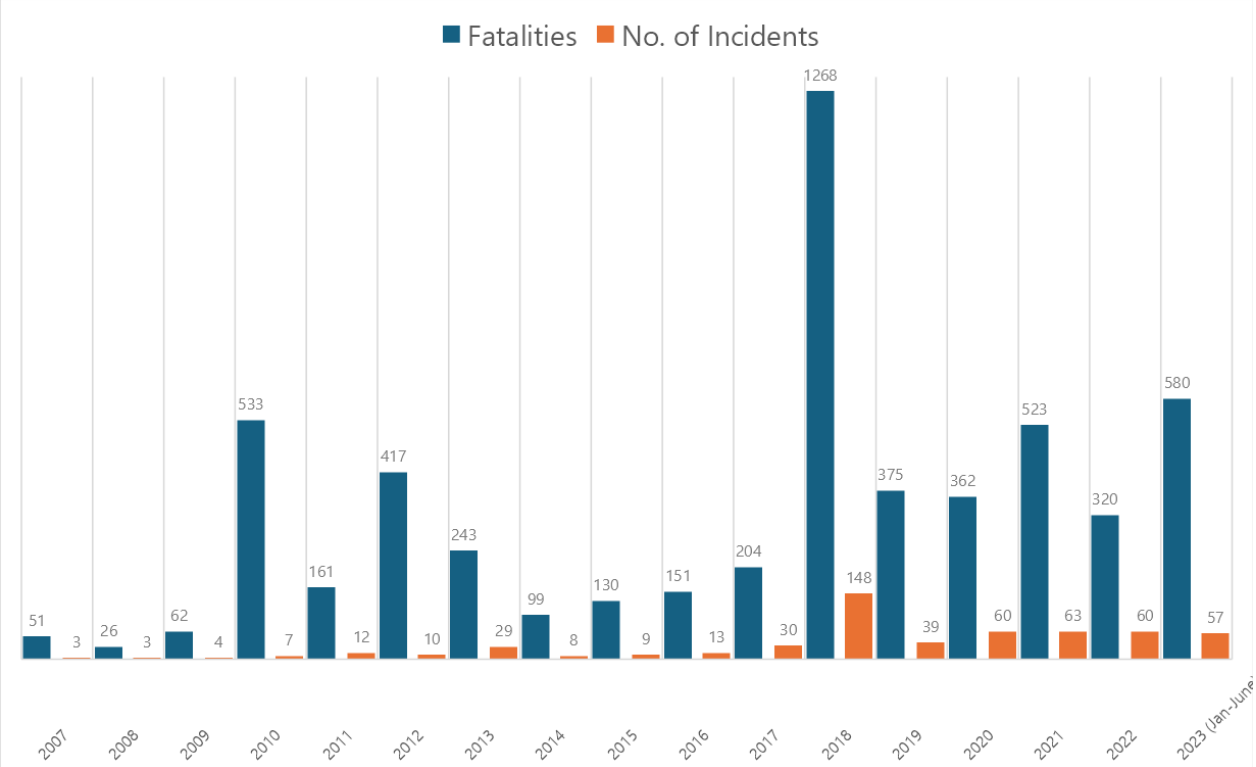
(Document #4), it can be argued that the intervention struggled in many communities to achieve sustainable peace. Many interviewees across the communities bemoaned the lack of peace despite the intervention, while others pointed out what could bring an enduring peace between farmers and herders. The head [Ardo] of herders in one of the host communities in Plateau offered his opinion on the search for peace: "[t]he herders would need a place to graze their cattle, education and empowerment to get more cattle" (Interview #30). This view was supported by other interviewees: "We need government to help us get a place for cattle to graze and not the farmlands" (Interview #28), "The issue of grazing needs to be settled for the conflicts to stop" (Interview #19). Another interviewee, who incidentally was the head of farmers in one of the host communities in Nasarawa, where conflict has persisted despite the intervention, offered a similar suggestion: "Well, to permanently resolve the conflict, you will need to find a separate grazing field for the herders, and it costs a lot of money. I don't think the NGOs wants to do that. Government is also not helping at all" (Interview #26). An interviewee remarked that though the fighting does not happen every day, it is caused by the same issue, grazing, "They don't fight every day. It happens occasionally. It is because of the farmlands when the cows encroach the farms and destroy the crops and a settlement is not reached between the two groups" (Interview #16).

Therefore, despite the intervention's efforts to bring about lasting peace in the communities, violent conflicts continued. As one participant put it, "We are very satisfied and hope [the INGO] would keep coming so they can continue helping us because we have not got a lasting peace yet" (Interview #29). Therefore, it can be argued that the intervention failed to address the primary cause of the conflict. Another interviewee admitted that even the rice mill provided could only be useful when there is peace in the community, "We can [only] mill our rice here now when there is peace" (Interview #21). And others agreed on their quest for sustainable peace despite the intervention: "We want them to help us bring real peace in the community" (Interview #24)), "They gave us a rice mill and we were benefitting from it. But we need peace in the community and we are calling for organisations and government to help us to bring peace" (Interview #22). One participant summed up the entire situation by acknowledging that the intervention yielded positive results in uniting the people but the relationship between the farmers and the herders continued to be fragile due to the constant encroachment of cattle on farmlands (Interview #23).

Furthermore, it was not only in the project communities that peace was elusive, but peace has also been a challenge in the whole of the North-Central region on account of the farmer-herder conflict, despite numerous peacebuilding interventions. Specifically, I explored the data of clashes between farmers and herders and deaths from 2007 to June 2023 for the four intervention states from the *Nigerian Watch* database, as explained in chapter five. The period covered showed the intensity of the conflict prior to the intervention and what it was after it. The essence is to understand if this

intervention improved state-level peace, since, among other things, the program aimed through the intervention to contribute to reduction in internal conflict incidences in the designated states (Document #3, Document #4). The results showed a steady increase in the number of conflict incidents between farmers and herders in all the four states since 2012. The results are shown in bar chart #1.

Bar chart #1: *Pastoralist-farmer conflict incidences and deaths in Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, and Nasarawa states from 2007 – 2023*.



Nigerian Watch project 2006 – 2023 (www.nigeriawatch.org)

Tragically, as I worked on this project on the 24th of December 2023, some of the host communities in Plateau state came under a fresh attack, with some Nigerian Newspapers reporting casualty figures between 150-190 people, in addition to about 10,000 people displaced (The *Punch* 27th December 2023; The *Vanguard* 28th December 2023). I feared for the lives of some of my interviewees and the pains of those who may have been displaced again. But this is only a pointer to the seriousness of the nature of the farmer-herder conflict and the more reason why interventions seeking to contain the conflict and achieve sustainable peace must focus on addressing its roots.

Consequently, if having a separate grazing field or ranch would ensure enduring peace for the herders and farmers, why did both the INGO and the LNGOs not factor it in their project design, given how peace was the goal of the intervention? Why was it not picked up from the needs analysis engagement with the communities if sustainable peace was the goal and the communities desired it? From the perspective of the INGO, when discussing why they and so many other

organisations intervening to bring peace in the farmer-herder conflict were not addressing the fundamental issue of creating alternative grazing fields for herders which was the main driver of the conflict, it is apparent that they understood alternative grazing fields are the root cause of the conflict, but would focus on the donor direction, amidst contending structural issues:

"*Hmmm...(pause), well, we know that cattle ranches and providing alternative grazing apart from the farmlands will ultimately address the root of the conflict but we are constrained by the focus of our donors on one hand. And secondly, there are a whole lot of social, cultural and political issues involved which are too enormous for NGOs. There are also issues on herding as a culture, issues on land regime and indigenous people*" (Interview #2).

While the structural issues, land regime challenges and the cultural dimension of herding are valid arguments, individual herders with arguably less funds are already overcoming these hurdles in Kwara state, another state in the North-Central region of Nigeria and setting up alternative grazing fields for their cattle. Mustapha's (2011) study chronicled how individual Zimbabwean farmers in Kwara state were setting up individual ranches and making commerce out of it. With the amount of funds committed to this intervention and its stated goal of sustainable peace, it would have made more sense to look at empowering the herders towards alternative grazing for their cattle, except, of course, if the INGO was constrained by the funder's focus to the extent that they were unable to do anything in this regard.

Being constrained by the "funder's focus" is also the position of the LNGOs when asked the same question. Their responses show that, they not only understand what needed to have been done, but could not because they were not in a relationship where their voices could be heard, nor did they have the power to make it to be heard (Interview #3; Interview #6).

Just to clarify, this problem was identified during the interaction with the communities, as evidenced in the project documents and interviews from INGO and LNGO interviewees. However, it was evident that the INGO had a plan in place already:

"*To ascertain the dynamics of the conflict, a baseline study was conducted in the affected communities within the four states to determine the escalators of the farmer-herder conflict and how it affects community relations. For example, committees were set up to visit farms to determine the extent of losses as a result of encroachment from cattle. Efforts are made to measure the land to determine the level*" (Interview #6).

Some Nigerian based Development experts, not connected with the project but experienced in the INGO-LNGO power relations and its impact on joint projects, concur: "The INGOs are the ones that dictate the relationship and influence what happens, the NGOs will feel sometimes they are more grounded, have more knowledge of the local areas but because they have no access to funds,

they have to be submissive to their INGOs" (Interview #11), "They, with their funds will say what they want and we, wanting the funds will do what they want. So, we dance to their tune. In all

honesty, the power imbalance is very ...glaring" (Interview #10), "...They [INGOs] have the money, they decide what to do with it, where to utilize the money, and when and how. Most times almost every activity is decided and approved by them" (Interview #8). A development expert interviewee argues that on paper, the relationship appears like a partnership but is not in reality. Adding that the power imbalance manifests in many ways including project conceptualisation:

"*On paper, the relationship between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) is portrayed as one of partnership; however, in practice, the dynamic is more analogous to that of a principal – agent relationship. The tendency of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) to direct local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) to engage the services of particular capacities and organizations brings into focus the principal –agent relationship that exists between INGOs and LNGOs. The ability of local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) to freely source for relevant local capacity is restricted when such directives come from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Some of the factors that deepen the principal-agent relationship between international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local non-governmental (LNGOs) are funding, reporting timelines, payment options, and threat to cancel contracts...the INGOs, who are sometimes the funders decide on the project or intervention, the funding structure, the monitoring and evaluation template, the needed skill sets for project implementers, reporting templates, and project schedules. Although it might be thought of as a way to guarantee project goals are realized, this undermines inclusivity, independence of focus and the balance of power between INGOs and LNGOs. This demonstrates the principal – agent connection between INGOs and LNGOs prevents the INGOs from benefitting from the input of LNGOs, who are familiar with the setting and the users of the projects or activities that the INGOs propose*" (Interview #9).

Consequently, it may be argued that the INGO and funder did not benefit fully from the local knowledge of the LNGOs as regards what may have contributed to building sustainable peace between herders and farmers due to the nature of their relationship, as pointed out by the development expert. However, in addition to the level of peace achieved in some communities, and the elusiveness of peace in many others, the project also achieved some results in improving the economic and social wellbeing of the residents. The next step is to discuss the economic and social benefits of the intervention.

6.8 Social and Economic Benefits of the Intervention

The intervention, especially the economic projects, including joint livestock and produce markets, grinding machines, joint farming, rice and garri processing, boreholes, and bead making, achieved some economic and social gains for the host communities. The discussion will start with the social benefits.

The social result of the projects is the fact that it brought hitherto agelong hostile residents, who were divided by ethnicity, religion and economic interests together in common areas to jointly use facilities like the boreholes, grinding machines and the processing mills. And also, to participate in the joint markets and farming. An interviewee, who was the village head in one of the host communities in Plateau state remarked, "The farming project brought the women from both sides

together and when they were farming together, they were no longer discussing Islam or Christianity. They worked together... And the women worked in consultation with us" (Interview #27).

The village head also pointed out that the joint farming equally helped to reshape their mindset towards each other, reduced social and religious fault-lines that had hitherto existed in the community and taught them how to consult and share information with each other instead of confrontation:

"*The projects have helped in shaping our thinking. We no longer look at each other as first class or second class, religious or irreligious. We now look at each other as people who have the capacity to develop our environment. Because of that project, we have adopted the policy of consultation. Because [of] the project, we have developed a habit of consultation among ourselves, so that if there is any problem, we seem to have privilege information, we consult each other and share information*" (Interview #27).

Some other interviewees supported the fact that the project created some level of social cohesion, interaction, togetherness and an understanding of the differences that lead to conflict, "At least we are meeting. It helped us to interact with one another" (Interview #26), "It helped us interact and build relationships with our neighbours... we are happy, it is the project that made me to know the people there" (Interview #25), "We are also able to speak to each other, even though there are still conflicts once in a while" (Interview #35), "They gave us a milling machine to help us in order to unite us... [it] made us to be in unity" (Interview #24), "The conflict training has helped us to know the things that can cause conflicts" (Interview #33). An interviewee from one of the host communities in Plateau state revealed that the projects helped bring the conflict groups together through access to each other's phone numbers:

"*The project had really helped so much. Those involved in the crisis are local people. The training connected them. The farmers and herders individually have the numbers of each other and have been communicating. As a result, there is mutual communication, thereby building cordial relationships...They made a very good relationship between farmers and the herders*" (Interview #30).

Many other aspects of the intervention equally helped to cement the relationship between the herders and the farmers. One of these is the joint management of the physical projects. The NGOs left the management of the projects to management committees made up of herders and farmers in each community, and this became an avenue of bonding as well. The community project management committees had their challenges which are discussed later; however, these provided forums for continuous engagement between the herders and the farmers, "By having both the farmers and herders involved in operating the grinding facility with the money being kept in a joint account for the community" (Interview #28).

To underscore the importance of social cohesion, interaction, and bonding among herders and

farmers in the communities, it is germane to restate that the farmer-herder conflict has protracted for many years to the point of hardening of positions, widening of cleavages, and insecurity, making it difficult for either farmers and herders in some communities to have access to the farms for farming and grazing or any form of commonalities prior to the intervention (Interview #15, Interview #30, Interview #18, Interview #15, Interview 34, Interview #14.

Furthermore, the project also helped deradicalize some indigenous youths on both sides who were born into the conflict and have never witnessed any period of peace amongst their peoples and consequently have only known hardlines, deaths, separation and hatred between their communities:

"*They [NGOs] have laid a very good foundation which will last by the grace of God. The relationship they have established matters more than any other thing. What you will understand is anybody from the ages of 10, 30 to 30+ years now, do not know that the Berom and Fulani have been living in peace over the years. All they know was enmity. But during the intervention, those within that age range were involved in the dialogue. They understand that there has been a cordial relationship between them. The project will last because the youth are involved, and the youth are the backbone of the society. Any ideology infused in them is what they grow with*" (Interview #30).

For context, the latest rounds of conflicts have been ongoing since the early 1990s as mentioned earlier meaning that many of the youths were born into it and have never experienced peace among themselves.

In addition to social gains, the intervention also had some economic benefits for the communities. In some of the communities where the grinding machines and the garri and rice processing machines were installed, the machines helped the communities address the problem of travelling to faraway communities to grind and process their food items which could be herculean because of distance and insecurity. Thus, there is a benefit of time, reduced stress, and cost. Some interviewees noted, "The project helped us to mill rice and it eased the pains of going to other towns" (Interview #25), "The cassava mills are also to help us process our cassava instead of going to another town to do so" (Interview #33), "We can process our garri in the community. It saves us the problem of travelling for long distance to other communities" (Interview #34). A participant observed that the installed capacity of the garri processing machine in their community is 5 pickup vans daily (Interview #29), meaning that they are huge and able to serve such small communities efficiently.

The economic projects also helped the communities to raise some funds consequent on the small amounts community members pay to use them (Interviews #29, Interviews #28). The funds were banked in joint accounts to be used in repairing the machines. However, as discussed later, the funds turned out to be grossly inadequate to pay for the maintenance of the facilities. This can be excused because the projects were not designed to raise funds; their utility is in the service they

provide to the communities. Thus, it can be concluded that the intervention helped the communities economically. Perhaps this accounted for why the project evaluation report indicated that community residents believed that their livelihoods are better off than their neighbours where the programme was not implemented (Document #4). However, despite these gains, the project experienced different challenges, including mismanagement, insecurity, recurring conflicts between the farmers and the herders, design, implementational and structural issues, which impacted performance.

6.9 Issues and Challenges of the Intervention

The questions that gave birth to the responses here include, what were the challenges of the intervention, and how were the projects managed. The aim is to explore all the issues and challenges concerning the implementation of the projects and project sustainability and management. The section starts with the project sustainability plans and management put in place by the NGOs.

6.10 Project Sustainability Plans and Management

The responses from the INGO and the LNGOs indicate that two approaches were adopted regarding the sustainability of the project. The first was based on community leaders being able to continue to apply the acquired knowledge in conflict prevention, interest-based negotiation, and mediation to address interpersonal disputes and disagreements concerning herding and farming. The second involves constituting project management committees in each of the communities where the physical projects were sited. The committees were composed of herders and farmers. Their tasks included managing the projects, collecting the funds being generated, and banking them; ensuring the maintenance and repairs of the machines when they became faulty. The two approaches were the sustainability plan as designed and implemented by the implementing NGOs across the communities. The Executive Director of LNGO 1 explained it further:

‘‘*The conflict communities had project management committees with membership comprising of each of the warring groups, decision making was by democratic consensus, sitting down together and arriving at a mutually beneficial decision. The money being generated at the rice milling centres, water boreholes and others are being used to make minor repairs. The water projects have also project management committees comprising of all the conflicting parties, we trained some of them on minor repairs and they were supposed to carry out minor repairs on the systems towards sustaining the projects*” (Interview #3).

Other interviewees also corroborated this: “The NGO left it to the community to manage...and by having both the farmers and herders involved in operating the grinding facility with the money being kept in a joint account for the community, the project would be sustained” (Interview #28). “It was dependant on the community. Those managing the project were selected from both sides of the community” (Interview #14). “The community is managing the project. The project is managed by members selected from the community; they are ...” (Interview # 26). “The project

was handed over to the management team in the community to manage. The project team included..." (Interview #23). "Ok, I think there is an arrangement between the NGO and the community to set up a management committee in the village to manage it" (Interview #35). The plan was for the communities to become stakeholders in the project in addition to being beneficiaries, "The plan was to ensure that we have a stake in the project" (Interview #18).

Nevertheless, while the sustainability plan may appear good, its operationalization was not without problems. The first was that in some of the communities the engines of the rice and garri mills were spoilt and the community project management committees were unable to repair them due to inadequate funds, "The rice processing machine is no longer working. An engineer told us the engines spoilt. We asked someone to repair it and give us the bill. The bill is expensive and it's packed up now" (Interview #23). The same interviewee also acknowledged that this was not the only challenge observed before the machine packed up. There was the problem of using gas to power it as against connecting the machine to the public power source, noting that gas[2] was expensive and because the community could not afford it, it was unsustainable. "They should connect us to public power source because using gas is not sustainable" (Interview #23). The small funds generated by the project committee were not enough to fund ongoing repairs. Another interviewee from the community confirmed that the machine is "spoilt and we cannot repair it" (Interview #26, Interview#24).

However, not only were the sustainability plans problematic, but there were also difficulties with the project design and execution. In one of the communities in Nasarawa state, members were promised a training workshop and a rice processing mill. However, after the training was completed, the rice mill was never delivered. An interviewee explained:

"*Ok. The plan is for the community to manage the projects at completion. However, the rice mill project hasn't been done so there is no project in the community to manage but the village head always calls for meeting from different tribes for the need to maintain peace. Our dream here is to have the rice milling machine...The awareness (training) [the INGO] created in my community was okay but we [are] looking forward for something more*" (Interview #13).

Others added, "We were told after they are done with the workshop...we all agreed to have a rice processing machine if we have a choice but it was not brought. The choice would still be a rice processing machine" (Interview #14), "The project was not implemented; I mean the rice project...I would prefer support from the [INGO] to give us a rice processing machine as agreed" (Interview #15).

Although LNGO 2 would respond that this was because the herders and the farmers could not

[2] Diesel is commonly called gas in Nigeria

agree on a common place to site the rice processing mill (Interview #6); however, from a programmatic point of view, not being able to find a common ground to site a peacebuilding intervention project for two conflicting groups in a community and consequently calling it off is an indictment on the capacity of the implementers to deliver peace. It is even more concerning when this challenge, as well as others highlighted here, are not mentioned in the evaluation reports (Document #4, Document #5).

Equally, apart from the problem of not building the rice mill in Nasarawa as promised due to the inability to agree on the location, there was also the case in Benue where recurring violent conflict in the community and the consequent displacement of residents led to the rice mill equipment being stolen. An interviewee explained that "the project was beneficial to us before but mismanagement has affected it...it helped us to mill our rice. But the conflict continued to send us away from the community" (Interview #19). Others also confirmed the recurrent nature of conflict in the communities despite the intervention leading to displacement, insecurity and impact on the project:

‘‘*We did not benefit from the project. It was my rice that was first used to test-run the machines. But before the project was open to the public for patronage, conflict occurred in [the community] and the project was destroyed.* ” (Interview #17).

Furthermore, "a*s soon as they finished the project, when the machines were tested, before work started, conflict took place. So we had no time to go there again, community was on the run and everything was destroyed... all the equipment were stolen. Nothing remained there ...*" (Interview #16).

Another interviewee from the same community added, "they brought the rice mill even before we got ourselves into crisis (conflict)... we did not benefit from the project... There was nothing to suggest that they are going to come and remove (steal) the project...(Interview #18). An interviewee blamed the poor management on the frequent displacement of the communities as a result of violent conflict, "But, it is poorly managed. The project is okay but managed poorly. Maybe because the community is always moving because of conflict." (Interview #19).

Many other interviewees called on the NGOs to assist in addressing the conflict-induced insecurity in the communities, "They should help us about the security challenge we face here all the time so we can use our engine" (Interview #14). Another interviewee quipped, "You can sink a borehole but if there is no peace you can't drink the water from the borehole" (Interview #30). Two other interviewees from communities in Benue concluded that "they installed a rice mill for us. But conflict is still a challenge here... we can mill our rice here now when there is peace" (Interview #21), and "They gave us a rice mill and we were benefitting from it. But we need peace in the community, and we are calling for organisations and government to help us to bring peace" (Interview #22).

The challenge of recurring conflict and insecurity also led to the removal of the cassava processing

machine in the host community in Kaduna and the abandonment of the processing building. Speaking about the sustainability of the project in his community, the community leader remarked that "the cassava engine is stolen because of the conflict and the building is abandoned (Interview #32). Other interviewees from the community agreed: "[t]he machines are removed" (Interview #35). "But the machines are removed, only the building left." (Interview #33).

It can therefore be argued that persistent conflict and associated insecurity were a real challenge to the interventions, even though the interventions were meant to address the conflict.

The intervention was also impacted by internal political dynamics in some of the communities, as well as the contentious issues of land tenure leading to the termination of the projects. In one of the host communities in Plateau state, where a garri processing machine was installed, the internal power tussle between the Muslim leader and the Christian head of the community led to the locking up of the machines and closure of their operations. An interviewee, who is also the head of the farmers stated:

"*The community is managing the project. Yes, through the head of the community. Before, it was the committee members set up by the late Emir but now everything has been hijacked by the new Emir. In essence, he locked down the unit and took all the materials back to the palace together with the money generated through the project*" (Interview #29).

At the moment, the garri processing mill in the community has ceased operations due to this internal politics. The engine has been removed from the project building and the building is under locks.

However, in another host community in Plateau state the problem revolved around land donation. The village head explained that joint farming took place in his community, but the market which was to serve as an outlet for the farm produce was not constructed because of land issues which then led to the end of the joint farming:

"*[The INGO] was able to bring the people of the community together, organized peacebuilding workshops, capacity building workshops for sustaining peace, and organized co-operative activities so that the women from both parties (farmer and herders) came together, acquired land on lease, and conducted farming activities. The NGO was to market and sell the farm produce. It was my family who gave the land that was used for the farming purpose. It was given without any charge... they started with their programmes, capacity building trainings on conflict prevention and resolution. Peacebuilding programmes, and several interactive programmes came in, which I will classify [as] one project. They sensitized the people on the need to come together, to live together, to tolerate one another and to progress. Having done that, they went into physical activities that the people would perform together in harmony and unity. They are to be of mutual benefits so that the community would reap the benefits. They brought a third project, markets and marketing. That was where the community failed a little. They wanted to build a market and what they needed was a site to construct the market so that commercial activities would take place in one place among the people together. A hitch came from the community on the issue of land tenureship. There were divergent views from the family that was to give the land we thought was strategically located*

for the market to be constructed. So they couldn't give the land and so the project was not constructed. It was not the inability of [INGO] that the project was not completed, but lack of understanding from the land owners. The farming project is not going on any more. That was how these projects came to an end" (Interview #27).

One of the fundamental issues that needs reflecting on here is how a huge project as this was predicated on freewill donation of land by a community member. Again, this comes off as an indictment on the project implementers, especially regarding the design and implementation.

However, beyond these challenges that are centred on design, implementation, persistent conflict, insecurity, and other issues in the communities themselves, the intervention also encountered structural challenges. This is discussed in chapter eight. The next step is to understand how the nature of the relationship impacted the effectiveness of the intervention.

6.11 The Partnership Relationship and the Intervention: How the Nature of the Relationship Influenced the Effectiveness of the Intervention

Did the nature of the relationship have any bearing on the intervention's effectiveness? Effectiveness as conceptualized in this dissertation (chapter two) is measured by the satisfaction of project host communities and active participation in project design, implementation and ownership by the stakeholders, especially, the local stakeholders (Westendorf, 2015; World Bank, 1998a). The local stakeholders as previously conceptualised in this dissertation include host communities, LNGOs and the peacebuilding institutional structure. It is also seen as the ability of the peacebuilding intervention to achieve the goal of peacebuilding, and its long-term sustainability (Bacccarini, 1999).

This conception of effectiveness aligns with the principles of everyday peacebuilding, which foregrounds local ownership, emotional investment, and micro-level actions that reflect how peace is actually lived and sustained by communities (Mac Ginty, 2011; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Moreover, these micropractices—daily routines, expressions of trust or alienation, and informal coping strategies—serve as valuable indicators of whether an intervention resonates with the people it seeks to support.

Evidence in the data as analysed suggest a direct influence of the nature of the relationship on the intervention. First, the sustainability plans put in place across the communities were not sustainable due to the nature of the relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs. In a real partnership where there is joint ownership of the projects, the LNGO partners are part of the sustainability plan as they will continue to interface the communities on behalf of the partners and ensure utility for the projects. The INGO alluded to the partnership with LNGOs as part of their plan for sustainability for the project (Document #3). However, there was no indication of the LNGOs being involved in the sustainability or management of the projects since the completion.

In fact, the communities hardly remembered the LNGOs (Interview #3, Interview #30, Interview #28; Interview #25). And many complained of the NGOs sudden withdrawal, meaning that the project completion and exit strategies were not mutually agreed between the NGOs and the communities. Which is why one community responded added that the NGOs should have stayed and alongside the community evaluated the intervention to know what worked and what did not work (Interview #27).
This disconnect reflects the legacy of postcolonial power dynamics, where external actors often dominate decision-making while marginalising local perspectives (Kapoor, 2008; Richmond, 2011). The emotional responses of communities—disappointment, abandonment, and exclusion—underscore how affect and sentiment are critical elements of effective peacebuilding that are often overlooked in technical project cycles (Mitchell, 2011).

Again, this reinforces the argument that local host communities are not reckoned in the accountability ratio of INGOs in Africa (Awua-Werehoh, 2014). The INGO's relationship with LNGO 2 has ended and that with LNGO 1 has moved on to other projects. The result is that the projects are packed up in many communities and riddled with avoidable challenges in some others on account of a faulty sustainability plan and an uneven relationship. One of Altahir's (2016:4) arguments for reconsidering the INGO-LNGO relationship is sustainability, stating that "LNGOs are able to continue to provide services and support to beneficiary populations long after INGOs transition out." In practice, this is only possible where there is a real partnership and the LNGOs feel a sense of belonging and ownership. A contractor or subcontractor has no such feeling or obligation; it is always about the money. And once it is collected, the contractor moves to the next client. These transactional relationships reflect the everyday international—routine, technocratic processes through which global power is enacted locally (Guillaume, 2011).

Secondly, and to further confirm the unequal structure of the relationship and influence on the project, one of the LNGO interviewees admitted that the outputs and the templates to measure them were determined by the INGO, as well as the reporting format, "The Communication Officer of [the INGO] gave us a detailed reporting format. The output and outcome are well captured in their template. Their reporting format was broad as it captures demographies, biodata of the sender and other useful details" and "There are specifications from their M & E units. Annual reports, the endline also helped in gauging their impact... project implementation goes with their M & E program specifications" (Interview #6). And speaking specifically about the monitoring and evaluation tools, the interviewee responded, "They were from [the INGO]." (Interview #6). Meanwhile, organisations in a real partnership relationship carrying out a joint intervention project jointly agree on outputs and design measurement and evaluation tools, as well as reporting formats. They are not unilaterally decided by one party and passed on to others (Postma, 1994 cited by Lister, 1999). This mode of working reinforces a postcolonial hierarchy in which local

actors are implementers of decisions made elsewhere, with limited voice or input (Lewis & Mosse, 2006; Kapoor, 2008). Such practices deny them the opportunity to shape their own peacebuilding reality.

In addition, it can also be inferred that the relationship impacted the level of community involvement and input towards the project. The interviews overwhelmingly showed that the communities wanted sustainable peace by having the issue of alternative grazing resolved for the herders (Interview #16, Interview #28, Interview 26, Interview #23, Interview #30, Interview #19), which corroborated the baseline leading to the project design (Interview 6). This also appear to be the position of the LNGOs—both, major stakeholders in the project. Instead of designing the project to address it, it was rather designed to build the conflict management capacity of local leaders to continue to manage the conflict. This appears like the original plan of the INGO and the funder, oblivious of the baseline. Where then is the community inclusion in decision making and ownership under localisation according to Westendorf (2015) and World Bank (1998a)? How then does it work that a peacebuilding program identifies the root cause of a conflict, then ignores it, but chooses to invest heavily in training the people involved on how to continually manage the problem. Yet, claims that its intended goal in the project is sustainable peace between the pastoralist and farmers. This contradiction again further illustrates the argument of how international peacebuilding models often overlooks or suppresses local voice under the guise of programming, reinforcing external narratives and priorities, and ignoring the lived experiences and realities of local communities (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Perhaps, this explains why an interviewee remarked that the intervention was not meant to bring peace or address the conflict, but the problems created by the conflict (Interview #25). The program ought not to have chosen sustainable peace as its goal. In doing so, it risked becoming performative—more about meeting donor expectations and reporting milestones than producing meaningful, context-sensitive change (Guillaume, 2011; Mitchell, 2011).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship was not an ideal partnership where partners exercised their agency in contributing meaningfully to project goals. And the nature of the relationship had a consequential impact on the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of stakeholders' active participation, exclusion of their voices, ownership and community satisfaction. A development expert agrees that the nature of the relationship between INGOs and LNGOs impacts on their project’s results in terms of implementation and delivery of key results (Interview #12). True everyday peacebuilding depends on the inclusion of local actors not just in form, but in function—in the design, leadership, and adaptation of programs to meet community needs through emotional, relational, and practical engagement (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011).

The next is the application of APP to the discussion.

6.12 Applications of the Authentic Partnership Principles: Unequal Peacebuilding Partnership Relationship Impacts Project Delivery and Effectiveness in Jointly Implemented Interventions.

1. Both INGO and funder did not benefit from local knowledge of the LNGOs or that of the host communities as established through baseline study/need analysis because of "funder's focus". This then influenced the theory of change, leading to non-achievement of sustainable peace in the communities/states as planned. While the huge benefits of this intervention cannot be belittled, it can be argued that the reason why the intervention failed to address the underlying driver of the conflict and achieve sustainable peace which was its goal, was the faulty theory of change. The faulty theory of change was consequent on the unilateral decision of the INGO, oblivious of the communities as established in the baseline/need analysis and LNGOs. Unilateral decisions are indicative of unequal partnership relationships. This confirms that unequal peacebuilding partnership relations impacts project delivery and effectiveness in jointly implemented interventions.

6.13 The Issue of Grazing Needs to be Addressed

This theme emerged from the interviews. Many of the community interviewees discussed it in discussing the intervention's impact on their communities, regarding bringing peace between the herders and farmers. The theme is important to them and at the root of the conflict. This is why it was reflected in the peacebuilding need analysis, but the INGO overlooked it. It is the reason why the intervention could not achieve its goal of sustainable peace because it is practically impossible to build peace between farmers and herders in Nigeria without addressing the contentious issue of a separate grazing field for herders. Its exclusion from the theory of change is a major flaw of the intervention, even as the communities voiced it. It speaks volume of the partnership's nature as the LNGOs do not seem to be onboard.

6.14 Highlights of the Key Findings

1. Unequal INGO-LNGO peacebuilding partnership relationship influences the effectiveness of jointly implemented projects. This contributes to literature on peacebuilding NGOs and peacebuilding in Nigeria, as well as the debate on INGO-LNGO partnership relationship in the Global South. It also contributes to the literature on peacebuilding within the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

2. Project communities can be actively engaged by NGOs on a project and still have their voices excluded in a project decision. This also contributes significantly to the literature because before now, the literature speaks about exclusion in the sense of non-engagement of project communities. This finding shows another dimension of exclusion, there can be engagement and still exclusion. That is participatory exclusion.

3. While the intervention made a lot of significant contributions to the communities in terms of skill and economic empowerment, it failed to build peace between the farmers and herders in the communities and in the four case study states in the region as planned.

6.15 Conclusion

The chapter answered whether the nature of a peacebuilding partnership influences the effectiveness of their jointly implemented intervention. The chapter found that the intervention contributed significantly to equipping the community leaders with skills in conflict prevention, dispute resolution, negotiation and mediation. The intervention also helped the communities build economic infrastructures like water boreholes and food processing mills, which then assisted them to address the problem of processing time and cost. However, the data showed that even though the communities were engaged by the NGOs prior to the project commencement, their voices, as well as that of the LNGOs were not heard in the program design, leading to a faulty theory of change. The consequence is that the intervention failed to build sustainable peace in the communities between herders and farmers, and in the four case study states in the North Central region as originally planned. Thus, the nature of a peacebuilding partnership can shape the effectiveness of its peacebuilding intervention. The next chapter discusses the third broad research question (RQ3), the peacebuilding intervention and the institutional peacebuilding structure.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTION AND THE STATE'S INSTITUTIONAL PEACEBUILDING STRUCTURE (IPS)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter merges the study's findings with discussion to respond to the dissertation's third broad research question 3 (RQ3), which examined how the peacebuilding intervention fared within Nigeria's institutional peacebuilding structure (IPS) and policy framework.

The literature indicates that peacebuilding is a state responsibility that many states neglect but attempt to compensate for by supporting NGOs in this regard. However, considering the centrality of the state to peace and the fact that peacebuilding is more political than humanitarian (Onodugo, Odor, and Onudugo, 2021), this dissertation argues that the state's active support or lack thereof may determine whether an NGO-led peacebuilding initiative succeeds or fails.

The questions that guided the discussion include: What is IPCR's role in peacebuilding in Nigeria? What are its landmark achievements and challenges in this role so far? What frameworks are in place to support, govern, or guide peacebuilders in Nigeria, including NGOs and LNGOs in partnership while implementing joint projects in Nigeria? What are its challenges? What kinds of support did the intervention receive during implementation, and what challenges were encountered? How do the communities perceive NGOs? The themes discussed include the role, achievements, and challenges of IPCR; the intervention; state support and institutional challenges; and community perception of the implementing NGOs. Other themes include the application of the APP and a brief highlight of the key findings. These themes emerged from the questions asked and from the interview responses. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the data is triangulated from interviews and documents.

7.2 A Summary of Findings Responding to RQ3

The data revealed that while Nigeria does have an institutional peacebuilding structure (IPS), capable of synergizing with NGOs and supporting peacebuilding interventions, it is constrained by a myriad of challenges, including an entrenched culture of using force to address conflict, inadequate funding, and paucity of professionally qualified personal in strategic positions. But more importantly, the IPCR is significantly challenged by an inactive peace policy that has remained in the wood since 2009. Thus, the IPCR is unable to function effectively in terms of supporting peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria, including NGO led peacebuilding. The case study peacebuilding intervention was not supported actively but not antagonized. It was confronted by institutional challenges owing to this lack of synergy with the state. It is the interplay of the problems within the NGO partnership and the weakness within the state's institutional peacebuilding structure that led to some of the lapses in the intervention, including in the

sustainability plans and community engagement. Consequently, the perception of community members is more disposed to the NGOs than the government.

Table 7 is the full thematic framework of the study generated from NVivo. It has major themes, and themes that respond to broad research questions. It is a guide to the discussions.

Table 7: *Full thematic framework*

Name	Files	References
1. Nature of the partnership among the actors		
Nature of the partnership	10	50
Community embeddedness and structure	14	43
Funder determines project themes and direction	9	18
Recruitment and organization of partners	16	63
2. Nature of projects implemented and impact on the communities		
Nature of the intervention	16	53
Community perception of the intervention	36	104
No peace yet, community on the run	33	71
Community relationship with NGOs	80	104
Impact of project on community	33	61
No intervention in the community	38	42
3. Issues and challenges of the intervention		
Challenges in the intervention	45	87
Community involvement in the project	40	70
Project sustainability plan and management	42	55
4. The relationship and the intervention		
Relationship impacts project	8	20
Power imbalance	6	17
LNGOs challenges	8	15
5. Improving INGO - LNGO relations and interventions		
Improving INGO-LNGO relations	4	5
Peacebuilding governance in Nigeria	6	8

The discussion begins with the governance of peacebuilding in Nigeria, particularly, focusing on the roles, achievements and challenges of the IPCR.

7.3 The Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution: Roles, Achievements and Challenges

The discussion here is focused on the role of the IPCR in peacebuilding, their significant accomplishments, and the challenges they face in the role. This is considered necessary as a background to understanding their interface with NGOs and peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria. The questions guiding the discussion are the role of the IPCR in peacebuilding, their landmark achievements and challenges.

The IPCR is the Nigerian state's institutional peacebuilding structure, a role it has played since 2000 when it was created. In the context of supporting NGO led peacebuilding on behalf of the state, the executive director reiterates:

"*Well, the Institute is [...] lead government agency for peace promotion and enthronement through nonforceful conflict prevention, management and resolution. It also serves as catalysts between the government and civil society organizations*" (Interview #31).

The IPCR, according to its composition, is the state's structure responsible for promoting peace through non-kinetic means. It also serves as a medium through which the state partners with NGOs and civil society organizations in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and conflict management. The IPCR has also achieved some notable successes in these areas, as the interviewee further noted:

"*The institute undertakes a regular strategic conflict assessment of Nigeria which provides a nuanced understanding of the nation's conflict environment in terms of the dynamics, actors, causes, triggers. There is a National Action Plan for the specific intervention roles of all stakeholders. The institute develop the capacity of stakeholders on peacebuilding and soft approaches to security and development*" (Interview #31)

So, although the IPCR prides itself as being a catalyst between peacebuilding NGOs, civil society organizations and the state, and in terms of developing the capacity of stakeholders on peacebuilding, it appears to be constrained by a lot of challenges, organizational, legal, logistical and funding:

"*The institute has challenges, firstly, due to the long tradition of forceful means of managing conflicts in Nigeria, a non-forceful approach is not too popular so funding becomes a challenge. There is a preference for military and security approach to addressing conflict than peaceful means. Secondly, there is paucity of professionally qualified personnel to position the institute properly. The dominance of support staff over core peace research staff. Poor financial management and accountability. Poor project management systems of peace interventions. Bloated staff. There is no operational national peace policy but a draft document*" (Interview #31)

These challenges can be daunting and have the potential to impede the IPCR's work and capacity. For instance, the challenge of not having qualified staff or adequate funding for its work. There is also the culture of using force to resolve every conflict situation which is a carryover of Nigeria's many years of military administrations. Unfortunately, after many years of democracy, it is still a challenge in Nigeria. The IPCR was created to chart a non-military part to handling conflict, but it

will take much more than an institution to shift the Nigerian mind from a forceful approach to settling dispute. Nevertheless, the most daunting challenge facing the IPCR is the non-signing into law of the peace policy. The peace policy document is a legal, operational and administrative instrument with which peacebuilding coordination and governance can be enabled. Its absence thus cripples the IPCR substantially. Having looked at the challenges bedeviling the IPCR in pursuit of its responsibilities, the next step is to examine the case study peacebuilding intervention in the light of the state's institutional peacebuilding structure.

7.4 Peacebuilding Governance in Nigeria: The Intervention, State's Support and Institutional Challenge

The questions driving the discussion here include the state's support for the intervention, institutional challenges encountered and community perception of the implementing NGOs and the government. The discussion begins with the state's support for the intervention.

7.5 State's Support for the Intervention

As mentioned earlier, the state's support for a peacebuilding intervention can come in many forms, sharing of information, provision of security, maintenance of law and order, policy framework, coordination, collaboration, or like in the case of Sudan, oversighting and monitoring (Altahir, 2016). In this case, an NGO interviewee stated there was no direct support, even though they had an enabling environment to operate:

"*Well, there was no direct support from the state to the intervention. But we have had no interference with our work, which is good. A conducive environment is great support. We sent a joint memo to the parliament on the issues involving farmers and herders in Nigeria. We also presented the findings of our research on household cost of pastoral conflict in four states to platforms with state representatives. So, I ... (pause) think we have had a cordial and supportive relationship*" (Interview #2).

Therefore, apart from providing a conducive environment, there was no direct support from the state for this intervention. Although the NGOs did send a memo to the Nigerian parliament on the farmer-herder conflict and presented some of their research to government stakeholders, the absence of active state involvement in this intervention had significant implications and ramifications, as the data shows and as will be discussed later. Next, I will examine the institutional challenges encountered in the intervention.

7.6 Institutional Challenges Encountered in the Intervention

The major structural challenge that this intervention faced is the absence of peacebuilding governance in Nigeria, that creates a structure for peacebuilding operations and coordinates the actions of peacebuilders, including INGO-LNGO partnerships. The result is that peacebuilding in Nigeria is an all-comers affair, an ungoverned space with all kinds of actors, each in their own silo operating like an island and producing all kinds of results that are neither verified nor coordinated or harmonised for the optimum utility of the host communities (Interview #31). By implication also,

peacebuilding partnerships are neither observed to avoid exploitation nor supported to ensure the sustainability of their projects. An interviewee with the project funder articulated all these and much more while responding to challenges to their interventions in Nigeria:

"*Yes, of course, development interventions everywhere come with their peculiar challenges. In Nigeria, we are confronted with the challenge of state institutions non-responsiveness to issues. A near absence of governance to development issues. Stakeholders not responding early to early warning. Individuals or institutions working on peacebuilding do not act timely to signals. Some are diverting resources for conflict mitigation to personal aggrandizement. Capacity issues. No maximum use of technology to track and develop tools that can lead to sustainable peace*" (Interview #1).

Elaborating more, especially as it concerns peacebuilding interventions, the interviewee suggested, "there is a need for serious changes among state institutions and those who run them. Effective collaboration, cooperation, effective coordination amongst peacebuilding agencies and organisations" is needed (Interview #1).

Lack of coordination, harmonization and governance of the sector resulting in poor results is an old issue in Nigeria's humanitarian terrain generally, as pointed out by the World Bank with reference to the Boko Haram ravaged North east:

"*The national government does not have a clear policy or legal framework for administering humanitarian aid. The result has been confused, poor coordination, competition or adversarial relationships between agencies, and a lack of clear lines of accountability. Delivery of humanitarian aid has been inconsistent and there are allegations of corruption by the authorities operating camps and those disbursing aid. At the same time, international and local NGOs are also implementing ad hoc interventions with limited harmonization of their efforts*" (The World Bank, 2014, p6).

As it concerns peace, Nigeria does have a peace policy as noted before, with a robust provision for addressing peacebuilding interventions, including synergising with NGOs, and domiciled with the IPCR:

"*The National Peace Policy (NPP) provides a framework for peaceful social transformations... defines the commitment of the Nigerian state to building and entrenching a culture of peaceful coexistence through a set of actions and activities as well as addressing issues of governance at all levels. Consequently, it focuses on both the operational and structural conflict prevention measures required in Nigeria, as established by the findings of the SCA conducted by the Institute covering the economic, political, legal and institutional issues and policies relating to conflict prevention. The operational preventive measures include policies and interventions aimed at defusing tension and preventing the outbreak, escalation, spread or recurrence of violence in the society. These measures include policing, humanitarian interventions, early warning and early responses, mediation, conciliation and other actions/activities carried out with the aim of preventing the outbreak of violence as well as contributing to peacebuilding. The structural preventive measures on the other hand, include addressing democracy and political governance issues, anticorruption measures, poverty reduction, employment generation, human capacity development, rule of law, and conflict – sensitive development to strengthen the peace fabric of the society, among other measures*" (IPCR, 2015, p 15).

However, despite the generous provisions of the peace policy covering almost all spheres of peace operations in Nigeria, including peacebuilding, the problem with it is that it has remained a draft document since 2012, thus leaving an operational and policy framework vacuum for peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions in Nigeria. The DG of the IPCR explained:

"*There is no such framework for regulating practitioners. The national peace policy is still in the working. That is the draft national peace policy that should spell out the terms in the regulatory frameworks. However, regulating peace works can be problematic due to the nature of peace and its all-encompassing state*" (Interview #31).

So, in this case, there was no government oversight of the partnership relationship agreement, like the situation in Sudan (Altahir, 2016). Additionally, there was no regulatory framework guiding the implementers operation. The decision to involve government agencies in ensuring the sustainability of the projects was left to the implementers, but they did not do so, despite sending an advocacy memo to the Nigerian parliament on managing the farmer-herder conflict (Document #11). One evident issue of not partnering with the state institutions was the lack of connection of the food processing mills engines to public power sources and the potential long-term sustainability of the entire project. An interviewee from one of the LNGOs admitted:

"*The maintenance of both machines are guaranteed through regular repairs from money generated from the [committee], but these are not enough and we are not happy about it. We are supposed to connect them with relevant ministries like Works, Water Resources and Agriculture. So that there should be a tripartite agreement between [the INGO], we the partners and [the] respective Commissioners who should maintain such machines and projects after the programme is concluded*" (Interview #6).

A tripartite arrangement as noted by the LNGO 2 interviewee involving the INGO, the LNGOs and the various government ministries would have ensured the sustainability of the project and better value for the communities. If the conflict prevention skills are done in partnership with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), they would continue to sustain it after the project cycle. If the processing mills are done in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the boreholes are done with the Ministry of Water Resources, they would ensure continuity after the project cycle. If the conflict prevention and mediations training are run and coordinated with the IPCR, it would ensure better sustainability management and efficiency. However, it can be argued that bureaucracy, cost and corruption would have also become issues needing to be dealt with as Nigeria remained challenged with weak institutions and corruption (Smith 2010). Another

issue is whether the Ministries as mentioned like the Ministry of power will be able to supply regular power to the mills and boreholes when they have not been able to do so for the average Nigerian. The same question can be asked of the IPCR considering the endless list of unresolved protracted conflicts all over Nigeria. And their operating challenge as listed here. How sure is it that they would have managed this one if given to them. Perhaps, resolving to power with gas

generators was the NGO's way of being practical in a difficult operating environment. The result, however, is that many of the machines are packed up and the communities are denied the full benefits of the intervention. While government shares in the blame for a lack of policy clarity and framework for operators, the bulk of the blame should be borne by the implementers for their failure to engage to ensure the sustainability of their projects. An LNGO 2 interviewee agreed with this conclusion but did not think the partnership was the solution, "I think local NGOs should build capacity to write good proposals to enable them to win projects themselves. It will help things to be done properly. It will help sustainability of projects. Often, the structures created with the project are allowed to die because of the structure of funding" (Interview #6). An LNGO interviewee does not believes the solution lies in the relationship with INGOs, they believed the solution is in LNGOs building their own capacity to attract direct funding and this will guarantee the sustainability of projects. So, despite the peace policy spelling out the role of the IPCR as it concerns peacebuilding intervention, including the synergy with peacebuilding NGOs, which was confirmed in the interviews (Interview #31), there was no active framework to guide peacebuilding, including this intervention. Equally, there was no policy guidance or framework on how communities should be engaged in projects that involve them. So, the individual organisations run their projects as they deem fit, unaccountable to anyone, and unobserved. The result is that while implementers may feel that they have done their best to engage the communities, the communities do not feel they have been sufficiently engaged and given a choice as it concerns their own peacebuilding and development needs (Interview #25, Interview #29, Interview #33, Interview #32). And as data indicates, there is no accountability to the communities. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights recognises the rights to development as an unalienable human right. In fact, it places the person as the central subject of development, as an active participant and beneficiary. And flowing from this, it recognises the active participation of local people in their development as a right and not privilege (Kiwanuka, 1988). The challenge of making the host communities in Nigeria to be at the centre of peacebuilding interventions run by NGOs, and

deriving optimum value from such interventions is both that of the NGOs and the institutional authorities in charge of peace.

Having discussed the structural challenges encountered in the intervention by the NGOs, the next step is to also understand how the communities see the NGOs in view of the project and engagement.

7.7 Community Perception of the Implementing NGOs

The question that this section responds to is how the communities felt about the implementing NGOs in the context of the intervention. Considering the services delivered, the issues and challenges associated with the intervention, the task was to gauge how they processed everything. Were they satisfied with the NGOs and their work, and what was their relationship with the NGOs

like afterwards?

Most of the responses from the host community interviewees show they were very happy with the INGO who ran the intervention: “We have harmonious and cordial relationship with the [INGO]. We are satisfied with the [INGO]...” (Interview #14). “It has been cordial. [The INGO] has done well for the community” (Interview #33). “We are doing fine with [the INGO] and our relationship with them is okay [...]. We are satisfied with the awareness and that has made us to pray for [the INGO] because that has changed the behavioural aspect of our youths to some extent” (Interview #15). “Our relationship with [the INGO] was cordial. It is long since I saw them” (Interview #25). “We appreciate all what [the INGO] did for us and all the programmes they executed [...] They should continue with their programmes in our community. We are happy about their activities” (Interview #18). “Our relationship with [the INGO] is good” (Interview #14), “We love [the INGO] for what they did for the community” (Interview #35). “We have enjoyed a good working relationship with [the INGO], we thank God and we thank [the INGO] for all the things they did for us. Apart from Red Cross, there is no any other organisation that has helped us like [INGO]” (Interview #17). “Our relationship is good...we are really satisfied” (Interview #24). Finally “the relationship is cordial and very interesting... In fact, I lack what to say about the good they have done to us. The project, if not because of the accident that happened, we the two communities appreciate the project” (Interview #16). The accident referenced is a conflict that led to the theft of the engines in the community.

The communities were so appreciative of the INGO that some interviewees asked that the INGO should not abandon them until peace is achieved: “we are very satisfied and hope [INGO] would keep coming so they can continue helping us because we have not got a lasting peace yet” (Interview #29). “They should not abandon us... They should help us bring lasting peace between crop farmers and pastoralist” (Interview #23). “We want them to help us bring real peace in the community” (Interview #24).

Some also decried the sudden withdrawal of the INGO from their community: “We don’t like how they left” (Interview #28). “We still desire that [the INGO] should not leave us just like that. We should still be interacting to sustain some of their projects... (Interview #27). The same interviewee, who is also the village head in one of the host communities in Plateau state further stated that “they left us like that without saying goodbye. We would like to review the project to know what were the successes and the failures and what we can do” (Interview #27).

Thus, it is right to state that the INGO through the intervention created dependency in the communities, with the communities needing them to address their multitude of problems, help sustain the project in the long run and achieve sustainable peace. This is understandably so, because of the absence of government and governance. The INGO-LNGO partnership should have leveraged on this to understand what worked and what needs to be improved on. Perhaps,

letting the LNGOs to manage the sustainability plans instead of total withdrawal would have made up for this, but then, this is also a function of the nature of the relationship between the INGO and the LNGOs. The issue of sudden withdrawal in the eyes of the communities speak again to the issue of NGO accountability, especially downward or local accountability, which was pointed out by the literature as being problematic in Africa (Awua-Werehoh, 2014). INGOs are more inclined to their responsibility and accountability upwards to their funders and stakeholders in the Global North, whilst not showing the same enthusiasm to the beneficiary communities of their projects. However, they can do both and would be better off doing so. However, this dependence is amplified because of the absence of the state in addressing their peacebuilding needs or even developmental needs, which are the responsibilities of the state.

Interestingly, most of the host community interviewees could only refer to the INGO as the organisation that brought the projects without remembering the LNGOs that implemented them. In addition to the other reasons pointed out earlier for this, the visibility of the INGO in the communities were a testament to the impactful nature of the program on the lives of the communities involved. Whether this impact translated into sustainable peace and improved livelihood economies for the residents as envisioned in the project objectives was a different thing. The next is the application of the APP.

7.8 Application of the Authentic Partnership Principles: Inauthentic Partnership, Sudden Withdrawals, No Government Support

The sudden withdrawal of the NGOs from the communities. “They left us like that without saying goodbye. We would like to review the project to know what were the successes and the failures and what we can do” (Interview #27). The NGOs indeed completed their project before leaving. The complaint was consequent on the sustainability plans that were not sustained by the LNGO partners when the INGO transitioned out. This shows that the partnership was not an ideal one as the LNGOs are supposed to continue to interface the project management committees after the INGO transitioned out. The inability of the LNGOs to do so is consequent on the nature of the relationship they had with the INGO. This, thus, denies them the opportunity to debrief on the sustainability plans and their management, to learn the needed lessons of what worked and what needs to be improved going forward. However, and especially in the context of the third broad research question (RQ3), it also shows the lack of government presence in the communities and in their peacebuilding responsibilities. The dependence on the NGOs is because the government is derelicting on its duty and did not offer commensurate support to the intervention.

1. Also, the challenges of the sustainability plan and the inability to synergise: *“*The maintenance of both machines are guaranteed through regular repairs from money generated from the [committee], but these are not enough and we are not happy about it. We are supposed to connect them with relevant ministries like Works, Water Resources and Agriculture. So that there should

be a tripartite agreement between [the INGO], we the partners and [the] respective Commissioners who should maintain such machines and projects after the programme is concluded" (interview #6). A very good plan, but why was it not implemented? While the Nigerian state shares in this blame, it can be argued that not handing the projects over to the ministries and not supervising them by the LNGOs is an indictment on the nature of the partnership. Perhaps, if it was an ideal partnership, either of the two would have happened.

7.9 Highlights of Key Findings

No institutional support for the intervention. Apart from the conducive environment to operate, the data suggests the state through its peacebuilding structure did not offer any direct support for this intervention. Even the conducive environment was not so conducive after all because there were cases of violent conflict erupting and disrupting the intervention.

1. The peacebuilding intervention was challenged because of the lack of direct support from the state. If the state supported, perhaps the sustainability plans would have been able to sustain the projects long term. If the state supported and oversighted them, perhaps there would have been a framework on community engagement, meaning that the voices of the communities would not have been excluded.

2. No framework for community engagement. There was no framework for community engagement for peacebuilding NGOs to establish a need analysis. Each peacebuilder is at liberty to engage as they wish and ultimately decide whether to use it or not. The import of this is the probability that a peacebuilding NGO can decide to ignore the voices of a community as expressed and impose projects on them as the data shows. It is the right of communities to be involved actively in their own development and the state's responsibility to ensure that right.

7.10 Conclusion

The chapter examined how the peacebuilding intervention in the case study communities fared within Nigeria's institutional peacebuilding structure, including the policy context. The dissertation found that there was no direct state support for the intervention and there was also no framework for peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria, including a framework for community engagement. Meaning that each implementer operated as a silo. The intervention was consequently challenged because of lack of state support. The next chapter summarises and concludes the dissertation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

The study set out to empirically examine the nature of the partnership between an INGO and two LNGOs engaged in the joint implementation of a peacebuilding initiative. It investigated how the dynamics of this partnership influenced the effectiveness of the intervention and assessed the extent to which the Nigerian state provided institutional support for peacebuilding efforts. Three overarching research questions guided the study:

1. In the context of the peacebuilding project, how did the NGO actors perceive and relate to each other?
2. How did the nature of the partnership influence the effectiveness of the peacebuilding intervention?
3. Considering the importance of state support for peacebuilding interventions within a country, how has the broader institutional and policy context in Nigeria supported or hindered the partnership and the intervention?

To answer these questions, the dissertation relied on the case study of a peacebuilding initiative led by an INGO in collaboration with two LNGOs. The project, aimed at addressing farmer-herder conflicts, was implemented between 2012 and 2016 across four North-Central Nigerian states: Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, and Nasarawa.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows: Section 8.2 presents the summary of the six key specific empirical findings of the dissertation, while 8.3 explores their theoretical implications. Section 8.4 addresses the study's limitations, while Section 8.5 identifies opportunities for future research. Finally, Section 8.6 offers concluding reflections.

8.2 Summary of Key Empirical Findings of the Dissertation

This section presents the summary of the six key empirical findings of the dissertation.

1. Structural Inequality and Inauthenticity in INGO–LNGO Peacebuilding Partnerships

Drawing on Alan Fowler's Authentic Partnership Principles (APP), this dissertation critically evaluates the partnership dynamics between an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) and two Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs) involved in a peacebuilding intervention. Through a systematic application of Fowler's framework, the study reveals that the partnership was characterized by structural inequality and substantive inauthenticity, despite being discursively framed in terms of collaboration and local ownership (Chapters 2 and 5).

2. Strengthening LNGO Bargaining Power Through Institutional Capacity

The research finds that LNGOs can enhance their bargaining power in INGO partnerships by cultivating robust internal structures. These include the development of extensive local networks, public visibility, technical expertise in their core mandate areas, and strong institutional governance and legitimacy (Chapter 5). This internal capacity enables LNGOs to engage more equitably in partnership negotiations and project implementation.

3. Community-Level Impact of Peacebuilding NGO Partnerships

The dissertation demonstrates that NGO-led peacebuilding partnerships can produce tangible outcomes in conflict-affected communities. Specifically, it shows that such partnerships contribute to local development and conflict mitigation through integrated mediation and economic initiatives. These initiatives foster both conflict resolution and intergroup economic cooperation, in selected Nigerian communities experiencing communal strife (Chapter 6, Section 6.2).

4. Partnership Quality as a Determinant of Peacebuilding Effectiveness

The study finds that the quality and nature of INGO-LNGO relationships significantly influence the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. Key factors affected include community engagement, needs assessment processes, project design, sustainability, and ultimately, the achievement of durable peace (Chapter 6, Section 6.10).

5. NGO Roles in the Farmer–Herder Conflict in Nigeria

This dissertation identifies key NGO actors engaged in peacebuilding efforts targeting Nigeria's protracted farmer-herder conflict. It outlines their specific roles, the activities they undertake, and the extent of their collaboration with state actors—particularly through the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)—as well as the tangible results achieved (Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

6. The Absence of State Support as a Critical Constraint

Finally, the dissertation revealed how the absence—and or dysfunction—of state support poses a significant constraint on the effectiveness and sustainability of NGO-led peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria. The lack of state involvement constrains project effectiveness, policy integration, and long-term impact (Chapter 7, Section 7.8).

Building on the summary of key empirical findings, the following section critically engages with their theoretical implications and contributions within the fields of international relations, peacebuilding, and development studies.

8.3 Contributions and Theoretical Implications of the Findings

This section examines the theoretical implications and contributions arising from the dissertation's six key findings.

1. Structural Inequality and Inauthenticity in INGO–LNGO Peacebuilding Partnerships

The existing literature has consistently questioned the nature of relationships between INGOs and LNGOs in the Global South, emphasizing the ongoing contestations and paradoxes in the operation of these partnerships (Wright, 2011; Morfit, 2011; Makuwira, 2018; Fowler, 1998, 2000, 2003). Scholars continue to debate whether these relationships reflect genuine partnerships, contractor-subcontractor arrangements, collaborations, or principal-agent dynamics (Abnett, 2024; Banks & Brockington, 2019; Banks, Sculpen, & Brockington, 2020). Some scholars have even further underscored the need for more nuanced research into specific partnership operations, case studies, and micro-level everyday interactions to better understand the nature of INGO–LNGO collaboration in practice (Contu & Girei, 2014).

This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of peacebuilding partnerships in Nigeria, where empirical investigations remain scarce (Onodugo, Odor, & Onodugo, 2021; Ukiyedeikimie, 2023).

This dissertation directly addressed these gaps through an empirical case study examining a peacebuilding intervention involving one INGO and two LNGOs operating within the farmer-herder conflict in North Central Nigeria. Utilizing Alan Fowler's (1991, 1992, 1997, 1998, 2000a, 2000b) Authentic Partnership Principles (APP) as a conceptual framework, the research revealed that the partnership was structurally unequal and asymmetrical, aligning more closely with a principal-agent model than with the normative ideal of authentic collaboration. Although the partnership was discursively framed in terms of cooperation and local ownership, the findings demonstrate a substantively inauthentic dynamic, one that perpetuates existing power hierarchies and dependency structures (Banks and Hulme, 2014; Elbers and Schulpen, 2013).

This theoretical contribution is significant for several reasons. First, it offers empirical validation for ongoing scholarly debates about the authenticity and equity of INGO–LNGO partnerships in the Global South, providing concrete evidence of structural inequality and rhetorical dissonance. Second, it extends the application of Fowler's APP framework to a specific peacebuilding context, enhancing the theoretical tools available for critically assessing partnership practices. Third, it directly responds to the scholarly call for micro-level, case-based analyses of INGO–LNGO dynamics (Contu & Girei, 2014), and contributes to the limited body of empirical research on peacebuilding NGO partnerships in Nigeria (Onodugo et al., 2021; Ukiyedeikimie, 2023; Adzande, 2022).

Therefore, this finding offers a critical theoretical lens through which to understand how North-South NGO partnerships function in practice and the extent to which they diverge from normative claims of mutuality, equality, and authentic collaboration.

2 Strengthening LNGO Bargaining Power Through Institutional Capacity

This study offers a significant theoretical intervention by challenging dominant narratives that explain INGO–LNGO power asymmetries primarily through financial dependency and institutional dominance (Tvedt, 2006; Fowler, 2000; Doane, 2019). Rather than portraying LNGOs as passive recipients within donor-led frameworks (Edwards & Hulme, 1998; Altahir, 2016; Peace Direct, 2020), this research foregrounds their agency and capacity to shape partnership dynamics through non-financial forms of power. It repositions LNGOs as strategic actors, capable of negotiating influence through institutional strength, community legitimacy, and embedded networks.

Empirical evidence from this study demonstrates that LNGO1 was not merely included in the peacebuilding partnership through benevolent inclusion by the INGO; rather, the INGO's engagement with LNGO1 was a strategic decision driven by the latter's embeddedness, organizational credibility, and technical expertise. This local organization's internal structural capacity—encompassing community legitimacy, professional competence, public visibility, and transparent governance—translated into tangible bargaining power. These dynamics counter the prevailing assumption that financial capital is the primary determinant of influence in Global South-North NGO relationships (Tvedt, 2006).

Specifically, the study illustrates how LNGO1 leveraged various institutional assets to strengthen its bargaining position, which is consistent with existing literature. Community embeddedness fostered trust and access, providing grassroots legitimacy often absent in INGOs (Mac Ginty, 2010; Autesserre, 2014). Robust governance mechanisms, such as active boards and transparency protocols, enhanced institutional credibility and negotiation leverage (Brass et al., 2018). Strategic networking with policymakers and peer organizations helped counterbalance INGO dominance and increase policy influence (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Public visibility/reputation functioned as symbolic capital, shifting the power balance within the partnership (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Although financial asymmetry remains a persistent structural constraint, this finding underscores the ways LNGOs can mitigate dependency and enhance influence through strategic investments in institutional capacity. The finding resonates with the broader literature on resistance and negotiation in Global South-North relations (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Bebbington et al., 2008; Banks & Brockington, 2019), and contributes to emerging scholarship that emphasizes mutual accountability and locally driven engagement in development partnerships (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Elbers & Schulpen, 2013; Rocha Menocal & Sharma, 2008).

Theoretically, this repositioning of LNGO agency carries several implications: First, it aligns with Barnett and Duvall's (2005) concept of productive power, which highlights how influence is exerted not only through material resources but also through social legitimacy, institutional positioning, and discursive authority. Second, it extends development scholarship that recognizes the strategic

capacity of local actors (Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Banks et al., 2020), by showing how internal structures can be harnessed to assert autonomy and co-determine partnership terms. Third, it supports critical peacebuilding literature that critiques externally imposed models and calls for the recognition of local agency in shaping intervention strategies (Mac Ginty, 2010; Autesserre, 2014; Richmond, 2011; Paffenholz, 2014).

Consequently, this finding offers a theoretically grounded and empirically rich perspective on development partnerships, peacebuilding, and global governance (IR). It argues that LNGO agency—rooted in community legitimacy, institutional capability, and strategic positioning—is central to reshaping INGO–LNGO relationships, rather than being merely dependent on INGO concessions. By positioning LNGOs as co-architects of partnership frameworks, this research reframes localization not as a benevolent gesture from INGOs, but as a dynamic and negotiated process in which power, identity, and everyday interactions are continually constructed and contested. These micro-level relations among NGO actors form the everyday practices of international relations, which ultimately shape broader dynamics in global politics (Solomon & Steele, 2017; Acuto, 2014; Croft & Vaughan-Williams, 2017; Björkdahl, Hall & Svensson, 2019).

3 Community-Level Impact of Peacebuilding NGO Partnerships

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution to peacebuilding and development literature by empirically demonstrating that NGO-led peacebuilding partnerships can generate tangible benefits at the community level. Specifically, the findings highlight how these partnerships contribute to localized conflict mitigation and community development through strategically interlinked interventions. In the context of the Nigerian farmer-herder conflict in North Central Nigeria, the partnership implemented a dual-track approach involving conflict resolution training and collaborative economic infrastructure, reflecting an integrated peacebuilding model.

The partnership's interventions included dispute resolution training, workshops on interest-based negotiation and mediation, and the construction of shared infrastructure such as local markets, agro-processing centres, boreholes, and joint farming initiatives. These activities align with scholarship that emphasizes the synergy between economic interdependence and social cohesion in fostering community resilience (Lederach, 1997; Brottem, 2014). The development components were not ancillary, but fundamental to the peacebuilding process—illustrating how development practice and peacebuilding logic can mutually reinforce one another at the grassroots level.

The training interventions were designed to build sustainable, inclusive conflict resolution capacity among local leaders. This resonates with broader peacebuilding literature that underscores the importance of "local ownership" and culturally embedded peace infrastructures (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011). The conflict resolution components addressed both immediate interpersonal disputes and long-term institutional capacity for peace. Simultaneously, economic cooperation

initiatives aimed to foster interdependence between historically polarized groups—most notably farmers and herders, whose tensions intersect ethnic and religious divides. This approach echoes theories in development and anthropology that stress how shared economic interests can catalyze trust-building and social capital regeneration in divided societies (Putnam, 2000; Ifedayo, 2023).

Empirical evidence from the study revealed that approximately 700 community leaders were trained and subsequently facilitated the resolution of over 400 disputes involving land use competition, livestock encroachment, and retaliatory violence. These outcomes affirm the theoretical importance of community-level dispute resolution mechanisms in conflict transformation theory, which posits that grassroots mechanisms are essential for preventing local disputes from escalating into broader instability (Lederach, 1997; Babatunde & Ibnouf, 2024).

Participants widely reported increased confidence and autonomy in managing local disputes, attesting to the transformative potential of sustained capacity-building. This aligns with Nnaji et al. (2022), who argue that empowered local actors can meaningfully alter rural conflict trajectories. Notably, the training not only provided technical mediation skills but also cultivated psychological readiness, enhancing participants' confidence to engage constructively in conflict situations.

While these interventions did not address the structural roots of the conflict—such as the unresolved demand for formal grazing corridors—they nonetheless make an important theoretical contribution. The findings support arguments in critical peacebuilding literature that peacebuilding need not await a comprehensive political settlement to be impactful (Richmond, 2011; Zhang & Liu, 2024). Indeed, delaying peacebuilding efforts until state-level transformations occur can risk deepening local grievances and forfeiting opportunities for incremental peace (Mac Ginty, 2008). This study demonstrates that micro-level interventions, grounded in local agency and embedded institutions, can generate meaningful reductions in hostilities and support the gradual rebuilding of fractured relationships.

Joint infrastructure projects—markets, boreholes, and processing centres—served both developmental and peacebuilding purposes. These shared spaces enabled intergroup interaction and informal cooperation, reinforcing the concept of "everyday peace" (Mac Ginty, 2014), where peace is cultivated through mundane, day-to-day engagement rather than through formal negotiations. Community members reported increased cross-group communication, phone exchanges, and cooperative use of shared resources—confirming sociological theories that social trust and cohesion often emerge through routine, low-intensity interactions (Putnam, 2000; Adelaja & George, 2019).

Furthermore, the interventions had notable psychosocial impacts. Youth participants, many of whom had previously held hardened views shaped by prolonged exposure to violence, began to soften these attitudes through involvement in joint economic ventures. This transformation supports research in conflict psychology suggesting that collaborative activity and role redefinition can disrupt radicalization

trajectories and foster empathy and perspective-taking (Queen's University Belfast, 2025; Muhammed et al., 2024).

Although these localized interventions did not dismantle structural inequalities, nor achieved sustainable peace in the longrun, they exemplify the potential of hybrid peacebuilding approaches that combine external support with local agency (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011). The study illustrates that community-level partnerships can achieve developmental and peacebuilding gains even within broader contexts of state fragility and unresolved structural grievances.

In theoretical terms, this finding reinforces the argument that sustainable development and peacebuilding are interdependent in the Global South (Campbell, 2018). It contributes to literature that calls for reconceptualizing peacebuilding not as a top-down or sequential process, but as one grounded in iterative, context-sensitive, and community-driven everyday practices. By linking peacebuilding with localized development through strategic NGO partnerships, this study underscores the potential for NGOs to serve as conduits for transformative change in protracted conflict environments.

4 Partnership Quality as a Determinant of Peacebuilding Effectiveness

This dissertation makes a significant theoretical contribution by critically rethinking the role of partnership quality in shaping peacebuilding effectiveness. While existing literature on INGO–LNGO relationships in the Global South has called attention to persistent power asymmetries and their implications for project implementation, participation, and accountability (Contu & Girei, 2014), such insights remain underexplored in the peacebuilding domain. These dynamics have received more sustained engagement in sectors such as health, WASH, and human rights (Olawoore & Kamruzzaman, 2019; Welle, 2001; Malavisi, 2010), but peacebuilding scholarship—particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings like Nigeria—has yet to adequately interrogate how these power relations play out in everyday partnership practices (Höglund & Lilja, 2018; Kolk & Lenfant, 2015; Quadrant & Haufler, 2008; Onodugu, Onu & Onodugu, 2021; Ukiyedeimie, 2023; Adzande, 2022).

Addressing this gap, the study advances the concept of *participatory exclusion* by moving beyond critiques of tokenistic engagement (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2006). It documents how seemingly inclusive processes often mask decision-making hierarchies that centralize authority within INGOs. The empirical evidence demonstrates that procedural participation—such as initial community consultations—frequently lacks substantive influence. This results in what Cooke and Kothari (2001) termed the "tyranny of participation," wherein engagement becomes a performative exercise to legitimize predetermined agendas. Significantly, this finding nuances prevailing assumptions in the literature that equate exclusion with the absence of participation (Kharisma, 2017), showing instead that exclusion can co-exist with formal inclusion when partnerships retain vertical control.

Furthermore, the dissertation illustrates how unequal, transactional partnerships compromise local ownership, community trust, and sustainability. The lack of jointly developed exit strategies and follow-up mechanisms underscores a subcontracting model in which LNGOs are utilized for implementation but marginalized from strategic planning. The post-project collapse of several initiatives reflects this structural deficiency, aligning with critiques of liberal peacebuilding and technocratic development that prioritize short-term deliverables over community-embedded systems (Zvaita & Mbara, 2019; Saaida, 2023; De Coning, 2016). The issue here is not merely resource constraints but partnership models that fail to recognize local actors as co-owners of the peacebuilding process.

The study also reveals the disempowerment of LNGOs, who, despite their community proximity and contextual knowledge, remain constrained by donor-driven priorities and hierarchical governance structures. This echoes broader critiques of localization discourse, where rhetorical commitments to local agency are undermined by institutional logics that prioritize upward accountability to donors rather than horizontal accountability to local communities (Werker & Ahmed, 2008; Hilhorst, 2003). As a result, the very actors best positioned to foster trust and sustain peace at the grassroots are relegated to instrumental roles. These findings reinforce the need to shift beyond operational considerations to view partnerships as political sites where power, legitimacy, and voice are negotiated.

In addition, the research exposes a persistent accountability deficit within INGO–LNGO partnerships. Despite normative frameworks advocating downward accountability to communities (Werekoh, 2014), accountability structures continue to prioritize donor expectations. The exclusion of community input from design and evaluation stages undermines the legitimacy of interventions and deepens local disempowerment. Once again, the quality and structure of partnerships emerge as central mediators of these outcomes.

In conclusion, this dissertation offers a theoretically grounded and empirically rich contribution to peacebuilding, international development, and international relations. It demonstrates that partnership quality is not a peripheral concern but a foundational determinant of intervention success. The study reconceptualizes partnerships not as neutral, technical arrangements, but as dynamic, negotiated spaces where power asymmetries, participatory hierarchies, and accountability structures intersect to shape peacebuilding outcomes. By foregrounding the everyday micro-relations of NGO actors, it contributes to the growing scholarship on *everyday international relations*, postcolonial critiques of development, and the politics of local voice. To foster durable, community-rooted peace, INGOs and LNGOs must reimagine their relationships as collaborative processes marked by shared accountability, genuine participation, and locally anchored legitimacy.

5 NGO Roles in the Farmer–Herder Conflict in Nigeria

Despite the protracted and escalating nature of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria's North Central region since the early 1990s—marked by recurrent violence, displacement, and social fragmentation—scholarly engagement with peacebuilding interventions in this context has remained limited and largely speculative. While existing literature has extensively examined the conflict's historical, ecological, ethnic, and religious dimensions (Adzande, 2022; CDD, n.d.), there has been little empirical investigation into the identities, roles, and practices of peacebuilding actors operating on the ground. The absence of systematic documentation of these actors and their activities constitutes a critical gap in both peacebuilding and conflict resolution scholarship. This dissertation addressed that gap by offering an empirically grounded account of who is involved, what peacebuilding interventions they implement, how these are executed, and with what outcomes.

Through a case study approach (Chapter Four, section 4.4), the study identifies one international NGO (INGO) and two local NGOs (LNGOs) actively engaged in peacebuilding in the conflict in the region. It investigates not only their individual roles but also the dynamics of their partnership, the influence of state (non)involvement, and the effects of these interventions in the selected communities. This mapping of the peacebuilding landscape provides a foundational empirical contribution to a field that has, until now, lacked concrete data on actor composition and operational mechanisms in Nigeria's farmer-herder conflict. In doing so, the study builds directly on Adzande's (2022) call for empirical insight into conflict response and actor identification, thereby moving the literature from diagnosis of the conflict's causes toward the interrogation of peacebuilding practice itself, including peacebuilding NGO partnerships, intervention effectiveness, and state support.

The findings reveal that the peacebuilding terrain is fragmented, weakly coordinated, and shaped by asymmetrical power relations, particularly between INGOs and LNGOs. Rather than a cohesive or strategic response to the conflict, interventions are characterized by short-term projects, externally driven mandates, and limited engagement with local or state institutional frameworks. This substantiates and extends critiques in peacebuilding and development literature regarding top-down, technocratic models that often instrumentalize local actors without genuinely empowering them (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2006; De Coning, 2016). By empirically documenting the nature of actor relationships and the fragmented modalities of intervention, this dissertation affirms that structural factors—such as donor-driven programming, unequal partnerships, and absent or ineffective state collaboration—profoundly shape peacebuilding outcomes and effectiveness.

The findings indicate limited collaboration with host government institutions and traditional authorities, which undermines the legitimacy, scalability, and sustainability of interventions. This not only reinforces the literature on weak state–NGO coordination in fragile contexts (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011; Höglund & Lilja, 2018), but also advances theoretical understanding of how the institutional ecology surrounding peacebuilding actors affects the prospects of systemic change.

By explicitly tracing the interrelationship between actor identity, partnership dynamics, and institutional engagement, this study contributes both empirically and theoretically to peacebuilding research. It nuances the common assumption that the mere presence of NGOs equates to meaningful peacebuilding. Instead, it highlights that the effectiveness of NGO interventions is contingent upon their relational positioning—both with each other and with state structures—as well as the degree to which they facilitate or hinder local agency. The study thus supports recent arguments that sustainable peace cannot be externally engineered but must be locally owned, contextually grounded, and institutionally supported (De Coning, 2016; Richmond, 2011).

To reiterate, this dissertation makes a significant contribution by empirically identifying and analyzing the roles of NGOs in a specific, underexplored conflict context, the farmer-herder conflict, while simultaneously enriching broader theoretical debates about power, coordination, and effectiveness in peacebuilding practice. By situating NGO action within a multi-actor, multi-level governance framework, the study offers a robust evidence base for designing more coherent, inclusive, and durable peacebuilding strategies in Nigeria and beyond.

6 The Absence of State Support as a Critical Constraint

Existing literature affirms that externally driven peacebuilding efforts cannot operate in isolation but must intersect with national policy frameworks and institutional peacebuilding infrastructures to be effective and sustainable (De Coning, 2016; Akande et al., 2021; Lederach, 2012). However, while Nigeria has established formal structures such as the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)—active since 2000 and responsible for formulating the National Peace Policy in 2009—empirical insight into how these institutions support or coordinate NGO-led peacebuilding remains scant (IPCR, 2009; Olalekan, 2023). Although peacebuilding activities continue across Nigeria (CDD, n.d.; Adzande, 2022), there is a marked absence of studies interrogating the interface between formal institutional frameworks and community-level NGO interventions. This dissertation addressed this gap by empirically demonstrating how the absence of state support critically undermines the effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability of NGO-led peacebuilding in rural Nigerian communities.

This finding makes a substantial theoretical contribution by filling the gap in literature that has not previously mapped or examined the operational disconnect between institutional peacebuilding governance and grassroots interventions (Olalekan, 2023). While theories of hybrid or complementary peacebuilding emphasise the necessity of state–non-state synergy (De Coning, 2016; Lederach, 2012), the empirical evidence in this study reveals a stark vacuum across key institutional dimensions: no policy direction or support, no collaboration with NGOs, no implementation oversight, and no state-led coordination mechanisms (Chapter 7, Section 7.5). In this institutional void, NGOs implemented peace interventions without alignment to state frameworks, community governance systems, or national priorities. The result was a pattern of fragmented, short-term interventions that failed to generate durable peace outcomes.

Theoretically, this challenges the prevailing assumption in peacebuilding literature that institutional presence is sufficient to enhance intervention effectiveness. The Nigerian case reveals that mere institutional existence does not translate into institutional functionality. Despite its formal mandate, the IPCR lacked the operational capacity, political will, and community reach necessary to support or coordinate local peacebuilding efforts. This insight nuances the arguments made by De Coning (2016) and Akande et al. (2021), who stress the importance of state-NGO synergy but do not fully account for how institutional dysfunction can render such synergy aspirational rather than actual.

By shifting the analytical focus from state absence to state dysfunction, this study advances post-liberal critiques of peacebuilding that have traditionally emphasised the imposition of Western-centric models and external dominance (Paris, 2002; Richmond, 2011). It refines these critiques by showing that, in contexts like Nigeria, internal institutional weaknesses—manifested in bureaucratic inertia, limited reach, and weak accountability—can be just as obstructive to sustainable peace as international impositions. This reframing brings empirical weight to broader theoretical debates in African peacebuilding scholarship, which increasingly question whether states in fragile contexts possess the capacity to act as reliable partners in peace governance (Mac Ginty, 2010; Murithi, 2008; Zambakari, 2016).

Furthermore, this finding complicates prevailing interpretations of INGO–LNGO partnerships in the Global South. While scholars often critique INGOs for dominating local partners in strategic and financial terms (Banks & Hulme, 2014; Elbers & Schulpen, 2013), this study shows that LNGOs are constrained not only by unequal partnerships but also by the state's institutional void, which deprives them of policy guidance, legitimacy, and platforms for scaling impact. In this light, NGO capacity is not merely a function of donor dynamics but is co-constructed by the institutional ecology in which NGOs operate. A comprehensive evaluation of peacebuilding effectiveness, therefore, must incorporate both international-local power dynamics and the mediating role of state institutions—particularly their failures.

In challenging the liberal assumption that state collaboration inherently enhances peacebuilding outcomes, this dissertation offers a critical theoretical shift: it is not institutional presence but institutional performance—defined by political will, coherence, and capacity—that determines whether peacebuilding efforts can succeed. The Nigerian experience illustrates that when state institutions like the IPCR are nominally present but functionally absent, they fail to provide the enabling environment needed for sustained and locally embedded peace. This institutional hollowness undermines legitimacy, erodes coordination, and leads to the breakdown of interventions.

This insight contributes to a more context-sensitive and institutionally grounded theory of peacebuilding in the Global South. It underscores that successful peacebuilding is contingent on three interdependent pillars: equitable NGO partnerships, locally grounded practices, and functional state

institutions. Where any of these is absent—or, as in this case, where institutional frameworks exist only on paper—the effectiveness of peacebuilding is fundamentally compromised.

In sum, this dissertation makes a significant empirical and theoretical contribution by demonstrating that state dysfunction—not just absence—serves as a structural constraint on NGO-led peacebuilding in fragile contexts. It refines liberal and post-liberal peacebuilding frameworks by bringing state institutional capacity into sharper analytical focus. This insight has far-reaching implications for peacebuilding practice and research in Africa, where institutional fragility often remains the invisible constraint. By empirically exposing how weak governance architectures in Nigeria actively shape—and limit—intervention outcomes, the study contributes to evolving debates in peacebuilding studies, development theory, and international relations. It calls for a recalibration of peacebuilding models to foreground not only the agency of local and international actors but also the enabling or constraining role of the state. In fragile settings like Nigeria, institutional performance, not just presence, must become a central analytical and operational concern in the pursuit of sustainable peace.

Generally, and by way of summarizing, this dissertation offers an empirically grounded and theoretically enriched account of INGO–LNGO peacebuilding partnerships, revealing how structural inequalities, performative localism, and uneven power dynamics shape everyday practices in global governance. While INGO–LNGO collaborations are often framed in the discourse of partnership and local ownership, the findings demonstrate the persistence of postcolonial hierarchies and technocratic rationalities that marginalize community voice and disempower local actors (Fowler, 2000; Contu & Girei, 2014; Richmond, 2011). Yet, the study also highlights moments of resistance and agency, showing how LNGOs can reconfigure their positionality through institutional capacity and grassroots legitimacy—thereby challenging the performativity of localization from within (Mac Ginty, 2014; Acuto, 2014). By centering the lived experiences of communities and local NGOs, the research contributes to the growing literature on everyday international relations, where emotions, trust, and relationality matter as much as institutional frameworks (Solomon & Steele, 2017; Björkdahl et al., 2019). Ultimately, this dissertation calls for a reimagining of peacebuilding as a dialogic, co-creative process rooted in local voice, emotional geographies, and horizontal accountability—thus advancing a postcolonial and community-anchored vision of sustainable peace and development.

Having examined the dissertation’s empirical and theoretical contributions to the literature, the next section addresses the study's limitations.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

This section discusses the limitations encountered during the research process.

One of the primary challenges faced in this study was a methodological limitation. The research initially proposed the use of face-to-face qualitative interviews as a primary data collection method. In-person interviews allow for direct interaction with respondents, enabling the researcher to observe

facial expressions and body language, which serve as non-verbal cues that enrich qualitative data collection (Opdenakker, 2006). However, due to the timing of the fieldwork—during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic—travel restrictions and safety concerns necessitated a methodological shift. Additionally, the persistent insecurity in the North Central region of Nigeria, exacerbated by violent conflicts, further constrained physical access to interviewees. In response to these challenges, the Ethics Committee mandated a transition from face-to-face interviews to online interviews.

To mitigate this limitation, video calls were employed for most of the interviews. This adaptation ensured that the researcher could still observe participants' facial expressions and other visual cues, thereby maintaining some of the benefits of in-person interactions. Previous studies have demonstrated that video conferencing can be an effective tool for qualitative research, as it allows for real-time engagement while ensuring participant safety (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). Furthermore, the flexibility of online interviews enabled the researcher to expand the participant pool beyond the initially proposed 25 individuals, ultimately interviewing 35 participants through a snowball sampling technique. This unexpected outcome enhanced the breadth of perspectives captured, turning an initial limitation into a methodological advantage.

Another significant limitation of this research was the requirement to maintain the anonymity of participating organizations, individuals, and communities. This decision was made in consultation with the Ethics Committee due to the sensitive nature of the study. While anonymity is a crucial ethical consideration, especially in research involving conflict-affected regions, it can also pose challenges in presenting a nuanced human dimension to the study. Anonymity may create a sense of detachment, as specific actors cannot be directly referenced, potentially limiting the depth of contextual understanding (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015).

To address this issue, the researcher adopted a detailed descriptive approach, providing rich contextual information about the organizations, individuals, and communities involved without compromising their confidentiality. This approach aligns with best practices in qualitative research, where anonymity is balanced with detailed narrative descriptions to enhance credibility and reader engagement (Kaiser, 2009). By employing these strategies, the study was able to preserve ethical integrity while still offering meaningful insights into the research findings.

8.5 Opportunities for Further Research

Further research is necessary to empirically examine a broader range of INGO-LNGO partnership relations in Nigeria and Africa within the context of peacebuilding. This would allow for a more comprehensive exploration of the opportunities and challenges associated with liberal peacebuilding in Africa, particularly in relation to collaborative projects between INGOs and LNGOs. Expanding the scope of research on peacebuilding partnerships would enhance the generalizability of the findings

from this dissertation and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of partnership dynamics in different contexts.

Additionally, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts aimed at resolving farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria. While this study has addressed this issue within the framework of INGO-led peacebuilding, further empirical research is needed to examine the interventions of other INGOs working on this conflict. Such investigations could provide deeper insights into why these interventions have not yielded sustainable peace on a larger scale, especially given the protracted nature of the conflict, its increasing intensity, and the substantial resources committed to resolving it (Adzande, 2022).

Furthermore, this research identified a lack of conceptual clarity among INGO and LNGO staff regarding the principles of partnership as outlined by scholars such as Fowler (1998). There remains considerable ambiguity surrounding the meaning of partnership, even among senior management and decision-makers. Future research should explore the extent to which INGOs and LNGOs comprehend the concept of partnership and its practical implications. Understanding this gap is crucial, as expecting organizations to engage in meaningful partnerships without a clear grasp of the concept presents a fundamental challenge to effective collaboration.

8.6 Conclusions

This chapter outlined the key findings of the study, highlighting their implications and contributions to existing literature. It provided a comprehensive synthesis of the dissertation's results, organized around the three central research questions that guided the study. Specifically, it explored the nature of the partnership between an international non-governmental organization (INGO) and two local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs) within a project-based collaboration. It also examined how this partnership influenced the effectiveness of the intervention and assessed the extent to which weak institutional support for peacebuilding in Nigeria posed challenges to its success.

Employing a qualitative methodology and utilizing Alan Fowler's APP as an analytical lens, the dissertation demonstrated that the INGO-LNGO partnership within the selected peacebuilding case study was fundamentally inauthentic and asymmetrical. The research further established that the nature of INGO-LNGO partnerships in peacebuilding critically affects the overall efficacy of interventions. Specifically, it revealed that unequal partnerships contribute to suboptimal sustainability outcomes, restrict meaningful community engagement, and reinforce top-down decision-making structures that undermine local agency. Additionally, the findings underscored that while the presence of an institutional peacebuilding framework is crucial for the success of NGO-led interventions, its efficacy is contingent on its functionality and active engagement.

The chapter also reflected on the methodological limitations of the study, particularly the reliance on online video interviews instead of in-person interactions and the constraints associated with ensuring

the anonymity of key stakeholders. Despite these challenges, the research offers valuable insights and highlights three key areas for future investigation. First, further empirical studies are required to examine INGO-LNGO partnership dynamics in Nigeria and across Africa within peacebuilding contexts, thereby deepening the understanding of both the potentials and pitfalls of liberal peacebuilding models in joint projects. Second, additional research is needed to explore peacebuilding efforts specifically related to the farmer–herder conflict, with a focus on understanding the persistent challenges that impede sustainable peace. Lastly, further inquiry should investigate the extent to which INGOs and LNGOs comprehend and operationalize the concept of “partnership” in their collaborative engagements.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a more nuanced and contextually informed discourse on peacebuilding partnerships, ultimately fostering more effective and equitable collaboration between international and local actors in conflict resolution and sustainable peace efforts.

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Project documents List

Document #1: Operational plan for Nigeria 2011 - 2015

Document #2: Operational plan for Nigeria 2011 - 2016

Document #3: Initial program design

Document #4: Annual project review, 2015

Document #5: Final impact evaluation of the project by an independent consultant

Document #6: Annual report 2013 (LNGO 2)

Document #7: Annual report 2014 (LNGO 2)

Document #8: Annual report 2016 (LNGO 2)

Document #9: LNGO 2's website

Document #10: LNGO 1's website

Document #11: INGO's memo to the Nigerian parliament 2015

Document#12: Project report of funder and INGO's collaboration in Somalia and Ethiopia, 2011

Interviews

Interview #1: Funder, Senior program manager, 01/09/2023

Interview #2: INGO, Deputy chief of party, 27/06/2022

Interview #3: LNGO 1, Executive Director, 27/09/2022

Interview #4: LNGO 1, Finance officer, 3/10/2023 Interview#5:

LNGO 1, Project officer, 27/10/2023

Interview #6: LNGO 2, Program Manager, 12/09/2022, 10/07/2023

Interview #7: LNGO 2, Project Coordinator, 27/09/2023

Interview #8: Development expert, Chief Executive Officer, 6/10/2022

Interview #9: Development expert, Chief Executive Officer, 29/09/2022

Interview #10: Development expert, National Coordinator, 03/10/2023

Interview #11: Development expert, Country Director, 03/10/2023

Interview #12: Development expert, Director of governance, livelihood and peacebuilding, 05/10/2023

Interview #13: Host community 1, Village head, 11/09/2022 Interview

#14: Host community 1, Head of farmers, 11/09/2022 Interview #15:

Host community 1, Head of herders, 11/09/2022 Interview #16: Host

community 2, Village head, 08/08/2022 Interview #17: Host

community 2, Youth leader, 08/08/2022 Interview #18: Host

community 2, Head of herders, 08/08/2022 Interview #19: Host

community 3, Youth leader, 15/10/2022 Interview #20: Host

community 3, Women leader, 15/10/2022 Interview #21: Host

community 3, Head of herders, 15/10/2022 Interview #22: Host

community 3, Head of farmers, 15/10/2022 Interview #23: Host

community 4, Village head, 09/07/2022 Interview #24: Host

community 4, Women leader, 09/07/2022 Interview #25: Host

community 4, Head of herders, 09/07/2022 Interview #26: Host

community 4, Head of farmers, 09/07/2022 Interview #27: Host

community 5, Village head, 13/08/2022 Interview #28: Host

community 6, Village head, 10/08/2022 Interview #29: Host

community 7, Head of farmers, 07/09/2022 Interview #30: Host

community 7, Head of herders, 07/09/2022

Interview #31: Ministry of foreign affairs (IPCR), Director General, 09/10/2022

Interview #32: Host community 8, Village head, 18/10/2023 Interview

#33: Host community 8, Head of herders, 18/10/2023 Interview #34:

Host community 8, Women leader, 19/10/2023 Interview #35: Host

community 8, Head of farmers, 19/10/2023