



## Community-Based Organisations' Collaboration in Promoting Sustainable Peace in Communities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract.** This study is aimed at assessing the community-based organisations' collaboration in promoting sustainable peace in communities in Rivers State. Two research objectives and questions guided the study. The descriptive research design was adopted. The population of the study was 2,718 Members of 113 community-based organisations in the three senatorial districts of Rivers State. The sample size for this study was 1,359 members of 56 community-based organisations (CBOs) in the study local government areas. The sampling technique that was adopted for this study was the multi-stage sampling procedure involving the use of purposive and proportionate sampling. A structured questionnaire titled 'Collaborating with Community Based Organisations in Promoting Sustainable Peace (CBOCPSPQ)' was used for data collection. The responses were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The study identified that collaborating with community-based organisations brings about intelligent gathering, partnership with relevant security agents to reduce violent crime and enlightenment to the people on current security issues and strong advocacy for social justice among others. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that there should be constant collaboration between state actors and relevant community-based organisations in order to attain the target of crime prevention in the community.

**Keywords:** Community Based Organisations, Security, Sustainability, Peace, Social Justice.

### 1. Introduction

The issue of sustainable peace in the society has been one of the major concerns in most discourses. The reason for the concern is because there can hardly be any significant development in any society where there is no peace. This concern informed the need to encourage the involvement of the Community-Based Organisations which operates at the grass-root level to complement efforts of the government towards ensuring the attainment of sustainable peace is community based.

In Nigeria, there used to be relative peace between and among various ethnic groups before the advent of current security challenges. However, the scary situation of insecurity in the state is a thing of grave concern for all. In Rivers State which is the treasure base of Nigeria, there has been the news about various types of violent crimes and heinous security issues in recent times. For this reason, Eze (2015) reported the alarming issues of insecurity and violent crimes being perpetuated on seemingly daily basis in some communities. Similarly, communities such as Oboburu, Ibaa, Kpoghor, Ogali, Ebubu, Bunu Tai among other communities were at some point affected by issues of violent crimes and insecurity that retarded peace and development.

In this direction, the community-based organisations can be collaborated with to bring about social justice, prevention of violent crimes and conflicts through the use of peace education programmes as an aspect of adult education to promote sustainable peace among the communities in Rivers State. It is the most used

approach in crime prevention in contemporary society. Koledoye (2019) identified some basic principles underlying the crime prevention strategies as follows:

- Effective leadership development and humane crime prevention by maintaining institutional frameworks and implementation.
- Inclusive socio-economic development that focuses on integration of crime prevention in all important social and economic policies.
- Cooperation and partnership with adult education programmes and community-based organisations like women group, youth wing, men organisation, Non-government etc.
- Knowledge base on multi-disciplinary programmes such as adult education, vocational education, agricultural education and community education.

However, these basic principles may be very difficult to achieve in a nation such Nigeria. It is also indicated that collaborating with community-based organisations in peace and security maintenance in respective communities has been an age long practice right from the time of the settlement of America where local communities were the first peace officers patrolling streets as volunteers. But, along the line the practice lost its hegemony in the mid-nineteenth century after the introduction of a formal policing system thereby rendering this approach to crime prevention passive (Manaliyo, 2016). Manaliyo further justified the participation of community-based organisations in crime prevention activities as a result of the fact that they know the crime problems and localities better than the state actors, making it very imperative to collaborate with to achieve sustainable peace in the local communities. Without this collaboration, it is very impossible for the security agencies to achieve any tangible result in crime reduction. The advantages of community-based organisations in crime prevention over state actors are based on the easy ways at which they get intelligent information about crimes and criminals in the community. This statement therefore implies that crimes cannot be prevented by state actors alone. Accordingly, Ajie (2020) added that preventing crimes in the communities requires that those measures and actions aimed at building peace and security are taken early enough to avoid the tendency of increasing rate of crime in the society. It is further believed that the achievement is made possible due to the fact that the community-based organisations are

directly linked to the grass-root where most of these crimes are committed and equally, they are disposed to volunteering information that may either lead to apprehending culprits.

Besides, community-based organisations such as local vigilantes and private security men in most cases have assisted in arresting violent crimes in the communities. The formation of local vigilante is the commonest pattern of engagement in community security architecture. The vigilantes are mostly male youths who on voluntary basis avail themselves to solve the security problems confronting respective communities. In some cases, residents take turns in guiding their areas, especially at night. The vigilantes perform their security duty using machetes, clubs for self-defence, and whistles to raise alarm for possible attack, torchlight and lamps to see the movement of objects and humans mostly at night. In some communities they share phone contacts for easy ways of sending security information within the neighbourhood and whenever suspicious persons are caught, they are well interrogated to determine the identity before they are prosecuted (Ijah and Patrick (2019). However, Chikwendu, Nwankwo and Oli (2016) stated that a number of factors are responsible for the emergence of vigilante groups in the state. Perhaps, due to the fact that police are very brutal to the people, corrupt and their inability to protect the lives and properties of the people among others provided the occasion for rise in community effort in establishing local vigilante groups for their own security. Corroborating this assertion, Aminu (2016) observed the emergence of the alternative community-based security institutions otherwise known as vigilante groups as one that have assisted in crime prevention and control in Nigeria. The reason being that the group has the ability to identify a criminal no matter how the criminal identity is been concealed. According to this view, members of the group move from one community to the other, fishing out criminals, arresting and punishing them appropriately. Although, the process recognises some unfortunate extra-judicial position in its methodologies to fighting crimes, it is better appreciated and incorporated to the complement the mainstream security efforts for a significant reduction of crime rate in the society. Ajie (2020) observed that many individuals, establishments cum communities in the area are beneficiaries of the informal security system, especially in the last few years of upsurge in violence and organised crimes that saw the failure and inability of the law enforcement agency to live up to their responsibilities. For this reason, it is further

advocated that job opportunities be created for the youth as a means of reducing restiveness and crime rate. This will engender the anticipated development in the area. Lyeon (2020) also assert that if adequate arrangements are made to improve the security prowess of this group, it will help in improving the security situations in Nigeria. On this basis, the tiers of government alongside other private organisations are expected to vote in enough resources to make it sustainable. Integrating the local community security structure in fighting criminalities would promote adequate security networking that will enhance the holistic view of securing the area.

Accordingly, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM, 2018) noted the importance of preventing violent crimes is to enable the attainment of sustainable peace that will eventually translate to development stipulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; this is because sustainable peace will promote social interactions, mobilization and opportunity to networks with experts to attain common purpose. Besides, Shamsideen (2016) stated that preventing violent crimes can be made possible using various adult education strategies at the expense of community-based organisations. This is because its policies promote democracy and peace in the communities. Accordingly, Ugwu (2019) referred to such adult education programme as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that enables the prevention of crimes and conflict for sustainable peace. The programme in the same way can serve as a paradigm to promote pro-social behaviour among people. Cossyleon (2019) contended that preventing crime can also form part of programme implementation to help educate youth about the risks of crime. Some of these educational programmes include: Neighbourhood Watch; Drug Abuse Resistance Education; and Gang Resistance Education and Training, will enhance involvement of a variety of actors, including government agencies, residents, neighbourhood associations and town unions, non-profit organisations, and local private businesses for sustainability of peace. Alemika (2011) reported the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch services in crime prevention, with a particular reference to Borno and Adamawa states of Nigeria. The report showed that the rate of crimes decreased substantially in the experimental areas than in the control areas. Sharing intelligent information for crime prevention among people reciprocally and freely is crucial to sanctioning criminals. This is more likely in communities where there is presence of

homogeneity and mobility of social networks of family members, business associates, church members, school children, social club members and so on. The informal social controls mechanisms of shaming, condemnation, corporal punishment, isolation, and other detrimental consequences convicted offenders, have a role to play in preventing and deterring criminal activities especially when imposed by family members, friends and neighbours (Manaliyo and Muzindutsi 2013). The approach strongly supports the traditional model of arresting crimes in the community. Again, Ajie (2020) asserted the need to enforce these strategies at the community level to assist communities prevent various forms of criminal activities for a peaceful and just atmosphere that will enable a strong sense of belonging and development. But, Akpa (2012) suggested that the effectiveness of these strategies depend largely on the following:

- **Interpersonal Relationship:** The strategy is likely to encourage intimacy, affection and social feeling among people for improved security.
- **Optimism:** Developing and sustaining a positive attitude in the midst of daunting security challenges is capable of keeping hope alive in the community.
- **Self-Actualisation:** The system that allows an individual's potentials and experience to be harnessed in order to solve perceived problems.
- **Empathy:** The ability to become aware of, understand, and appreciate the feelings of others for peaceful co-existence.
- **Social Responsibility:** The display of sense of responsibility and emotional intelligence to provide purposeful leadership germane to the security of the communities.
- **Emotional Self-Awareness:** Having a good time to recognise and reflect on emotions that affect interpersonal interactions, decision making and overall performance.

Besides, community-based organisations also help to advocate for social injustice. Social justice is seen as a philosophical theory that promotes the concept of fairness among people in terms of socio-economic, political and social opportunities (Ajie, 2020). According to Aguti (2017) social justice is a cornerstone for the promotion of a just society where people are equitably treated, human rights respected and scarce resources are allocated without discrimination; it is represented by fair and unbiased process where freedom of individuals to express sense of reasoning or belonging and equal

opportunities without institutionalized domination, oppression within the community. It is also a system of good governance where every person is subject to the jurisdiction of the rule of law, irrespective of social status in the community. In this direction the recent global summits, the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg (WSSD) in 2002, strengthened the link between human rights and sustainable development that was enunciated in the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. While the Copenhagen Summit noted that sustainable development is not possible unless human rights are protected for all, the Johannesburg Conference focused on the relationship between human beings and the natural environment (Temitope, 2010). Based on this reason, Essien (2014) noted that it is evident that many community-based organisations such as Campaign for Democracy (CD), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and Civil Liberties Organisations (CLO), were instrumental to social justice in Nigerian history. Besides, Moses (2015) identified the contributions of these organisations in Nigeria to include:

- Opposing authoritarian and undemocratic principles and values
- Establishing human rights legal standards and advancing the application of human rights norms through high test cases.
- Promoting legal and judicial reform through legislative advocacy.
- Providing legal assistance to disadvantaged persons, communities and groups.
- Supporting the government through constitutional litigation.
- Advancing the application of international legal instruments on human rights in Nigerian.
- Working with the government and their institutions to promote laws, policies and practices that address the rights of poor and excluded communities.
- Voters' education on electoral principles and guidelines.
- Training of election observers and monitors, election tribunal monitoring and electoral reform advocacy.
- Peace building and Conflict mitigation, promoting access to justice, public interest litigation, budget tracking, constituency outreaches as well as research and documentation in thematic areas of democracy and governance

- The promotion and the defence of the constitution and rule of law.

It can also be narrated that the functions of community-based organisations are closely related to advocacy for equity, participation, equal access to resources and social diversities. According to Neji (2011) advocacy initiatives increases when reinforced by knowledge of how to organise effective campaigns which is accompanied by monitoring initiatives targeted at drawing the attention of the international communities to current happenings in the state. Kafula (2016) explained that equitable access or distribution of services is particularly important where there is perceived discrimination against a certain group of people, may be due to region, ethnicity, or any other form of groups. Therefore, promoting social justice for sustainable peace is vital but peace becomes elusive without social justice. It can be equally highlighted that promoting social justice is one of the core values and functions of community based organisations. This implies, that one of the roles of community-based organisations is to manage diversities and to ensure that everyone, regardless of the socio-economic, political or religious affiliation have equal access and opportunities in order to reduce inequalities as a major driver of violent crimes and conflicts in the society. Therefore, this study seeks to assess how collaborating with community-based organisations can assist in promoting sustainable peace in communities in Rivers State.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Sustainable peace in any given society is a foundation for achieving development. Regrettably, the existence of a spate of violent crimes, conflicts and social injustices among other issues have compounded efforts to improve on sustainable peace in the historical development of the Nigerian nation. Rivers State, the treasure base of the nation is not left out in the grappling and challenging security situations. To tackle the problem of violence and lack of peace, there is a need for collaboration with community-based organisations in promoting peace in communities in Rivers State. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine how collaborating with Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) can assist in promoting sustainable peace, particularly on crimes and conflicts prevention and enhancing social justice in communities in Rivers State. The extent to which this collaboration with community-based organisations (CBOs) can promote

sustainable peace in communities in Rivers state is therefore the problem of this study.

### 1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess how the collaboration with Community-Based Organisations can promote sustainable peace in communities in Rivers State.

The specific objectives are to:

- Examine the extent of involvement of community-based organisations in crime prevention in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State;
- Determine the extent of involvement of community-based organisations in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State;

### 1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- To what extent are community-based organisations involved in crime prevention in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State?
- To what extent are community-based organisations involved in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State?

## 2. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was considered suitable for this study because it involves systematic collection of data to address the overall objectives of the subject under investigation. The population of the study was 2718 Members of 113

## 3. Results

The results of the study were presented as follows.

**Question 1:** To what extent are community-based organisations involved in crime prevention in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State?

community-based organisations in the study area. The sample size for this study was 1359 members of 56 community-based organisations (CBOs) in the study area. The sample technique that was adopted for this study was the multi-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, 2 Local Government Areas were purposively selected from the three senatorial districts of Rivers State. The second stage was the proportionate selections of 50% of community-based organisations in the Local Government Areas selected and the third stage involved the proportionate sample of 50% of the membership of the selected community-based organisations in the local government areas drawn. A structured questionnaire titled 'Collaborating with Community Based Organisations in Promoting Sustainable Peace (CCBOPSPQ) based on modified 4-points likert scale was used. The instrument was designed by the researchers. It has the following weighted response options: VHE-4, HE-3, LE-2 and VLE-1. The instrument was duly validated by three experts in the field of Community Development, Measurement and Evaluation and Criminology in Sociology department of the University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the instrument was established by test retest which indicated a co-efficient of 0.74. The study adopted a multidimensional approach to elicit information for this study which implies that the study incorporated both primary and secondary data to address the questions posed in this study. A total of one thousand three hundred and fifty-nine (1,359) copies of the questionnaire were administered with the aids of six research assistants to the respondents but only 1140 duly filled copies of the questionnaire representing eighty-three percent (83%) of the total copies of the questionnaire administered were used for the analysis of this study. The weighted mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. A criterion means of 2.50 derived through adding the weight and dividing by 4 was used in taking decision.

**Table 1:** Mean scores of respondents on extent of community-based organisations involvement in crime prevention in communities for sustainable peace.

S/N	Items	Rivers East N =385 M	Rivers West N=517 M	Rivers South N=235 M	Grand Mean (x)	Remark
1	Provide neighbour watch services for the gathering of intelligent information	3.66	3.81	3.63	3.70	High Extent
2	Partners with the security agencies in the community to reduce violent crime	3.26	3.58	3.50	3.59	High Extent
3	Periodic enlightenment of the people on current security issues	2.73	2.35	3.18	2.75	High Extent
4	Developing community based approach to situational crime preventions	2.36	1.90	2.57	2.37	Low Extent
5	Corporal punishment to shame and serve as deterrence to other criminally minded individuals	2.64	2.87	3.33	2.95	High Extent

Table 1 indicates the mean responses of respondents on the extent community-based organisations are involved in crime prevention in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State. Respondents in the study area of the state responded positively on items 1 and 2 that is provision of neighbourhood watch services for the gathering of intelligent information (with mean scores 3.66, 3.81 and 3.63 respectively), partners with the security agencies in the community to reduce violent crime (Mean scores=3.62, 3.58 and 3.5 respectively) with the highest grand mean scores of 3.70 and 3.59 respectively. Furthermore, there is also an agreement on the extent of involvement in both Rivers East and South on item 3 (with mean scores of 2.73, and 3.18 respectively) while respondents in Rivers West showed negative responses on the item (with mean score =2.35) with grand mean of 2.75. Item 4 indicates a high extent of involvement response in Rivers East (with mean score=2.63 ) and Rivers south (with mean score =2.57) while respondents in Rivers West responded to a very low extent of involvement on the item (with mean scores =1.90) with grand mean of 2.37. Item 5 shows agreement on the use of corporal punishment to shame and serve as deterrence to other criminally minded individuals within the communities of study area (with mean scores of 2.64, 2.8 and 3.33 respectively) and grand mean of 2.95.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent are community-based organisations involved in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace in the communities in Rivers State?

**Table 2:** Mean scores of respondents on extent of community-based organisations involvement in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace.

S/N	Items	Rivers East N =385 M	Rivers West N=517 M	Rivers South N=238 M	Grand Mean (x)	Decision
1	Strongly advocate for equity among members of the community	3.30	3.58	3.63	3.50	High Extent
2	Encourage inclusive participation in community development processes	3.05	3.02	3.50	3.19	High Extent
3	Provide supports for the protections and respect of people’s rights in society	3.19	3.08	3.18	3.15	High Extent
4	Advocate for the equal access to scarce resources in the community	3.35	3.17	2.57	3.03	High Extent
5	Encourage diversities and togetherness among members of the community	2.52	3.47	3.33	3.11	High Extent

Table 2 presented the mean responses on the extent that community-based organisations are involved in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State. Respondents responded positively to all five items raised. Item 1, that is, strong advocate for equity among members of the community attracted the highest mean score of 3.50 with the range of grand mean scores from 3.03 to 3.50, the results reveal the extent of community-based organisations involvement in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State, as encouraging equity among the community, inclusive participation,

respect of people’s rights and equal access to scarce resources in the community among others.

#### 4. Discussion on the Findings

On the extent that community-based organisations are involved in crime prevention in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State, the study revealed that the community-based organisations are highly involved in the state by providing neighbourhood watch services for intelligent gathering, partners with relevant security agents to reduce violent crime,

enlightens the people on current security issues and shame criminally minded people in order to deter others. With the grand mean above the criterion mean of acceptance of the statement, the study revealed that there is high extent of community-based organisations involvement aimed at improving peace and security in the communities. These findings affirmed the assertion of Shamsideen (2016) that preventing crime can be made possible using various strategies such as the involvement of community-based groups. Accordingly, crime prevention is also a proactive approach aimed at nipping crime on the bud and as a strategy of ensuring safety and security of lives and properties. The approach enables community stakeholders' direct intervention towards confronting problems and being able to meet considerable needs, save money, prevent social agonies and so on (Koledoye,2019). This study corroborates the assertion of Manaliyo (2016) as the study reveals that community-based organisations are involved in intelligent gathering, partnership with state security apparatus and use the informal and traditional system of punishing criminals to achieve sustainable peace in the local communities. The implication of the findings reiterated the urgent need to collaborate with the community-based groups as a very vital security instrument to achieve tangible results in crime reduction and to improve security in rural and urban communities.

The findings of the study on involvement in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State, the study revealed that community-based organisations have contributed to that effect. With the grand mean score above the criterion mean is a clear indication of the acceptance of the contributions of various community-based organisations in fostering social justice. The study reveals that community-based organisations are highly involved in fostering social justice by strongly providing advocacy for equity among members of the community, encouraging inclusive participation in community development processes, supporting the protections and respect of human rights in society, advocating for the equal access to scarce resources and encourage diversities and togetherness among members of the community. The findings of this study is in tandem with the view of Aguti (2017) that social justice is a cornerstone of promoting a just society where people are equitably treated, human rights respected and scarce resources are allocated without discrimination; it is represented by fair and unbiased process where freedom of individuals to express themselves in terms of sense of reasoning, belonging and equal opportunities without the

presence of institutionalized domination or oppression within the scope of the community. More so, the results of this study is in agreement with Essien (2014) who noted that it is evident that many community-based organisations such as Campaign for Democracy (CD), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and Civil Liberties Organisations (CLO), were instrumental to the reinforcement of social justice in Nigeria. Besides, Moses (2015) vividly stated that the role of these organisations in promoting the process of social justice in the society through peace building, conflict mitigation, promoting access to justice, public interest litigation, budget tracking, constituency outreaches as well as research and documentation in thematic areas of democracy and governance cannot be overemphasised. The implication of the findings is that addressing issues of social justice is a yardstick for peace building and development in any given society.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the results clearly indicated that the community-based organisations are highly involved by providing neighbourhood watch services for intelligent gathering, partners with relevant security agents to reduce violent crime, enlightens the people on current security issues and to shame the criminally minded people in order to deter others. In respect of their involvement in fostering social justice in communities for sustainable peace in Rivers State, the result positively indicated that community-based organisations have contributed to that effect. It can be concluded that collaboration and partnership is key in crime fighting and prevention and that crime fighting and prevention should be community driven involving community-based organisations.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are therefore made:

- There should be constant collaboration between state actors and relevant community-based organisations in order to attain the target of crime prevention and social justice in the community.
- The content of community-based organisations involvement in fostering access to justice should incorporate effective and legal means through which the state can

identify and recognize their advocacy roles for good governance and equity in the advancement of human rights.

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