NGOs and Management of Post-Conflict Situations/Crises: The Case of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria

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0:0: Abstract

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in managing post-conflict situations and crises, particularly in addressing the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). This study examines the key challenges and strategies employed by NGOs in managing post-conflict situations involving refugees and IDPs, drawing from the case study of the North-East of Nigeria. The study is inclined to the Elite theory and content analysis draws and analyzes data from literature sources highlighting the complex dynamics involved in providing assistance and support to vulnerable populations affected by conflicts. It further explores the diverse range of services provided by NGOs, including shelter, food, healthcare, education, and psychosocial support, to address the multifaceted needs of refugees and IDPs, and also delves into the coordination efforts among NGOs, governments, and international agencies to ensure effective and efficient delivery of aid in post-conflict settings. Furthermore, the study discusses the challenges faced by NGOs in managing post-conflict situations, such as limited resources, security risks, political complexities, and coordination issues. It underscores the importance of innovative approaches, community engagement, and sustainable solutions in addressing the long-term needs of refugees and IDPs. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the critical role of NGOs in managing post-conflict situations involving refugees and IDPs and highlights the need for continued collaboration, innovation, and commitment to ensuring the well-being and protection of vulnerable populations in crisis-affected regions.

Keywords: NGOs, Post-Conflict Situations, Refugees, IDPs, Crisis Management, Conflict Resolution

1:0: Introduction:

This introduction sets the groundwork for exploring the nuances of Post-Conflict Situations, highlighting the intricate interplays of various components in rebuilding societies, fostering peace, and laying the groundwork for a prosperous future in regions emerging from conflict. The study here is based on a framework of the four key terms or concepts driving the title, namely: Post-Conflict Situations/Crises, NGOs, Refugees and IDPs. It is deemed imperative to define them, for easier understanding of the entire vision and view of our discourse.

A line of semantic difference is drawn between the words ''situations'' and ''crisis'' in the conceptual framework of the discourse in this study, whereas ''Post-Conflict Crises'' as

a term denotes crises that pose challenges to peace-building efforts in post-conflict situations, and ''Post-Conflict Situations imply all the events or developments that inform, determine or regulate the roles of stakeholders in peacebuilding at the end of conflicts. This is with a view to highlighting the fact that crises are common features of Post-Conflict Situations that require coordinated peace-building efforts that underscore the need for strategies or keys in the roles of NGOs as stakeholders in the process. In Post-Conflict areas, there is an absence of war, but not essentially real peace. (https://guides.womenwin.org/gbv/conflict/defining-conflict-post-conflict).

Junne and Verokren clarify: ''Post –postconflict'' is a conflict situation in which open warfare has come to an end. Such situations remain tense for years or decades and can easily relapse into large-scale violence.

1:1:Conceptual Framework A

Post-conflict crises: These refer to situations that arise in the aftermath of a conflict or war, characterized by ongoing challenges, instability, and humanitarian emergencies. These crises often involve complex social, political, economic, and security issues that can have lasting impacts on communities and individuals affected by the conflict. Post-conflict crises may include:

1. **Displacement:** Large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes due to violence and persecution during the conflict.

2. **Humanitarian Needs:** Severe shortages of basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education, leading to a humanitarian crisis among affected populations.

3. **Security Concerns:** Lingering violence, insecurity, and the presence of armed groups or militias that continue to pose threats to civilians and hinder efforts at peace-building and reconstruction.

4. **Economic Challenges:** Destruction of infrastructure, loss of livelihoods, high unemployment rates, and economic instability can impede recovery and development in post-conflict settings.

Social Reintegration: Challenges related to reconciliation, justice, and social cohesion among diverse communities affected by the conflict, including issues of trauma, displacement, and intergroup tensions.

5. **Political Transition:** Processes of political reform, institution-building, and governance restructuring to establish stable and inclusive governance systems that can address the root causes of conflict and prevent future crises.

 Post-conflict crises require comprehensive and coordinated responses from governments, international organizations, NGOs, and local communities to address the multifaceted challenges and vulnerabilities faced by populations affected by the conflict. Effective interventions in post-conflict settings aim to promote peace, stability, reconciliation, and sustainable development while ensuring the protection and well-being of all individuals impacted by the crisis.

B: Post-Conflict Situations

These refer to the period following the cessation of armed conflict or war, characterized by efforts to rebuild, reconcile, and restore stability in affected regions. These situations entail a complex set of challenges and opportunities as societies transition from conflict and violence to peace and development. Key exigencies of post-conflict situations include:

1. **Reconstruction and Recovery:** The process of rebuilding physical infrastructure, restoring essential services, and revitalizing economic activities that have been disrupted by the conflict.

2. **Reconciliation and Peacebuilding:** Initiatives aimed at promoting social cohesion, healing divisions, and addressing grievances among communities and individuals affected by the conflict.

3. **Demobilization and Disarmament:** Efforts to disarm combatants reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian life, and transition from a state of conflict to one of peace.

4. **Justice and Rule of Law:** Establishing mechanisms for accountability, truth-seeking, and ensuring access to justice for victims of human rights abuses and violations during the conflict.

5. **Humanitarian Assistance:** Providing emergency aid, protection, and support to vulnerable populations, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other affected communities.

6. **Security Sector Reform:** Strengthening security institutions, promoting civilian oversight, and building capacity to ensure the protection of citizens and prevent a resurgence of violence.

7. **Socio-Economic Development:** Fostering inclusive growth, creating employment opportunities, and addressing socio-economic disparities to promote sustainable development and reduce vulnerabilities that can lead to future conflicts.

Post-conflict situations require a comprehensive and integrated approach involving governments, international organizations, civil society groups, and local communities to address the root causes of conflict, promote reconciliation, and build sustainable peace. Effective post-conflict interventions focus on fostering resilience, inclusivity, and sustainable development to prevent the recurrence of violence and promote long-term stability in conflict-affected regions.

Having for academic purposes given fairly detailed semantic attention to the two words ''Crises'' and ''Situations'' and established it a fact that the former is contextually implied in the latter, the two terms ''Post-Conflict Situations'' and Post-Conflict Crises'' will again run in a marriage of convenience (as one) in our discourse, as ''Post-Conflict Situations/Crises'', as we proceed further with concepts driving our discourse.

C: Refugees: Advanced English Dictionary(online) defines the word ''Refugee'' simply as an exile who flees for safety. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English on the other hand, sees it as Someone who has been forced to leave their country, especially during a war, or for political or religious reasons. Refugees thus refer to people

compelled by unbearable situations or developments in their root places of abode to seek refuge in alien places or environments they consider safe or safer.

D: NGOS: An acronym of the term ''Non- Governmental Organizations'', this refers to organizations that are not part of the local, state or federal government. ''A non-governmental organization(NGO) is defined as a non-profit organization, group or institution that operates independently from a Government and has humanitarian or development objectives. It is important to note that ''if an NGO is designated to implement a UNDP project, the NGO must have the legal status to operate in accordance with the laws governing NGOs in the programme country. (UNDP Programmes and Operations, Policies and Procedures -popp.undp.org).

E: IDPS: This is an acronym of the term ''Internally Displaced Persons''. An internally displaced person is someone who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees, although they do not fall within the legal definitions of a refugee.(en.m.wikipedia.org) . According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons(also known as ''IDPs'') are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border. (UNDP Programmes and Operations, Policies and Procedures- www.ohchr.org**)**

F: Crisis Management: This refers to the process of identifying, assessing and responding to a crisis or emergency situation in order to minimize its impact on an organization, its stakeholders and the general public. It involves developing strategies and plans to prevent or mitigate potential crises before they occur, as well as effectively managing and resolving crises when they do happen.

G: **Conflict Resolution**: Conflict resolution is the process of resolving disputes and finding mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts that arise between individuals or groups. It involves understanding the underlying causes of the conflict, facilitating communication between parties involved, exploring options for resolution and reaching a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved.

In summary, Crisis management focuses on preventing or mitigating the impact of emergencies or crises on organizations and their stakeholders, while conflict resolution focuses on resolving disputes between individuals or groups through effective communication and negotiation

1:2. Theoretical Framework: This study, as earlier stated, is cognizant of the Elite Theory. Dass MG (2015) observes that in recent years, the study of the elite theory has come to occupy a prominent position on the research agenda of political scientists, historians and other scholars in the social and behavioural fields. Scholastically, the Elite theory posited that power resides in and is always in the control of a network of elites. the proponents of the elite theory include Pareto Mosca, Robert Mitchels, C. Right Mills, Ortega Y. and Gasset, among others. They maintained that public policy is by and large the mirror image of elite interest. In order to understand public policy, one

has to examine the socio-economic status as well as power relations within the community. (Mohammed and Yalwa, 2018).

We are further informed that the underlying premise of the elite theory is that the masses are basically apathetic hence, the elite are left to dominate the policy-making process. Mohammed and Yalwa thus summarize the major thrust or tenets of the elite theory as follows:

a. Society is basically divided into a few who have power and allocate values for the society.

b. Elites are drawn mainly from the upper socio-economic strata of the society.

c. The movement of non-elite to the elite class must be slow and continuous so as to maintain stability and avoid revolution.

d. Elites always try to defend the status quo-ante, so as to protect and preserve their undue advantage over the masses.

e. Influence and power always flow from the elites and the top downwards to the masses.

Mohammed and Yalwa(2018) analytically outline the strength of the elite theory as follows:

a. It prevents the involvement of a large number of people in the decision-making process which may be time-consuming and cumbersome.

b. It reduces the study of politics to power relations. In fact, if power proves to be an inadequate principles for understanding politics, the elite theory will collapse.

c, Elites try to find a moral and legal basis for them to be in power and present the elite theory as the logical and necessary consequences of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognized and accepted.

At the same time, the authors (Mohammed and Yalwa) observe that the strength of the elite theory in power relations equally calls for its weakness which can be analyzed thus:

a. The theory does not condone a radical change, as the elites always want to maintain the status quo.

b. The elite theory also creates a gap between the masses and those in political power, which invites conflicts.

c. The elite theory is Eurocentric since most of the proponents of the theory are non-Africans.

The elite theory in a post-conflict area played out in the case of North-Eastern Nigeria, featuring political, religious and organizational elites. Mohammed and Yalwa(2018), observe that ''The political elites have politicized the insurgency(in the North-East) as a conduit pipe for tapping resources from the conflict'', citing the accusation by Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, former President of Nigeria's accusation of Kashim Shettima, former Governor of Borno State, challenging him to '' come clean on Chibok girls'' and be clear on the roles he played in the kidnapping of the Chibok school girls. Jonathan

accused Shettima of playing ignoble roles in frustrating the war waged by the past administration against Boko Haram, even in his own Borno State. (Daily Trust, Vol.6, 2017). Responding, Shettima asked Jonathan to explain why he deliberately concealed the report of a presidential fact-finding committee he constituted and inaugurated in 2014 to probe the affair of the Borno State Commission for Education. Mohammed and Yalwa thus further observe that it is clear that the elites perpetuate conflicts to achieve the same purpose. Unfortunately, the same political elites who politicize conflicts and conflict resolution processes are called upon to serve in various commissions of inquiry- to investigate the causes of the conflicts and make recommendations for lasting solutions to the conflicts**.**

3:0: Challenges of Post-Conflict Situations/Crises

Post-conflict situations present complex challenges and opportunities for societies emerging from periods of violence and instability. The aftermath of armed conflict requires careful navigation of political, social, economic, and humanitarian complexities to transition towards sustainable peace and development. This introduction sets the stage for understanding the dynamics of post-conflict environments and the critical components involved in rebuilding and reconciling fractured societies.

In the wake of conflict, communities grapple with the devastation of war, displacement, loss of livelihoods, and deep-seated traumas that impact individuals and societies at large. The transition from conflict to peace involves multifaceted processes of reconstruction, reconciliation, and reintegration to address the root causes of violence and build a foundation for lasting stability.

Key aspects of post-conflict situations include reconstruction efforts to restore infrastructure and services, peace-building initiatives to foster social cohesion, demobilization and disarmament programs to reintegrate former combatants, and justice mechanisms to address past atrocities. Humanitarian assistance plays a crucial role in meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable populations affected by conflict, while security sector reform aims to establish effective governance and ensure citizen safety.

Moreover, post-conflict environments provide an opportunity for societies to address underlying socio-economic disparities, promote inclusive development, and strengthen institutions to prevent the recurrence of violence. The road to sustainable peace requires collaborative efforts among governments, international organizations, civil society actors, and local communities to chart a path towards reconciliation, justice, and long-term stability.

3:0: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROLES OF NGOs IN MANAGING POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS GLOBALLY

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a crucial and multifaceted role in the management of post-conflict situations across the globe, contributing to peace-building, reconstruction, and humanitarian assistance efforts. Their unique characteristics and capabilities make them valuable partners in addressing the complex challenges that

arise in the aftermath of conflict. Here are some key roles that NGOs play in post-conflict management:

1. **Humanitarian Assistance:** NGOs are often at the forefront of providing essential humanitarian aid, including food, shelter, healthcare, and psychosocial support, to populations affected by conflict. They respond rapidly to the immediate needs of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and vulnerable communities, ensuring their survival and well-being.

2. **Peacebuilding and Reconciliation:** NGOs engage in peace-building initiatives that aim to promote dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion among communities torn apart by conflict. They facilitate grassroots reconciliation processes, promote intergroup dialogue, and foster understanding to address the underlying causes of conflict and prevent future violence.

3. **Advocacy and Protection:** NGOs advocate for the rights of conflict-affected populations, raise awareness about human rights violations, and work to ensure protection for vulnerable groups, including women, children, and minorities. They play a critical role in holding governments and other actors accountable for their actions during and after conflict.

4. **Capacity Building:** NGOs build the capacity of local institutions, civil society organizations, and communities to participate in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts. They provide training, technical assistance, and resources to empower local actors to take ownership of their development processes.

5. **Conflict Sensitivity:** NGOs employ conflict-sensitive approaches in their interventions to minimize potential harm and maximize positive impacts in fragile post-conflict environments. They conduct thorough conflict analyses, engage with local stakeholders, and adapt their programs to address the root causes of conflict.

6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** NGOs play a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating post-conflict programs to assess their effectiveness, identify gaps, and learn from successes and challenges. They provide valuable data and insights that inform evidence-based decision-making and improve future interventions.

7. **Coordination and Collaboration:** NGOs collaborate with governments, international organizations, donors, and other stakeholders to coordinate efforts and avoid duplication of resources in post-conflict settings. They contribute to multi-stakeholder platforms that facilitate information sharing, joint planning, and synergies among *actors*.

4:0: The Case of IDPs and Refugees in Post-Conflict North-Eastern Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populous nation of the African continent, has witnessed a plethora of conflicts and crises prior to and after securing her independence from Britain in 1960. These, according to Dass MG (2015), range from the political crises, ethnoreligious conflicts, civil war and the contemporary indigene/settler dichotomy, threats of secession by some regions of the country, as well as the recent Boko Haram insurgency which ravaged almost the Northern Nigeria, and in particular, the North-Eastern Nigeria with massacre of death told.

The North-East of Nigeria had been reputed for peace and tranquility, tourism and hospitality, as major factors responsible for the advancement in economic activities in the region, prior to the escalation of various conflicts. Mohammed and Yalwa(2018) observe that ''Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi, Dadin Kowa tomatoes and other perishable goods in Gombe, Beans production in Yobe State, Dry Fish and Yam in Taraba, Yam and Rice in also in Adamawa State…economic activities have been crippled due to the insurgency of Boko Haram. The Northeast now ranks first in the statistics of out-of-school children, in northern Nigeria. According to Daily Trust, 2017, of 10 million out of schools, in Northern Nigeria, the Northeast has seven million(7 million). Mohammed and Yalwa attribute the trend to a lack of political will on the part of the successive governments, with the tendency to engender the exodus of non-governmental organizations(NGOs) from various parts of the world from the region.

Chukwumah (2005) observes that the four years of insurgency had brought loss of lives and halted economic activities in the entire North-Eastern Nigeria.

The role of NGOs in providing succour to IDPs and Refugees in post-conflict situations in the North-East of Nigeria can be summed up under the following subheadings:

1. Humanitarian aid: NGOs have played a crucial role in providing essential humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons(IDPs) and refugees in post-conflict North-Eastern Nigeria: This includes food, shelter, clean water, medical care, and other basic necessities.

2. Advocacy and Awareness: NGOs have actively advocated for the rights and well-being of IDPs and Refugees in the northeast of Nigeria, raising awareness about their plight and pushing for government and international intervention to address their needs.

3. Education and Skill Development: NGOs have established temporary learning centres and provided educational materials to ensure that children of IDPs and Refugees can continue their education. They have also offered vocational training programmes to help individuals acquire new skills for employment opportunities.

4. Health Services: NGOs have set up mobile clinics, hospitals, and health centres to provide medical care, including vaccinations, treatment for diseases, mental health support, and reproductive health services to IDPs and Refugees in post-conflict situations in the northeast of Nigeria.

5. Reintegration Support: As conflict subsides in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria, NGOs assist in the reintegration of IDPs and Refugees into their communities, by providing financial support for small businesses or income-generating activities, rebuilding homes, restoring infrastructure and promoting social cohesion.

6. Legal Assistance: Some NGOs offer legal aid to help IDPs and Refugees navigate the complex legal systems related to asylum claims or property rights issues they may face upon returning home.

7. Protection from Violence: Like in other post-conflict areas across the globe, NGOs in north-east Nigeria work closely with local authorities to ensure the safety of IDPs and Refugees, by establishing protection mechanisms against violence or exploitation within camps or host communities.

8. Livelihood Opportunities: NGOs implement policies aimed at creating livelihood opportunities for IDPs and Refugees through agricultural projects, microfinance initiatives or employment training programmes.

Overall, NGOs play a vital role in addressing the immediate needs of IDPS and Refugees, while working towards long-term solutions that promote resilience, dignity, safety, justice, equality, and participation rights of these vulnerable populations in post-conflict north-eastern Nigeria, just as they do in all other areas. They bring flexibility, innovation, local knowledge, and a people-centred approach to post-conflict management, complementing the efforts of governments and international agencies. Their presence is instrumental in bridging gaps, filling critical needs, and fostering sustainable peace and development in regions recovering from conflict.

5:0: CHALLENGES OF MANAGING POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS/CRISES

Managing post-conflict situations and crises presents a myriad of challenges that can complicate the transition from conflict to peace and hinder sustainable development. Some key challenges include:

1. **Security Risks:** Lingering insecurity, the presence of armed groups, and the potential for violence to reignite pose significant challenges to stability and impede post-conflict recovery efforts.

2. **Displacement and Refugees:** The large-scale displacement of populations, both internally and across borders, creates humanitarian challenges related to shelter, food, healthcare, and protection for vulnerable individuals.

3. **Reconciliation and Social Cohesion:** Healing divisions, addressing grievances, promoting trust among different ethnic or social groups, and fostering social cohesion are complex processes that require time, resources, and commitment.

4. **Economic Recovery:** Rebuilding infrastructure, reviving economic activities, creating job opportunities, and addressing socio-economic disparities are critical for sustainable development but can be hindered by resource constraints and lack of investment.

5. **Justice and Accountability:** Ensuring accountability for human rights abuses, establishing mechanisms for transitional justice, and addressing past grievances while promoting reconciliation can be contentious and challenging processes.

6. **Political Instability:** Fragile governance structures, weak institutions, political tensions, and lack of inclusive governance can exacerbate instability and impede progress in post-conflict settings.

5:0:   KEYS TO MANAGING POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS/CRISES

Managing post-conflict situations and crises effectively requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses the multifaceted challenges and opportunities present in such environments. Here are key strategies and principles for successful management of post-conflict situations/crises:

1. **Conflict Analysis:** Conduct a thorough conflict analysis to understand the root causes, dynamics, and actors involved in the conflict. This analysis informs strategic decision-making and intervention design.

2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local communities, governments, NGOs, international organizations, and civil society groups, to ensure inclusivity and ownership of post-conflict initiatives.

3. **Peacebuilding and Reconciliation:** Prioritize peacebuilding efforts that promote dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion among conflict-affected communities. Invest in initiatives that address grievances, build trust, and foster understanding.

4. **Humanitarian Assistance:** Provide essential humanitarian aid to meet the immediate needs of displaced populations, including shelter, food, water, healthcare, and psychosocial support. Ensure the protection of vulnerable groups.

5. **Security Sector Reform:** Strengthen security institutions, promote civilian oversight, and build capacity to ensure the safety and security of all individuals in post-conflict settings.

6. **Reconstruction and Development:** Focus on rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing economic activities, creating job opportunities, and addressing socio-economic disparities to promote sustainable development and stability.

7. **Justice and Accountability:** Establish mechanisms for transitional justice, ensure accountability for human rights abuses, and promote access to justice for victims of conflict-related atrocities.

8. **Conflict Sensitivity:** Adopt conflict-sensitive approaches in all interventions to minimize harm and maximize positive impacts. Consider the potential impact of programs on conflict dynamics and adjust strategies accordingly.

9. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of post-conflict initiatives, identify gaps, learn from experiences, and improve future interventions.

10. **Coordination and Collaboration:** Foster coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders involved in post-conflict management to avoid duplication of efforts, leverage resources efficiently, and promote synergies for sustainable peace-building.

CONCLUSION

By adhering to these keys to managing post-conflict situations/crises, NGOs as key stakeholders can work together to navigate the complexities of post-conflict environments, promote peace and reconciliation, rebuild communities, and lay the foundation for long-term stability and development.

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