

## Harnessing the Potentials of Theatre for Development (TFD) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBO's) in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building: A Focus on Shiites-Army Conflict in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The Nigerian governments have had clashes with members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) popularly known as Shiites during the military era. However, since the nation's return to democracy in 1999, the 2015 Shiite-Army clash in Zaria can be said to be a major recurrence that left hundreds in its wake. Consequently, there has been a growing tension between members of the sect and the Nigerian Army, and by extension, the Nigerian government. This is further worsened by the continued incarceration of the leader of the sect Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zazzaky. The recent 2018 re-escalation of hostilities between the Shiites and Nigerian soldiers in Abuja indicates that conflict resolution mechanisms so far deployed to mediate in the conflict are either inappropriate, or completely ineffective. Hence there is an urgent need to explore other alternative strategies to mitigate this conflict. This paper argues that Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) and Theatre for Development (TFD) are viable communication channel and strategy respectively that can be used to mediate in the ongoing Shiites / Army conflict in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Clashes, conflict resolution mechanisms, Army conflict

### Introduction

Human societies since time immemorial have never been insulated from one form of conflict or the other. Conflicts as a matter of fact are resultant effects of different beliefs, convictions, choices, values, orientation, ideologies, socio-economic status and psychological inclinations, which are in turn, actual reflection of the characteristic diversities of most human societies or communities. To assume that there can be a conflict-free society is akin to fruitless attempt at creating an imaginary utopia which may never see the light of day so long as the above mentioned diversities exist. However, our task is to ensure that these conflicts do not fester or find a permanent place in our life, to the detriment of our collective wellbeing and development. It is in pursuit of this task that most human institutions such as governments, religious organizations, pressure groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based groups (CBOs), and faith-based organizations (FBOs) were created as viable structures that can, at best manage these conflicts whenever they occur, and to also undertake the task of promoting peace and rebuilding trust among hitherto conflicting

parties.

Among the various types of conflicts that are extant, religious conflicts seem to be persistent in Nigeria, and perhaps most African countries. A typical case in point is the ongoing religious mayhem that has remained unabated in Central African Republic (CAR) for some years now. It is important to note that under the umbrella of religious conflicts, there are two broad categories which are inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts. Inter-religious conflict occurs between adherents of different religions. Example, Muslims-Christians, Hindu-Buddhist, etc., while intra-religious conflict occurs between adherents of the same religion. Example, inter-denomination conflicts in the Christendom, and Sunni-Shiites conflicts in Islam. However, the conflict under study in this paper is slightly different because it is between a religious sect (Shiites) and an important machinery of the government: the army, even though conflict analysts have categorized it as a veiled manifestation of the age-long Sunni-Shiites conflict. Therefore, this paper focuses on how the potentials of Faith-Based organizations (FBOs) and Theatre for Development (TFD) can be



harnessed to mediate in Shiite-Army conflict that has remained persistent in Nigeria.

***Peace Building, Conflict Resolution and Religion.***

Peace building is an activity that aims to resolve injustice in non-violent ways and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. It revolves around developing constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national and racial boundaries. This process includes violence prevention; conflict management, resolution, or transformation; and conflict reconciliation or trauma, i.e. before, during and after any given case of violence. As such, peace building is a multidisciplinary, cross-sector technique or method which becomes strategic when it works over the long run, and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally—thus engendering sustainable peace.

Strategic peace building activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution, and stabilize society politically and socio-economically. Researchers and conflict experts also increasingly find that peace building is most effective and durable when it relies upon local conceptions of peace and the underlying dynamics which foster or enable conflict. To this end it can be deduced that the central task of peace building is to improve human security.

In other words, peace building include a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national and international levels to address the root causes of violence and ensure civilians have freedom from fear, want, and humiliation during and after violent conflict. Although many peace building's aims overlap with those of peace making, peace keeping and conflict, it is a distinct idea. Peacemaking involves stopping an ongoing conflict, whereas peace building happens before a conflict starts, or once it ends. Peace keeping prevents the resumption of fighting following a conflict; it does not address the underlying causes of violence or work to create societal change as

peace building does. Peace keeping also differs from peace building in that it only occurs after a conflict ends, not before it begins.

On the other hand, conflict resolution does not include some components of peace building, such as state building and socio-economic development, but it is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. This includes a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation. By conflict resolution, the deeply rooted sources of conflict are expected to be addressed and resolved and the behaviour is no longer violent, nor are attitudes hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed (Ramsbotham et'al 2016). Committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of the group (example, intentions, reasons for holding certain beliefs), and by engaging in collective negotiation. At this level, the outcomes of the resolution are to be mutually acceptable depending on the culture and civilization of the people and their society.

For instance, the African Traditional Dispute Resolution (ATDR) differs from the Western Alternative Dispute Resolution (WADR). Although in Africa, the approaches differ from one culture to another, most communities have traditional and religious institutions that have some traditional powers conferred on them to solve disputes. On the other hand, the WADR promote the use of non-violent means to resolving conflict including grass root community based activities through governance, communication collaboration, negotiation, and mediation among others. It can be said that in principle conflict resolution connotes a sense of finality, where the parties are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense. There are also other ways to resolve conflict such as surrendering, running away, overpowering the opponent with violent acts, filing a lawsuit, etc.



Beyond all of these, the current movement towards Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is borne out of the belief there are better options to resolving conflicts than litigation and the use of violence. Over the years, the terms ADR and Conflict Resolution have often been used interchangeably to refer to a wide range of processes that encourage nonviolent dispute resolution outside of the traditional court system. The idea is about the search for an application of “non-conventional” peaceful methods of settling disputes and solving conflicts using the least expensive methods and that satisfies both parties as well as preserve mutual trust after settlement. In most societies, this approach usually promotes peaceful coexistence after conflict resolution.

Furthermore, besides ATDR, WADR and ADR approaches, other forms or approaches to conflict resolution are extant the world over. These may include negotiation, mediation and arbitration. Negotiation which is a discussion between two or more people with the goal of reaching an agreement. Mediation is seen as a voluntary and confidential process in which a neutral third-party facilitator helps people discuss difficult issues and negotiate an agreement. Basic steps in this process include gathering information, framing the issues, developing options, negotiating, and formalizing agreements. The parties in mediation create their own solutions and the mediator does not have any decision-making power over the outcome. Arbitration is also another option that entails a process in which a neutral third-party, after reviewing evidence and listening to arguments from both sides, issues a decision to settle the case. Arbitration is often used in commercial and labor/management disputes.

A hybrid approach Mediation-Arbitration is also gaining increased relevance in conflict resolution discourse across the globe. In this approach, prior to conflict resolution session, the disputing parties may agree to try mediation first, but give the neutral third-party the authority to make a decision if mediation is not successful. Equally worthy of mention here is the Early Neutral Evaluation approach to conflict

resolution which involves using a court-appointed attorney to review a case before it goes to trial. The attorney reviews the merits of the case and encourages the parties involved in the case to attempt a resolution outside the court. If it fails, the attorney then informs the disputants about how to proceed with litigation and gives an opinion on the likely outcome if the case goes on trial.

Another approach is the community Conferencing which is a form of structured conversation involving members of a community (Offenders, victims, family, friends, etc) affected by a dispute or crime. Using a script, the facilitator invites people to express how they were affected and how they wish to address the harm inflicted. Collaborative law, negotiated rulemaking and peer mediation are also important approaches that have been used in conflict resolution (Abbas, 208:14-15). Based on the foregoing therefore, it is important to note that conflict resolution that aims to succeed must as a matter of necessity bring the disputing parties to a point of negotiation, compromise and forgiveness. This is more important in this paper because the case study conflict involves a religious sect, and majority of the world religions emphasize the benefits of peaceful coexistence among different peoples. Ironically however, religion has often been implicated in both domestic and international conflicts. Some of the reasons according to Holenstein (2006: 76) cited in Haynes (2009: 53) include the following:

- Religion is focused on the absolute and unconditional, as a result, can adopt totalitarian characteristics.
- When claiming both absolute and exclusive validity, religious conviction can lead to intolerance, over-zealous proselytization and religious fragmentation. Religious exclusiveness may also be hostile to both pluralism and liberal democracy.
- Religion can increase aggressiveness and the willingness to use violence.
- Leaders within faith-based organizations may seek to legitimize abuses of power



and violation of human rights in the name of religious zeal.

He further argues that religious leaders may try to make use of the following susceptibilities. First, domination strategies of identity politics may seek to harness real or perceived 'ethnic-cultural' and 'cultural religious' differences. Second, misused religious motivation can inform terrorist activities. Third, leaders of religious fundamentalist movements lay claim to a single absolutist religious interpretation at the cost of all others, and they link their interpretation to political power objectives. The last point relates to what Kurtz labels 'exclusive accounts of the nature of reality', that is, followers only accept religious beliefs that they regard as 'true' beliefs (Kurtz, 1995:238). Examples include the 'religions of the book': Judaism, Christianity and Islam, because each faith claims authority that emanates principally from sacred texts, actually, similar texts. Such exclusivist truth claims can be a serious challenge to religious toleration and diversity, essential to our co-existence in a globalized world, and make conflict more likely. (Haynes, 2009:54).

On the other hand, many religious traditions also have core beliefs that theoretically can help develop a peaceful multi-cultural world. For example, Christianity features the notion of non-violence. The faith's founder, Jesus Christ, insisted that all people are children of God, and that the test of one's relationship with God is whether one loves one's enemies and brings good news to the poor. As St. Paul said, "there is no Jew or Greek, servant or free, male or female: because you are all one in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:28). Premised on the foregoing therefore, religion, which has hitherto been appropriated by overzealous fundamentalists as an instrument for the perpetuation of violence, can also be harnessed for conflict resolution and peace-building, especially in Nigeria, and other developing countries where religious conflicts remain persistent. This can be done through religious individuals or faith-based organizations (FBOs).

### ***The Role of FBOs in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building.***

A faith based organization is an organization whose values are based on faith and /or beliefs, which has a mission based on social values of the particular faith, and which most often draws its activists (leaders, staff, volunteers) from a particular faith group. The faith to which the organization is relating to does not have to be academically classified as religion, because the term "faith-based organization" is more inclusive than the term "religious organization", as it refers also to the non-congregation faith beliefs. FBOs are grassroots organizations that are active locally, but also on an international scale. Most of their funding comes from goodwill donations, but they are also eligible for state or international grants. (Wikipedia).

Based on the above definition, we can understand that FBOs emphasize the tenets of a particular faith or belief system as an anchor for their activities. They appeal to the general public from the standpoint of their persuasion to advocate for a cause which they believe is beneficial to the entire well-being of the human society. It is in this respect that FBOs in recent years are increasingly becoming popular because of the roles they have been playing in human empowerment, conflict mediation/ resolution and peace building. Haynes corroborates this assertion thus:

Individuals and faith-based organizations from variety of religious traditions are increasingly active in attempts to end conflicts and foster post-conflict reconciliation between warring parties in various parts of the world. This is a phenomenon gaining increased attention, although it is not a new one. Religious individuals, often as representatives of faith-based organizations, have for decades aimed at mediation, striving to help resolve conflicts. Examples include: mediation undertaken by Quakers and financed by the Ford Foundation in the Nigerian Civil War 1967-70; the work of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa



Conference of Churches in mediating a cessation to the Sudan conflict in 1972; efforts made by John Paul Lederach (Professor of International peace-building at the University of Notre Dame) in Nicaragua in the 1980s; and the recent works of the Imam of Timbuktu in mediating various West African conflicts.

This implies that in the global arena, the contributions of FBOs in human empowerment and international peace building have been enormous. Another FBO worthy of mention here is the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), an organization that promotes dialogue and joint action across lines of religious division. It encourages dialogue based upon the mutual respect for the primary language of each member religious community, while also seeking to discern the deeply held cares and concerns that the communities commonly embrace. Such major concerns as abuse of children, human rights violations, unequal economic development, and armed conflict. After identifying these shared concerns, WCRP then uses these as terms of reference to organize collaborative action. This approach was deployed in Sierra Leone where WCRP in collaboration with Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone facilitated in both assisting with the mediation that helped end civil war in the country and helping implement the resulting peace agreement through such acts as obtaining the release of significant numbers of child soldiers (United States Institute of Peace, 2001).

This suggests that to focus single-mindedly on conflicts within and between religions not only oversimplifies causal interconnections between religion and conflict, in particular by disregarding alternative variables, but also leads to an underestimation of attempts emerging from various religious traditions to help resolve conflicts and build peace. The point is that, when successful, religion's role in helping to resolve conflicts and build peace is a crucial component in helping to achieve human development more generally (Haynes, 2009:60). The role of religious peacemakers in conflict

resolution is said to be increasing and in some cases, becoming more effective. These faith-based peace building initiatives have been credited with contributing positively to peace building in four main ways. Specifically, they have been identified as providing: (i) emotional and spiritual support to war-affected communities; (ii) effective mobilization for their communities and others for peace; (iii) mediation 'between conflicting parties'; and (iv) a conduit in pursuit of 'reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (Bouta et'al, 2005:ix cited in Haynes 2009:61). Closely related to conflict resolution and peace building activities, FBOs have also been engaged in the pursuit of community development through mobilization of the people at the grassroots, and empowering them to take charge of their development destinies. Typical examples of such FBOs in Nigeria include Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Women of All Faith Network in Nigeria (WAFNN), and Women in Da'awah (WID). Others include Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO) and Islamic Green Club Association of Nigeria.

FOMWAN for instance, is a faith-based umbrella organization that links Islamic women's groups in Nigeria and promotes Muslim women's viewpoints on the national stage. Since 1985, the federation has worked to spread Islam through *da'awah* and to advocate for Muslim girls' education, thereby improving the status of Muslim women and children. Through its various activities, which are largely collaborative (with government, local communities, and international organizations and governments) in approach, the federation has been able to advance Nigerian development projects and promote the positive social behaviour of Muslim girls. So far, FOMWAN has facilitated the building of many Islamic schools and hospitals in Nigeria, and has also inspired the creation of similar groups in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Mauritius and Niger.

The Islamic Green Club Association of Nigeria is another FBO that focuses on ameliorating the devastating effects of climate



change and environmental degradation caused by human activities. Since its establishment, the organization has collaborated with other FBOs with similar passion such as Abuja Women of Faith Network, Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN) and FOMWAN to serve humanity through tree planting. In 2014, the organization in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture empowered 120 beneficiaries of both Christian and Muslim faiths through training in agriculture businesses. The organization has continued to encourage grassroots collaboration and local participation as essential ingredients in the pursuit of sustainable development.

From the foregoing therefore, we can outline the potentials of FBOs thus:

- Their emphasis on collaboration eases the facilitation of all-inclusive and sustainable development.
- Most FBOs have both local and international presence. This means that their sphere of influence can be leveraged to engender all-round progress in our communities.
- Anchoring their activities on faith or belief system places FBOs on a higher moral pedestal which can be harnessed for the advancement of common good, especially in conflict situations.
- FBOs' emphasis on mutual and continuous dialogue can also be harnessed in building peace among hitherto conflicting parties.
- Membership of FBOs which draws from reputable religious leaders is another potential that can be deployed to bring about lasting peace, progress and sustainable development.
- FBOs pursue people-centred development given their emphasis on collaboration and participation of local community members in engendering sustainable development. This intrinsically links FBOs to the ideals of Theatre for Development (TFD).

### ***Theatre for Development (TFD) and Conflict Resolution***

Theatre for Development (TFD) is an unconventional means of doing theatre that varies from the manner which conventional theatre is conceptualized and performed. As the name suggests, it is a kind of theatre that focuses on galvanizing local community members to participate in a "performative" dissection of pressing development challenges confronting them, with a view to finding lasting and sustainable solutions. There are many other terms used to refer to TFD across the globe. Some of them include Theatre of the Oppressed, Participatory Theatre, Interactive Theatre, Guerilla Theatre, and Applied Theatre among others. Unlike the conventional theatre which is often performed in a theatre building, with a clear demarcation between actors on stage and the audience or spectators in the auditorium, TFD is often located in community arenas, village squares, streets of towns and urban slums, market spaces among others.

In TFD, the line between actors and spectators is being blurred through 'spect-acting' process that enables spectators to intervene, or rather interrupt the acting process whenever they realize that what is being acted is not in tandem with their lived realities. This intervention further advances discussions among participants, thereby deepening their collective understanding of the issues on ground. No wonder, Kwabena Bame (2005:65) argues that "any development oriented ideas disseminated through the instrumentality of TFD are more likely to involve and motivate a larger number of people to participate in the development process". Corroborating this assertion, Tsaku (2012:16) avers that TFD favours a "perspective that promotes the involvement of the communities directly in the entire project circle. This approach creates a democratic process where the community members are involved in identifying and resolving their vast



community needs and problems militating against their growth and development”.

Hence, the relationship between TFD and conflict resolution and peace building cannot be overemphasized. This is evident in the roles TFD plays and the values placed upon it as it reflects, refracts and mediate human experiences and values that build and promote peaceful coexistence in human society. The inherent potentials of TFD as a participatory communication tool makes it attractive to conflict experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international agencies, and governments as they embrace it as a medium for conflict resolution and peace building. Supporting this assertion, Reich (2012:07) opines that:

In interactive theatre, the separating line signifies the difference between the two spaces and makes use of the qualities deriving from that, without marking the people inhabiting the two sections as essentially different, since the spectators also move on to the stage. Due to this exchange of spect-actors the Boalian aesthetic space become very interesting for the craft of conflict transformation

There is a plethora of case studies where TFD has been deployed to mediate, resolve conflict and build mutual trust and confidence among hitherto warring parties across the globe. Two of such cases are worthy of mention here: Participatory Theatre Project in Rwanda by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Peace Dialogue’s (PD) Project ‘Let’s see... Let’s choose... Let’s change...’ in Armenia.

SFCG is an American NGO founded in 1982 that implements projects in more than 30 different countries in the world. Its aim is to transform the way that the world deals with conflict: from adversarial approaches towards collaborative problem-solving. SFCG uses a multi-faceted approach, employing media initiatives and working with local partners in government and civil society. Its strategy is to

find culturally appropriate means to strengthen societies’ capacity and to deal constructively with conflicts. SFCG began working in Rwanda in 2008 in collaboration with local organizations to build peace both nationally and regionally. The organization’s work in Rwanda has two main objectives: to promote constructive and collaborative dialogue within Rwanda and in the broader Great Lake region, and to reinforce regional and national media capacity to address conflict issues with accuracy, impartiality and responsibility. Between 2008 and 2011 several initiatives have been organized to implement the peace building process at the grassroots level, and specifically to manage the different conflicts in the local communities. Among the strategies used in reaching out to local community members is participatory theatre. SFCG developed and applied two different methods of participatory theatre: the first one is based on the classical approach of SFCG offices, also declared in the *Participatory Theatre for Conflict Transformation Training Manual*, published online in 2005; the second is a method specifically designed for Rwanda’s unique political conditions.

The first step in both methods is to train local actors in the Common Ground approach to theatrical performance, which included interaction with spectators. They are also trained in techniques of conflict management. This training aims to reinforce the local capacity for peace building and to encourage the participants to use autonomously these techniques. SFCG implemented a project of participatory theatre in the Karongi district, involving local mediators and the professional actors already in contact with SFCG.

Peace Dialogue (PD) is an Armenian NGO registered in Armenia in 2009. It brings together different peace and civil activists from Armenia, Russia, Georgia, and Germany. Its mission is to support the active participation of civil society in the processes of peaceful conflict resolution and promotion of respectful dialogue among members of conflicting societies, with the long term aim of contributing to peaceful regulation and prevention of new conflicts. In



2011, PD launched the project 'Let's see...Let's choose...Let's change...' (LSLCLC), and placed within the framework of PD's three-year youth strategy 'See Who WeAre, Choose Who We Want To Be'. Young women and men from regions directly involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict form the project's target group. The aim of the project is to attract, motivate and enable young people to become actively involved in peaceful developments and non-violent ways of conflict resolution in their communities and throughout the entire region. Within the broad project (LSLCLC), applied theatre training has been organized with a combination of conflict management sessions. This combination has been mostly based around the theories of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, and specifically through the methodologies of Forum Theatre and Newspaper Theatre.

However, PD has been developing an original methodology called History Theatre. These two examples clearly illustrate the potency of Theatre for Development in conflict resolution and peace building processes. More so, they also bring to the fore the dynamic nature of this genre of theatre that can lend itself to be deployed in any conflict situation anywhere in the world. It is also a tool that can be utilized by different types of organizations. Premised on the forgoing therefore, we will like to argue that TFD, when effectively deployed by reputable FBOs, can immensely help in resolving the lingering Shiites-Army conflict in Nigeria.

### ***FBOs to the Rescue of Shiites- Army Crisis in Nigeria***

Although Shiites Islamic group have a history of conflict with the Nigerian government, the recent clash between the sect's adherents and the Nigerian military is what has now been code-named the '2015 Zaria Massacre' in the public parlance. The army however claimed that it had only responded to an attempt to assassinate Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai by the Islamic Movement of Nigeria popularly known as Shiites. This claim has been strongly rejected by the Islamic Movement and several human rights organizations who argue that the massacre occurred without any provocation

(Wikipedia).

In January 2016, the Kaduna State Government formed the Commission for Judicial Inquiry into the causes of clashes in Zaria between the Shiites and the Nigerian Army in December 2015, under the chairmanship of Justice Mohammed Garba, the presiding justice of the Port Harcourt Division of the Court of Appeal. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016, the commission found that the army gunned down 348 Shiites and urged the prosecution of all those involved in the killings. Till today, there is no report of a single prosecution. More so, the leader of Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zazzaky remains behind bars. This situation has continued to sustain an atmosphere that is vulnerable to violence and mutual intolerance among the Muslim adherents in the country. It is in this precarious situation that the services of FBOs are most needful.

FBOs can leverage on their unique identity, expertise and approach to mediate in the lingering crisis. TFD avails itself as a promising communication strategy that can provide a platform for both parties to air out their grievances 'performatively', after which earnest post-performance discussions will be made with the sole aim of reaching an understanding between members of the sect and representatives of the Nigerian Army. To effectively harness the potentials of TFD in this situation, it is necessary that any FBO saddled with this responsibility should seek the assistance of experienced TFD practitioners who would train them on the methodological dynamics of the strategy. A typical TFD process begins with advocacy visits to target community to intimate them on the intention and goal of the intervention. During this visit, TFD practitioners meet with key stakeholders and community leaders to point to them how the intervention will be of immense benefit to the community in question. When community leaders accept, a date is agreed upon for the intervention. intervention period can be three days, one week, two weeks or even more, depending the enormity of the issues been addressed. On the first day of intervention, community research is carried out. it entails



engaging different individuals, group such as youth associations, women groups, men's associations, civil servants, etc. with a view to eliciting from them information or perspectives on identified development challenges in their community.

Having gleaned information from the community members, the issues are further interrogated through the use participatory learning and action (PLA) tools such as community mapping, and pair-wise ranking in order to come up with the most pressing issues from the perspective of the people. Another PLA tool known as the Problem Tree is further applied to guide the community members towards identifying the causes (Roots) and effects (branches) of the most pressing issues identified. These issues are then developed into scenarios by community members, and are subsequently rehearsed. The period of rehearsals is also a period of immense learning for deeper understanding of the issues by participants. As they try to perfect their roles, they get a better understanding of the nuances of their development challenges. After all roles are perfected, a performance date is fixed.

Traditionally, TFD performances take place in public arenas where every member of the community can watch and intervene wherever and whenever he feels the actions on stage do not vividly capture the reality on ground. This kind of intervention turns spectators into spect-actors, who are actively involved in the performative discussion of development issues that confront them. One good thing about TFD is that it also uses traditional modes of expressions such as songs, proverbs, dances and so on during performance. These elements further endear community members to the process. At the end of the performance, a post-performance discussion takes place to further ruminate on the issues and seek solutions to them. Post-performance discussions are often characterized by debates, arguments and counter-arguments. In fact in some cases, they may even threaten to escalate into fistfights, but the role of facilitators is to ensure they do not degenerate to that extent. Successful post-performance discussions are

expected to result in consensus on how the community can tackle their challenges. Finally, a Community Action Plan (CAP) is designed to guide community members in the implementation of agreed solutions. The CAP also identify individuals and groups in the community with their respective responsibilities. It also carries monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to use in tracking the progress or otherwise of the intervention. Hence, we argue that the duo of FBO and TFD can fit perfectly as alternative, or unconventional approach to resolving the Shiites-Army conflict, a pressing challenge that conventional institutions and approaches have hitherto not being able to address.

Applying TFD to this conflict may require TFD practitioners and mediating FBO(s) to engage both the Army and Shiites in separate TFD processes. After which, with the consent of both parties a date can be fixed for the performances. The two performances will avail each party the opportunity to present their own side of the story. Post-performance discussions will then be a forum for mutual dialogue between the conflicting parties. Through the promotion of mutual dialogue, FBOs can herald the emergence of a lasting solution for the ongoing conflict between the Nigerian Army and the Shiites. However, for this goal to be achieved, there must be a genuine commitment to peaceful resolution from both sides and a sincere willingness to make sacrifices. The virtue of forgiveness can be emphasized in the reconciliation and peace building process, without necessarily jettisoning the role of justice delivery in cases of verified crimes that were committed. It is important for us to note that justice delivery does not only entail the prosecution of the criminal, but also the promotion of reconciliation between the offended and the offender. FBOs can serve as viable machinery to facilitate the reconciliation process and also encourage a continuous mutual dialogue at the grassroots for the sustainable peace building.

### **Conclusion**

As earlier pointed out in this paper, conflict is an inevitable occurrence in human societies. Hence, what is important is how



conflicts are managed and resolved in order to allow for subsequent peaceful co-existence between hitherto conflicting parties. It is the position of this paper that the Shiites-Army crisis in Nigeria has lingered so long, and there is an urgent need for the deployment of alternative conflict resolution and peace building mechanism. Premised on this, these researchers reviewed the role of faith-based organizations in conflict resolution and peace building. Theatre

for Development has also been brought to focus as an alternative communication strategy that has helped in conflict resolution and peace building in Rwanda and Armenia among other countries of the globe. Based on the foregoing therefore, we submit by arguing that when effectively harnessed, the potentials of FBOs and TFD can be leveraged to bring about a successful resolution of Shiites-Army conflict in Nigeria.

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