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Beyond Conflict: Reconciliation and Rehabilitation, a Prerequisite for Peace Building in North-East Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper explores the importance of reconciliation and rehabilitation in the context of peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria. The region has been plagued by insurgency and prolonged conflict, leading to significant social, economic, and political instability. Addressing the aftermath of conflict through reconciliation and rehabilitation initiatives is essential for restoring trust, fostering social cohesion, and rebuilding communities. Drawing on Allport's (1954) contact theory, and secondary studies of peacebuilding experiences of other conflict-affected regions, the paper aims to make meaningful contributions to the existing literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It also offers insights into effective strategies and initiatives for addressing the aftermath of conflict in the region. The study comprehensively analyses the significance of reconciliation and rehabilitation in promoting sustainable peace and development in North-East Nigeria. The findings highlight the need for a comprehensive reconciliation and rehabilitation framework that addresses the physical, emotional, educational and psychological scars of conflict. The study reveals that reconciliation and rehabilitation are essential for promoting social cohesion, trust, forgiveness and rebuilding of communities. The study recommends a multi-faceted approach that includes Cognitive and Rational Behavioural therapy, truth-telling, apology, peace education, restitution, and reintegration. It emphasises the importance of involving local communities and peace-focused research and practice organisations, such as the Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP) in the peacebuilding process. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on peacebuilding and offers practical insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars on strategies for achieving sustainable peace in North-East Nigeria.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, Peacebuilding, Sustainable Peace, North-East Nigeria

Introduction

The conflict in North East Nigeria, which began in 2009, has resulted in unprecedented human suffering, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods. The crisis, perpetrated by the extremist group Boko Haram, has claimed over 20,000 lives, displaced 2.2 million people, and affected 15 million people in the region (World Bank, 2021). The conflict has also exacerbated existing challenges, including poverty,

inequality, and environmental degradation, making it one of the most complex humanitarian crises in the world (UNICEF, 2023). Despite the efforts of the Nigerian government and international community to contain the crisis, the conflict persists, and its impact continues to grow. The humanitarian response has focused on providing emergency assistance, including food, shelter, and healthcare, but sustainable peace and development remain elusive (OCHA, 2022).

Reconciliation and rehabilitation are critical components of sustainable peace, yet they have received limited attention in responding to the crisis in North East Nigeria. Reconciliation involves addressing the root causes of the conflict, promoting dialogue, and rebuilding community trust (UN, 2018a), while rehabilitation, consists in supporting individuals and communities to rebuild their lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure (World Bank, 2016). Ayissi (2021) notes that in Africa, reconciliation and reintegration remain the Achilles Heel of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) and other peacebuilding programs and only a minority of ex-combatants are sustainably reintegrated into their communities. The poor record of reintegration in Africa is due to poor reconciliation and rehabilitation programs and 'in significant part to unreliable and frequently-delayed external funding' (Ayissi, 2021).

The lack of emphasis and efficient programs on reconciliation and rehabilitation has resulted in a gap in the response to the crisis, perpetuating a cycle of violence and undermining efforts to achieve sustainable peace. Despite pockets of violence, as the region transitions from conflict to peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation are essential prerequisites for sustainable peace. This study therefore aims to emphasise the role of reconciliation and rehabilitation in achieving sustainable peacebuilding in North East Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Conflict

Conflict is a state of discord or disagreement between individuals, groups, or entities, often involving a perceived incompatibility of interests, needs, or values (Deutsch, 1973). It can manifest in various forms, including verbal, physical, or psychological, and can occur at interpersonal, intergroup, or international levels (Fisher, 1990). Conflict can arise from diverse sources, such as communication breakdown (Hocker & Wilmot, 2014), cultural or value differences (Hofstede, 1980), competition for resources (Dahrendorf, 1959), power imbalances (Foucault, 1972), historical grievances (Bar-Tal, 2001). Hence, conflict is caused by inadequate or perceived to be inadequate resources, contradictory value systems, competition for psychological needs, and the dissemination of information.

When conflicts occur, the effects are of two dimensions, positive and negative. These consequences include creative problem-solving (De Bono, 1985), personal growth and development (Maslow, 1962), social change and justice (Freire, 1970), emotional distress and trauma (Herman, 1997), and violence and destruction (Galtung, 1969).

Meanwhile, to effective management conflicts, the following are important, active listening (Rogers, 1951), empathy and understanding (Gilligan, 1982), nonviolent communication (Rosenberg, 2003), problem-solving and negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1981), forgiveness and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997).

Conflict in North-East Nigeria

Conflict in North East Nigeria refers to the ongoing violence and instability in the region, particularly since 2009, when the Islamist group Boko Haram began its insurgency. The conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, human rights abuses, and significant humanitarian needs. According to

the International Crisis Group (2020), the conflict in North East Nigeria is characterised by three main dimensions:

1.Boko Haram's insurgency: The group's violent campaign against the government and civilians has led to massive displacement and human rights abuses.
2.Counter-insurgency operations: The Nigerian military's response to Boko Haram has been criticised for human rights abuses and excessive force.
3.Intercommunal violence: Ethnic and religious tensions have led to clashes between farmers and herders, resulting in further displacement and violence (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Also, the conflict has resulted in significant humanitarian needs, including displacement: Over 2.5 million people have been displaced, with many living in camps or host communities (UNHCR, 2020); human rights abuses: Reports of human rights abuses, including sexual violence and child recruitment, have been widespread (Amnesty International, 2020), and humanitarian access: The conflict has limited access to humanitarian aid, thus, exacerbating the crisis (OCHA, 2020).

Several efforts have been utilized to address the conflict, including military operations where the Nigerian government has led military operations against Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). Also, dialogue and negotiation have been utilised, as attempts have been made to dialogue with Boko Haram, but have been met with limited success. Similarly, International organisations and NGOs have provided aid and other humanitarian responses to affected populations.

Post-Conflict

Post-conflict refers to the period following the cessation of violent conflict, where efforts are made to rebuild and restore societies, address the root causes of conflict, and promote sustainable peace. According to the United Nations, post-conflict periods require a comprehensive approach that addresses the political, economic, social, and psychological dimensions of conflict (UN, 2018b). The post-conflict phase involves several key processes important for sustainable peace and prevention of a relapse to conflict, these processes include Peacebuilding, which are efforts to establish a lasting peace, including the establishment of a functional government, security sector reform, and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997). Reconstruction which is the rebuilding of physical infrastructure, housing, and basic services (WHO, 2018a), is also fundamental in the post-conflict stage. Similarly, recovery - the restoration of economic activity, social services, and cultural heritage (UNDP, 2017a); reconciliation, the process of addressing past grievances, promoting forgiveness, and rebuilding relationships (Herman, 1997); and justice, the pursuit of accountability for human rights abuses and war crimes, through mechanisms such as truth commissions and international tribunals (OHCHR, 2018a) are essential for sustainable peace in post conflict spheres.

Effective post-conflict interventions require a nuanced understanding of the conflict's root causes, the impact on affected populations, and the need for inclusive and participatory processes (Paris, 2004). These processes are important for addressing the root cause of conflicts, rebuilding, reconciling and reintegrating conflict parties and ensuring sustainable peace in a post-conflict setting. However, this study focuses on two of these processes (reconciliation and rehabilitation) invaluable for sustainable peace in a post-conflict setting.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a multifaceted concept that involves rebuilding and restoring relationships, addressing past conflicts and injustices, and promoting healing and understanding between individuals, groups, and communities.

According to John Paul Lederach, a prominent scholar in conflict resolution, reconciliation is "a process that seeks to transform the destructive cycles of violence and hatred into constructive patterns of relationship and community" (Lederach, 1997). It is also the process of rebuilding relationships and restoring trust between individuals, groups, and communities (Lederach, 1997). Reconciliation addresses the root causes of conflict, promotes forgiveness, and creates an environment for sustainable peace (Helmick & Petersen, 2001).

In reconciliation, several key elements are important. Acknowledgement and recognition of the past injustices and harm suffered by individuals or groups (Minow, 1998), apology, where perpetrators of violence offer sincere apologies for past wrongs and taking responsibility for one's actions (Govier, 2002), are major elements of reconciliation. The provision of restitution and payment of reparations to address the material and symbolic harms suffered (De Greiff, 2006); forgiveness by letting go of resentment and anger, and forgiving those responsible for past harms (Enright, 2001); healing, that is, promoting emotional and psychological healing for individuals and communities (Herman, 1997) and the rebuilding of relationships, communities, and societies based on justice, equality, and respect (Lederach, 1997) are all invaluable aspects of reconciliation.

More so, reconciliation which occurs at the interpersonal (between individuals), communal (between communities) and national levels (Kolawole, 2021) involves the processes of 'acknowledgement of past injustices and harm, apology and forgiveness, truth-telling and truth-seeking, rebuilding of relationships and trust, education and cultural exchange, memorialisation and commemoration (Kolawole, 2021) and restitution and reparations (World Bank 2020).

It is important to note that reconciliation is not only important for individuals and communities but also for societies and nations, as it can help to promote social cohesion and unity (Putnam, 2007), address historical injustices and traumas (Torpey, 2006), foster a culture of peace and nonviolence (Galtung, 1996), and Support post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding (Paris, 2004).

(Post-conflict) Rehabilitation

Post-conflict rehabilitation is the process of restoring and rebuilding individuals, communities, and societies after a conflict or war. It involves addressing the physical, emotional, and psychological wounds of conflict and promoting social, economic, and political recovery. According to the United Nations, post-conflict rehabilitation is "a critical component of peacebuilding, aiming to rebuild livelihoods, restore dignity, and promote social cohesion" (UN, 2018). Similarly, rehabilitation is the process of restoring individuals and communities to their pre-conflict state, including physical, emotional, and economic reconstruction (UNDP, 2017c). Rehabilitation addresses the physical and psychological wounds of conflict, promoting individual and community resilience (WHO, 2018a).

Post-conflict rehabilitation involves several key elements. It involves physical rehabilitation, which entails restoring physical infrastructure, housing, and basic services (WHO, 2018a); psychological rehabilitation, which aims at addressing emotional trauma and mental health needs through counselling and therapy (Herman, 1997). It also involves social rehabilitation, where social connections and community relationships through community-based initiatives are rebuilt (Lederach, 1997); economic rehabilitation, which entails the promotion of economic empowerment and stability through education, training, and livelihood support (UNDP, 2017b) and political rehabilitation, where governance structures are

rebuilt, accountability is promoted, and human rights ensured (Paris, 2004).

Essentially, among others, post-conflict rehabilitation is essential for enhancing social cohesion and community relationships (Lederach, 1997), reducing symptoms of PTSD and other mental health conditions (Herman, 1997), promoting economic stability and empowerment (UNDP, 2017b), improving physical function and mobility (WHO, 2018a), and supporting sustainable peace and development (Paris, 2004).

With two major dimensions to rehabilitation – 'Individual (focusing on personal well-being) and Community (focusing on collective well-being) (ReliefWeb, 2020), rehabilitation encompasses processes such as physical reconstruction (infrastructure, housing, etc.), economic empowerment (livelihoods, employment) (World Bank, 2020), psychological support (counselling, therapy) and social reintegration (community reconnection) (RelieveWeb, 2020). This process is achieved through capacity building and skills training, economic support and entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2020), mental health and psychosocial support, and community-based initiatives and social support networks (RelieveWeb, 2020). Effective post-conflict rehabilitation requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach, involving governments, international organisations, civil society, and local communities. It also requires a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting justice, accountability, and human rights to prevent a relapse to conflict and promote sustainable peace.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a range of activities and processes aimed at creating and sustaining a peaceful society. It involves addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting social cohesion, and rebuilding communities (Lederach, 1997). According to the United Nations, peacebuilding is "a process that aims to build a lasting peace and prevent a return to conflict, by addressing the root causes of violence and promoting social, economic, and political development" (UN, 2018b).

Peacebuilding involves several key elements, including conflict prevention and resolution (Lederach, 1997), post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation (Paris, 2004), social and economic development (UNDP, 2017a), political and institutional strengthening (OECD, 2019) and human rights and rule of law (OHCHR, 2018b). By understanding the concept of peacebuilding, we can better appreciate the efforts of individuals, organisations, and governments working towards a more peaceful world.

Peacebuilding is utilised as both a conflict prevention and resolution mechanism, As a preventive mechanism, they are actions directed towards addressing latent structural anomalies in the society capable of igniting conflicts, while as a post-conflict mechanism, they address the root causes of a conflict and directed towards rebuilding the society and its political, economic, security and social structures, to avoid a relapse to conflict, but promote development and sustainable peace.

Effective peacebuilding requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach, involving governments, international organisations, civil society, and local communities (Hernandez, 2018). It also requires a commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting justice, accountability, and human rights. Peacebuilding is a vital process that helps to create a lasting peace and prevent a return to conflict. It addresses the root causes of violence and promotes social, economic, and political development.

For an effective Post-conflict peacebuilding, several key elements are important. Elements

such as Security Sector Reform (SSR) (OECD, 2019), Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) (UN, 2018b), transitional justice (TJ) (OHCHR, 2018a), Human rights and rule of law (OHCHR, 2018b), economic development and reconstruction (UNDP, 2017a), political and institutional strengthening (OECD, 2019) and social cohesion and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997), are important for building peace in post-conflict societies. Post-conflict peacebuilding is a vital process that helps to create lasting peace and prevent a return to conflict.

The Nexus between Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Peacebuilding

Reconciliation, rehabilitation, and post-conflict peacebuilding are interconnected concepts essential for building sustainable peace after a conflict. As noted, reconciliation refers to the process of restoring relationships and promoting healing between individuals, groups, and communities that have been divided by conflict (Lederach, 1997). Rehabilitation, on the other hand, involves the restoration of physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of individuals and communities affected by conflict (WHO, 2018b). Post-conflict peacebuilding is the process of rebuilding and reconstructing societies after a conflict, addressing the root causes of violence and promoting social, economic, and political development (UN, 2018b).

The nexus between reconciliation, rehabilitation, and post-conflict peacebuilding is evident in several ways: first, reconciliation and rehabilitation are essential components of post-conflict peacebuilding. Reconciliation helps to address the emotional and psychological wounds of conflict, while rehabilitation focuses on restoring physical and economic well-being (Herman, 1997).

Also, post-conflict peacebuilding provides the framework for reconciliation and rehabilitation to take place. It creates the conditions for former enemies to come together, address their differences, and work towards a common goal (Lederach, 1997). Reconciliation and rehabilitation can contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding by promoting social cohesion, trust, and economic development (UNDP, 2017a). Post-conflict peacebuilding can also facilitate reconciliation and rehabilitation by providing the necessary resources, support, and infrastructure (OECD, 2019). They promote healing, restoration, and development, and are critical for addressing the root causes of violence and promoting social, economic, and political development in the society.

Case Studies and Best Practices

Mullet, Lopez and Pineda Marin (2021) in their study 'forgiveness and reconciliation in post-conflict settings' note that countries such as Lebanon, after their civil war, encouraged forgiveness and reconciliation to promote healing among conflicting parties. In South Africa, after apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to address past human rights violations and encourage forgiveness and reconciliation; also the 'Bloody Sunday Agreement' in Northern Ireland encouraged intergroup forgiveness and reconciliation among conflicting groups.

In Rwanda as well, reconciliation sentiment was encouraged among genocide victims to promote mental health and forgiveness, while in Chile, forgiveness and reparation were encouraged to address past human rights violations. In Colombia, former perpetrators of violence and non-combatant citizens were reintegrated into society through forgiveness and reconciliation and in Sierra Leone, forgiveness was encouraged among street children towards their wartime oppressors (Mullet et al, 2021).

Harris, (2010) notes that to rehabilitate and reconcile child soldiers and ex-combatants in the Sierra Leone Civil War back into society

programs such as Dance/movement therapy were used with ex-combatant teenagers to help deal with feelings of guilt and shame. The teens used dramatisations of their experiences with the rebel army to process their emotions and deal with the rage associated with those experiences. This public dramatisation of their wartime history prompted local elders to welcome them back into society. Harris states this clearly, thus:

> Dance/movement therapy group with ex-combatant teenagers illustrates a methodology – based on kinesthetic empathy – for fostering a sense of collective agency and self-worth, and a restored capacity for positive interaction. Through improvisational dancing and dramatizations of their time with the rebel army, the 12 youths dispelled long suppressed rage and practiced reconnecting with others. Given the liberty within a safe space to acknowledge their experiences, and mourn their suffering and that of those whom they had caused to suffer, the former boy soldiers discovered a route to reconciliation with a community that had shunned them for years. The youths' earnest public dramatization of their wartime history prompted local elders to welcome them to assume productive adult roles in the devastated area's development. (Harris, 2010, p. 334)

Challenges and Limitations of reconciliation and rehabilitation efforts in NorthEast Nigeria

> Boko Haram's resilience highlights the limits of a purely military solution to Nigeria's conflict. A broader demobilization, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and reintegration strategy is necessary. (Brechenmacher, 2018)

Several peacebuilding and specifically reconciliatory and rehabilitative efforts have been engaged by the Nigerian government, Non-Governmental Organizations and International Organisations in North East Nigeria, for instance, the International Development Association (IDA) in 2017, contributed $200 million in 2017 and an additional $176 million in 2020 for the Multi-sectoral Crisis Recovery Project (MCRP) to support households, rehabilitate and improve critical service delivery infrastructure, enhance livelihood and displaced communities and strengthen social cohesion in North-East Nigeria (World Bank, 2020). Despite these efforts the conflict persists, and repentant combatants go back to their armed groups making the conflict persist with no end in sight. This thus questions the processes and implementation of these reconciliatory and rehabilitatory processes.

Another challenge of reconciliatory and rehabilitation efforts in North East Nigeria is poor implementation of strategies. In December 2017, the Nigerian government, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), adopted an initial Action Plan for Demobilization, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation for those associated with Boko Haram, yet such a strategy faces significant implementation challenges (Brechenmacher, 2018). To be effective, it must ensure that the military has robust eligibility and vetting criteria in the context of ongoing conflict.

The Nigerian government has conducted talks with Boko Haram about a possible ceasefire, but the nature and scope of these negotiations are unclear. In the absence of a political deal, the priority is to incentivise more Boko Haram fighters to defect and to rehabilitate those who are captured or leave the group. However, the existing rehabilitation programs operate with little transparency, and the military's criteria for screening detainees are not clearly defined and

thousands of suspects remain in military detention without charges under overcrowded and unsanitary conditions (Brechenmacher, 2018).

Operation Safe Corridor is another 'small intergovernmental program' aimed at rehabilitating low-risk, "repentant" Boko Haram fighters. It is currently the only sanctioned mechanism for combatants to exit the group. The program offers religious reeducation, psycho social support, and vocational training at a military-run facility in Gombe State (Brechenmacher, 2018). Similarly, a rehabilitation centre in Maiduguri caters to low-risk women, children, and elderly individuals associated with Boko Haram. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the criteria used by the military to categorise individuals as "low-risk" versus "high-risk," which determines their eligibility for rehabilitation or detention (Brechenmacher, 2018).

Effective and comprehensive reconciliation is also difficult in the absence of military victory in the region. In the presence of continuous insurgency and other dimensions of violence in North East Nigeria, reconciliation efforts will only be frustrated. Moreover, local communities have diverse views on the reconciliation process, with some recognising the long-term need for reintegration but feeling that it is too soon for former fighters to return. Others find it difficult to envision living alongside those who have caused harm to their families and communities. In response, civil society groups have been pressing for community participation in reintegration and reconciliation issues, advocating for locally-owned reconciliation processes to help overcome the cleavages that have emerged during the war (Brechenmacher, 2018).

Hence, the complexity of achieving peace in Northeast Nigeria and the need for a multifaceted approach goes beyond purely military solutions. It is also obvious that existing reconciliatory and rehabilitation programs have challenges and shortcomings. It thus underscores the importance of more effective approaches and local community involvement in the reconciliation and rehabilitation of former Boko Haram members and members of the community.

Reconciliation and Rehabilitation Strategies for Sustainable Peace in North-East Nigeria

To understand how a well-planned and implemented reconciliation and rehabilitation process will ensure sustainable peace in North East Nigeria, it is important to clarify what sustainable peace means. Sustainable peace is a state of peace that is maintained over time, addressing the underlying causes of conflict and promoting social, economic, and political development (Paris, 2004). The Word Bank (2020) sees sustainable peace to be characterised by the “absence of violence and conflict, presence of social justice and human rights, economic development and prosperity, political stability and good governance which is attained through post-conflict reconstruction and development planning, institution building and capacity strengthening, economic development and investment, social cohesion and community building”. Sustainable peace is critical for North East Nigeria, ensuring that the region does not relapse into conflict (Collier et al., 2003).

Achieving an effective reconciliation process in North-East Nigeria requires a range of coping strategies, such as acknowledgment (Enright, 2001), where ex-combatants recognize past harm caused and take responsibility for actions; offer sincere apologies for past wrongs; and the victims 'forgiving and letting go of resentment and anger' (Worthington, 2005). It would also entail both the victims and perpetrators showing empathy, by understanding the perspectives and experiences of the other party.

Communication is also vital where all the parties have open and honest dialogue to address issues and concerns.

To achieve sustainable peace through reconciliation in the region, trust-building is instrumental. According to Lencioni (2016), this is done through consistent and reliable actions. Managing emotions (Gross, 2002) to prevent escalation of tensions, promoting calm dialogue and finding collaborative approaches to address underlying issues and find solutions to the conflict are key strategies for enduring reconciliation. Importantly, getting the parties to learn about the conflict (Salomon, 2002), its impact, and strategies for reconciliation; building a network of supporters to encourage and guide the process; engaging in personal reflection to understand one's role and biases and respecting and understanding cultural differences and nuances of the other parties is invaluable for an effective reconciliation process. These strategies can help individuals and communities navigate the complex process of reconciliation and work towards healing, understanding, and rebuilding relationships for sustainable peace in Northeast Nigeria.

Effective post-conflict rehabilitation in the North Eastern region of Nigeria would require a range of coping strategies, including, dealing with trauma and emotions of both combatants and victims through techniques like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and psychosocial support. It would also involve social support (Cohen, 2004), by building strong support networks of family, friends, and community. Skill-building the parties to help them acquire new skills for employment and daily life, to engage their minds and to meet their needs is a crucial rehabilitation process for the region.

Importantly, engaging the parties in activities that promote their physical and mental well-being is another rehabilitation strategy (International Rescue Committee, 2020). Other coping strategies for rehabilitating parties in North East Nigeria instrumental for sustainable peace are helping the combatants and victims find purpose and significance in life after conflict; reconciling the parties by addressing past conflicts and rebuilding relationships; changing negative thought patterns and beliefs (Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services, 2020) through Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT); Respecting and understanding cultural differences and nuances; Participating in community activities and rebuilding social connections; and 'giving the combatants and victims access to resources and opportunities for economic stability' (United Nations, 2019). These strategies can help individuals and communities in North-East Nigeria heal, recover, and rebuild their lives after conflict, promoting resilience and sustainable peace.

Reconciliation and Rehabilitation for Sustainable Peace in North-East Nigeria

Reconciliation and rehabilitation are essential for peacebuilding and sustainable peace in North East Nigeria because they will help address past grievances. Reconciliation helps address past grievances and traumas, promoting healing and understanding among conflicting parties. It would also be invaluable in rebuilding Trust. Reconciliation rebuilds communities' trust, fostering a sense of safety and security essential for sustainable peace. More so, the rehabilitation of Victims of insurgency in North East Nigeria is important for sustainable peace in the region, because, rehabilitation supports victims of violence and provides them with the necessary resources to rebuild their lives.

Similarly, rehabilitation is instrumental for sustainable peace in North-East Nigeria as it will help reintegrate former combatants into society. Rehabilitation of the combatants will not just help to reintegrate former combatants into society, it will also reduce the risk of recidivism, thereby promoting social cohesion

and ensuring sustainable peace in the region. Importantly, it would be essential to reintegrate the perpetrators and the victims of the conflict in Northeast Nigeria to promote sustainable peace in the region. Reconciliation and rehabilitation will also foster social cohesion, essential for building resilient and peaceful communities in North-East Nigeria. It will also be instrumental in addressing the root causes of conflict, to prevent future violence and promote sustainable peace in the region.

Essentially, reconciliation will encourage forgiveness, and reduce the cycle of revenge and retaliation that perpetuates violence in the region. It will also be invaluable for strengthening community relations, promoting collective responsibility for peace, reducing tensions and facilitating the surrender of other combatants. Reconciliation and rehabilitation will aid other peacebuilding efforts, enhance human rights, and promote justice, accountability, and the rule of law, which are essential for a comprehensive approach to building sustainable peace in Northeast Nigeria. In sum, in North East Nigeria, reconciliation and rehabilitation are critical for addressing the devastating effects of the Boko Haram insurgency, promoting healing, trust, and social cohesion among affected communities, and ensuring sustainable peace.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Reconciliation and rehabilitation are essential prerequisites for sustainable peace as they address the physical and emotional wounds of conflict, rebuild relationships, and restore trust which are critical steps towards a lasting peace. Importantly, reconciliation and rehabilitation are interconnected. Reconciliation can facilitate rehabilitation by addressing underlying traumas and grievances (Kolawole, 2021), while, rehabilitation can support reconciliation by promoting individual and community well-being (ReliefWeb, 2020). Sustainable peacebuilding is also dependent on an effective reconciliation and rehabilitation process because it addresses the root causes of conflict and promotes social, economic, and political development.

In the efforts toward effective reconciliation and rehabilitation in the North East, community engagement is pivotal. To ensure a comprehensive approach, it is essential to actively involve professional and academic societies, such as the Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), in the process. The SPSP can play advisory, implementing and evaluative roles, bringing expertise and objectivity to the table. This involvement is crucial because many governments and NGOs operating in the region often benefit from the prevailing instability, creating an "economy of war" that can compromise their efforts. The SPSP can serve as a watchdog, preventing biased and compromised initiatives.

To effectively support the reconciliation and rehabilitation process in North-East Nigeria, peace societies such as the SPSP could establish a regional chapter in the North-East region of Nigeria. This chapter would liaise with state governments and NGOs to facilitate a more coordinated and effective process. Importantly, key components of this reconciliatory and rehabilitative process should include providing thorough Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to both victims and perpetrators of violence. Additionally, peace education should be integrated into the process.

Similarly, to promote sustainable peace in the region, peace societies like the SPSP should extend their reach to higher institutions in the North East. By facilitating peace studies, these organisations can groom young minds to value peace and contribute to a culture of non-violence. This aligns with the UNESCO (1945) preamble, which recognises that "since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be

constructed." By transforming minds through education and therapy, we can build a foundation for enduring peace in the North East.

Having been plagued by insurgency and terrorism, displacement and refugees, cultural and religious diversity, and limited infrastructure and resources (Word Bank, 2020), the need for inclusive and participatory culturally-sensitive and context-specific reconciliation and rehabilitation approaches involving local communities, governments, and other stakeholders in North-East Nigeria is invaluable. An effective reconciliation and rehabilitation process in North East Nigeria will breed noticeable indicators of sustainable peace, such as reduced violence and conflict, improved human development indices (health, education, etc.), increased economic growth and stability, and strengthened institutions and governance.

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