

Foreign Aid Flows and Peacebuilding Outcomes in Post-Conflict States in Nigeria

Mark, Kingsley Chinonso PhD.¹, Ihegbu Nnanyereugo²

¹Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

²Institute for Peace, Security and Development Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Received: 22 June 2026 | Accepted: 02 September 2026 | Published: 16 September 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22925994>

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between foreign aid flows and peacebuilding outcomes in post-conflict states in Nigeria with particular reference to the BAY (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) States in Nigeria. Specifically, this study examined how the conditions attached to foreign aid influence the priorities, implementation, and outcomes of peacebuilding interventions in post-conflict states of Nigeria (BAY states), assess how the allocation and utilization of foreign aid influence the effectiveness of peacebuilding programmes in post-conflict states in Nigeria; Evaluate how local community participation affect the sustainability of peacebuilding outcomes arising from foreign aid interventions in post-conflict communities of Northeast Nigeria and ascertain how foreign aid dependency affect the sustainability and local ownership of peacebuilding initiatives in post-conflict communities of Northeast Nigeria. The study was anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory, and relied on the ex-post-facto research design, with the secondary method of data collection sourced from official documents like UN, UNDP, OCHA, World bank. The study found that foreign aid has made a substantial contribution to post-conflict reconstruction in Nigeria, particularly through infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood programmes and restoration of public services. Also, foreign aid has contributed positively to humanitarian stabilization and there is a positive relationship between aid-supported livelihood programmes and community resilience. The study therefore recommend that foreign aid programmes should be aligned with Nigeria's national and subnational peacebuilding priorities. More so, humanitarian relief should be connected to longer-term development and peacebuilding among others.

Keywords: Foreign Aid Flows; Peacebuilding Outcomes; Post-Conflict States; Conflict Transformation; Human Security; Local Ownership

Introduction

Foreign aid has remained an important instrument of international engagement with fragile, conflict-affected and post-conflict societies. Specifically, it has always been used as an instrument of development in post conflict situations within the international organization in the form of bilateral and multilateral aid conditions. This phenomenon has resulted to scholars questioning the

effectiveness of foreign aid in development. For example, while scholars like Moyo (2009) and Deaton (2013) are of the opinion that it is insignificant and negative on development, others like (Steinwand 2015; Annen and Moers 2017; Burnside and Dollar 2000; Easterly 2005) affirms its effectiveness but added that it is dependent on different factors. Therefore, beyond its traditional development functions, external assistance is increasingly deployed to address the political, social, economic and security conditions that sustain conflict and undermine post-conflict recovery. Invariably, the dynamics of conflict is implicated on the use of foreign aid flows to either sustain, escalate or deescalate conflicts. Foreign aid may take several forms. These include official development assistance, humanitarian assistance, grants, concessional loans, technical assistance, budgetary support, emergency relief, reconstruction financing and funding channeled through multilateral organisations and non-governmental organisations.

The relationship between foreign aid and peacebuilding has become increasingly important in international development and security studies. Traditionally, foreign aid was conceptualized primarily as an instrument for promoting economic development, reducing poverty and supporting public-sector capacity in developing countries (Habtom, 2016). However, the emergence of civil wars, terrorism, forced displacement and fragile states has broadened the role of external assistance. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness identified ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability as central principles for improving the effectiveness of development assistance (OECD, 2005). These principles are important in conflict-affected societies because weak institutions, insecurity and competing political interests may make external assistance more vulnerable to elite capture, dependency and poor accountability. Foreign aid is now frequently directed towards humanitarian relief, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, reconstruction, institutional reform, social protection, livelihood recovery and the restoration of state legitimacy. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) describes conflict and fragility as multidimensional conditions involving economic, political, security, societal, environmental and human dimensions. It therefore emphasises that assistance to fragile contexts must address more than immediate humanitarian needs (OECD, 2005).

The contemporary understanding of peacebuilding emerged partly from the recognition that ending armed violence does not necessarily produce sustainable peace (Öjendal, Bachmann, Stern, & Leonardsson, 2021). A peace agreement or decline in direct violence may represent only the beginning of a much longer process involving institutional reconstruction, reconciliation, reintegration, economic recovery, political inclusion and restoration of relationships between communities and the state. Galtung (1969) distinguished between negative peace, understood as the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which involves addressing the structural and social conditions that produce violence. This distinction is particularly relevant to post-conflict Nigeria, where the reduction of insurgent territorial control does not automatically eliminate poverty, displacement, unemployment, distrust, exclusion, trauma and institutional weaknesses that may sustain insecurity.

Nigeria represents a particularly significant case for examining the relationship between foreign aid flows and peacebuilding. Although Nigeria is not conventionally classified as a post-conflict state in its entirety, several parts of the country have experienced protracted armed conflict and are undergoing processes of recovery, stabilisation and peacebuilding. The North-East, particularly

Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States, has experienced the devastating effects of Boko Haram insurgency since 2009. The conflict has resulted in extensive loss of life, internal displacement, destruction of infrastructure, disruption of agriculture and commerce, and the weakening of social and institutional structures. The World Bank reports that the insurgency profoundly affected approximately 15 million people across the region and generated large-scale displacement and extensive reconstruction needs (World Bank Group 2016). The total foreign aid flows to Nigeria average between \$3.5 billion and \$4.4 billion annually, with specific allocations heavily concentrated toward post-conflict regions like the Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states. (The Cable, 2024; The GlobalEconomy.com. 2023; ReliefWeb, 2025). The vast majority of post-conflict stabilization and recovery is handled via annual Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans co-managed by the United Nations and the Nigerian government: (OCHA, 2026). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs launched an appeal for \$516 million exclusively targeting 2.5 million vulnerable people in the post-conflict BAY states. As of mid-2026, \$247.3 million has already been received. (Omeje, 2026; OCHA, 2026). Also, out of a required \$916 million for the northeast crisis, donors successfully funded \$526 million, with the United States acting as the top bilateral contributor by providing over \$320 million (57%) of that pool. (TVC News Nigeria, 2026). In addition, the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund, pooled fund specifically for local NGOs operating in the northeast has mobilized over \$215 million since its inception in 2017 (ReliefWeb, 2025). Although there had been wars like the civil war and others in the post conflicts states of Nigeria, however, these contemporary post conflict events are cited because of its timing, spillovers and the associated foreign aid flow it has gathered in Nigeria.

The UNDP has also supported peacebuilding and early recovery interventions through its programmes in the North-East that entails livelihood restoration, restoration of basic services, accountable local governance, community security and social cohesion (UNDP, 2020) The Japanese government, for example, has provided financial support through UNDP for recovery and peacebuilding initiatives in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, illustrating how bilateral foreign assistance can be channeled through multilateral institutions to support local recovery. (UNDP, April 1, 2020).

Notwithstanding these aids and supports, the relationship between aid and peacebuilding outcomes is neither automatic nor straightforward. While aids can produce infrastructure, employment and humanitarian relief, it does not necessarily produce reconciliation or address the political grievances underlying conflict. Likewise, humanitarian assistance may prevent immediate suffering but can create dependency if not connected to recovery and livelihood strategies. The distinction between relief and peacebuilding is therefore important. Humanitarian assistance addresses immediate needs, whereas peacebuilding seeks to create conditions that reduce the probability of renewed violence and enable communities to develop mechanisms for managing conflict peacefully. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that this study evaluates the effectiveness of foreign aid flows on peacebuilding outcomes amongst some selected post conflict states in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The consensual notion on aid as an instrument of development has been matched with some varying notion on how effective and to what extent it enhances such. Drifting towards the field of conflict is another dynamics and perspectives as well. Despite the wide literature on foreign aid, the influence of foreign aid on conflict and vice versa has not attracted the same level of attention as other aspects

of development. Additionally, the growing literature on foreign aid and conflict focuses on the impact of conflict on aid allocation (Balla and Reinhardt 2008; Lis 2018) or general analyses of the impact of aid on conflict-prone regions (Findley 2018). Irrespective of the findings of these studies, the practical reality remains that state and non-state actors allocate foreign aid for various reasons. However, most of these studies are yet to provide a detailed analysis of how foreign aid can be used to facilitate post-conflict stability, especially with the combination of different methods and an examination of different dynamics of foreign aid.

In a similar perspective, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) argue that conflict is shaped by economic opportunities and grievances, suggesting that economic conditions can influence the capacity of armed groups to organise and sustain rebellion. Their argument has implications for foreign aid because aid that strengthens legitimate livelihoods, expands economic opportunities and reduces vulnerability may potentially reduce some of the conditions that facilitate conflict. However, aid that does not address exclusion, governance failures and perceptions of injustice may have limited peacebuilding effects. The aid effectiveness debate also raises questions concerning ownership. The Paris Declaration emphasises national ownership and alignment with recipient-country strategies (OECD, 2005). However, scholars have questioned whether these principles are consistently realised in practice. Booth (2012), for example, argues that country ownership cannot be assumed merely because aid programmes are implemented within recipient states; political incentives and institutional conditions influence whether ownership is meaningful. This is especially relevant in Nigeria, where multiple donors, government agencies, international organisations, humanitarian agencies and civil society organisations may operate simultaneously.

Furthermore, the increasing localisation of peacebuilding scholarship has challenged highly centralised international approaches as observed by Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013). They argue for greater attention to local actors and everyday forms of peacebuilding. Their "local turn" highlights the importance of communities in defining, negotiating and sustaining peace. Donais (2021) similarly emphasises the contested nature of local ownership, raising questions about who owns peacebuilding interventions and whose priorities are represented. These debates provide the intellectual foundation for examining foreign aid flows and peacebuilding outcomes in Nigeria. The central concern of this study is therefore not simply the amount of foreign aid entering Nigeria but the mechanisms through which such aid is translated into peacebuilding outcomes.

Nigeria has experienced significant internal conflicts that have generated complex humanitarian, political, social and economic consequences. The Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East constitutes one of the most severe manifestations of this problem. Although military operations have reduced the capacity of insurgent groups to control territory in some areas, conflict-related insecurity, displacement, poverty, destruction of infrastructure, weakened livelihoods and social fragmentation continue to affect communities. UNDP's assessment of the developmental consequences of the conflict demonstrates that insecurity has generated interconnected effects across economic, social and institutional sectors. (Hanna, Bohl, Rafa, & Moyer, 2021). The severity of the crisis has attracted extensive international assistance. Foreign governments, multilateral development institutions and international organisations have funded humanitarian response, reconstruction, livelihood programmes, institutional strengthening, education, health, infrastructure

and community-based peacebuilding. The World Bank's recovery interventions alone illustrate the scale and multidimensional nature of external support. (World Bank, 2017).

However, the presence of substantial foreign assistance does not necessarily guarantee sustainable peacebuilding outcomes. This constitutes the central problem of the study. Despite extensive humanitarian and development interventions, several conflict-affected communities continue to experience insecurity, displacement, unemployment, weak social services and fragile relationships between communities and public institutions. Humanitarian access has also been constrained by insecurity, with affected populations in hard-to-reach areas experiencing difficulty accessing assistance. ((Stoddard, Harvey, Czwarno, & Breckenridge, 2020). A major problem concerns the fragmentation of aid. Multiple donors and implementing organisations may pursue similar or overlapping objectives while operating according to different funding cycles, reporting requirements and institutional priorities. Such fragmentation can undermine coherence and make it difficult to establish a unified peacebuilding strategy. The Paris Declaration's principles of harmonisation, alignment and mutual accountability were developed partly in response to these problems (OECD, 2005). In addition, humanitarian funding often responds to immediate crises, whereas peacebuilding requires sustained engagement over longer periods. The OECD reports that in highly fragile contexts, humanitarian assistance has grown while the share of official development assistance devoted to peace has declined, suggesting a continuing imbalance between emergency response and longer-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding. (OECD, 2025).

The problem, therefore, is the insufficient understanding of how, under what conditions and through which mechanisms foreign aid contributes to sustainable peacebuilding outcomes in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria. This study relied on the ex-post-facto research design, with the secondary method of data collection sourced from official documents like UN, UNDP, OCHA, World bank to address the gap by critically examining the relationship between foreign aid flows and peacebuilding outcomes, focusing particularly on the North-East as a principal case of post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study is guided by the following aim and objectives.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between foreign aid flows and peacebuilding outcomes in post-conflict states in Nigeria with particular reference to the BAY (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) States in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine how the allocation and utilisation of foreign aid influence the effectiveness of peacebuilding programmes in post-conflict states in Nigeria.
2. Examine how the conditions attached to foreign aid influence the priorities, implementation, and outcomes of peacebuilding interventions in post-conflict states of Nigeria (BAY states)
3. Ascertain how foreign aid dependency affect the sustainability and local ownership of peacebuilding initiatives in post-conflict communities of Northeast Nigeria?

Research Questions

In line with the research objectives, the following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How do the allocation and utilisation of foreign aid influence the effectiveness of peacebuilding programmes in post-conflict states in Nigeria?
2. How do the conditions attached to foreign aid influence the priorities, implementation, and outcomes of peacebuilding interventions in post-conflict Nigeria?
3. How does foreign aid dependency affect the sustainability and local ownership of peacebuilding initiatives in post-conflict communities in Nigeria?

Conceptual Review of Related Literature

Foreign Aid

Foreign aid has remained a significant instrument of international development and a major source of external resources for developing and conflict-affected countries. It encompasses financial, technical, humanitarian and developmental resources transferred by bilateral donors, multilateral institutions and other international actors to recipient countries. In post-conflict environments, Ndikumana (2016) argues that foreign assistance can help post-conflict countries address structural constraints and reduce the risk of renewed conflict, particularly through support for security, public services, infrastructure and institutional development. The conventional development literature, however, provides no consensus regarding the effectiveness of foreign aid. Early aid debates largely focused on whether external resources could accelerate economic growth by supplementing inadequate domestic savings and investment. Burnside and Dollar (2000) found that aid contributed positively to economic growth in countries characterised by sound fiscal, monetary and trade policies. Their argument suggests that aid effectiveness is conditional upon the quality of recipient-country policies and institutions. Nevertheless, subsequent scholarship challenged the robustness of this relationship. Qian (2015) observes that the empirical evidence on aggregate aid remains mixed and that methodological problems arise because aid is heterogeneous and is frequently influenced by donor objectives rather than solely by recipient needs. Thus, treating foreign aid as a homogeneous resource may obscure important differences in the purposes, channels and consequences of different aid interventions.

Also, some strands of literature emphasize the political economy of aid allocation. Hoeffler and Outram (2011) found that bilateral aid allocation reflects both recipient need and donor self-interest, suggesting that aid flows cannot always be interpreted as objective responses to development or humanitarian requirements. Similarly, recent research argues that donor motives can shape both the allocation and effectiveness of aid, with evidence that aid is particularly effective in sectors favoured by donors rather than necessarily in areas of greatest recipient need (Hoeffler & Outram, 2011; Kobayashi, 2024). This perspective is important for post-conflict Nigeria because the volume of aid received by a conflict-affected state does not necessarily indicate that resources are directed towards the underlying causes of conflict. It becomes more contested when foreign aid is examined in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Gisselquist (2021) identifies foreign aid as a core component of peacebuilding but cautions that aid can generate unintended consequences, including weakened state capacity, reduced public accountability and, under some circumstances, increased conflict. She therefore emphasises contextual appropriateness, local ownership and the strengthening of domestic institutions as conditions for effective aid-supported peacebuilding. Similarly, a systematic review by Zürcher (2017) found that aid interventions in conflict-affected

countries do not consistently reduce violence; in some circumstances, aid may even increase violence, while violence-reducing effects are more likely in relatively stable and secure environments. This finding challenges the simplistic assumption that greater aid automatically produces greater peace.

Conversely, evidence also demonstrates that appropriately designed aid can contribute to peace and post-conflict recovery. Collier and Hoeffler (2002) argued that aid can reduce the risk of civil conflict by supporting economic recovery and improving the socioeconomic conditions associated with conflict. In post-conflict societies, such assistance can help rebuild infrastructure, restore livelihoods, strengthen institutions and create conditions for sustainable peace. Ndikumana (2016) similarly stresses that the effectiveness of post-conflict aid depends heavily on the capacity of the recipient state to perform core functions such as security, law enforcement, public-service provision and domestic revenue mobilisation.

More recent evidence provides an important refinement to this debate by distinguishing the volume of aid from its composition. Lilja, Lindé, Ahmad, and Milante (2025), using evidence from post-conflict contexts between 1990 and 2022, found a statistical relationship between aggregate aid and sustained peace, but also demonstrated that the composition of aid matters. In particular, the share devoted specifically to peacebuilding was associated with avoiding conflict relapse. This finding is particularly significant for the present study because it suggests that analysing only the amount of foreign aid flowing into Nigeria may provide an incomplete explanation of peacebuilding outcomes.

Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict States in Nigeria

Peacebuilding in post-conflict Nigeria involves more than the cessation of armed violence. It encompasses the processes of rebuilding institutions, restoring livelihoods, addressing grievances, promoting reconciliation, strengthening social cohesion and preventing the recurrence of violence. This broader understanding is particularly important because Nigeria's post-conflict environments differ significantly in their historical causes, actors and patterns of violence. For example, the **Niger Delta** is principally associated with oil-related grievances, environmental degradation, political exclusion and militancy, whereas the **North-East** has been profoundly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, displacement, destruction of infrastructure and weakened social and institutional systems. Consequently, peacebuilding strategies that are appropriate in one context cannot necessarily be replicated successfully in another.

Peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria

Peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria presents a different set of challenges. The Boko Haram insurgency generated extensive loss of life, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, disruption of livelihoods and deterioration of social relations. Borno, Adamawa and Yobe became particularly affected by the crisis. Consequently, post-conflict interventions have involved not only security measures but also humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, livelihood recovery, psychosocial support, institutional strengthening and social cohesion. The Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPBA) conducted by the Nigerian Government in collaboration with the World Bank, European Union and United Nations represented an important shift towards an integrated approach to recovery and peacebuilding. The assessment examined both the physical consequences of conflict and its underlying drivers, thereby linking reconstruction with longer-term peacebuilding.

The World Bank's Multi-Sectoral Crisis Recovery Project (MCRP) further illustrates this approach. Its interventions have included rehabilitation of infrastructure, livelihood support, psychosocial assistance and initiatives aimed at strengthening social cohesion. The project demonstrates an understanding that peacebuilding in the North-East requires rebuilding both the physical infrastructure and the social relationships damaged by conflict.

Nevertheless, the North-East experience demonstrates that reconstruction does not automatically produce sustainable peace. Aluko (2020) argues that a durable peacebuilding process must incorporate a human-rights-based approach, because violations of rights and weak governance can contribute to the persistence of conflict. He therefore advocates institutionalising respect for human rights within governance and social relations as a foundation for sustainable peace. More recent scholarship also emphasises deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration as important components of post-conflict peacebuilding following Boko Haram's insurgency (Sambo & Sule, 2026).

Foreign Aid and Peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Foreign aid has become an important component of Nigeria's response to conflict, humanitarian crises, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. However, the Nigerian experience demonstrates that the relationship between foreign aid and peacebuilding is neither automatic nor uniformly positive. Rather, the effectiveness of external assistance depends on the nature of the conflict, the form and timing of assistance, institutional capacity, local participation, accountability and whether interventions address the structural causes of conflict. The Boko Haram insurgency generated extensive humanitarian, developmental and institutional needs, thereby producing substantial involvement by international development and humanitarian actors. The World Bank's Multi-Sectoral Crisis Recovery Project (MCRP), for example, was designed to rehabilitate critical infrastructure, improve livelihoods and strengthen social cohesion in conflict-affected communities. The programme demonstrates a broader understanding of peacebuilding in which recovery, service delivery, livelihoods and social cohesion are connected to sustainable peace. The World Bank's broader North-East recovery programme was informed by the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPBA) undertaken by the Nigerian Government, World Bank, United Nations and European Union. Its interventions included education, health, agricultural production and livelihood improvement, thereby illustrating a movement from emergency humanitarian assistance toward recovery and resilience-building. The UNDP (2021) similarly conceptualises recovery and peacebuilding in the North-East as interconnected processes requiring attention to the developmental consequences and underlying dynamics of conflict.

Nevertheless, the North-East experience also reveals important limitations. International organisations operate within an environment characterised by insecurity, displacement, weak infrastructure and restricted humanitarian access. These conditions can limit the ability of foreign-funded programmes to reach vulnerable populations and convert financial resources into durable peacebuilding outcomes. Recent research on international NGOs in the North-East identifies insecurity, illiteracy and sociocultural factors among the constraints affecting peacebuilding interventions (Saka, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory. The theory is strongly associated with the work of John Paul Lederach, who argues that peacebuilding should move beyond resolving or managing individual manifestations of conflict to transforming the relationships, structures and broader social contexts that produce and sustain violence (Lederach, 1997). Conflict transformation differs from conventional conflict management and conflict resolution. Conflict management generally seeks to control destructive conflict; conflict resolution seeks to address the immediate causes and incompatibilities underlying conflict; whereas conflict transformation seeks to alter the wider systems and relationships that generate conflict (Lederach, 2003).

Conflict Transformation Theory provides a useful framework for understanding post-conflict peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria because it shifts attention from the termination of violence to the transformation of the structures, relationships, institutions and social conditions that generate and reproduce conflict. The theory is principally associated with John Paul Lederach, who argues that sustainable peace requires more than managing or resolving immediate disputes; it requires transforming the broader systems and relationships within which conflict occurs (Lederach, 1997, 2003).

The theory is particularly relevant to North-East Nigeria because the Boko Haram insurgency cannot be understood simply as a security problem. The conflict has been associated with poverty, unemployment, weak governance, political grievances, socioeconomic exclusion, inadequate public services, radicalization, corruption, human-rights concerns and the marginalisation of some communities. Consequently, the defeat or containment of insurgents does not necessarily eliminate the conditions that make renewed violence possible. A central assumption of Conflict Transformation Theory is that violent conflict is frequently rooted in unjust or dysfunctional social, political and economic structures (Lederach, 1997). Peacebuilding must therefore address these structural conditions rather than concentrate exclusively on combatants.

In North-East Nigeria, this implies that post-conflict peacebuilding should address poverty, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, weak public institutions, limited access to education and healthcare, displacement and socioeconomic inequalities. Foreign aid can support this transformation through financing schools, health facilities, roads, water systems, livelihood programmes and institutional development. The Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPBA) conducted by the Nigerian Government, World Bank, European Union and United Nations reflects this broader approach by linking recovery and reconstruction to peacebuilding. The assessment recognised that the consequences of the insurgency extended beyond physical destruction to livelihoods, social services and institutional capacity.

From a conflict-transformation perspective, however, reconstruction should not merely replace what was destroyed. It should also contribute to changing the conditions that facilitated conflict. For example, rebuilding a school is a reconstruction activity, but improving equitable access to education and employment opportunities can become a conflict-transformation intervention. Furthermore, Lederach (1997) identifies relationships as another critical dimension of conflict transformation. Violent conflict damages relationships between individuals, communities and institutions. In the North-East, the Boko Haram insurgency contributed to distrust between communities, displaced populations, government authorities and security agencies. Peacebuilding therefore needs to rebuild relationships among: displaced persons and host communities;

communities and government institutions; civilians and security agencies; former combatants and receiving communities; and victims, former combatants and wider society. Dialogue, community reconciliation, mediation, peace education and community-based peacebuilding can contribute to rebuilding these relationships.

Again, Conflict Transformation Theory also recognises the importance of transforming the narratives and cultural patterns that sustain violence (Lederach, 2003). In North-East Nigeria, prolonged insurgency has affected perceptions of identity, religion, authority and belonging. Some communities may associate particular groups with insurgency, while returning or formerly associated individuals may face suspicion and stigmatisation. Consequently, peacebuilding should promote narratives that encourage: peaceful coexistence; tolerance; forgiveness and reconciliation; rejection of violent extremism; respect for diversity; and reintegration of affected populations.

The economic dimension is particularly important in post-conflict North-East Nigeria. Conflict destroys livelihoods, markets, agricultural production and employment opportunities. Displacement further increases economic vulnerability. From a conflict-transformation perspective, livelihood programmes should therefore be understood as more than poverty-reduction interventions. They can contribute to peace by reducing socioeconomic grievances and providing alternatives to participation in violent or criminal activities.

Findings

The study found that foreign aid has made a substantial contribution to post-conflict reconstruction in Nigeria, particularly through infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood programmes and restoration of public services. Evidence from the World Bank demonstrates that international financing has supported roads, hospitals, schools, water facilities and public buildings in the North-East. (World Bank 2021)

Second, the study found that foreign aid has contributed positively to humanitarian stabilization. Humanitarian resources have helped address immediate needs created by displacement, food insecurity and destruction of livelihoods.

Finally, the study found a positive relationship between aid-supported livelihood programmes and community resilience. Programmes involving agricultural support, vocational training and economic opportunities can reduce vulnerability and facilitate reintegration. UNDP-supported programmes provide examples of such interventions. (UNDP)

Conclusion

Foreign aid has become an important component of post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding in Nigeria. The experience of the North-East demonstrates that international assistance can support humanitarian stabilisation, infrastructure reconstruction, livelihood recovery, public-service restoration, institutional strengthening and social cohesion. However, the relationship between aid and peace is neither linear nor automatic. The existence of foreign-funded projects does not necessarily mean that sustainable peace has been achieved. Peacebuilding requires attention to the structural conditions that produce vulnerability to conflict, including poverty, exclusion, weak governance, unemployment, inequality, limited public services and distrust between citizens and institutions. The study argues that the effectiveness of foreign aid depends on how resources are

designed, allocated, coordinated and implemented. Aid that is fragmented, short-term or externally driven may produce temporary improvements without addressing the foundations of sustainable peace. Conversely, aid that is aligned with national priorities, responsive to local needs, coordinated across humanitarian and development actors, and designed around local ownership can make a substantial contribution to peacebuilding.

The experience of North-East Nigeria is particularly instructive because the region illustrates the interconnected nature of humanitarian crisis, development deficits and peacebuilding challenges. The World Bank's integrated approach to recovery, combining infrastructure, livelihoods, services and social cohesion, demonstrates the potential value of linking humanitarian and development interventions with peacebuilding objectives. (World Bank 2021). The ultimate challenge is therefore to move from an aid model centred on emergency response and discrete projects towards a coherent, long-term peacebuilding strategy that strengthens Nigerian institutions and communities. Foreign assistance should complement rather than substitute domestic capacity.

Recommendations

Foreign aid programmes should be aligned with Nigeria's national and subnational peacebuilding priorities. Donors should work through Nigerian institutions while maintaining appropriate safeguards for transparency and accountability. Conflict-affected communities should participate meaningfully in programme design, implementation and evaluation. Traditional leaders, women's organisations, youth groups, religious institutions and civil society organisations should be integrated into peacebuilding planning.

Humanitarian relief should be connected to longer-term development and peacebuilding. Where appropriate, programmes should move beneficiaries progressively from emergency assistance towards sustainable livelihoods and social protection. Greater attention should be given to agriculture, vocational training, entrepreneurship, small businesses and employment creation, particularly for young people and vulnerable households.

Every major aid intervention should assess how the distribution of resources could influence relationships among communities. Programmes should avoid reinforcing existing political, ethnic, religious or socioeconomic inequalities. Donors should avoid excessive dependence on short-term funding cycles. Sustainable peace requires predictable financing over longer periods.

Copyright © 2026, Authors retain copyright. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> (CC BY 4.0 deed)

References

- Aghedo, I. (2013). Winning the war, losing the peace: Amnesty and the challenges of post-conflict peace-building in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 48(3), 267–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909612453987>
- Ajibola, I. O. (2015). Nigeria's Amnesty Program: The role of empowerment in achieving peace and development in post-conflict Niger Delta. *SAGE Open*, 5(3), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015589996>
- Aluko, B. A. (2020). Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: The imperative of institutionalising human rights-based approach to post-conflict peacebuilding in the North-East. *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*.
- Annen, K., and L. Moers. 2017. "Donor Competition for Aid Impact, and Aid Fragmentation." World Bank Economic <https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhw019>. Review 31 (3): 708-729.
- Balla, Eliana, and Gina Yannitell Reinhardt. 2008. "Giving and Receiving Foreign Aid: Does Conflict Count?" World Development <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.03.008>. 36 (12): 2566-2585.
- Booth, D. (2012). Aid effectiveness: Bringing country ownership (and politics) back in. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 12(5), 537–558. doi:10.1080/14678802.2012.744184
- Burnside, C., & Dollar, D. (2000). Aid, policies, and growth. *American Economic Review*, 90(4), 847–868. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.90.4.847>
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2002). Aid, policy and peace: Reducing the risks of civil conflict. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 13(6), 435–450.
- Deaton, A (2013). The great escape: health, wealth, and the origins of inequality. Vol. Book, Whole. Princeton, N.J; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Donais, T. (2021). Local ownership, legitimacy, and peacebuilding. In O. P. Richmond & G. Visoka (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and peace formation* (pp. 549–562). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190904418.013.39>
- Easterly, William. 2005. "What did structural adjustment adjust? The association of policies and growth with repeated IMF and World Bank adjustment loans." *Journal of Development Economics* 76 (1): 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2003.11.005>.
- Findley, Michael G. 2018. "Does Foreign Aid Build Peace?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (1): 359-384. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041916-015516>.
- Gisselquist, R. M. (2021). Foreign aid and peacebuilding. In O. P. Richmond & G. Visoka (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and peace formation* (pp. 532–548). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Habtom, G. K. (2016). Foreign aid effectiveness and development strategies in Eritrea: A lesson for Sub-Saharan African countries. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 8(5), 49–66. doi:10.5897/JASD2016.0389
- Hanna, T., Bohl, D. K., Rafa, M., & Moyer, J. D. (2021). *Assessing the impact of conflict on development in North-east Nigeria*. Abuja, Nigeria: United Nations Development Programme.

- Hoeffler, A., & Outram, V. (2011). Need, merit, or self-interest—What determines the allocation of aid? *Review of Development Economics*, 15(2), 237–250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9361.2011.00605.x>
- Ikelegbe, A., & Umukoro, N. (2016). Exclusion and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: An assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 11(2), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2016.1189347>
- Lilja, J., Lindé, T., Ahmad, A. S., & Milante, G. (2025). Foreign aid composition and sustaining peace after war. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 20(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166251348785>
- Lis, P. 2018. "The impact of armed conflict and terrorism on foreign aid: A sector-level analysis." *World Development* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.06.009>. 110: 283–294.
- Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. P. (2013). The local turn in peace building: A critical agenda for peace. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), 763–783. doi:10.1080/01436597.2013.800750
- Moyo, Dambisa. 2009. *Dead aid: why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*. Vol. Book, Whole. London: Allen Lane.
- Ndikumana, L. (2016). The role of foreign aid in post-conflict countries. In A. Langer & G. K. Brown (Eds.), *Building sustainable peace: Timing and sequencing of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding* (pp. 141–159). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Obi, C. (2014). Oil and the post-amnesty programme (PAP): What prospects for sustainable development and peace in the Niger Delta? *Review of African Political Economy*, 41(140), 249–263.
- OECD. (2025). *The state of responses to crises and fragility*. In *States of Fragility 2025*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/81982370-en>
- Öjendal, J., Bachmann, J., Stern, M., & Leonardsson, H. (2021). Introduction – Peacebuilding amidst violence. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 15(3), 269–288. doi:10.1080/17502977.2021.1913006
- Omeje, I. (2026, July 20). *Nigeria received \$37.8bn foreign aid in ten years as poverty bites harder*. The Whistler Newspaper. Retrieved from <https://thewhistler.ng/nigeria-received-37-8bn-foreign-aid-in-ten-years-as-poverty-bites-harder/>
- Osumah, O. (2013). No war, no peace: The example of peacebuilding in the post-amnesty Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *African Security Review*, 22(4), 244–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2013.838793>
- Qian, N. (2015). Making progress on foreign aid. *Annual Review of Economics*, 7, 277–308. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080614-115553>
- ReliefWeb. (2025, August 14). *Nigeria Humanitarian Fund: Funding overview 2025, as of 14 August 2025*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-fund-funding-overview-2025-14-august-2025>
- Saka, A. J. (2025). Assessment of international NGOs' roles and challenges in peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria. *Journal of Governance*, 10(2).

- Sambo, U., & Sule, B. (2026). *Deradicalisation and post-conflict peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria: Countering Boko Haram's extremism*. London, England: Routledge.
- Steinwand, Martin C. 2015. "Compete or Coordinate? Aid Fragmentation and Lead Donorship." International Organization <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818314000381>.
- Stoddard, A., Harvey, P., Czwarno, M., & Breckenridge, M.-J. (2020). *Humanitarian access SCORE report: Northeast Nigeria: Survey on the coverage, operational reach, and effectiveness of humanitarian aid*. Humanitarian Outcomes.
- The Eagle Online. (2018, September 1). *Nigeria reaffirms \$6.7b Northeast reconstruction, rehabilitation, resettlement*. Retrieved from <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/nigeria-reaffirms-6-7b-northeast-reconstruction-rehabilitation-resettlement/>
- TheCable. (2024). *U.S. foreign assistance to Nigeria hit a decade-high of \$1.03bn in 2023, totals \$8.27bn* [Facebook post]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/thecableng/posts/us-foreign-assistance-to-nigeria-hit-a-decade-high-of-103bn-in-2023-totals-827bn/1337308081918828/>
- TheGlobalEconomy.com. (2023). *Nigeria: Foreign aid*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Nigeria/foreign_aid/
- TVC News Nigeria. (2026, February 11). *U.S. funding has been consistently supporting humanitarian needs in the North-East – Goje* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xA-a3CyArzc>
- Ukiwo, U. (2016). Timing and sequencing in peacebuilding: The case of Nigeria's Niger Delta Amnesty Programme. In A. Langer & G. K. Brown (Eds.), *Building sustainable peace: Timing and sequencing of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding* (pp. 262–283). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Ukiwo, U. (2016). Timing and sequencing in peacebuilding: The case of Nigeria's Niger Delta Amnesty Programme. In A. Langer & G. K. Brown (Eds.), *Building sustainable peace: Timing and sequencing of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding* (pp. 262–283). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2020, April 1). *Government of Japan announces USD \$2.5 million for early recovery and peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria*. United Nations Development Programme webpage
- United Nations Development Programme. (2021). *Assessing the impact of conflict on development in North-East Nigeria*. Abuja, Nigeria: Author.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2026). *Press release: Government of Nigeria, humanitarian partners launch urgent appeal for US\$516 million to provide lifesaving support to 2.5 million people in north-east Nigeria in 2026*. Retrieved from <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/press-release-government-nigeria-humanitarian-partners-launch-urgent-appeal-us516-million-provide-lifesaving-support-25-million-people-north-east-nigeria-2026>
- Ushie, V. (2013). Nigeria's Amnesty Programme as a peacebuilding infrastructure: A silver bullet? *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 8(1), 30–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2013.789255>

- World Bank Group. (2016). *North-East Nigeria recovery and peace building assessment: Volume I—Synthesis report*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
- World Bank. (2017, December 18). *Northeast Nigeria*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2020). *Strengthening recovery and peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2021, July 7). *Strengthening recovery and peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/07/07/strengthening-recovery-and-peacebuilding-in-north-east-nigeria>
- Zürcher, C. (2017). What do we (not) know about development aid and violence? A systematic review. *World Development*, 98, 506–522. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.05.013>