PART A. NARRATIVE REPORT

Summary
The goal of this project was to pilot local mothers’ voter education and peacebuilding initiatives in six of the many Nigerian villages most impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency. Another significant aspect of this project was to educate the women about the importance and impact of their votes and how they can be used to achieve their goals for peace in their communities.

Project Description
How did you decide what issue(s) you wanted to address and what approach(es) or strategies you chose to implement in your project?
I took a course on the theories of international relations in the fall of 2022, and part of our final project was to choose a topic of our choice and write about it. I saw that as an opportunity to embark on a journey of researching women and peacebuilding in Africa. My decision to choose this topic was influenced by a long observation of the role women play in my community. Since the evolution of Boko Haram, men have actively participated in countering the insurgency, but women in these communities have yet to organize to use their tools as citizens to build a movement that will put pressure on the local, state, and national governments to provide them with the security they dearly need. After researching the Liberian women’s “Mass Action for Peace,” which launched a nonviolent campaign that led to the end of the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003, I was inspired and believed that women from modest backgrounds can indeed make a huge difference in creating a peaceful society once they become aware of their power. This is what led to the idea of implementing peacebuilding initiatives and political education in my community. I used some of the strategies used by the Liberian women, such as such as mobilization through religion.

Why did you choose your host site? In what ways did local relationships support you or contribute to the project?
I chose to advance the Projects for Peace in Northeastern Nigeria because not only was I born and raised in the community, but I also experienced and witnessed living in a society that lacks peace. My community and many others in the Chibok area and Borno State as a whole have long been terrorized by the Boko Haram insurgency, and women and young girls have been the major targets of the violence. The Projects for Peace gave me hope and the opportunity to create a difference for women and next time young girls in my community. The relationships I had with people in my community facilitated the implementation of my project. Not only did the participants trust me for creating such a unique opportunity in our dear community, but they were also very proud that I could still remember them despite being away from home for some time. The recruitment process was fun and easy – as a result, all the women in the community wanted to participate in the program.

What changes or adjustments did you make to your original plans, and why?
My original plan was to be in my community this summer to advance the Projects for Peace myself in addition to students at the Federal Polytechnic Mubi, Adamawa Yola, Nigeria, but due
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To security reasons, I was not able to go back. Consequently, I had to join the workshops via Skype and recruit more leaders who helped implement the program in addition to the Federal Polytechnic Mubi students. Thus, the project was even more successful than I thought it would be with the support of the team and the participants.

**Are there opportunities for continuing your work on this issue? If so, please describe.**
The goal of this project going forward is to create an organization. After advancing the Projects for Peace in my community and how successful it was, the participants asked to convert the program into a long-term organization. An organization that allows the women in the community to voice their concerns mobilize for peace initiatives, and run for office. I promised the women to support them in building the organization and continue to work with them on the issues concerning women and beyond. Therefore, I hope to get more support and guidance in the future to make this dream a reality.

**Reflection**

**How do you define peace?**
Before my engagement with this project, I had a narrow understanding and definition of peace, but after a careful observation of the participants’ perspectives and analysis of peace, I have come to learn that peace is not only when society is free from violence, conflict, social disturbance, and when an individual is able to sleep in their home without fear of being killed, slaughtered, or kidnapped by someone for no reason, but also when love, unity, and kindness exist.

**In what ways might your project contribute to peace? What changes occurred?**
**Short-term? Long-term?**
In addition to the enormous efforts men have put to counter the threat Boko Haram poses, I believe my project opened a door for women in the Chibok community to start participating in an effort to dismantle the insurgent violence and rebuild their communities, but my project also helped them uncovered their power, roles, and potentials to make a difference. In the short term, my project was eye-opening. Many among the participants promised to not only use their votes to demand a better government and security but they also promised to run for office in the next election. In fact, they had already started appointing their fellow women who they believed should run for office, and these women committed to mobilizing more women beyond their communities. In the long term, there will be more women as political representatives, peacebuilding initiatives, and safe spaces such as organizations for women in the Chibok community and beyond.
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Identify a significant conflict you observed or encountered in your work (it could be any level of relationship: intra- or inter-personal, community/group-based, and/or societal/global). How did you navigate the conflict, and what would you like to learn more about as a result.

Interestingly, I did not encounter any type of conflict in my work, but one of the major challenges was the selection of the participants. I pretty much know everyone in the community, and when the project was announced, all the women volunteered to participate, and no one wanted to be left out. However, the non-participants eventually realized that the project was the foundation for creating a safe space to voice their opinions.

Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has the project changed, challenged, or inspired you?

This project changed and challenged me in various ways. I never believed a young girl who was born and raised in a rural community could also make a small difference in her community, but this project proved me wrong. Not only has the project made me believe in my potential, but also taught me to value my ideas and ability and, most importantly, to believe in myself. Through this project, I have learned that a small change can indeed make a huge difference. I love and enjoy helping others, but after experiencing the difference this project has made in my community, I am even more motivated to dedicate my time and career to helping women and young girls have better living conditions in rural areas beyond the Chibok community. Finally, the project has strengthened my leadership skills and shaped my ability to confidently contribute to building a better society.

Personal Statement

“This project has impacted this community in a way that initially, women were sleeping, but this project has influenced the women to wake up from their sleep, and they now know their values in the community. Women used to think that they were nothing, but due to this project, they now know that, yes, through them, a change can take place in the community. I learned that I am something as a woman, and I can bring change in my community as the Liberian women did.”

- Juliana Alfret -- one of the participants

“As a woman, I thought we have no power on our own; we have no say; my role was only to cook for my husband and take care of my children; that is the only thing. This program has changed my perspective; now I realize that women have a say in society, women have power in society, and I will not look down on myself. I can build peace through awareness with my fellow women. I will make use of what has been taught. Now that we know, it is very important for us women to come out, use our votes, and participate in politics because it is through that change can happen in our society.”

- Mommy Tariza -- one of the participants