Report of Training of *Hakimai* and *Ardo* on Peacebuilding & Conflict Resolution in Kaduna State

Under the:

Strengthening the Delivery of Peace and Security (SDPS) Project

Organised by

Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja

in partnership with

Centre for Peace Studies,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Held at:

Asaa Pyramid Hotel, Kaduna State

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Background

Even before the current spate of rural violence and banditry in northwest Nigeria, Kaduna state has been a hotspot of violent conflict with a history of religious and ethnic conflicts, political violence as well as deep-rooted indigene-settler disharmony. Present-day rural banditry, in the form of kidnapping, pillage of rural communities and mass killings, has fluidly diffused into pre-existing ethno-religious tensions and bigotry, which is often amplified by the media and political commentators. Every killing, kidnapping or act of violence in Kaduna is seen as Muslim against the Christian or vice-versa, thereby inflaming the multiple complexities of the conflict. As a result, armed banditry in the state has the potential of being misinterpreted in different ways, compared to other states with less of a history of ethnic and religious violence.

Traditional leaders—*Hakimai and Ardo*—are ever-present conflict actors either as its victims or as agents of peacebuilding and resolution. Socially speaking, traditional authorities are the agents of peace and social cohesion. They operate at the grassroots and interact regularly and closely with the masses. In addition, they are custodians of culture and traditions. They are also the major pillars for the success of any social programme and public policy design and implementation. When it comes to conflict resolution, they have a vast knowledge and experience of the acceptable traditional methods and procedures of conflict management, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In fact it has been argued that the collapse of the traditional conflict resolution and peacebuilding architectures in many societies was partly responsible for the escalation of this violent conflict in Kaduna state.

In recognition of this Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Abuja in partnership with the Centre for Peace Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto organised a two-day capacity building training for selected *Hakimai* and *Ardo* in Kaduna state on peacebuilding and conflict resolution under its *Strengthening the Delivery of Peace and Security (SDPS) Project*.

Objectives

The key essence of the training was to provide a platform in, which the capacity of traditional leaders would be improved by strengthening their traditional methods of conflict resolution in order to serve as agents of peace and conflict resolution. This approach is based on the premise that traditional leaders are best placed to counter negative narratives by the media and individuals that could instigate and inflame violent conflict. Without challenging and correcting ethnic and religious profiling the evolving conflicts in volatile Kaduna state will likely continue to linger and spread. The situation requires more urgent and effective proactive measures and CDD believes the best point to start is from the *Hakimai* and Ardo, who are the custodian of peace and conflict resolution. The main objective is therefore, to build the capacity of traditional leaders to strengthen their knowledge and expertise to understanding the challenging dynamics, trends, dimensions and complexities of all types of conflicts in Kaduna state and to support their efforts to contribute meaningfully towards peacebuilding and resolution using all necessary traditional and religious mechanisms as differentiated in various communities and religious domains.

Opening keynote

The first day of activities were jointly facilitated by Prof SYB Kura and Dr Murtala A. Rufa'i with support from Dr Muftau O. Olarinde. An initial address was provided by Kaduna state Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, who reiterated the importance of the training/dialogue towards curbing the violent armed conflict. He emphasised that the training was timely considering the *new* dimensions the armed conflict has already taken with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP and Ansaru establishing formidable strategic linkages with armed bandits in Kaduna state citing the example of the Abuja-Kaduna train attack. He stressed that the ability to put an end to armed conflict in Kaduna state lies with traditional leaders and requested for the assistance and commitment of District Heads (*Hakimi* and *Ardo)* in this respect.

Training modules and Facilitation

Modular training and interactive lecture facilitation were conducted during the programme. The interactive lecture was led by Dr Murtala Rufa'I, while Dr Abdullahi Gambo led modular training. During the interactive lecture, Dr Rufa'i highlighted the problems and dynamics of conflict in Kaduna and northwest generally. He reaffirmed the existence of collaboration between criminal gangs like cattle rustlers, bandits, and terror groups and noted that this situation was in part due to neglect of the role of District Heads in rural community development and peacebuilding by the government. He argued that all tribes and religious groups are deeply involved and therefore no particular tribe alone could be accused of perpetrating the conflict. Remarking that the root causes of the conflict are injustice and bad governance he called on all participants to wake-up from their slumber to address the prevailing insecurity.

The modular training presentation by Dr Abdullahi Gambo focused on religion, fake news and the role of traditional rulers in peacebuilding. Dr Gambo outlined the main qualities of a leader/peacebuilding actor; articulated the importance of leaders/participants knowing their followers and the nature of their relationship with their followers; and noted that in many communities in the Kaduna there is general loss of trust between the traditional leaders and their followers. To solve this problem, he argued there is a need to identify the root causes of the problem rather than identifying how to solve the problems. Using a conflict analysis framework, he detailed that the first step is to identify the problems. After the analysis, the next step is the identification of approaches to be adopted and this is final followed by proposed actions. In building these conflict resolution solutions he argued there is a need to account sensitively for religion and ethnicity, and to find ways of tackling fake news. In relation to the roles of traditional rulers, he stressed that "leaders are not born but made" and that behind them are followers of different categories of people, those that like them and give them support for the progress of the societies and those that do not.

Impacts on knowledge

Pre-training and post-training surveys were conducted (See Appendix 1) to evaluate gaps in participants' knowledge and the effectiveness of the training and ascertain whether the content of training met the expectations of participants. The pre-training evaluation focused on rating the previous knowledge of the participants about conflict the dynamics, fake news, role of traditional leaders in peace building and

the aspect(s) of conflict resolution and peace building that interest them most. All responses were rated in five points Likert scale with exception of areas of conflict resolution.

Pre-Training

The pre-training survey found that of the 36 participants 44% have good knowledge of conflict dynamics while 27% has a very good understanding of conflict dynamics: just 6% admitted to having a poor understanding. In relation to fake news, 36% had average knowledge of fake news but 47% admitted that their understanding of these issues was poor or very poor. When discussing roles of traditional leaders in peacebuilding over 90% claimed to have average, good or very good knowledge. Overall, the participants like the interactive aspect of the training, including practical guides for building their leadership qualities. They also appreciated the training programmes, as it avails them the opportunity to explain their experiences regarding the causes, trends, patterns of the conflict and the challenges for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Similarly, in terms of Questions 5 and 6, the participants were of the general opinion that their expectations were met, however, they would require more similar training to gain knowledge on conflict resolutions. In particular, some participants stressed that: "I have settled different conflicts in villages and wards in Shika District (sic)." "I gained much from this discussion." "Government should take note of the report." "I'm happy to be part of this programme." Similarly, the participants opined that the training could be improved by increasing the number of training days; involvement of security agencies, religious leaders and the youth into the training to improve synergy.

Post-Training

The post-training survey indicates that after the training, the percentage of the participants with very good understanding of conflicts dynamics increase from 28% to 30%, whilst those with an average level of understanding increased from 22% to 37%. The analysis of respondent's knowledge about fake news equally indicates at least 29% of the respondents that attempted the survey have a good knowledge of fake news compared to 17% of respondents during the pre-training. On the roles of traditional leaders, the number of participants with very good knowledge has increased from 36% pre-training to 42% post training. Overall, it can therefore be concluded that the training has improved the understanding of the participants about conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Dialogue and Discussion

Accordingly, a session was dedicated in the programme, to avail participants the opportunity to share their experiences. Thus, participants were encouraged to identify synonyms of the word conflict in Hausa. Based on these, participants were asked the question of whether conflict is good or bad. Whilst there was recognition that non-violent conflicts can have benefits, there was agreement that once it escalates into "tashin-hankali" (violent conflict) then the effects will always be negative. Participants were divided into syndicate groups to discuss and share their experiences of conflict and to provide recommendations for resolution. The following are summary of experiences shared by the participants.

i.   Armed bandits largely live and harbour all their criminal activities in the forest. Government is aware of this trend but seems to ignore the threat despite traditional leaders reporting the knowledge they have to government officials or security agencies.

ii.   Since traditional leaders were removed from the recruitment processes of the police most of those being recruited are not known to *Hakimi* and *Ardo* in the rural communities.

iii.   There is a lack of collaboration and synergy among Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

iv.   There is delineation of functions and activities of the *Hakimai* and *Ardo*. Presently the document being used to address this problem is based on an executive order developed by the government without inputs from District Heads.

v.   Traditional leaders have generally failed in their roles of profiling people living within their domains and are not adhering to their cultural ethos as a basis for their leadership roles, peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

vi.   There is a lack of, or awareness of, a codified law guiding the activities of District Heads (*Hakimi* and *Ardo*) in their various communities. This is a huge lacuna in the operation and activities of traditional leaders in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Kaduna state.

vii.   Federal and State Governments seem somewhat oblivious to, or has refused to appreciate the roles of, the *Hakimi* and work with them in addressing the problems of armed banditry and kidnapping.

viii.   Thee exists evidence of injustice and denial of people's rights in various communities by the traditional leaders and government officials.

ix.   The main sources and escalators of conflict are the breakdown of inter-community relationship arising out of weak leadership and prolonged injustice; weak internal conflict management frameworks due to inexperienced District Heads who have assumed the position of leadership by inheritance but lack relevant experience; politics; and the lack of well-defined roles for the District Heads. These have jointly weakened the internal conflict management framework at the community level.

x.   One major challenge for conflict resolution is the formation of development associations and CBOs in Kaduna state, which weaken the power of District Heads. The activity of *Miyyetti Allah* was cited as an example, given that its members assume the status of informal courts in some rural areas. As a result, members accord much loyalty and obedience to the leaders of these associations in comparison to District Heads. Another perspective to this problem was that the District Heads themselves accorded power to some of these development associations by giving them power to adjudicate on some social conflict cases.

Key challenges

The training identified a number of key challenges:

i.   One of the challenges facing the conflict management framework at the community level in Kaduna state is a lack of respect for the office of traditional rulers, in particular the *Hakimi* and *Ardo* by various security agencies. As a result, there is no collaboration in the form intelligence sharing between the two and the security officials are viewed as giving more respect to political office holders. Even District Police Officer's do not recognise the role of traditional ruler in their communities, and this impacts significantly on effort to address the conflict.

ii.   Some conflict and civil matters are better resolved by traditional rulers using traditional conflict management. But once a case is taken to court only very few judges allow for the traditional rulers to intervene.

iii.   There remains a communication gap between various Federal security agencies of government operating in Kaduna and the District Heads.

iv.   The recruitment of officials into community police introduced in Kaduna state has no input from the *Hakimai* despite the fact that they are better informed about the altitudes and profile of every member of their communities. In other words, *Hakimai* and *Ardodi* should be engaged through the operational structures of traditional institutions, in community police recruitment exercise.

v.   *Hakimi* and *Ardo*, and in general traditional rulers have been detached from appointment of political issues and selection of political office holders have been carried out without input from the traditional rulers. As such, political leaders have no respect for the traditional rulers. This makes the *Hakimi* and *Ardo* feel irrelevant in their domains.

vi.   There is a lack of community laws that guide the activities of the traditional rulers. In the recent time, the law becomes out-dated.

vii.   There is lack of funding for running the day-to-day conflict resolutions and peacebuilding activities of traditional leaders.

Recommendations

To overcome these challenges, the following points were suggested to support strengthening the governance systems, building the capacity and enabling effective functioning of traditional rulers (District Heads) especially in the areas of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

i.   An interactive dialogue between representatives of security agencies and the District Heads on conflict resolution and peace building is needed. This will provide the opportunities for each of them to understand their roles and limitations and to identify areas of collaboration and synergy. It can also help deal with the issues of distrust and disrespect by building confidence and honesty in the discharge of their security responsibilities.

ii.   In many cases, despite the use of traditional peacebuilding and conflict resolutions, modern court system has to be involved. Often, there is conflict in this process. The modern court system, especially in multi-religious communities such as Kaduna state obstruct the efficacy of traditional peacebuilding and conflict resolutions mechanism and strategies. To manage this problem and to further empower traditional leaders to discharge their role and improve the efficacy of their conflict resolution and peacebuilding role, a synergy should be established with the Kaduna state judicial justice system. Perhaps a joint forum for periodic engagement between the two parties could be instrumental in achieving this objective.

iii.   The *Hakimai* and *Ardo* should be duly involved in the process of local police recruitment.

iv.   There should be a community acts/law that will guide the activities of *Ardo* and *Hakimai.* The current Executive Order and other laws governing the operations of traditional leaders must be accordingly harmonised and gazetted.

v.   Capacity trainings to improve the knowledge of *Hakimai* and *Ardo* regarding their duties and functions should be regularly provided by Kaduna State Government through its agencies, such as Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Kaduna State Peace Commission, and relevant Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), such as the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), etc.

vi.   *Miyetti Allah* has grown too big to overshadow and usurp the traditional role of *Hakimai* and *Ardo*. In this regard, perhaps as a pilot and a quasi-experiment, the *Miyetti Allah* organisation should be reformed and its duties overhauled, clearly designated and limited to avoid unnecessary overlap, confusion and conflict. Kaduna state should set an example. The best possible way to start is to also include the leadership of *Miyetti Allah* is all the conflict resolution and peacebuilding training programmes being organised. This will serve as an informal forum to appreciate the concerns of the *Hakimai* and *Ardodi* regarding their activities

vii.   To curb the escalation of armed violent conflict and achieve sustainable peace in Kaduna state, the *Hakimai* and *Ardo* should be at the centre of any conflict resolution efforts. To support this assertion, reference was made to the success achieved in the polio vaccination campaign in Nigeria. It was argued that the programme failed to achieve a significant coverage until when the District Heads were involved in community sensitisation mobilisation.

Conclusion

The training programme has achieved its set objectives. The participants were enthusiastic, receptive, motivated, concerned, responsive, open-minded and even responsible. Gaps were highlighted which continue to obstruct the contributions of District Heads and *Ardo i*n peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Further training in key areas should be regularly provided. This will not only enhance and strengthen their role in the enterprise of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, but will ensure efficient collaboration and synergy between District Heads and *Ardo* on one hand and all relevant security agencies and stakeholders/actors of community peace on the other.