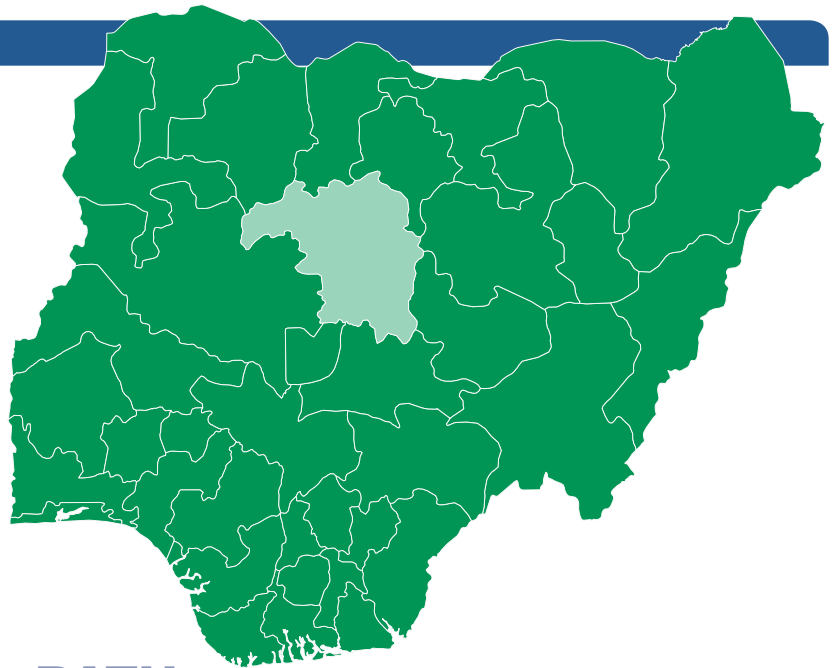


ONE FAMILY UNDER GOD CAMPAIGN:

RESTORING OUR SHARED VALUES THROUGH A PEACEFUL PATH



Nigeria is a federal republic in West Africa and world' 20th largest economy. Known as the "Giant of Africa", Nigeria is home to 186 million inhabitants. A religious country, Nigeria's people are Muslim and Christians—which has caused myriad conflict and violence. In Kaduna state, Global Peace Foundation's "One Family Under God" campaign has impacted more than 10,000 people and brought peace to the region. Rev. Enyiaka visited GPF programs in Abuja and Kaduna. At the request of James P. Flynn, International President of GPF, he has written his observation.



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seventeen years ago, Rev. Canice served in different capacities of high responsibility with positive accomplishments both in Nigeria and the U.S. He is guided by his strong conviction that respect and promotion of the inviolable dignity of the human person is both the foundation and strength of a peaceful, healthy and a happy global community where the freedom and welfare of human beings are enlarged regardless of race, gender, religion, and social status. Rev. Canice was born in the South Eastern part of Nigeria and worked for nine years in Nigeria after his ordination in 2000 before moving to the United States. He holds a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Master of Divinity and Bachelor of Philosophy from Urban University, Rome. He is presently working on his dissertation research which focuses on religion, peacebuilding and human security in Africa.

Violent conflict in southern Kaduna has made news headlines for quite some years. The crisis that engulfed the area claimed many lives with the displacement of families and loss of properties. Fear and mutual suspicion accelerated by the interest of internal and external actors turned the zone into an epicenter of bloody violence. Taking a step back into the past of Kaduna crises, we recall the 1981 land dispute between Hausa traders and residents of Adara in Kachia that resulted in deadly violence and the destruction of hundreds of homes. In 1986, in a local district headship contest in Lere, the candidacy of a Muslim, which many were opposed to, caused violence to erupt in that area. Later, the 1992 relocation of a market led to bloody violence which claimed thousands of lives. The 2011 elections resulted in conflicts and violence in Kaduna and its neighborhood. For more than three decades, Kaduna has been constantly confronted by different types of conflict that resulted in violence at various locations. At the center of the 2016 crisis were the Fulani herdsmen which took many lives leaving behind ugly memories that have deepened the divide along ethnic, social, and religious lines.

Similar to northern Nigeria, the moral, economic, and social fabrics of southern Kaduna have been deeply impacted and has heightened the mutual suspicion of hate and fear of the “other”. Rebuilding relationships and achieving constructive change has been a herculean task in southern Kaduna since the last violent episode. In order for peacebuilding to occur the restoration of relationships serves as a prerequisite for peace. Therefore, at the center of conflict and peace lies the human relationship (Lederach, 1995).

The basic fact is that humans are fundamentally relational beings whose relations reach different dimensions of lives and communities (Obiekwe, 2009). Different state and non-state actors with both local and international affiliations have tried to transform the conflict in southern Kaduna using different methods without much success. It is important to note that southern Kaduna has a long-standing history of loyalties along religious, tribal, ethnic, political, and economic fault lines which have been turned into tools for polarization over the decades. Ignoring this diversity and dynamism as a historical reality is a mistake that must be avoided in considering any peace process.

Founded in 2009 with the noble vision and mission encapsulated in “One Family Under God”, Global Peace Foundation (GPF) affirms universally recognized principles and shared values that are foundational to social cohesion and a more peaceful global community. Among these values are:

- All people have intrinsic value, dignity, and fundamental rights, as endowed by the Creator.
- Every person has in his or her highest attribute, a spiritual and moral essence.
- Our human nature finds its fullest expression and meaning in relation to others.
- People develop their innate potential through their choices and actions. Freedom and responsibility are intrinsically linked.

With this inspiring and challenging mission, Global Peace Foundation, a non-partisan, non-profit and non-sectarian organization uses various resources and tools to advance peace in the world. The organization’s Nigerian office located in the capital city of Abuja has been in Kaduna state since 2014 advancing the message of peace in an area where deaths, displacements, loss of property and social capital have made life miserable in recent years. As the 2016 crisis between Fulani tribes and natives escalated, GPF initiated the ‘One Family Under God’ campaign. Its mission is to collaborate with faith and community leaders on the path to sustainable peace based on common principles and shared values.

As the organization moved into several districts in Jema’s local government area of Kaduna state, they focused on Dangoma, Goska, Ambam, Bakin Kogi, Unguwar Fari, and Garti. GPF started the peace process by visiting each of these communities/chiefdoms and establishing collaborative relations with different segments of each community. Their consultative approach was to respectfully meet the communities where they were willing to listen and implement solutions given by experts on the meaning of peace and how to achieve it. They met privately with Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders’ Association, Southern Kaduna Peoples’ Union, Christian Association of Nigeria, Jama’atu Nasri Islam, as well as with paramount rulers and leaders of Fulani communities. This inclusive approach is in line with the thought that if a sustainable peace agreement is to be achieved, no part of the community must be left out including governments, NGO/professional, business, private citizens, religious institutions, funding agencies, communication (McDonald 2002).

By patiently and respectfully listening to every group and community, GPF was seen as a trusted collaborator in the peacebuilding process and in turn allowed the community to be open and forthcoming with their stories. Because of this earned trust, GPF was also able to gain an in-depth understanding of their conflict and was able to effectively

consult without judgment and bias. The process helped all sides to acknowledge the memories of others, encouraged empathy, and changed some of the negative held biases about the other.

A major fruit of GPF collaborative efforts with communities in southern Kaduna occurred in July 2017. It was a peace and reconciliation event which brought representatives from all the communities and other organizations. The representatives of faith organizations, community leaders, women, and youths of various communities agreed to embrace peace, forgive one another, and pledged to live as brothers and sisters of one family under God. The result is that the whole area has been free of conflict and violence since then and there's more of a proactive approach rather than a reactionary one in relation to avoiding conflicts.

Moving forward, Global Peace Foundation in collaboration with all stakeholders inaugurated the southern Kaduna Peace and Reconciliation Committee with proper representation of every community and group. The committee was inaugurated in September and holds a monthly meeting where reflections and reports are presented. Sub-committees were formed in the following areas: (1) quick response and meditation (2) emergency relief (3) research and investigation (4) faith leaders (5) women's committee (6) and a youth committee. With ownership and sincere commitment, all sides of the conflict have grown in tolerance, respect, and appreciation of the other as they see themselves as partners in building sustainable peace.

In the middle of this peace process, an example of the "One Family Under God" campaign are two religious leaders in Kaduna, Rev. Joseph Hayab (Christian) and Shiek Halliru Maraya (Muslim) who have shown the role of inter-religious, dialogue, and collaboration conflict transformation and sustainable peace. Working together for peace, these two religious leaders have used the "One Family Under God" campaign to change the narrative that religion is the cause of conflict in northern Nigeria and is the main tool for

polarization. Having been on the extremes of opposing sides, both men committed to leading the path to newness and renewal and it has been a huge success as more religious leaders are emulating their collaboration in different communities. The commitment of these two religious leaders also known as the "twins of Kaduna" further strengthens the idea that "Religious leaders and institutions can be mediators in conflict situations, serve as a communication link between opposing sides, and provide training in peacemaking methodologies" (Smock, 2008, p.4). Sheik Maraya and Rev. Hayab have used their collaboration to build, link, and communicate between the Fulanis and the natives showing that, "religious actors build peace when they act religiously, that is when they draw on the deep wells of their traditions, and extract from those debts the spiritual instincts and moral imperatives for recognizing and embracing the humanity of the other" (Appleby, 2000, p.9). The activities of these religious leaders only show how important the moral authority and local presence of religious leaders can take peacebuilding to the desired direction. As noted by Albright, "together, [religiously-based organizations] have more resources, more experience, more dedication and more success in fostering reconciliation than any other government" (Albright, 2006, p.77). Sheik Maraya and Rev. Hayab brought both moral character and 'field diplomacy' to the southern Kaduna peace process.

Looking at the root of the crisis in southern Kaduna, GPF recognized that the violent conflict between the Fulani tribes, the natives, and the farmers, was given a religious face by conflict entrepreneurs and those who cherish the victimization of religion as a tool for polarization in every conflict in the area as a way of distracting from the underlying structural issues that trigger conflict. Reaching out to the communities, GPF learned that beneath the religious identity used as an excuse for conflict were social, economic, and political issues that needed to be addressed. Entering the life and experiences of the individuals and communities in a respectful and validating manner, showed

that ignorance of religious education in what (Haar & Busuttill, 2005) call “wrong identity of religion” was instrumental to the appeal to religious identity for conflict in the area. The ‘one family under God’ campaign is using shared values to re-invent social cohesion tapping on the social capital resource of religion.

Power shifts or politics played its own role in the conflict process creating a situation where both the natives and the Fulani tribes have a deep distrust for governments and organizations that align themselves to the government in the conflict transformation process. Being a representative of government has become a deficit baggage in the area.

LESSONS

The values and community-based approach of GPF with its emphasis on “people to people” gradually diffused the deep-rooted mutual suspicion and unwillingness to respectfully face the conflict opponent that existed in the area for a long time. When the trust was built on GPF and the other conflict parties, people were able to lay their grievances and fears on the table and the decomposition of what was broken became a reality. The organization remained with the communities through the difficult and different stages of negotiating peace process and celebrated the peace agreements with them. Having succeeded in returning peace to the area, the organization has remained to collaborate with the leaders they trained and the communities as they are aware that rushing out of the area in haste was not a good idea. The end of physical conflict they understand is the beginning of new engagement. With both sides of the aisle developing tremendous confidence in GPF, selfishness gave way for the rediscovering of our basic humanity.

The formation of different subcommittees, which is based on GPF process, paid attention to every party in the conflicting area using diversity as the strength for working together and being proactive. With people of different ethnic, social, economic, and religious affiliations working together in various sub-committees under the one family under God

concept, the vision of re-establishing God’s order (Shreiter, Appleby, & Powers, 2010) was gradually realized. As relationships grew with trust in southern Kaduna, incidents that were once catalysts in the conflict were now reported to subcommittees and conflict preventative measures were put in place that resulted in reduced killings.

Deflating the use of the media, that was often used as an avenue for inflammatory statements and teachings by opposing groups and conflict entrepreneurs also worked very well for GPF in their collaborative work with the communities. The peace and reconciliation committee became a viable umbrella to regulate the activities of different groups and with the monthly meetings, education of the local leaders; it was easier to educate different groups on the importance of building peace by avoiding the negative use of media. The radio of program of Sheik Maraya and Pastor Hayab every week where they teach people about one family under God, admonish on the importance of peace, as well as answering questions made the media a tool for peace. The visibility of the two religious leaders on that platform has also helped to spread the message of peace.

GPF tapped into a very important aspect of the African world—arts and culture in achieving sustainable peace in the area. The gathering of over 8,000 Muslims and Christians in Mando and Maraban Rido in May 2017 for the celebration of peace festivals showed how arts and music can open the door for peace. These cultural tools not only created social interactions but helped the conflicting parties to invite and be invited to the world of one another as they reach out to embrace that which is common and universal irrespective of the outward variations they express. The festivals served as a dialogue of peace as the communities are torn apart by differences, saw the wealth of their diversity in art and music—wherein different rhythms, the languages of joy, happiness, and peace are spoken.

In the southern Kaduna project, GPF has reminded us that at the center of both conflict and peacebuilding is

relationship. Their strategic approach from the micro to the macro levels focus on the power of relationship. The organization used their values and community-based approach to collaborate with the people to build social cohesion and constructive social change. As Lederach argued, constructive change is brought about when energy is focused on the underlying human relationships and social structures that have been affected by conflict and the primary aim is to move conflict away from destructive processes and towards constructive ones (Lederach, 2003). GPF project in southern Kaduna has shown the power of positive relationship to re-emphasize our common origin in the one family of God as the dignity of every member of the conflicting communities is validated. Human dignity, relationships, and peace have found their way back to southern Kaduna. The community and values-based model of GPF which embraces every segment of the community in the peace process is a bright light on peacebuilding in our time. It is only imperative that this is taken to other parts of Nigeria and Africa.

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