

Reimagining Nigeria's Infrastructure of Peace: A Critical Analysis and Contextual Framework for Sustainable Peacebuilding in Anambra State

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Abstract

Nigeria's recurring security crises—ranging from communal violence and political unrest to secessionist agitations—highlight the absence of a coherent and institutionalized infrastructure for peace (I4P). This study critically assesses the state of Nigeria's existing peace architecture, identifying key weaknesses such as fragmentation, elite dominance, lack of legal mandate, and poor integration of traditional and grassroots peace mechanisms. Using Anambra State as a case study, the paper explores localized conflict dynamics, including youth violence, cultism, political thuggery, IPOB-related insecurity, and land disputes. It argues that while various actors—traditional rulers, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and vigilante groups—are involved in informal peacebuilding, the absence of a structured, coordinated, and legally backed infrastructure hinders sustainable conflict prevention. Guided by conflict transformation theory, systems thinking, and multi-track diplomacy, the paper draws on comparative insights from countries such as Ghana and Kenya to develop a context-specific I4P model for Anambra State. The proposed framework includes the establishment of a State Peace Council, Local Government Peace Committees, a Conflict Early Warning and Rapid Response Unit, and Youth and Women Peace Hubs. It emphasizes the need for legal foundations, integration with national and global development goals (e.g., SDG 16), and the use of ICT, media, and education to foster a culture of peace. A five-phase implementation roadmap is presented, covering legal adoption, institutional setup, capacity building, community engagement, and monitoring and evaluation. The paper concludes by offering comprehensive policy recommendations for the Anambra State government, Nigeria's federal authorities, civil society, and development partners. It calls for a deliberate shift from ad hoc interventions to institutional peace governance that is inclusive, participatory, and adaptive. The Anambra model, if implemented, could serve as a scalable blueprint for peace infrastructure across Nigeria's federating states.

Introduction

Background to Peace and Conflict in Nigeria

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is marked by a complex mosaic of ethnic, religious, and regional identities, making it a fertile ground for recurring conflict. Over the years, the nation has witnessed a range of conflict forms, from ethno-religious clashes and farmer-herder confrontations to secessionist agitations and political violence. These conflicts have persisted due to weak institutions, systemic marginalization, economic inequality, poor governance, and the absence of robust conflict prevention mechanisms (Albert, 2017; Akinwale, 2010). To address these multifaceted challenges, scholars and practitioners have advocated for the development of an Infrastructure for Peace (I4P)—a network of structures, mechanisms, resources, values, and skills that institutionalize the capacity for conflict prevention and peace-building at multiple levels of society (Kumar, 2011). In contexts such as Ghana and Kenya, the I4P model has demonstrated measurable impact in mitigating violence, especially during elections and intercommunal tensions (Odendaal, 2013).

In Nigeria, however, the development of a formalized peace infrastructure remains fragmented, under-resourced, and often reactive rather than preventive. While efforts such as the National Peace Committee and state-level peace-building initiatives exist, they often lack legal backing, sustained funding, or coordination with grassroots structures (Ibeanu, 2006; Onuoha, 2022). The challenge, therefore, is to envision a context-sensitive, integrated framework that can align national priorities with localized peace responses. Despite the increasing global emphasis on institutionalizing peace through coherent infrastructure, Nigeria's peace architecture remains largely ad hoc. While states such as Plateau and Kaduna have piloted peace-building institutions, many other states, including Anambra, face growing security threats without an effective and structured peace response mechanism. Anambra State, located in southeastern Nigeria, has experienced significant episodes of political violence, communal disputes, and more recently, instability linked to separatist agitations and criminal violence (Okolie & Orji, 2022). As a strategic economic hub with a dynamic civil society and strong traditional institutions, the state has enormous potential for building a localized peace infrastructure. However, a systematic framework tailored to its unique conflict drivers and actors is still lacking. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by critically analyzing Nigeria's existing peace infrastructure and proposing a contextualized and sustainable Infrastructure of Peace for Anambra State.

Problem Statement

Nigeria's persistent conflicts and fragile peace mechanisms are symptomatic of the absence of a nationally coordinated, yet locally embedded peace infrastructure. While frameworks exist at various levels, they are often uncoordinated, elite-driven, and fail to harness community-based knowledge or traditional conflict resolution methods. In Anambra State, the absence of institutionalized peace mechanisms contributes to the recurrence of violence, breakdown of trust, and poor conflict response. The central problem addressed in this study is the disconnect between Nigeria's national peace efforts and localized conflict realities, using Anambra State as a case study for developing a model that integrates national frameworks with local capacities.

Research Objectives and Questions

Objectives:

1. To understand and assess the existing infrastructure of peace in Nigeria.
2. To critically evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of these mechanisms.
3. To propose a contextualized infrastructure of peace tailored to Anambra State's socio-political landscape.

Research Questions:

1. What constitutes Nigeria's current infrastructure of peace?
2. What are the structural and operational weaknesses in Nigeria's peace architecture?
3. How can a sustainable and inclusive infrastructure of peace be designed for Anambra State?

Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on peace infrastructures at both national and sub-national levels, with a specific emphasis on Anambra State. While broader references are made to regional and global peace architectures, the analysis and framework are primarily geared toward practical applicability in southeastern Nigeria. The study relies on secondary data, policy reviews, and literature synthesis, with some limitations in accessing real-time government peace-building documents due to bureaucratic restrictions.

Methodology Overview

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design, relying on secondary data, thematic literature reviews, and comparative analysis. Key policy documents, academic journals, and practitioner reports on peace infrastructure in Nigeria and other African

countries are analyzed. The approach is interpretive and analytical, using insights from conflict transformation theory and systems thinking to design a locally adaptable peace framework for Anambra State. This paper is organized into eight sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of peace infrastructures. Section 3 maps the current peace infrastructure landscape in Nigeria. Section 4 provides a critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Nigeria's existing peace mechanisms. Section 5 examines the peace and conflict dynamics in Anambra State. Section 6 proposes a contextualized framework for building a sustainable peace infrastructure in the state. Section 7 outlines an implementation roadmap for operationalizing the framework, and Section 8 concludes with policy recommendations and a reflection on broader implications for Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Infrastructure for Peace (I4P)

The term *Infrastructure for Peace* (I4P) refers to a dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, and institutional capacities deliberately established to promote dialogue, prevent violence, mediate conflict, and sustain peace at multiple levels of society (Kumar, 2011; Odendaal, 2013). Unlike ad hoc interventions, I4P aims to create enduring systems that embed peace-building within formal governance institutions and community networks. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describes I4P as “a network of interdependent systems, resources, values, and skills held by government, civil society, and communities that promote dialogue and capacity for peace-building in a society” (UNDP, 2010, p. 4). These infrastructures are considered essential for the prevention of violent conflict and the institutionalization of peaceful conflict transformation. In practical terms, I4P structures may include peace councils, early warning systems, mediation networks, truth and reconciliation commissions, and peace education programs. The goal is to move from reactionary crisis responses to preventive peace systems (van Tongeren, 2013).

Components of an Effective Infrastructure for Peace

According to Odendaal (2013), an effective I4P typically contains the following core elements:

- a) *National and Sub-national Peace Councils*: Multi-stakeholder platforms for dialogue, early warning, and conflict resolution.

- b) *Early Warning and Response Systems*: Tools for timely detection and coordinated response to signs of conflict.
- c) *Peace Education and Awareness Mechanisms*: Formal and informal education to foster peace culture.
- d) *Inclusive Governance Mechanisms*: Institutional arrangements that ensure the inclusion of youth, women, and marginalized groups.
- e) *Linkages between State and Non-State Actors*: Coordination between government structures, civil society, traditional institutions, and local communities.

These components are most effective when they are embedded within national development strategies and supported by strong political will, local ownership, and adequate financing (UNDP, 2010).

Theoretical Foundations

This study draws on three interrelated theoretical lenses to explain and design peace infrastructures in the Nigerian context:

Conflict Transformation Theory

Developed by John Paul Lederach (1997), conflict transformation theory emphasizes changing the underlying structures, relationships, and discourses that produce and sustain conflict. It shifts the focus from merely resolving immediate disputes to addressing root causes and building sustainable peace. According to Lederach, sustainable peace-building requires a “web of constructive human relationships and institutional change” (Lederach, 2003, p. 39). I4P aligns closely with this theory by institutionalizing spaces and systems that promote inclusive dialogue, healing, and social justice over time.

Systems Thinking in Peace-building

Systems thinking views conflict and peace as part of a broader societal system with multiple interacting actors and variables; it encourages holistic approaches that recognize patterns, interdependencies, and feedback loops (Ricigliano, 2012). Building an I4P involves creating interlinked institutions and mechanisms that adaptively respond to evolving conflict dynamics. In this model, local peace committees, national councils, and early warning systems function as nodes in systemic peace architecture.

Multi-Track Diplomacy

This framework, introduced by Diamond and McDonald (1996), expands the notion of peacemaking beyond official diplomacy (Track One) to include multiple actors such as business leaders, educators, grassroots activists, and media (Tracks Two through Nine). In

I4P, this approach informs the design of peace infrastructures that leverage both formal and informal actors across society to manage conflict. Multi-track diplomacy is especially relevant in Nigeria, where traditional rulers, religious leaders, and civil society actors often wield more influence in conflict-prone areas than formal state institutions.

Comparative Examples from Africa

Several African countries have made notable progress in institutionalizing I4P frameworks:

Ghana

The Ghana Peace Council, established by an act of parliament in 2011, is a leading example of a statutory peace infrastructure. It operates at national, regional, and district levels, providing platforms for preventive diplomacy, early warning, and conflict resolution (Aning & Lartey, 2013). Its successes in managing electoral tensions have been widely acknowledged.

Kenya

Following the 2007–2008 post-election violence, Kenya established the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) to promote unity and prevent incitement. Complemented by peace committees at the county level, this infrastructure has helped mitigate electoral and ethnic violence (Odendaal, 2013).

South Africa

South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission and ongoing community peace committees demonstrate the integration of justice, memory, and institutional mechanisms in national healing and peacebuilding efforts (Lamb, 2011).

These examples show that localized, legally grounded, and multi-actor frameworks can play a vital role in conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

Relevance to Nigeria's Peace-building Context

Nigeria has implemented various peace initiatives, such as the National Peace Committee, transitional justice programs in the Niger Delta, and community dialogues in the Northeast. However, these efforts are often episodic, elite-driven, and poorly coordinated (Onuoha, 2022). The lack of a structured legally backed I4P limits the scalability and sustainability of peace initiatives, particularly at the state and local government levels. Furthermore, most conflict-prone states, including Anambra, lack inclusive, institutionalized platforms for dialogue and mediation. This study builds on the theoretical and comparative insights discussed above to propose a functional and sustainable

Infrastructure for Peace framework tailored to the unique conflict dynamics of Anambra State.

Mapping Nigeria's Existing Infrastructure of Peace

Overview of Institutional Mechanisms

Nigeria's peace-building efforts operate within a fragmented institutional landscape, comprising state, quasi-state, and non-state actors. At the federal level, the most prominent actor is the National Peace Committee (NPC), established in 2014 to promote peaceful elections and national cohesion. Led by eminent Nigerians, including religious leaders and former heads of state, the NPC has played a significant role in facilitating pre-election peace accords and convening high-level dialogues (Albert, 2017; Kukah Centre, 2023). Other institutions with mandates relevant to peace-building include the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and specialized departments within the Nigeria Police Force, such as the Community Policing Unit. However, these bodies often work in silos, without a unified framework or coordination platform for sustained peace infrastructure (Onuoha, 2022). At the state level, a few proactive governments—such as in Plateau, Kaduna, and Borno—have established State Peace-building Agencies (SPAs) or Peace Commissions. These bodies coordinate local peace actors, facilitate inter-communal dialogue, and implement early warning and response initiatives. Plateau State's Peace-building Agency, for instance, has become a model of sub-national peace infrastructure in Nigeria (GIZ, 2021).

Role of State and Non-State Actors in Peace Processes

While government institutions lay the groundwork for national policy on peace, civil society organizations (CSOs), faith-based groups, and traditional institutions are often the first responders to conflict in many Nigerian communities. Faith actors such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) have historically led interfaith dialogue and reconciliation processes during ethno-religious crises (Kukah, 2011).

International organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and GIZ, have supported the establishment of peace structures in volatile states by funding training, facilitating community dialogues, and supporting capacity-building for local actors. However, the sustainability of these interventions often depends on continued donor support and political commitment from local authorities (Odendaal, 2013). Traditional leaders, such as emirs, Oba, and Igwe, also play a central role in dispute resolution, particularly in rural areas where state presence is minimal. These actors are often perceived as more legitimate and accessible than state institutions,

especially in matters concerning land, chieftaincy, and communal relations (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

Community-Based and Traditional Peace Mechanisms

In Nigeria's rural and peri-urban communities, community-based peace committees (CPCs) are a common feature of informal peace architecture. These committees, typically comprising elders, youth representatives, women leaders, and religious figures, mediate conflicts ranging from land disputes to domestic violence and intergroup tensions. Their strength lies in local knowledge, trust, and cultural legitimacy (Umar & Ocheni, 2015). Despite their effectiveness, these local mechanisms face challenges such as lack of legal recognition, weak linkage to formal justice systems, and limited access to funding. The absence of integration with formal state structures limits their broader impact on systemic peace-building efforts (Albert, 2017). In some cases, particularly in the North Central and Northeast, traditional mechanisms have been revived and restructured to complement formal institutions. For example, the Borno State Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Committee integrates traditional rulers and youth leaders in de-radicalization and community reintegration programs for ex-combatants (UNDP Nigeria, 2020).

Role of Faith-Based and Civil Society Organizations

Faith-based organizations have consistently filled gaps in Nigeria's peace-building landscape. Churches and mosques serve as both conveners of community dialogue and providers of psychosocial support for victims of violence. Notably, the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna has pioneered Christian-Muslim peace-building initiatives that have been replicated across Nigeria (Haynes, 2009). Civil society groups like the CLEEN Foundation, WANEP-Nigeria, and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) have also been instrumental in promoting electoral peace, human rights advocacy, and civic education. Through the deployment of early warning and response systems, these organizations have developed real-time conflict mapping tools and community incident reporting platforms (WANEP, 2021). Despite their contributions, civil society actors often face political intimidation, funding constraints, and challenges in accessing decision-making spaces, especially at the federal level (Onuoha, 2022).

Early Warning and Response Systems

Nigeria has made attempts to build early warning and response systems, though these remain underdeveloped and poorly coordinated. Platforms such as the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate (ECOWARN) and the WANEP-Nigeria Early Warning System (NEWS) provide valuable information on conflict risks across the country (WANEP,

2021). At the national level, the Office for Strategic Preparedness and Resilience (OSPRE)—a federal initiative established in 2019—seeks to coordinate national and subnational early warning and response systems. However, the implementation has been uneven; with limited integration of community-based early warning indicators or grassroots feedback mechanisms (OSPRE, 2021). Many state-level initiatives lack the technical capacity and institutional support to respond effectively to early warnings, resulting in missed opportunities to prevent escalation. This challenge is particularly acute in areas like Anambra State, where localized conflict triggers are often underreported and unaddressed until violence erupts.

Legal and Policy Frameworks Supporting Peace Infrastructure

While Nigeria lacks a comprehensive national peace policy or legal framework on I4P, several sectoral policies touch indirectly on peace-building. The National Security Strategy (NSS 2019) emphasizes community engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration but does not explicitly mandate the creation of peace infrastructures at federal or state levels (Office of the National Security Adviser [ONSA], 2019). Efforts such as the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) and the Policy on Community Policing promote elements of local peacebuilding and inclusive security, yet they remain siloed from broader peace infrastructure frameworks (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). At the sub-national level, only a few states, including Plateau, Kaduna, and Adamawa, have passed legislation to institutionalize peace commissions or agencies. The absence of legal mandates in most other states, including Anambra, undermines efforts to create sustainable, coordinated peace mechanisms. Nigeria's current peace infrastructure comprises a fragmented patchwork of initiatives, ranging from high-level mediation efforts to informal local mechanisms. While these efforts have yielded some successes, especially in electoral peace and community dialogues, they remain disconnected, under-resourced, and often lacking legal authority. As such, there is a pressing need for a more integrated and context-sensitive approach, especially in conflict-prone states like Anambra. The next section will critically analyze the strengths and limitations of this fragmented peace architecture.

Analysis of Nigeria's Peace Infrastructure

Despite notable efforts to build mechanisms for conflict mitigation, Nigeria's current peace infrastructure remains underdeveloped, fragmented, and reactive. This section critically examines the key limitations and structural challenges affecting the functionality and sustainability of peace infrastructures in the country.

Structural Weaknesses and Fragmentation

One of the most glaring weaknesses of Nigeria's peace infrastructure is the lack of a centralized, legally binding national peace policy or law. Existing institutions such as the National Peace Committee (NPC) operate without statutory authority and often rely on the influence of high-profile personalities rather than institutional mandates (Albert, 2017). This undermines continuity, sustainability, and the potential for coordination across sectors and levels of governance. Furthermore, the peace-building space is characterized by institutional silos. Ministries, departments, and agencies involved in security, justice, and development often act independently with minimal synergy. For instance, the work of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and civil society groups lacks formal coordination mechanisms, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficient resource use (Onuoha, 2022). Additionally, only a few Nigerian states, such as Plateau and Kaduna, have established legally-backed peace-building agencies. The absence of similar structures in most states, including Anambra, reflects a lack of national integration and commitment to devolved peace infrastructure (GIZ, 2021).

Operational Challenges and Capacity Deficits

Another challenge is the operational inefficiency of peace institutions. Many bodies at the federal and state levels suffer from inadequate staffing, lack of training, and limited logistical support. These capacity gaps are compounded by poor funding. For instance, the Office for Strategic Preparedness and Resilience (OSPRE), designed to coordinate national early warning and response efforts, lacks sufficient budgetary allocation and remains largely inactive (OSPRE, 2021). Furthermore, donor dependency undermines the sustainability of many peace initiatives. Projects funded by international partners such as UNDP, GIZ, or DFID often lapse once external funding ends, highlighting the need for domestically driven and financially sustainable approaches (Umar & Ocheni, 2015). Political instability and elite interference also reduce the independence and effectiveness of peace structures. Appointments to state-level peace commissions are sometimes politicized, reducing public trust and legitimacy, particularly among opposition groups or marginalized communities (Kukah Centre, 2023).

Inclusivity and Representation Gaps

Effective infrastructure for peace must be inclusive, reflecting the voices of diverse actors, especially women, youth, and traditional authorities. However, Nigeria's peace processes are often elite-dominated and male-centered. A 2021 analysis by WANEP found that less than 20% of peace mediation and dialogue platforms at national and sub-national levels included women in leadership roles (WANEP, 2021). Youth, who constitute more than 60% of Nigeria's population, are frequently perceived as perpetrators rather than peace-builders, further alienating them from formal peace mechanisms (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

The exclusion of these vital demographics not only reduces the reach of peace infrastructure but also erodes community ownership and legitimacy. In many cases, traditional and religious institutions—often the first responders in rural and peri-urban settings—are not integrated into formal peace frameworks. This lack of recognition weakens opportunities for synergy between indigenous conflict resolution systems and statutory peace-building bodies (Uche & Obi, 2015).

Weak Integration of Traditional Mechanisms

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms remain a major yet underutilized component of Nigeria's peace landscape. In many communities, institutions such as the Igwe-in-Council (Igbo), the Emirate system (Hausa-Fulani), and Obaship (Yoruba) continue to resolve disputes related to land, inheritance, marriage, and inter-group relations (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014). However, modern peace infrastructures have often failed to incorporate these systems, instead favoring technocratic or externally designed models. This oversight reduces the legitimacy and accessibility of peace processes, especially in areas where traditional leaders are viewed as custodians of justice. According to Uche and Obi (2015), excluding these actors from policy and implementation frameworks creates parallel structures and weakens overall peace-building coherence.

Disconnection between Early Warning and Early Response

While several early warning systems exist—such as those operated by WANEP, UNDP, and the ECOWAS Commission—these platforms often lack corresponding response mechanisms at state and local government levels. Information gathered through SMS alerts, radio monitoring, or field observers is seldom acted upon promptly due to bureaucratic delays, lack of authority, or inadequate resources (UNDP, 2010). The federal government's attempt to institutionalize early warning and response through OSPRE has faced setbacks due to poor inter-agency cooperation and political inertia. Consequently, preventable conflicts—such as those related to elections, land disputes, and sectarian tensions—continue to escalate into violence due to the absence of timely interventions (Onuoha, 2022; OSPRE, 2021).

Case Illustrations: Electoral Violence and Farmer–Herder Conflicts

Nigeria's peace infrastructure has failed to prevent recurring electoral violence. Despite the involvement of the National Peace Committee in brokering pre-election peace accords, incidents of violence, voter suppression, and hate speech persist (Kukah Centre, 2023). This indicates a disconnect between high-level agreements and grassroots enforcement. Similarly, the ongoing farmer–herder conflict across Nigeria's Middle Belt region demonstrates the inadequacy of conflict prevention systems. The absence of localized mediation mechanisms and land-use dialogue platforms contributes to deadly

clashes, displacements, and food insecurity (International Crisis Group, 2017). Nigeria's peace infrastructure, while visible in pockets of excellence, remains largely underdeveloped and fragmented. Structural weaknesses, operational inefficiencies, exclusionary practices, and poor integration of indigenous systems collectively hinder its effectiveness. For states like Anambra, which face unique socio-political challenges, the design of a responsive and inclusive peace infrastructure must address these systemic gaps. The next section will analyze Anambra's specific conflict dynamics and assess opportunities for localized peace architecture.

Conflict Dynamics and Peace Architecture in Anambra State

Anambra State, located in Nigeria's southeast geopolitical zone, is historically known for its vibrant commercial activity, high literacy rate, and strong civil society. Despite these assets, it has faced rising insecurity and fragile peace mechanisms, particularly in the last decade. This section provides an in-depth analysis of conflict patterns, actors, existing peace mechanisms, and the prospects for a localized infrastructure for peace (I4P) in the state.

Overview of Peace and Conflict Trends in Anambra

Anambra has been relatively more stable than neighboring states like Ebonyi or Imo. However, the state is increasingly affected by complex and evolving threats. These include: Political thuggery and electoral violence, Cult-related killings and youth gang violence, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)-linked secessionist agitation, Banditry and kidnapping, and Communal land disputes. The activities of IPOB and its paramilitary wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), have intensified since 2020, leading to targeted killings of security agents, arson attacks, and disruption of public order through Monday sit-at-home orders (International Crisis Group, 2022). Furthermore, violent crimes have proliferated in rural areas, often exacerbated by weak policing and judicial systems. According to Nigeria Watch (2023), Anambra recorded over 400 violent deaths between 2019 and 2022, with cultism, political clashes, and criminal violence being the major causes.

Drivers of Conflict in Anambra State

Several interrelated factors drive the persistence of conflict in Anambra:

- a) *Youth Unemployment and Marginalization*: The National Bureau of Statistics (2021) reported youth unemployment in Anambra at 34.8%, creating a pool of vulnerable individuals easily recruited into violent groups or criminal networks.

- b) *Political Patronage and Electoral Violence*: Local politicians often arm youth gangs to intimidate opponents during elections, only to lose control of them afterward (Iwuoha & Umego, 2020).
- c) *Secessionist Sentiments and Ethnic Grievances*: Perceived marginalization of the Igbo ethnic group within Nigeria's federal structure fuels support for IPOB and resistance to state authority (Okolie & Nweke, 2021).
- d) *Weak Institutions and Corruption*: Inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms, slow judicial processes, and corruption have eroded public trust in formal institutions, prompting communities to resort to vigilante justice.
- e) *Land Disputes*: Communal tensions over land boundaries persist in localities like Aguleri-Umuleri and Nanka-Okoko, often reigniting decades-old grievances (Anyanwu, 2018).

Assessment of Existing Peace Structures and Actors

Anambra lacks a formal, state-backed infrastructure for peace. However, various actors contribute to peace efforts at different levels:

- a) *Traditional Institutions*: The Council of Ndi Igwe (traditional rulers) plays a central role in dispute resolution, especially in rural communities. Their legitimacy and influence are deeply rooted in local customs and respect.
- b) *Religious Leaders*: Churches, particularly the Catholic and Anglican denominations, have historically served as mediators during crises. They also run rehabilitation programs for youth involved in cultism and violence (Okonkwo, 2020).
- c) *Town Unions and Community Associations*: These grassroots bodies engage in local governance and conflict mediation. They have helped maintain order in urban markets and neighborhoods, though their influence has waned due to political interference.
- d) *Vigilante Groups*: While intended for community protection, the lack of regulation has led to abuses by some groups, including extrajudicial killings and torture (CLEEN Foundation, 2022).
- e) *Civil Society Organizations*: Few NGOs are involved in sustained peace-building in Anambra, partly due to limited donor presence and security risks. However, groups like the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) have supported conflict mediation and human rights education.

Despite these efforts, the lack of coordination, funding, and legal backing severely limits their impact and sustainability.

Role of Local Government, Traditional, and Religious Institutions

Local governments in Anambra often play a limited role in conflict prevention, focusing primarily on administrative duties. Most lack dedicated peace desks or early warning systems. Traditional rulers, on the other hand, continue to mediate inter-family and inter-village disputes, with outcomes largely respected by parties due to cultural authority (Anyanwu, 2018). Religious bodies frequently intervene during election-related conflicts, organizing prayer campaigns and peace walks. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Anambra has issued communiqués urging calm during tense political transitions (Okonkwo, 2020). However, without integration into state peace planning, these efforts remain isolated.

SWOT Analysis of Peace-building in Anambra State

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of Peacebuilding in Anambra State

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong civil society and literacy rate	Lack of state-level peace agency
Active traditional and religious leaders	Poor coordination among actors
Community-based town unions	Politicization of youth and vigilantes
Cultural respect for dialogue	Weak legal backing and funding
Opportunities	Threats
Opportunity to pilot localized I4P	Rise of IPOB-linked militancy
Leverage diaspora engagement	Political elite interference
Use of digital early warning tools	Weaponization of ethnic narratives

Needs Assessment for Peace Infrastructure in Anambra

For Anambra to effectively manage conflict and build sustainable peace, the following needs must be addressed:

- a) *Legal and Policy Framework:* A state-level peace-building law is needed to establish a formal Anambra Peace Council and provide statutory support for local peace structures.

- b) *Capacity Building*: Training for local government staff, traditional leaders, CSOs, and youth in conflict mediation and early warning is critical.
- c) *Data and Early Warning Systems*: Investment in community-driven conflict mapping and real-time reporting mechanisms is essential.
- d) *Inclusion of Women and Youth*: Any peace architecture must prioritize the inclusion of underrepresented groups, who are both victims and agents of conflict.
- e) *Coordination Mechanism*: Establishing a secretariat or hub to coordinate all peace-related activities, actors, and data within the state is crucial.

Anambra's peace and conflict landscape is complex, shaped by historical grievances, political manipulation, and socio-economic challenges. While informal peace actors play critical roles, their impact is constrained by the absence of a coordinated, inclusive, and legally backed infrastructure. The next section proposes a strategic framework for building a contextualized and sustainable Infrastructure for Peace in Anambra State.

Designing a Context-Specific Infrastructure of Peace for Anambra State

The complexity and diversity of Anambra State's conflict landscape necessitate a peace infrastructure that is inclusive and decentralized, yet anchored within a legal and policy framework. This section proposes a practical model for an *Infrastructure for Peace (I4P)* in Anambra State that integrates traditional structures, civil society, and state institutions in coordinated and sustainable peacebuilding architecture.

Guiding Principles for a Localized Peace Infrastructure

The proposed Anambra I4P is anchored on the following principles:

- a) *Local Ownership*: Peace processes must reflect the voices, experiences, and leadership of Anambra's indigenous communities (Odendaal, 2013).
- b) *Inclusivity*: Women, youth, persons with disabilities, religious and traditional leaders, and marginalized communities must be involved at all stages of the process (WANEP, 2021).
- c) *Sustainability*: Peace structures must be embedded in law and adequately funded by the state, with support from development partners.
- d) *Cultural Legitimacy*: Traditional institutions and community norms should be respected and incorporated into peace mechanisms (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).
- e) *Preventive Approach*: The infrastructure should prioritize early warning, dialogue, and mediation to prevent escalation of violence.

Institutional Blueprint for Anambra's Infrastructure for Peace

6.2.1. Anambra State Peace Council (ASPC)

A State Peace Council should be established through legislation passed by the Anambra State House of Assembly. The Council will serve as the apex coordinating body for peace-building, mediation, and early warning response.

Composition:

- a) Chairperson appointed by the Governor (preferably a respected retired jurist, academic, or religious leader) and Representatives from:
- b) Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs
- c) Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development
- d) Civil society organizations
- e) Traditional rulers (via the Council of Ndi Igwe)
- f) Interfaith groups (e.g., CAN, Muslim Council)
- g) Academia (peace and conflict experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University)

Functions:

- a) Policy formulation and coordination
- b) Oversight of local peace structures
- c) Issuance of conflict advisories and recommendations
- d) Liaison with federal peace institutions and donors
- e) Hosting annual Anambra Peace Forum

Local Government Peace Committees (LGPCs)

Each of Anambra's 21 LGAs will establish a *Local Peace Committee* to serve as a grassroots conflict prevention and resolution platform.

Roles:

- a) Facilitate dialogue in conflict-prone communities
- b) Mediate minor disputes (land, marriage, communal issues)
- c) Coordinate local early warning systems
- d) Monitor and report conflict trends to the ASPC

Membership:

- a) Town union presidents
- b) Youth and women leaders
- c) Traditional rulers and community elders

- d) Local clergy and teachers
- e) Representatives of local vigilante groups (regulated)

These committees will receive training in alternative dispute resolution (ADR), conflict sensitivity, and gender-responsive peace-building.

Conflict Early Warning and Rapid Response Unit (CEWRU)

A state-level early warning and rapid response unit will be established under the ASPC to analyze conflict data and facilitate swift interventions.

Functions:

- a) Receive and analyze conflict reports via SMS, WhatsApp, radio, and community monitors
- b) Liaise with law enforcement and emergency responders
- c) Produce quarterly Conflict Situation Reports (CONTSIT)
- d) Maintain a Peace Risk Map of the state

The CEWRU will be linked to local peace committees, the Ministry of Information, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and selected media outlets for timely dissemination.

Youth and Women Peace Hubs

To mainstream youth and women in peace-building, Peace Hubs will be created in educational institutions, markets, and urban centers.

Activities:

- a) Peace education and civic engagement programs
- b) Leadership and mediation training
- c) Awareness campaigns on political tolerance, drug abuse, and cultism
- d) Partnerships with youth influencers, musicians, and digital content creators

Each hub will function as a think-tank and rapid mobilization point in times of unrest.

Integration with Development Plans and SDGs

The Anambra I4P must align with the Anambra Vision 2070, the National Development Plan (2021–2025), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). To ensure institutional mainstreaming, peace-building indicators (e.g., number of conflicts mediated, early warnings issued, community dialogues held) should be included in the state’s annual performance

scorecards for local governments. Peace-building should also be a cross-cutting component in state budgeting, education policy, and security sector reforms.

Role of Education, Media, and ICT in Peace Infrastructure

Peace Education:

- a) Integration of Peace and Citizenship Education into school curricula (primary to tertiary)
- b) Establishment of Peace Clubs in schools and universities
- c) Teacher training on conflict sensitivity and nonviolent communication

Media Partnerships:

- a) Partnership with Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), community radios, and online influencers to promote a “Culture of Peace”
- b) Peace journalism training for reporters
- c) Establishment of a Peace Media Taskforce during election periods

ICT Tools:

- a) Mobile apps and SMS platforms for early warning (e.g., Ushahidi-style community reporting)
- b) Interactive conflict mapping dashboard for state officials and researchers
- c) Online hub for peace education materials and digital training

Resource Mobilization and Sustainability Strategy

- a) *State Funding:* A dedicated budget line should be created within the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.
- b) *Legal Foundation:* Peace infrastructure must be backed by a *Peace-building and Conflict Management Law* passed by the Anambra State Assembly.
- c) *Donor Engagement:* Partnerships with UNDP, USAID, GIZ, WANEP, and ECOWAS Peace Fund to support initial rollout and capacity-building.
- d) *Diaspora Participation:* Leverage the Anambra diaspora’s strong financial and intellectual resources through annual Peace Innovation Challenges and investment in peace-tech solutions.
- e) *Public–Private Partnerships:* Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs from local businesses and banks can support peace-building projects and training centers.

A sustainable Infrastructure for Peace in Anambra State must be homegrown, legally anchored, inclusive, and adaptable to the state’s evolving conflict dynamics. By building

strong vertical linkages—from communities to the state capital—and fostering horizontal collaboration among diverse actors, the proposed framework has the potential to not only prevent violence but also consolidate peace and development. The following section presents an implementation roadmap for translating this vision into action.

Implementation Roadmap

Establishing a sustainable and functional Infrastructure for Peace (I4P) in Anambra State requires a *phased, inclusive, and legally supported* implementation strategy. This roadmap outlines key steps across short-, medium-, and long-term timelines and provides practical measures for stakeholder mobilization, institutional setup, and monitoring. See Table 2 for a Phase Plan

Phase-by-Phase Action Plan

Table 2: Phase-by-Phase Action Plan

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities	Lead Actors
Phase 1: Legal and Policy Foundation	Months 1–3	- Draft and pass the Anambra State Peace-building and Conflict Management Law - Establish the Anambra State Peace Council (ASPC) via executive order pending legislation	Governor's Office, State Assembly, Ministry of Justice
Phase 2: Institutional Setup	Months 4–6	- Recruit technical staff for ASPC - Constitute Local Government Peace Committees (LGPCs) - Launch the Conflict Early Warning and Rapid Response Unit (CEWRU)	ASPC Secretariat, Ministry of Local Government, CSOs
Phase 3: Capacity Building and Training	Months 7–9	- Train ASPC, LGPC, and CEWRU staff in conflict analysis, early warning, and	Development partners (e.g., UNDP, GIZ),

		ADR - Peace education training for teachers and community leaders	Universities, NGOs
Phase 4: Community Engagement and Rollout	Months 10–15	- Launch awareness campaigns through media and town hall meetings - Operationalize Peace Hubs in schools and marketplaces - Start collection of baseline conflict data	LGPCs, ABS Media, Religious Bodies, Youth Councils
Phase 5: Monitoring, Review, and Institutionalization	Months 16–24	- Conduct midterm review - Revise conflict response protocols - Integrate peace indicators into state budgeting and development planning	Ministry of Budget and Planning, ASPC, Evaluation Experts

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

A multi-actor, multi-sector approach is necessary for legitimacy and sustainability. Key stakeholders and their proposed roles include:

- a) *State Government*: Political leadership, legal framework, resource allocation.
- b) *Local Government Councils*: Deployment of Local Peace Committees and community engagement.
- c) *Traditional Institutions (Council of Ndi Igwe)*: Mediation, legitimacy, integration of customary law.
- d) *Religious Bodies (CAN, Muslim Council)*: Advocacy, faith-based reconciliation.
- e) *Civil Society Organizations (e.g., JDPC, CLEEN Foundation)*: Technical support, advocacy, training.
- f) *Youth and Women Networks*: Participation in Peace Hubs, local monitoring, inclusion.
- g) *Media*: Peace messaging, real-time reporting, conflict-sensitive journalism.
- h) *Academia (e.g., Nnamdi Azikiwe University)*: Research, training, impact assessments.
- i) *Development Partners (UNDP, USAID, GIZ)*: Funding, technical expertise, learning platforms.

A *Peace Stakeholder Forum (PSF)* should be convened quarterly to coordinate activities, ensure accountability, and share innovations.

Capacity Building and Training Needs

To professionalize the I4P, intensive training will be required for different categories of actors:

Table 3: Capacity Building for Target Groups and Training Topics

Target Group	Training Topics
ASPC and LGPC Staff	Conflict mapping, mediation, trauma healing, negotiation skills
Teachers and Students	Peace education pedagogy, anti-bullying, civic responsibility
Traditional/Religious Leaders	Gender-sensitive peace-building, ADR documentation, dialogue facilitation
Journalists	Peace journalism, fact-checking, hate speech prevention
Youth Leaders	Digital peace advocacy, community organizing, countering violent extremism

Training modules should be developed in partnership with institutions like the *University for Peace (UPEACE)* and local universities.

Community Engagement and Public Awareness Strategy

To ensure grassroots buy-in, the following strategies should be adopted:

- Peace Sensitization Campaigns* via community radios, posters, and social media.
- Annual Anambra Peace Week* to showcase success stories, cultural performances, and intercommunity dialogue.
- Local Peace Champions* program, identifying influential individuals to serve as ambassadors in each LGA.
- Partnership with Nollywood actors and musicians* to produce culturally resonant peace messages.

Additionally, civic education on tolerance, coexistence, and dispute resolution should be integrated into ongoing government and NGO outreach.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework

A robust MEL system is vital for tracking impact, learning, and accountability.

Core Indicators:

- Number of community conflicts resolved without violence

- b) Number of early warnings issued and responses triggered
- c) Women and youth participation rate in peace structures
- d) Reduction in politically or ethnically motivated violence
- e) Public perception of security and justice (survey-based)

Data Collection Tools:

- a) Quarterly surveys and focus group discussions
- b) Conflict Incident Reporting Forms (CIRFs) from LGPCs
- c) Peace and Conflict Scorecards for each LGA
- d) Digital dashboards visualizing trends and hotspots

Evaluation should be done semi-annually by an independent MEL team and results shared during the Peace Stakeholder Forums.

Risk Assessment and Conflict Sensitivity Plan

Implementation of a state-wide peace infrastructure will encounter several risks. Table 4 shows the risks and their mitigation strategies.

Table 4: Risk and Mitigation Strategy

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Political interference	Ensure ASPC appointments are transparent and multi-stakeholder-based
Resource shortfalls	Engage development partners early; create CSR peace fund with private sector
Resistance from informal actors	Conduct confidence-building dialogues with vigilante groups, youth groups, IPOB sympathizers
Conflict sensitivity breaches	Train all implementers in "Do No Harm" and cultural competency approaches
Public apathy	Launch storytelling and testimonial campaigns showcasing real impact of peace structures

The implementation of Anambra's Infrastructure for Peace must be systematic, inclusive, and adaptive. With phased action, broad-based engagement, and ongoing monitoring, the state can build a resilient system that addresses root causes of conflict and nurtures a culture of peace. The concluding section summarizes the paper's key findings and presents policy recommendations for institutionalizing peace in Anambra and beyond.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Summary of Key Findings

This paper set out to analyze Nigeria's national peace infrastructure and develop a context-sensitive Infrastructure for Peace (I4P) for Anambra State. The findings reveal that Nigeria's peace architecture is fragmented, under-institutionalized, and often reactive, with limited grassroots ownership or legal mandates. While some progress has been made at the national level—especially with the National Peace Committee and selected state peace commissions—these efforts remain elite-driven, unsustainable, and poorly connected to local realities.

In Anambra, persistent conflict—driven by political violence, youth exclusion, land disputes, and secessionist agitation—underscores the urgent need for a formal peace infrastructure that bridges the gap between community resilience and state-led policy. Despite the presence of vibrant traditional authorities, religious bodies, and town unions, there is no legal or institutional mechanism to harness these assets into a coherent peace strategy.

This study proposes a comprehensive I4P model for Anambra that includes:

- a) A State Peace Council for policy coordination
- b) Local Peace Committees for grassroots mediation
- c) A Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit
- d) Peace Hubs for youth and women engagement
- e) Legal, media, and ICT tools to support transparency and scale

The proposed model is feasible, scalable, and aligns with both national development priorities and global best practices.

Policy Recommendations

For the Anambra State Government

1. *Enact the Anambra Peace-building and Conflict Management Law*, which will institutionalize peace structures across the state and ensure budgetary allocation.
2. *Establish the Anambra State Peace Council (ASPC)* immediately via executive order pending legislative action.
3. *Mainstream peace-building in education, planning, and budgeting* by integrating peace indicators in Local Government Area (LGA) scorecards.
4. *Create a dedicated Peace Fund* supported by the state, diaspora contributions, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

For the Federal Government of Nigeria

1. *Develop a National Infrastructure for Peace Policy Framework*, which will provide minimum standards and coordination for peace councils across all states.
2. *Support states through technical guidance, funding, and training* via institutions like the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and OSPRE.

For Civil Society and Development Partners

1. *Support the capacity-building of peace actors* in conflict mediation, early warning, gender-sensitive dialogue, and monitoring.
2. *Invest in local innovations* such as community-based peace tech, mobile reporting platforms, and school peace clubs.
3. *Promote inclusion by targeting youth, women, and marginalized communities* in program design and leadership development.
4. *Establish a Peace Innovation Lab* in collaboration with local universities to generate policy solutions and conduct participatory research.

For Traditional and Religious Leaders

1. Form a Standing Committee on Traditional Mediation and Dialogue under the ASPC to ensure formal recognition of customary peace mechanisms.
2. Lead public education campaigns on peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and civic responsibility.
3. Integrate traditional dispute resolution with state-recognized Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) frameworks.

Final Reflections

The peace deficit in Nigeria—and in Anambra specifically—is not just a result of violence but of institutional absence, exclusion, and inertia. Reimagining peace infrastructure is about creating a deliberate system of peace governance that enables communities, not just governments, to prevent and resolve conflict. Anambra has the social capital, cultural structures, and intellectual capacity to lead Nigeria in demonstrating what decentralized, inclusive, and sustainable peace architecture can look like. If implemented, the proposed framework can serve as a model for other Nigerian states and contribute to national resilience, especially in the face of election cycles, insecurity, and developmental inequities.

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