

## ARTICLE



# Looking Beyond Conflict: The Involvement of Tiv Diaspora in Peacebuilding in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Examining the role of transnational migrant groups in peace processes is a particular area of field research within the broad area of studies on migration. This article examines the contribution of diaspora of the Tiv ethnic group in the USA to peacebuilding in Nigeria and argues that, contrary to recent findings in the literature that African diaspora had a negative impact on peace processes, the Tiv diaspora actively engaged all the conflicting parties in an attempt to ensure sustained peace and wider democratisation of power. They were mobilised as a result of the military massacre of two hundred unarmed Tiv civilians in their homeland. The initially weak ties of the Tiv diaspora with their home country have been strengthened, with the propensity to actively participate there. Despite their track record in peace processes, a weak social, economic and political position, as well as capacity constraints, may frustrate their efforts towards an enduring and sustainable peace.



## Keywords

diaspora, transnationalism, migrants, peace building, Tiv, conflict

## INTRODUCTION

In the second week of October 2001, Nigerian soldiers killed more than two hundred unarmed civilians and destroyed homes, shops, public buildings and other property in more than seven towns and villages in Benue State, in central-eastern Nigeria. All those killed were from the Tiv ethnic group, an ethno-linguistic group and ethnic nation in West Africa. They constitute approximately 2.5% of Nigeria's total population, and number over 5.6 million individuals throughout Nigeria and Cameroon. Historically, the Tiv people are said to have migrated from central Africa to where they now live, in what is generally described as the Middle Belt of Nigeria, around 150 miles east of the confluence of River Benue with River Niger.

This military operation was part of the broader, long-standing inter-communal conflict in the area. As Human Rights Watch (2002, p.5) notes, "in a sense, it can be seen as a culmination of a series of attacks and counter-attacks by Tiv and Jukun armed groups, primarily in Taraba State and the areas around the Taraba-Benue border". The incident which provoked the violent response of the military in October was the abduction and killing of nineteen soldiers two weeks earlier. According to the government authorities, the soldiers were on a mission to restore peace in the area affected by the conflict between Tivs and Jukuns, and were abducted by a Tiv armed group in Vaase, in Benue State, on October 10. Their mutilated bodies were found two days later, on October 12, in the grounds of a primary school in the town of Zaki Biam, also in Benue State.



Less than two weeks after the discovery of the bodies, a large number of soldiers arrived in several towns and villages in Benue, between October 19 and 24, in a carefully coordinated operation designed to take residents by surprise. Soldiers rounded up the residents of these towns, separated the men from the women and children and suddenly opened fire on them. Following the shootings, the soldiers proceeded to burn the bodies and raze all the settlements. The army continued its callous vendetta in nine other Tiv settlements in both Taraba and Benue State over the next two days. The orgy of violence and massacre of unarmed civilians continued for days after, with women and children killed, maimed, and made refugees without shelter, food or basic means of livelihood, and property worth billions of naira destroyed, in various parts of Benue State.

The extra-judicial violence orchestrated by the Nigerian military was denounced by civil organisations, human rights groups and Nigerian diaspora. The killings by the government, it was argued, contravened Nigeria's obligations under international law. The Nigerian diaspora, specifically the Tiv community, condemned the attacks which destroyed lives and property, the systematic looting, and the rape of women and children.

In the literature on conflict and peacebuilding, Spear (2006) states that "the contribution of African diaspora to the promotion of peace in their countries of origin has been largely overlooked, yet it is a critical input for peacebuilding". While much of the media attention and recent academic analyses focus more on the money sent to the homelands (Orozco, 2007; IFAD, 2007), the potential of those behind these remittances to contribute to the resolution of past and ongoing conflicts has received little attention. Diaspora groups have constant links to their homeland and many have a lot of influence, not only as a result of the money sent there, but also as members of the society. Their input, if channelled through formal processes and institutional frameworks, could lead to breakthroughs in areas where Western-prescribed conflict resolution concepts have failed or only led to a temporary ceasefire.

Available data suggests that the flow of money sent home is high, and increasing. These remittances were estimated to be worth \$268 billion in 2006, the vast proportion of which – \$199 billion – went to developing countries (Mohapatra et al., 2006). Including unrecorded transfers, according to Mohapatra et al (2006), these contributions are greater than direct foreign investment, and more than twice the official aid received by developing countries. In Nigeria, commercial bank executives report that, in 2006, the recorded flow was 30% higher than in 2005, estimated at US\$4.2 billion dollars, in 700,000 transactions. The overwhelming majority of these person-to-person transfers are said to come from the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, and other Western European countries (Orozco and Myllis, 2007).

This article is an attempt to highlight the constructive role played by the Tiv diaspora community in responding to what has been described as "terrorism and ethnic cleansing against the Tiv" (Ijir, 2001). This group actively engaged the parties in the conflict in an attempt to stop further violence and change the structural conditions of the 'indigenes and settlers' syndrome. The broader aim of this paper is to contribute to the debate on the role of diaspora in peacebuilding.

## METHODOLOGY

A review of the literature on diaspora in developing countries, with a particular focus on their role in conflict and peacebuilding was carried out, in addition to loosely structured interviews. The interviews are a constructionist approach aimed at discovering, as Silverman (2001, p. 95) said, how subjects actively create meaning. Thirty five interview subjects were selected from members of the Mutual Union of Tiv in America (MUTA), Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO), the media and other civil society organisations. So while the limited number of qualitative participants precludes any claim of being able to generalise the data gleaned from the interviews, purposive sampling is the most appropriate method for the aim of this project, which is to explore the subjects' perception of the role of diaspora in peacebuilding. As Arber (2001) notes, such a purposive sampling is ideal to "generate theory and a wider understanding of the social processes or social action" (Arber 2001, 61). As Holstein and Gubrium (1995) explain, the theoretical justification for interview methodology rests on the active selection of "people" over "population". That is, individuals are deliberately chosen as subjects for their competency in "narrative production" that serves to illuminate social context, interdependency, and construction of reality. However, it is imperative to stress that the interviews were not limited to survey respondents; in most cases, having arranged interviews with members of the Tiv diaspora and civil society organisations, the researcher was introduced to and handed over to a number of other groups.

## TRANSNATIONALISM: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The engagement of diaspora in peacebuilding in their country of origin is within the framework of transnationalism. Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc (1994) offered a suitable definition of transnationalism: "We define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which



immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasise that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.”

Vertovec and Cohen (1999) consider transnationalism as a “site for political engagement”. This is an allusion to many diaspora and ethnic groups who undertake transnational political activities as a dynamic interaction between the politics of their countries of origin and those of their receiving countries. Identity and political mobilisation of diaspora are the manifestation of vigorous practices of “long-distance nationalism” (Anderson, 1992), largely through transnational political, social, economic and cultural activities that refugee and immigrant populations sustain across the boundaries of nation-states.

## DISCURSIVE ROLE OF THE DIASPORA IN PEACEBUILDING

Diaspora groups are clearly constituent elements of civil society and, as such, often take an interest in conflict and peacebuilding efforts in their countries of birth. The argument here is that diaspora groups are a central component of civil society and should be included in any analysis of its contribution to peacebuilding. One obvious example is the number of newspapers created to satisfy the appetite of diaspora communities for information about what is happening in their place of birth. These media outlets frequently comment, either positively or negatively, on the political processes linked to violent conflict in the homeland and efforts to end the violence through dialogue and negotiation (Cochrane, 2007 p. 21).

The literature on diaspora engagement with the home country is divided into two fields, each striving to explain the role of diaspora groups in peace and conflict processes. The first school of thought claims that their role in the peace processes is counter productive. In fact, it argues that diaspora groups, especially conflict-generated diaspora, are at the forefront in derailing peace process in the home country (Lyons, 2004). The second school claims that, under certain circumstances, the diaspora is a formidable force, with financial and social capacity and human capital that can be tapped for development, and by extension, peacebuilding (Spear, 2006).

Most of the literature links diaspora with conflict. Collier and Hoeffler (2000, p. 26) conclude in their quantitative large-N study that: “[...] by far the strongest effect of war on the risk of subsequent war works through diasporas. After five years of post conflict-peace, the risk of renewed conflict is around six times higher in the societies with the largest diaspora in America than in those without American diaspora. Presumably this effect works

through the financial contributions of diaspora to rebel organisations.”

When diaspora are mentioned within the context of violent conflict, the focus is frequently on their tendency to fund the continuation of warfare and their propensity to destabilise negotiations and peacebuilding efforts. It is recognised that large diaspora communities have the coercive power to raise funds for weapons, or lobby in support of the political objectives of militant liberation struggles in their countries of origin. This view is quite pervasive within the ‘new wars’ literature associated with theories of 21<sup>st</sup> century transnationalism and neo-liberal global governance (Kaldor, p. 2001).

Collier and Hoeffler’s widely cited work, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* (2004), emphasises the destabilising impact of migrant groups, leading to the continuation of violent conflict. The 2001 report from the Rand Corporation, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, is equally reductionist in its analysis of the destructive potential of diaspora communities. From a more nuanced perspective, Terence Lyons (2004) highlights the obstacles in the way of diaspora communities in Africa contributing positively to peacebuilding efforts. The example of Somalia and Eritrea suffices, where parts of the diaspora supported different clans with funding that was channelled through civil society groups and used to purchase weapons (Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa: Report of the IPA/OAU Consultation, 1996:12).

And as Shain and Barth (2003, p. 450) note: “For many homeland citizens, territory serves multiple functions: it provides sustenance, living space, security, as well as a geographical focus for national identity. If giving up a certain territory, even one of significant symbolic value, would increase security and living conditions, a homeland citizen might find the trade-off worthwhile. By contrast, for the diaspora, while the security of the homeland is of course important as well, the territory’s identity function is often paramount.”

Werbner (2002, p. 120) adds one more twist to this debate by echoing this concern, noting that diaspora often “feel free to endorse and actively support ethnicist, nationalistic, and exclusionary movements”. Finally, Fitzgerald suggests that some members of diaspora advance a “model of citizenship that emphasises rights over obligations, passive entitlements, and the assertion of an interest in the public space without a daily presence” (Fitzgerald, 2000, p. 106).

The second school of thought holds that diaspora, by their very nature detached from frontline conflicts, are more inclined to contribute to, and play a positive role in the peace processes in their country of origin. While acknowledging the capacity of diaspora groups to contribute to violence in their countries of origin and accepting the arguments that they are slower to accept the political pragmatism often required for building peace processes within deeply divided societies, it is argued here that insufficient



attention has been given to their more positive contributions. It has been recognised by other scholars that diaspora communities cling to the political and cultural certainties associated with the conflict, through a combination of sentiment, guilt or even ignorance of the real situation. The Rand Corporation makes the reasonable point that “communities abroad often feel a genuine sympathy for the domestic struggles of their overseas kin. Sometimes these communities may also feel a sense of guilt because they are safe, while their kin are involved in brutal and bloody struggle” (Byman et al., 2001, p.55). Within this context, diaspora groups may become actively involved in finding means of ending conflicts at home. As a Nigerian proverb puts it, “only a mad man can go to sleep with his house on fire”. This for example, has resulted in the putative efforts by London’s diaspora from the Horn of Africa to work together to pressure their home countries to build more constructive political relationships.

In is imperative to distinguish between the empirical and theoretical arguments made for and against the diaspora with respect to peace processes. While the theoretical arguments of the ‘New Wars’ sees diaspora groups as a threat, empirical evidence from London’s Horn-of-Africa communities, Polish-Americans in the United States during the 1980s, and Irish-Americans during the 1990s (sustaining the Northern Ireland peace process), and a host of others, show that under certain conditions, diaspora communities “are increasingly able to promote transnational ties, to act as bridges or as mediators between their home and host societies, and to transmit the values of pluralism and democracy” (Shain and Barth, 2003, p. 450). Diaspora can therefore contribute positively or negatively to peace processes in their home countries.

## THE CONFLICT IN THE TIV AREA OF TARABA STATE

The conflict in the Taraba-Benue area, which has lasted for decades, is principally between Tivs and Jukuns (HRW, 2002 p.16). While the Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups had a cordial relationship for centuries, that amiable coexistence progressively turned sour between the 1930s and the 1950s because of ecological as well as political changes, in the Wukari area in particular and in the Benue Valley in general.

The emergence of overt conflicts between the two ethnic groups, particularly from 1959, and their continuation since then, have turned this feud into what Nnoli (1995, p.220) has described as “the deadliest inter-ethnic clashes”. There seems to be no end to the Tiv-Jukun problem, as each decade since the 1950s has resonated with new waves of conflict. This clearly indicates the existence of intractable, deep-rooted and fundamental disagreements between

the two neighbours. The Tiv-Jukun ethnic conflict has extended over various periods, with the first conflict-prone atmosphere surfacing in 1959, preceding the federal elections held in Nigeria that year.

The conflict in Taraba between Tiv and Jukuns has tended to centre on competition for land, as well as control over economic resources and political power (cf. Best, Idyrough and Shehu, 1999). Three major factors have been used to explain this ethnic conflict: the land issue, the political factor and the indigene-settler question. An emerging consensus among various scholars who have analysed the Tiv-Jukun conflict is that, inasmuch as other vital factors such as politics have often acted as a stimulant for the crises between them, land remains fundamental in understanding the standoff (Best et al., 1999), as both Tiv and Jukun are farmers. This is especially true for the Tiv, with 80% engaging in farming as their principal occupation.

Identity has manifested itself in the political calculus between indigenes and non-indigenes in this area, involving fierce competition not just for land, but also for political posts. Mitchell (2000, pp. 1-2) has noted that conflicts involving settlers and natives usually revolve around the question of land, in most cases with settlers wanting to dispossess the natives of their land through what he called “migratory overcrowding”. This is particularly the case in Wukari. However, what is more worrisome about this conflict is that it brings to the fore the debate on citizenship in Nigeria. This debate is driven by questions that hinge on contestable issues such as who is an indigene in Nigeria, why should other Nigerians be termed non-indigenes, settlers or migrants in other parts of the country and what should be the rights of Nigerian citizens.

In broad terms, the Jukuns claim to be the original inhabitants of Taraba State, the “indigenes” or “sons of the soil”, and consider the Tivs as “settlers” or “comers”. The Tivs reject this view, on the basis that they too have been living there for generations and therefore have equal rights; they complain of being marginalised and excluded in Taraba, and consider it blasphemous if not absurd to be regarded as “foreigners”. Likewise, the Jukun minority in Benue State also complain of marginalisation, lack of employment opportunities and insecurity.

Political polarisation and cultural identity has gradually led to physical segregation too: as violence has intensified in Taraba, an increasing number of Tivs have fled to Benue. Tivs have complained of persecution in Taraba and talk of a deliberate campaign of “ethnic cleansing” (Ijir, 2000), primarily by the Jukuns allied with the Fulanis, and, in October of 2001, in conjunction with the military and the federal government. They have claimed that the Jukun timed these operations deliberately to ensure a political advantage in Taraba in the run-up to the elections that were scheduled for 2003. In addition, and this represents a deep dimension of the conflict, the rivalries between the Tivs and Jukuns have always had the potential to escalate



into even more serious conflict at the national level, as both groups are well represented in the higher echelons of the national army.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF MUTA TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Members of the Tiv group are found in many areas across the globe, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany. The most cited reasons for emigration is to find employment and for further studies. In these countries they form unions, the strongest being the Mutual Union of the Tiv in America (MUTA). Other, smaller groups, include the Tiv Network and numerous Tiv-diaspora internet-based organisations. MUTA Inc., registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit and non-partisan organisation, is the umbrella organisation for the Tiv diaspora, with over 200 Tiv residing in North America, which provides a forum where members can assemble and discuss issues concerning their people across the world, but especially back in Nigeria. The Association is rather small considering the Nigerian diaspora population of 5,701,806 (Orozco, 2007, p. 3), and is financed through registration, charity and other donations, investments and funds from other sources. Even though MUTA does not explicitly have peacebuilding as its main objective, its involvement in peace processes, especially during the aftermath of the deployment of soldiers in October 2001 as a reprisal for the abduction and subsequent killings of the 19 soldiers, remains commendable.

A key area of investigation in studies of transnationalism is the expression of ethnic and national identities (McCarthy, 2007, p.223), and a major area of analysis is the historiography of Tiv diaspora groups. How these identities influence diaspora consciousness has been a subject of intense debate. The Tiv groups are a recent formation, from the 1980s. Although new on the stage, they have been able to engage both the host and native country, especially in what it perceived to be an orchestrated campaign against the Tiv people.

Scholars of immigrant associational culture have indicated that the incentive for forming immigrant associations can be motivated by offensive or defensive matters. As Moya (2004, p. 840) posits, "The principal stimulus for associational activity thus derived not from cultural backgrounds of the emigrants or the civic habits of their hosts but from a universal source: the migration process itself. This process tends to intensify and sharpen collective identities based on national, ethnic, or quasi-ethnic constructs [...] the collective identities of arrivals were heightened not only by contrast to those of the native population but also by contrast to those of other newcomers."

In a press statement by the Tiv Development Association (TDA) on the Jukun-Tiv Crisis, Jos Branch, echoed that the Tiv nation and other minority groups were facing extermination under the Obasanjo-led federal government, and that a strategic plan to exterminate the Tiv nation may have been endorsed by the government of President Obasanjo (Ijir, 2001). The reasons that were put forward by TDA were varied. This perception of the Tiv individual as being marginalised gave shape to the recent identification of the Tiv diaspora community and those living in Nigeria, articulating their common plight, and repositioning themselves in the Nigerian polity.

In this globalised world, diaspora communities have the resources and knowledge needed to build social, economic and political bridges through transnational networks. Accordingly, the Tiv diaspora, a constituent of the Nigerian diaspora, can be a bridge-builder between the Jukun, the Nigerian government and the Tiv people, especially as it relates to the distrust, misrepresentation and misunderstanding between all three. As such, it is essential that these Tiv have a proactive role in ensuring that sustainable peace and development pervades their nation. For example, because of being in the USA and Canada and in EU countries, the Tiv diaspora is in a position to build up and tap the benefits from vast transnational social, economic and political networks. There are three areas where the Tiv diaspora in general and Nigerian diaspora in particular can contribute to the shaping of a viable Nigeria in the short, medium and long terms. These are the promotion of peace, the inculcation of democratic political habits and development.

In the context of MUTA, since it was established it has been concerned with the socio-political and economic development of the Tiv people, to enhance their participation in nation building in Nigeria and in North America and to reap the benefits of globalisation. Even though this organisation is new, it has embarked on several programmes to support the causes that are dear to its heart and that of every Tiv. The involvement of this group in educational assistance programmes, such as scholarships and the institutionalisation of a Chair at the state university attest to their financial and social capital. It has also been active in health delivery in the State.

MUTA has also engaged the Nigerian government in programmes intended to enhance civic participation, political enlightenment, campaigns to halt and reverse the HIV/AIDS epidemic, rural development, especially the construction of boreholes, water supply networks and rural churches. Recently, the Union had requested a slot to actively participate in the home government in order to ensure that their skills and talents were utilised for the development of the state. The request to tap into the pool of knowledge and experiences abroad to foster the development of the Tiv nation has been responded to, as the Benue State Governor, in 2010, allocated the cabinet position of the



Commissioner of Health to Dr. Orduen Abunku. The Tiv diaspora have also presented Professor Steve Ugba as an opposition candidate in Benue State to challenge the incumbent governor in the April 2011 general election in Nigeria.

## RESPONSE OF TIV DIASPORA TO THE MILITARY INCURSION OF BENUE STATE

The response of the Tiv diaspora community to the military incursion into Benue State stemmed from the long-held belief of the Tiv and other groups that the ethnic group was a victim of state-sponsored violence. The crises are a result of the settlement pattern of the Tiv in these areas, characterised by contiguity either with kith or kin, clearly visible and as witnessed in documentary evidence from the British Colonial Governments. The intention, as mentioned in the *Tiv/Jukun Inquest*,<sup>1</sup> was to cause disorientation among ethnic groups which had previously lived together without rancour, with the Tiv being driven to Benue State, so losing their traditional lands.

According to Ijir (2001), the formation of the Tiv ethnic militia was a direct response to the long standing injustices which the state failed to address. As he argues, "It is an inevitable reaction to a threat to the very survival of the Tiv nation in modern Nigeria. The Tiv indigenous to Nassarawa and Taraba states since the dawn of the current political dispensation in Nigeria, have been subjected to all forms of harassments incompatible with human dignity and existence... It is amazing that in spite of all these atrocities committed against the Tiv people, this did not attract the attention of the Nigerian State's attention, concern and intervention" (p. 3).

While reaffirming their support for the Federal Republic of Nigeria, based on the current ethnic crises involving Tiv people, the MUTA issued a categorical statement that the Tiv were peace-loving and law-abiding people, wanting to live peacefully with all their neighbours, and would reject any reference to them as "settlers", without citizenship status, in any part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. They further called upon the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Benue State Government to exercise their constitutional duties to protect all citizens, including the Tiv people.

In a memorandum submitted to the Judicial Commission of inquiry into the Inter-communal Conflicts in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba States, March 2002, the Tiv diaspora group argued that a fair and unbiased ver-

dict of the Commission will inter-alia protect and enforce the fundamental and inalienable rights of citizenship, lives and property of the Tiv people. The diaspora acknowledged that certain issues had to be addressed, to find lasting and fair solutions to the crises in these states, related to citizenship rights, the role of the Army/Security forces in the crises, marginalisation of Tiv populations, the illegal build up of arms in the rural areas and the role of the federal government in the crises.

On many occasions, the Tiv diaspora has called on the Tiv nation to positively and purposively engage both the Jukun and the federal government in establishing longstanding peace, as well as participating itself in peace processes, democratisation and development initiatives in Nigeria. Furthermore, the Tiv diaspora has become an influential pressure group, through the broader Nigerian diaspora community, North American and European civil society organisations with which it is linked, with a positive impact on international efforts in Nigeria. As the African Diaspora Policy Centre (2010, p.5) states, "the Nigerian diaspora will capitalise its strategic position in the Northern countries to promoting policies that impact positively on the continent in terms of favourable policy changes, trade concessions, debt cancellation and appropriate development programs among others". Other areas include democratic governance and human rights issues, as well as reversing the injustices meted on the Tiv nation. Similarly, the international community out-rightly condemned and denounced the military action that led to the killing of over 300 Nigerians in the Niger Delta, what is referred to as the Odi massacre on November 20, 1999, as part of an ongoing conflict over indigenous rights to oil resources and environmental protection. These efforts have been attributed to the Nigerian diaspora (ADPC, 2010).

In their memorandum to the Judicial Commission into the Inter-communal Conflicts in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba States, March 2002, the diaspora noted: "Tiv people have suffered innumerable discriminations in Nassarawa, Taraba and Plateau states. In all these states, they are denied the privileges and attributes of citizenship. These discrimination and denials are essentially invidious and relate to functions at the heart of representative government and also aimed at excluding their language from the mainstream of public communication as a way of undermining their rights to maintain and strengthen their social and cultural identity" (Memorandum, 2002, p.16).

The memorandum also noted the vexatious issues of political exclusion of the Tiv people in Taraba, citing the curtailing of Tiv rights to participate in public affairs, and the exclusionist policies designed to portray them as settlers and immigrants.

1 See "Tiv in the Valley of the Shadow of Death," *Vanguard* [Nigeria], November 27, 2001.



## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study shows that diaspora communities can play a positive role in peacebuilding in their country of origin. Nevertheless, a constructive role in a sustained peace process demands that diaspora groups establish strong ties with their home community (Granovetter, p. 1973), characterised by substantial investment of time and money, emotional intensity, intimacy and the reciprocal exchange of services.

The peace process between the Tiv and their neighbouring brothers, especially the Jukun, has been in operation for some time now, with the diaspora and other stakeholders playing a key role as bridge builders. A key issue has been to tap into and benefit from the social capital of the Nigerian diaspora in North America, United Kingdom and other EU countries. It also necessitates joining forces and effectively mobilising all the available social forces, social capital, intellectual ideas, economic means, creative initiatives and activities in order to deal with the challenges of managing and resolving the conflict in Nigeria in a collective spirit.

Finally, the Tiv diaspora can promote peace through development. It has already contributed to community development in Nigeria in different ways. Some send money home each month to support families, thereby providing a lifeline to many on the bottom rungs of society. This has indeed become a reliable form of sustenance for increasingly impoverished households in Nigeria with relatives abroad. The Migration Policy Institute for the Department of International Development argued that: "remittances have a direct impact on poverty reduction, since they tend to flow directly to poor (although not necessarily the poorest) households and are used primarily for basic needs such as food, shelter, education and health care. The common observation that remittances are not used for 'productive' investment misses the point that poor households rationally give priority to these basic needs, which represent an

investment in human capital as well as needed consumption. Spending on basic needs also has a multiplier effect in the community" (2004, p. 2).

Remittance directly helps people in Africa cope with poverty, a form of 'pro-poor'. Though financial support is important to the Tiv nation, social remittances, which have received much less attention are even more so, especially in the context of conflict mediating skills, rebranding of the psychology and socio-economic orientation of Nigeria, and protection of women, young people and the most vulnerable members of the society.

This article has highlighted the potential of the diaspora communities to contribute to peace processes in their country of origin. It brings together the insights that the Tiv diaspora articulated as a contribution to the peacebuilding initiative in Nigeria, especially in the context of the Tiv and Jukun crisis and the federal government's reaction to the massacre of Nigerian soldiers. This article further proposes the need to tap into the intellectual resources, information, innovative ideas, networks and human capital of the Nigerian diaspora for the promotion of peace and stability in Nigeria. It must be mentioned in passing that, for there to be peace between the three parties, there is a need for the diaspora community to insist on an integrated approach linking peacebuilding with the democratisation of power for better governance in Nigeria in the near future. This strategy is very important as this will increase the effectiveness of the intervention.

However, despite the many valuable benefits they dispense, Tiv diaspora in the USA, Canada, and the European Union, still operate on the margins of society because of their weak social, economic and political position. Strengthened, more effective institutional and organisational capacities would enable the Nigerian diaspora to play a much wider role in the peace, democratisation and development initiatives in Nigeria. It is through this proactive engagement that the Tiv diaspora in particular and the Nigerian diaspora in general may be able to create public support in the USA, Canada and the European Union regarding Nigeria.

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