ROLE OF WOMEN'S NGOs IN CONFLICT GENERATION AND MITIGATION IN BIRNIN-KEBBI, KEBBI STATE, NIGERIA

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1   Introduction

Literature on women and conflict in Africa has over the years been trapped in the 'impact syndrome' where analysis treats women as victims of conflict rather than actors in the generation and mitigation of conflict (Oluyemi-Kusa, 2006, Adamu, 2005 and Abdu, 2002). Closely related to this is the dominance of open and violent conflict in our conception and analysis of conflict in Nigeria. Although there are several studies on religious, ethnic, resource related conflict such as Farmers-Pastoralists and Niger Delta conflict as well as chieftaincy related conflict (see the 2003 Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria), other forms of conflict that is not opened and violent such as gender conflict, that is, conflict arising as a result of gender issue or on the basis of gender are recorded little interest. This could be related to the fact that while ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria have been destructive and linked to competition and contest over social and economic resources, the same cannot be said to gender related conflict. Yet, like any other source of conflict, gender related conflict is a manifestation of a deeper social inequality and discrimination in the distribution of resources or perceive exclusion and marginalization of one group by another. It involves power relations. Why gender inequality and marginalization is yet to produce violent reaction in Nigeria as is the case with other marginalization and exclusion remains to be explored. However, what is obvious is that conflict is an inevitable social fact that is part and parcel of human existence. It is a social condition involving competition between two parties in pursue of different and incompatible interests. Francis (2006) defines conflict as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups or individuals. It is therefore about power relations and by extension; gender related conflict is about power relations and struggle between women and men, whether knowingly or unknowingly, deliberately or not.

If conflict is about power relation and pursuance of incompatible interests, then women as a gender cannot only be victims of conflict but also active participants in generating and mitigating conflict. What is the nature of such gender related conflict? How is gender related conflict played out between men and women? What other factors influence gender

related conflict? To answer the above questions we studied women's groupings and associations in Kebbi state. Responding to gender discrimination and inequality requires mobilizing women into groups to champion a course that affect them as a gender. NGOs are the best social setting that will expose the dynamics of gender relations that may generate conflict. This is because mobilizing women into groups to confront gender discrimination is by itself, a challenge to gender ideology and the nature of power relations between men and women in the society. The gender conflict may further be exacerbated by the nature of activities pursued by the NGOs and the approaches adopted in the implementation of such programmes. What is the nature of these NGOs and their activities? What is the role of the NGOs in generating, and mitigating gender conflict? That is, to what extent are the NGOs activities and strategy a source of gender related conflict?

This study therefore is concerned with the internal working dynamics of women's NGOs or NGOs associated with women as well as other external factors that may influence the programmes, strategies and implementation of the NGOs. Thus, the objectives of this study are:

1   To describe the nature and activities of the women's organisations.
2   To examine how activities of these organisation can generate or mitigate gender conflict
3   To analyse the nature and dynamics of such gender related conflict

2   Methodology

2.1   Research Design

As mentioned above, the focus of this study is any form of women's mobilisation into a group or an association for the purpose of pursuing a common gender interest. Considering the fact that there are many diverse forms of such mobilisations or associations such as political, professional, ethnic, trade unions, community based etc, we decided to focus on the registered list of such groups and associations by the Kebbi State Ministry for Women's Affairs no matter their orientation. The choice of Ministry for Women's Affairs and not other similar bodies such as Ministry of Commerce is obvious. It is an indication any NGO that register with the Ministry liked to be identified with women and women's issues and are therefore likely to have women's agenda. Thus, any form of NGO that is registered by the ministry is of interest to this research.

The study is purely qualitative both in terms of data collection and analysis, relying heavily on the narrations of the leaders and active members of the selected NGOs. Thus, it is an in-depth study of Women's NGOs and they constituted the unit of analysis of this study.

2.2   Sampling Methods

The research used multi-staged sampling methods because of the diverse nature of women's NGOs. The sampling frame is the list of NGOs registered with the Ministry for Women Affairs. There were thirty three (33) NGOs registered with the Ministry (Appendix 1). In order to ensure representation of all the different types of women

NGOs, the list is classified into categories on the basis of focus and orientation: Thus, five categories were identified and they included Professional or labour related associations (5), Faith-based organizations (7), Ethnic related associations (2), Developmental and right-based organizations (10) and cooperative and others (8). However, for the purpose of this study only four categories were included in the sampling. The cooperative/others groups were excluded because such NGOs were formed in association to others- being a wife of an army or police. Under such circumstance, gender politics may not be of vital important.

2.2.1   Sampling selection process and size
For the four categories of NGOs, the selection process involved use of systematic sampling technique of 50% proportion with some slight modification to ensure equal representation as presented in Table one. The modification concerned Faith-based Organisations (FBOs), where the actual sampled size should have been 3, however, in order to ensure equal religious representation, the two religions of Islam and Christianity represented in the Ministry's list were purposively allocated 2 slots of NGOs each, one women's only and one gender mixed NGOs. Hence, the FBOs had four NGOs (2 women's only and two gender mixed) instead of three, giving us a total of 12 NGOs as our expected sample size. However, data on the 11th NGO was not presented for analysis because of lack of audio.

Table one   List of Selected Categories of NGOs and Size

Type	Number	50%
Professional/ labour	5	2
Ethnic	2	1
Developmental/ Rights based	10	5
Religious/ Faith-based	7	4
Total	24*	12

*Excluding Cooperative/ others category

To select the NGOs for in-depth study, a simple random sampling technique through writing the names of the NGOs per category and tossing it for selection was used. Any NGO selected is included for the study. Since the unit of analysis is the NGOs, leadership of the NGOs constituted our list of informants- So, where the president or the secretary of the NGOs was absent, any executive or active ex-officio of the NGO was interviewed to provide information. Considering the fact that some of the NGOs are gender-mixed, attempt was made to interview a male and a female leadership to enable us explore the two sides to the gender dynamics. Thus, included in the sample were 3 male informants.

2.3   Methods of Data Collection
In carrying out this study, a combination of data collection methods was applied. First, we make extensive use of secondary data that was drowned from published and

unpublished materials relevant to the subject matter of the study such as books, journals, magazines, newspapers, conference and seminar papers and newspapers. In addition, we have also made use of the publications of the NGOs.

Second, in generating the primary data, in-depth interviews were conducted with the leadership of the 12 selected NGOs. The interview was semi-structured and the interview scheduled questions is presented in appendix 3. The semi-structured interview was adopted to ensure focus, and not to allow important issues to be left out, and at the same time captured the diversity of the NGOs and allowed an in-depth discussion of issues. This technique may not allow vigorous statistical analysis, but it has the advantage of generating and facilitating extensive detailed information.

2.4   Methods of Data Analysis

In interpreting the data attempt was made to establish the relationship between women's NGOs activism and gender related conflict both at theoretical and empirical levels. At the theoretical level, discourses on women's NGOs activism and gender issues in Nigeria were analysed within the context of gender conflict and gender politics. Empirically, qualitative and historical methods of data analysis were also used to provide an insight into the dynamics of gender relations in Nigeria, using the NGOs as a case of study. For the presentation of the data, both quantitative and qualitative techniques such as tables, percentages, boxes, matrix and cases were used.

3.   Gender, Inequality and Conflict

One of the major contributions of CRISE is providing the connection between inequality, particularly horizontal inequality and conflict. According to Stewart (2001) "an important factor that differentiates the violent from the peaceful is the existence of severe inequalities between culturally defined groups". Thus, horizontal inequality is like timed bomb waiting to explode and Nigeria is one of such countries that experienced violent conflict over years as a result of political corruption. In particular, the abuse and exploitation of the ethnic, religious and regional differences by the Nigerian elites for jobs, contracts, and official plunder (Strategic Conflict Assessment, 2003). Describing the Nigerian political system, Joseph (1991:10) in SCA (2003: 18) notes that, "since it is a self-justifying system which grants legitimacy to a persistent conflict, and since its modus operandi is to politise ethnic, religious and linguistic differences, it serves to make the Nigerian polity a simmering cauldron of un-resolvable tension over which a lid must regularly be clamped, and just as regularly removed". The consequence of this prebendal politics is made worse with the strong perception of unequal treatment in the sharing of national and local resources and goods by these ethno-regional and religious groups in the country. The 2003 SCA reports that "field reports suggest that strong grievances have arisen around the perception that a particular state or ethnic group has been unfairly treated, in great differences in the standard of living" (SCA, 2003:30-31). This perceived unequal treatment by the Nigerian political class was reported to be one of the causes of tension and conflict at the national, state and local government levels.

If unequal treatment and competition over resources between and among different groups in the country are some of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria, why is gender

inequality not being an enough factor to generate conflict? National and state disaggregated data have revealed the extent to which women have been discriminated against. Nigerian MDG report (2004) notes that: "The difference in educational access between males and females, has assumed considerable significance in the Nigerian society, which is increasingly concerned with the twin imperatives of equity and efficiency. Investment in education is made in the expectation that its returns will be equitably distributed and that it will provide benefits to Nigerians as a whole. However, the traditional attitude of parents to education of their children is to invest in the education of boys thereby denying the girls the opportunity to participate. This situation has translated into unequal access to education, health and employment". Furthermore, a national disaggregated data according to regions or states reveals a worsening data for the North-west zone and Kebbi state, the area of this study.

Figure 1: Zonal Literacy rate by Gender
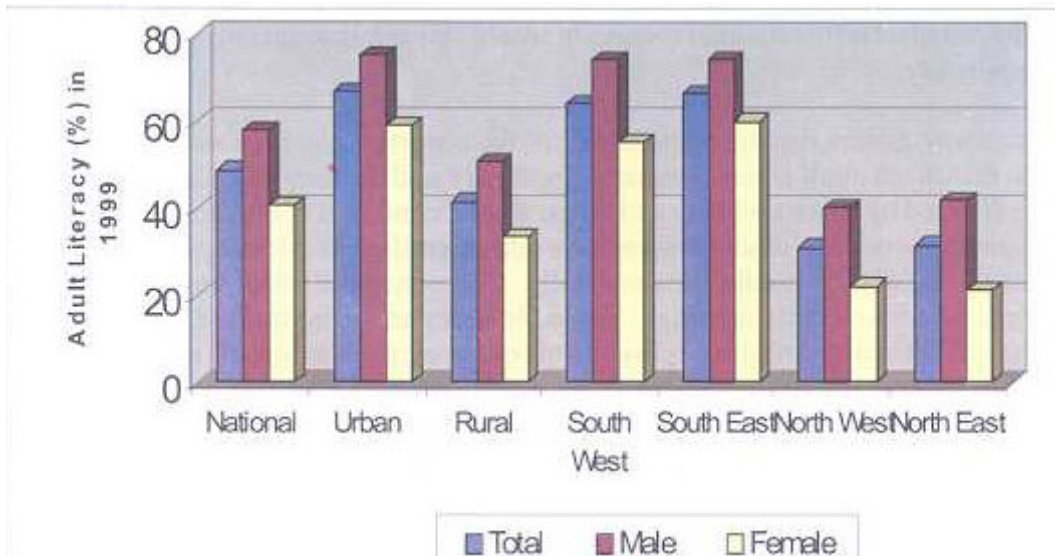
According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2005), Kebbi state has a primary enrolment ratio of 57.55 compared to Lagos and Anambra states that have 100 and 99 respectively. The figure is worst when one looks at the gender disaggregated data where the total enrolment figure stands at 220,631, while that of the female is only 76,548 in 1996. The situation improves slightly with a total enrolment figure of 321,467 and that of female stands at 144,606 (National Bureau for Statistics, 2006). However, the picture is worst for secondary school enrolment and University attendance as shown in Tables two, and three. Worst picture applies to the political position of women in Nigeria as indicated in the MDG report presented in Table four.

Table Two: Kebbi State School Enrolment by Gender

	Primary Enrolment	Secondary Enrolment

	Total	Female	Total	Female
1996	220,631	76,548	28,718	8,766
1998	255,575	87,715	-	-
2000	238,856	80,049	85,765	22,054
2002	276,956	95,944	101,812	24,916
2004	309,228	104,251	-	-
2005	321,467	144,606	-	-

Table Three: UDUS Students Population by Gender and Session

	2001/2002		2002/2003		2003/2004	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sub-degree	3874	530	1979	542	1092	338
Under-graduate	7244	1951	7770	2024	6961	2002
Post graduate	591	172	1021	245	NA	NA
Total	11709 (81%)	2653 (19%)	10770 (79%)	2811 (21%)	8053 (77%)	2340 (23%)

Table Four: Proportion of Women Holding Political Posts: 1999 - 2003

Position	Male		Female		Total		Female (%)	
	1999	2003	1999	2003	1999	2003	1999	2003
President	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.0	0.0
Vice President	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.0	0.0
Ministers Special	35	34	9	5	44	39	20.5	12.8
Advisors	35	34	1	2	36	36	2.8	5.6
Speakers	36	36	0	0	36	36	0.0	0.0
Governors	35	34	1	2	36	36	2.8	5.6
Deputy Governors	765	0	9	0	774	0	1.2	0.0
LGA Chairpersons	8667	0	143	0	8810	0	1.6	0.0
Councillors	978	-	12	-	990	-	1.2	0.0
State Assembly	106	105	3	4	109	109	2.8	3.7
Members	347	345	13	15	360	360	3.6	4.2
Senators								
House of Representatives								

Source: Nigeria MDG Report (2004: 27)

The above data have implication for women's wellbeing and the protection of women's rights. For instance, a 2005 FGN/UNFPA survey of assisted states in Nigeria indicated that men have high percentage of HIV/AIDS awareness compared to women. In Kebbi state for example, 66.6% of the male respondents reported knowing two ways HIV/AIDS can be prevented compared with 32.7% of the female respondents.

Despite this apparent unequal treatment and distribution of resources between men and women, gender has remained a silent factor in generating conflict. This is because

identity politics in Nigeria is not politicized along gender lines to the level of mobilization for political demand and action. Despite the emergence of gender as an identity marker due to certain national and global forces, it is obvious that gender identity is not active enough to mobilize women for political demands and action. While, it is true that identities that "evoke nationalist claims and notions of territoriality strong enough to challenge the validity of extant states" are more likely to be violent and dangerous, it is not the only explanation (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). The ability of a group to mobilize and make political demand and take action is itself an indication of certain level of political awareness and power. For example, such group must have the power to produce and interpret the religious and cultural knowledge and the propaganda resource capable of mobilizing people for political action. For instance, while religion and ethnicity can be resources and sources of political action such as conflict for men, the same cannot be said for women. In fact the two identities of religion and ethnicity constitute major impediments to effective women's involvement in the politics of their community. As Abdu (2002:37) notes "ethnicity reinforces traditional prejudices against women, while religion is represented as an exclusive preserved of men who dictate and determine what happens in the arena". Thus, ethnic or religious politics may have different outcome for men and for women as was observed by Osaghae and Suberu (2005:14). According to them, more often than not, ethnic, religious and regional divisions constrain the effective national mobilization of Nigerian women against entrenched patriarchal practices both in customary procedures for land use, marriage, divorce and inheritance and in the allocation of diverse resources in the modern public arena. To sum up, a group that is structurally and deep-rootedly powerless does lack the capacity to mobilize for political action. For instance, women are overburden with the struggle for their survival and that of their families. Even where they are willing to engage, they may be constrained by the requirement of needing the consent of their husbands or male relatives to contend with.

Despite the absence or weak analysis of the relationship between gender identity and conflict in Nigeria, literature on the impact of the conflict on women is recently being receiving attention. Okoye (2000) provided explanation on the impact of ethno-religious conflicts on women and children. She presented the extent of destructions on some selected conflict areas of Northern Nigeria citing cases of physical displacement, death, injury, lose of spouses/parents and the psychological problems associated with all these misfortunes. Thus, on the impacts of the conflicts on women, Okoye argues that women and children have been the worst affected by the various ethnic and religious crises in Northern Nigeria. Similarly, FGN/UNICEF (2001) has also provided a collection of materials on the impact of violent conflicts on women and children, especially on areas related to physical displacement and combat.

Thus, most of the literature on gender/women and conflict in Nigeria has tended to portray women as helpless victims of conflict, rather than actors capable of playing an important role in generating, escalating, and managing the conflicts. Exception to this rule is Abdu (2002). He contends that "while it is true that women face physical displacement and other peculiar socio-economic conditions as a result of their gender and the asymmetric power and resource relation in the society, it is reductionist to limit every thing to this" (Abdu, 2002:23). He argues that portrayal of every woman as victim of

violent conflict is capable of loosing sight of class, racial and ethnic dimensions of conflicts. Women have a combination of identities different from gender identity. It is these pluralities of identities, Abdu argues that "shapes the character of women involvement in violent conflicts and determines the issues and impact of ethno-religious crises. Aside from being women, they are identified by what ethnic religious or social class they belong... Women in Nigeria cannot be treated as a homogenous group. There are variations in class, religion, ethnic identity etc. Nevertheless they share a common identity of been discriminated against because they are women" (Abdu, 2002:26).

In his study of the various violent crises that erupted in Kaduna state, Abdu (2002) reports that since the Zangon Kataf crisis of 1992, women were observed to have played active role in ethno-religious conflicts. They were seen carrying arms in Zango and they were also part of the group that occupied the Zango town before it was liberated by the police and Army. Women were also reported to be involved in the burning and destruction of lives and property in Zango-Kataf, and uprooting of crops in the farms of the Hausa community. The involvement of women in conflict became more apparent during the 2000 Shariah crisis. During the crisis, many women were seen carrying arms, in Sabon-Tasha, Narayi, Unguwar Television, and some part of Barnawa. Some women were involved in burning and destruction of properties. In Sabon-Tasha, women were involved in gathering and throwing stones against their enemies in the absence of weapons. In Rigasa, thousand of women stood for hours to protect their Churches, from being destroyed. They fought and threw stones against the advancing arsonists.

4 Women's NGOs and Women's interests in Nigeria
Since the end of decade for women in 1985 and in response to the global momentum against women's discrimination, women's groups and movements have emerged to champion women and gender issues in Nigeria. Formation of women's organizations is popular and attractive enterprise among women and men. Despite two decades of women's engagement in mobilising themselves into organizations for collective action, their impact on the Nigerian patriarchal political space has been low. Many factors accounted for this. Foremost amongst them are the patriarchal nature of our political system, low level of political awareness among the generality of women, and competing identities and interests among the women etc.

4.1 Competing Women's Interests
Women in Nigeria, like everywhere in the world, are not a homogenous group. They are divided in terms of their ethnic, religious and class differences and loyalties. This is more so in Nigeria where the construction of gender identity and interests are very much linked to ethno-religious politics in the country. The gap between these divisions in terms of interests, priority, potential and problems is too wide to such that it is difficult to build alliances between women of these diverse identities. In fact, women or gender issues have tended to divide Nigerian women more than unite them this is because the issue to struggle for and the interest to pursue have always been an issue of contention between the different categories of women. Religious, ethnic, regional and class identities have influenced the support or otherwise an issue would receive among Nigeria women. No issues illustrated these problems best in recent times than the 2005 National Political

Conference and the response of women to the expansion of Shariah in Northern Nigeria (Adamu, 2006).

National Political Conference: For over 25 out of the 45 years of Nigerian independence, Nigerians have had to put off with military dictatorship which has greatly impacted the Nigerian political landscape. This situation led to agitations from different groups and sections of the country for political reform that would address many of the nation's political ills. On the 21st February 2005 the government of Obasanjo inaugurated the National Political Reform Conference with the objective of curving a new political path for Nigeria. Despite the importance of the above conference in righting the wrongs of our political system, the government and the political and traditional elite do not see it fit to right the wrong of women's exclusion and gender discrimination, in fact if anything, the conference has showcase the extent of gender discrimination in our political system. For example, out of the 400 participants, only 30 were women representing decimally 7% of the delegates. Of the 37 states in the federation, each state was to nominate 6 participants and only 4 states saw it fit to nominate a woman each. The situation is made worst because other interest groups that were involved in the nomination such as political parties, labour unions, business and professional associations have not been liberal enough to nominate women in their fold. With this open discrimination and marginalisation, women formed a coalition of Nigerian women groups and led by a former University Vice Chancellor, Prof. Jadesola Akande. The coalition adopted three actions; (1) mobilisation of women to demonstrate against such discrimination during the inauguration (2) file a suit challenging such act at the Abuja High Court and (3) Women in their own states were also called upon to demonstrate and take court actions at their local levels. Despite the relevance of the issue at stake and the apparent discrimination against women, the issue did not receive the support of grass-root women. In fact, the activity of the coalition was concentrated in Abuja, few states responded to the coalition call for nation wide protest.

The second example is women's response to the expansion of Shariah in Northern Nigeria. Less than a year into the return of the country from military to democracy, some state expanded the Shariah legal system to cover criminal law in 1999 which generated a lot of controversies and brought out to the core the conflict of interest among Nigerian women. Importantly, the response further heightens the division between Muslim women in Nigeria. With the Islamist women[1] supporting and protecting anything put forward as Shariah and the secularist women attacking and condemning anything in the name of Shariah. The women Islamists became blind to the male biases in the Shariah document adopted. Similarly, the Muslim women secularists were equally blind to the rights and protection the shariah provided women. Thus, women were involved in the demonstration and counter-demonstration, for and against *shariah*. For example, few days before the 2000 Shariah crisis in Kaduna, Muslim women led by FOMWAN and other religious organization staged a demonstration in support of the introduction of *shariah* in the state. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) also organized

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[1] By Islamist women we mean those women who believe that women's liberation can only be attained within Islam and they are blind to the male biases inherent in the current Islamic movement in Nigeria.

demonstration. It was the demonstration that escalated into the crisis in February 2000 (Abdu, 2002).

Few scholars have pondered over reasons for women's NGOs inability to mobilise women. One reason put forward is the elitist nature of Nigerian women's NGOs along side mass uneducated and politically unaware women. Majority of the Women's organizations are controlled by the women elite who have little in common except perhaps being women. Consequently most of the issues championed by these organizations have tended to be elitist in nature or targeted towards maintaining the status quo. According to Osaghae and Suberu (2005:14) "the representatives of the majority of ordinary, poor women have not spearheaded the most politically visible women's associations in Nigeria. Rather, these associations are mainly led either by politically connected and often corrupt 'femocrats' (first ladies of political office holders) or by professionally privileged feminists. Because their authority derives solely from being married to powerful men who are implicated in the structures of gender inequality and other social inequities, the 'femocrats' are unable to fulfil their rhetorical commitments to the advancement of ordinary women. The feminists, on the other hand, are often preoccupied with the narrow interests of an upper class of professionals and businesswomen. Torn between the false populism of the 'femocrats' and the crass elitism of the feminists, the majority of Nigerian women have shunned political mobilization on a gender basis and maintained their preoccupation with individual and household economic survival". Similar observation was made by Pareira (2002:2). According to her, the gap between urban and rural women and between the 'elite' and the 'masses' is very wide. She observed that "urban, educated middle-class women have the national leadership potential but not the mass support needed for effective political action, while the urban market women and rural community-based women have the potential for mass mobilization… but they lack the national leadership and political objectives". Thus, this division between women has been a serious constrain against the effective national mobilization of Nigerian women. This is made more attractive because of the nature of the Nigerian political culture where ethno-religious and regional differences are vehicles for accessing the resource of the state.

Another factor identified in the literature militating against the struggle for women's interest and agenda is the depolitisation of women's agenda through the creation of specialized institutions thereby shifting the issues of gender inequality out of the sphere of politics and into the technical realm of policy making (Hashim, 2006). According to Banaszek, Beckwith and Rucht (2003, 6) in Hashim (2006:14) "women's movements have been presented with an increasingly depoliticized and remote set of policy-making agencies at the national level…The relocation of responsibility to non-elected state bodies eventually reduces social movement influence". In this context, Hashim argues that interest articulation becomes not just de-politicised but also *anti-political*, to the extent that demands for this or that policy are shunted into bureaucratic alleys.

In view of the foregoing factors, one can arguable contend that there exists no single women 's movement that can speak for women. Women's organizations exist and function along sectional, religious, class and ethnic interests. This has been an important

impediment to setting women agenda and the struggle to actualize it by the women's NGOs. The existence of a strong association that has the capacity to articulate the interest and agenda of women and to mobilize women and men in defense of these interests is crucial for the success of women's struggle against gender inequality. Despite the low performance of women's NGOs in pursuing women's strategic collective interest, women's NGO have proliferated over the years with the aim of championing women's rights and raising their living standard. What are the gender issues pursued by these organisations? How do other interests and factors apart from gender, influence the function and activities of these organisations? Whose interests are these organisations pursuing? What role are women's NGOs playing in generating and mitigating conflict?

5   The nature of the NGOs

This section provides background information on the organisations under study covering such information as their history, gender composition, scope and activities of the organizations. There were all in all 11 groups interviewed, 6 were state based, while five were national in coverage. By state based we mean NGOs and CBOs or FBOs whose operational coverage is restricted to the state, while by national coverage we mean such organizations that have national operational coverage. Such types of organizations are mostly umbrella organizations with branches across the states of the federation. Thus such organizations have two dates for years of establishment to represent the year of establishment at the national level and that of the state branch. The fact that Kebbi state was curbed out of Sokoto state in 1992, all the national NGOs had established their branches in the state in 1992 except the Women's wing of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) which was established in 2001. In terms of gender composition of the groups, five organizations were women only while six consisted of both women and men. There are different types of NGOs operating in Kebbi state, for analysis purpose the NGOs are classified on the basis of their self definition as explained in the methodology. NGOs that carry the name of a religion or identified themselves as religious are classified as Faith-Based Oganisations (FBOs) and four of such NGOs were interviewed. The highest category of NGOs (5) interviewed was development-based, ethnic-based NGOs has one and the last two groups belong to the category of NGOs under professional /trade union.

Table five: Nature of the NGOs

SN	Name of Organisation	Year of Est.	Coverage	Gender composition	Type
1	Women and Children Development Initiative (WOCDI)	Feb. 2006	State based	Mix	Human Development
2	Women and Children Care Foundation	2005	State Based	Women	HIV-AIDS-Development
3	National Association of Women Entrepreneurs- (Women in Handcraft)	1992	National	Women	Professional/ Income-generation
4	Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN)	1992 1986	National	Women	Faith Based

5	Mother and Child Care Support	2003	State based	Mix	Human Development
6	Yamium Huscin Lelna [Cigaban Dakarkari]	1992	State based	Women	Ethnic
7	Women And Children Support Initiative (WACS),	2000	State based	Mix	Human Development
8	Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Women's Wing	1992	National	Mix	Faith Based
9	Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Women's wing	1992	National	Mix	Faith Based
10	Nigerian Labor Congress, Women's Wing	1978 2001	National	Mix	Trade Union
11	Women Ministries	?	State-based	Women	Faith-based

As table 5 indicates, three of the FBOs are national-based organizations, and only one is state-based. Two are women's only, while two are gender-mixed. Similar picture applied to professional/trade union NGOs. In contrast to the national based nature of faith-based organizations and the professional one, all the developmental based organisations, except one, are state-based. Their state-based nature may be connected to the fact that by their nature, developmental based organizations are usually established in response to certain local demands in the state. Thus, some of the NGOs are responding to the low educational status of the state, while one is responding to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the state. Worth noting is that all the state-based developmental NGOs have appended children or child in their names. Are they focusing on both women and children, if yes, how could that affect their ability to address women's only issues or is it a cover-up against being branded women activists through emphasising women's motherhood roles, a nomenclature that may be susceptible to attack in a conservative place like Kebbi? Attempt will be made to answer these questions in discussing the activities of the NGOs. Similarly, the ethnic-based NGO is state-based and its memberships are women only. The Yamium Huscin Lelna is an association of Dakarkari women residing in Birnin-Kebbi, the state capital. Dakarkari is an indigenous minority ethnic group in Kebbi state, but it is a dominant ethnic group in Zuru emirate.

5.1   Activities of the NGOs
The programmes of the NGOs classified and presented in appendix one are as follows:
A   Building and enhancing capacity:
Almost all the NGOs have an educational programme aimed at building and improving the knowledge, skills and general wellbeing of their members and that of women in general. The major programmes implemented to meet this objective included training in all sorts of issues such as income generation skills, HIV/AIDS, extra mural lessons and literacy, religious knowledge and spiritual up-liftment, advocacy and mobilization skills and tools, peace and conflict resolution. In terms of training in income generation skills,

about 8 out of 11 NGOs are providing such skills either to their members or and to other women. Those that provided training to women were receiving some funding and support from donors. For example, Women and Children Initiatives (WOCDI) received funding assistance from the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) to provide computer and tailoring skills training to young girls who are engaged in street hawking as an alternative means of generating income.

Other beneficiaries of this programme are young divorcees (*zawarori*) who are usually in a vulnerable situation having lost their spinsterhood and the financial security benefit and freedom that goes with it. The social setting is such that spinsters are generally provided with all the essential commodities such as toiletries and underwears they require by their parents, any member of the family, especially married senior sister or through their income generating activities they engage to independently or in partnership with an adult woman. However, for the young divorcees they lack such supports. Even though they may be provided with feeding and accommodation such essentials are hardly provided by the family and they therefore have to find means of meeting such needs. To compound the problem, young divorcees, having been married are socially expected to observe some degree of seclusion (purdah) that makes it difficult for them to engage in hawking goods in the street. Barkow (1972:320) notes this extra-ordinary position of a young divorcee. He said, "*bazawara* has a choice of either observing the behaviour of an ideal married woman –seclusion, modesty, no lovers and therefore considered respectable, or reverts to the behaviour of the *budurwa* (pre-nubile girl)- teasing and flirting, wandering about unveil and therefore considered shameless. "If she delays remarriage, takes lovers, goes about in the daytime, and moves to the compound of non-kin, she will be considered a courtesan" or *karuwa*. And very unlike adult women who have access to the labour of young girls to hawk their goods, the *zawarori* are too young to have access to the labour of girls to hawk for them. Consequently, the young divorcees usually either remarry after the three months waiting period, fry or sell their product stationed in front of the family home or engaged in temporary prostitution which ends immediately they re-marry. Thus, providing the young divorcees with an alternative means of generating income that can be marketed in a stationed place or within the home is important.

Women in Handicraft, an affiliate of the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs had also gotten support from NDE and IFAD to provide training to women on beads making, table mat, bags, perfume, cream, soap etc. Being an affiliate of the NAWE, Women in Handicraft also provided marketing support to those producing the product by establishing a shop and attending local and national trade-fares. Women and Child Support Foundation, a HIV/AIDS positive women's organization that was established in response to the inadequate attention a similar group dominated by men was given to the peculiarity of positive women is also engaged in providing many income generating skills to their members and other positive women. The Federation of Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Women in Ministries and the Christian Association of Nigeria in Kebbi state were equally involved in providing income generating skills to women.

Other forms of trainings being provided were functional, religious and extramural classes. All the four religious organizations were deeply involved in providing not only

religious knowledge, but also western form of education. Considering the low level of Muslim women's education in the state, FOMWAN and Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in the state have series of programmes aimed at improving the Muslim women's educational statistics of the state. As indicated in appendix one, FOMWAN organized women's classes every Saturdays and Sundays teaching women english and math. MSSN organized extramural classes in science subjects for students of all genders about to take post secondary school entrance examinations as well as exams writing skills. According to the Ameerah (female president of the Society), MSSN is keen on encouraging women to read science subjects at their o-levels so as to enable them become trained as medical doctors and health personnel as well as engineers, areas that the society is in desperate need of personnel. Consequently, MSSN organized regular visits to girl's colleges to encourage and motivate them to study hard to take up professional courses in the universities and other high institutions. The sister's unit of the MSSN has what it calls Nana Asma'u week to celebrate the achievement of Nana Asma'u (the daughter of the founder of the Sokoto Jihad and Caliphate) and to motivate the girls to take into her foot step. Nana Asma'u has published extensively and contributed in the governance of the Sokoto Caliphate during her period.

B   Service and welfare provisions
Another area of activities by the NGOs is in providing services and welfare support to women. All the NGOs have at least one programme that was aimed at improving the living conditions of women. The three major programmes were: educational support and services, health care support and services as well as general welfare support to women in desperate circumstance such as credit, and shelter. Three out of the four faith-based organizations are educational service providers having reported establishing schools that provide quality education. FOMWAN has a nursery and primary school in the state capital that provides western form of education, which again doubles as adult education classes for women. CAN has schools established in other states and such schools are available to their members and Women in Ministries has also adult education programme. WOCDI and Women and Child Support Foundation have also reported supporting the educational needs of some girls whose parents wanted to withdraw from schools because of poverty. This is particularly important for the children of the Foundation's members whose parents have died. Thus, the Foundation has the programme of meeting the school expenses of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Even though school fees is free in Kebbi state, other expenses such as school uniform and keeping it clean, books, daily pocket money, PTA and other non-tuition fee charges by individual schools may prove expensive for a woman widowed by HIV/AIDS and therefore having the burden of buying drugs and maintaining diets.

Another area of interest and concern for the NGOs is the health sector. However, in terms of health service provision and support, it is the faith-based organizations and the Foundation for Positive people that are active. Both FOMWAN and CAN claimed that they have hospitals in other states of the federation which services are available to their members and the general public. The foundation does also buy drugs for women in desperate needs of HIV/AIDS treatments. Sometimes the drug support may not be

necessitated by economic factor alone, but also social and strategic reason. According to the Secretary of the organization;

> "Some infected women are secluded at home without access to treatment because of the fact that husbands may not be able to provide treatments to himself and that of his wife/ves. Under such condition, the husband denies permission to the wife/ves to go for treatment. In that situation and if we are aware of such case, we pay a visit to the wife to ask her to go to the hospital or and talk to the husband to allow her to go. Mark you some of them are yet to know their HIV status… Some husband may give the permission on the condition that he is not bothered with the expenses. If that happens, then we have to bear the expenses until we convince her[2] to take up the responsibility".

The third programme being implemented by few NGOs is providing financial security to women such as through credit facility and female networks. A Christian group narrated that "when we started we were not given out money, but given them something they can sell and make money. We give out things like a bag of grain to process and sell. But thank God today things has changed it has reached a certain level that we no longer give out grains but we do give out money for say 12 months, 24 months, use it and pay us later. This has made men to see that women are very useful in terms of running the family. Common slogan says a man builds a house and a woman makes the house, you understand". Furthermore, the Positive women foundation provides temporary shelter to displaced and refugee positive women. They have cases such as a case of Sierra Leone's refugee who was sent out packing by her long time boyfriend for 'infecting' him. All the FBOs were also involved in providing welfare supports to converts and members of their churches or needy Muslim women.

Another support that is uniquely different from the above is the one provided by the Dakarkari women progressive union, an ethnic based group operational in Birnin-Kebbi, the state capital. The group was formed by the dakarkari women elite to provide social and financial support to all dakarkari women involved in the informal sector of the economy such as trading, processing and marketing of food and snacks. The method of rendering such supports followed the traditional system of *biki* or a female friendship network. *Biki* is a reciprocal exchange partnership that operates in connection with ceremonial expenditure (Hill, 1972) of wedding, and christening. A member of the organization narrates that "the aim of our organization is basically to unite zuru women, especially with those that are not educated such as those engaged in selling fried bean-cake, pancake, peanut, and to empower them to be able to stand on their own and to meet their basic needs". This is done through recreating a family ties within the organization. Each member of the group has a niece, a mother, a sister and a friend within the group and such member is expected to maintain the same ties and support she would have given members of her family of the same ties back home in Zuru. Once a person is in financial

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[2] The gender division of labour which is entrenched by Shariah and enforced by the Shariah courts, is such that health expenses of a wife is the responsibility of the husband, consequently, majority of wives insist that husbands bear such cost by refusing to pay.

or social difficulties and needs, members of her family within the group are expected to come to her rescue. The gift given is done in an open and transparent manner. Every member of the family is called upon to announce how much and what support she is providing and she will be cheered up by other members of the group. Through that system, the less privilege female members of the Dakarkari society are being supported and provided with certain level of social security.

C   Promotion and protection of rights

Despite the claim by all the NGOs that women's rights are being denied and violated in Kebbi state, few NGOs work in the area of women's rights promotion and protection. All the four FBOs have claimed to be working towards the promotion and protection of women's rights and such efforts are viewed within religious teachings. For instance, the MSSN president states that "I will categorically state to you that our organization is protecting the right of the women particularly in all higher institutions. We have what we call orientation for new students and that is where we talk about the problems of women's rights abuse and violation in our schools. We tell them their rights and take up cases of female students against male lecturers and teachers". A CAN exco said "fighting for equality among the sexes, I feel CAN is one of the bodies that really fight for that because according to our religion, every body is equal, gender should not be a barrier, especially there is no religion that says a woman should be your personal property that you can dispose at. But when you look at some cultures in Africa, let me be precise, in Nigeria, women are being considered not even second class citizens but as a personal property. Women have no right to talk in the society, women don't have right to further education, in fact their only duty is just to be house wives where they spend the rest of their lives in the kitchen. This is wrong. As far as I am concerned, priority should be given to women in terms of education, my reason is that if a woman is educated in a family, every one will be educated. And if such family is educated, then the whole of the village is educated, and if the whole village is educated then a whole local government is educated and so on".

Two secular organizations (WOCDI and Women and Children Support Initiative (WACI) have also declared promoting and protecting women's rights as their primary objective. Two objectives of WOCDI are: To strengthen the capacity of women and children to enable them make informed decisions and to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to promote and protect the rights of women and children. The central focus of WACI was to provide voice to women and children whom are the less privilege ones in the society. According to its director, the

> "Nigerian constitution has made women second class citizens and for that women don't have a say and nobody listens to their voices and this organization intends to make a difference… And you know when you say rights have been violated especially female, we are talking about social abuse, deprivation of women, they are not considered as

anything in the society, these are the kind of things we fight for, that is, the practices that do not give women the opportunity to excel".

Most of the programmes being implemented by the NGOs for the promotion and protection of women's rights were advocacy and enlightenment in nature. There were few court cases against women's right violations championed by WACI.

D   Sensitisation and community mobilisation
Most of the activities of the NGOs, especially the secular ones have centred around advocacy, sensitization, and community mobilization. All the NGOs have advocacy and sensitization programmes. This is not surprising considering the fact that most of the issues raised in the NGOs' statement of objectives require attitudinal changes and support from certain key stakeholders and society's gatekeepers. The sensitization programmes covered many and diverse issues such as reproductive health issues, HIV/AIDS, cultural practices against women's access to social services such as education and health, religious issues and matters related to good governance. The women's wing of the Nigerian Labour Congress has also reported enlightening female workers about their rights and protection under the Nigerian labour laws. In the voice of the president "the objectives of this women wing is to mobilize, bring women together, to sensitize and to create awareness for the women to have knowledge about their rights and entitlement as workers. The women should know that they are very important in the organizations. And they should participate in the activities of NLC".

Some of the methods used by the NGOs to advocate for an issue and to sensitise the public included visits to key stakeholders, providing information and imparting knowledge to the public on the consequences of some practices through the media, and training the trainers and visit to communities and to the remotest villages. Three of the NGOs have prided themselves of having established rapport with the leadership and membership of the communities they are working with.

6   The Role of NGOs in Generating and Managing Conflict

The initial conception of this research was to study the role of women, particularly the elderly, in conflict prevention and management both at the macro and micro levels. However, the comments by CRISE that suggested we focus more on Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) forced the researcher to have a rethink and make adjustments to the focus of the study. This was indeed difficult not only because it demanded an adjustment to my thinking and the literature to be consulted, but also because NGOs as a third sector is relatively new and weak in Kebbi state both in terms of manpower, activities and specialisation. In comparison to the southern part of the country, the Northern part is far behind in the NGOs sector. The situation is worst for the North-west zone where Kebbi state belongs. In fact even within the 7 states in the zone, Kebbi is one of the worst states when it comes to NGOs presence, activities and performance. Despite these challenges, the research was designed to explore the role of women's and gender mixed NGOs in conflict situations. That was again difficult because there were few NGOs focusing on peace and conflict. This is not surprising because despite few reported

cases of conflict in the state, Kebbi state is not a hot spot for violent conflict in the country to warrant formation of NGOs to focus on the issue.

Confronted with this challenge, the research was re-designed again to focus on the role of all existing women's and gender mixed NGOs in Birnin Kebbi, the state capital in preventing and managing conflict. Information gathered revealed not so much the performance of the NGOs in conflict prevention and management, but the extent of another type of conflict that is gender related and which is often overlooked. When questions were solicited on the NGOs roles in preventing or managing conflict in the state, most of their responses have centred on their roles in managing gender-related conflicts either within their organizations or outside it. Similar responses were also generated when they were asked about the problems they have and the challenges facing them. Many of the women narrated how women's involvement in NGOs activities is generating conflict in the society. Thus, rather than ethnicity, religion and other known factors, gender (by women's involvement in NGOs) has emerged as an important source of conflict between men and women both within the NGOs and through the activities of the NGOs. The social setting in the state is such that women dominate the private sphere and men the public ones through the practice of purdah that secluded women within the home. Changes over the years facilitated by economic and social realities have seen Muslim women increasingly taking up employment in the public service[3].

Another changes taking place in the Hausa Muslim society is the involvement of women in NGOs, especially their mobilization to form separate organizations or to join men's organization. The practice is not new; the tradition was long established by Nana Asma'u, the daughter of the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate through her *yan'taru* women's movement. Despite this history, women's involvement in NGOs is seen as foreign and a threat to men's control and monopoly over the public space, including the religious space. However, armed with this tradition, and the demand of the contemporary society, women are contesting for the right to organize themselves into NGOs. What is the nature of this contest? How are women responding to this contest and how is the contest affecting the nature of women's involvement in NGOs? Analysis of the data on gender-based conflict was done in two ways. The first one explores the nature and dynamics of the gender conflict within the NGOs and the second part relates to their roles in mitigating the gender related conflict through their activities outside the NGOs.

6.1   Gender as a Generator of Conflict within the NGOs

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[3] Apart from the economic, the changing of Nigeria's political structure from regionalism to the federalism that promotes competition for national resources by the federating units have played an important role in bringing women's out to take job. Women's involvement in public space changes from being non-Islamic to Islamic obligation for fear of domination by other ethnic and religious groups. Prominent religious groups and leaders were publicly campaigning on the need for women to occupying certain positions in the country.

This section presents internal dynamics within the selected NGOs in general terms and in relation to gender. What are the similarities and differences within and between the NGOs, How is gender and other non-gender factors influencing the dynamics within and between the NGOs? We begin with the similarities. Most of the leadership and membership of the NGOs are government (national, state and LGA levels) workers or have close ties with government or certain established authority such as the traditional or military authority. This indeed has compromised the ability of most of the NGOs to take up cases or issues that may challenge an established authority such as the government or established gender norms. Except in few incidences, the NGOs did not take on the government over some of the corruption allegation and its unfavourable policies against women such as lack of women's representation in the state delegates to the National Political Reform Conference, and lack of legal bill that provides protection against women's discrimination etc. It is very clear that the NGOs are dependent on government's patronage and support to get funding and remain relevant in the state. This is more so with the development based NGOs and less with Faith-based organization. This patronage-client relationship between the government and the NGOs is important if we consider the fact that most of the NGOs except to a large extent the Christian groups and to a lesser extent, the Islamic group, lack independent means of generating funds for their activities. They are completely reliant on bilateral funds such as IFAD, and State Action Committee Against AIDS (SACA) jointly financed by a pooled fund contributed by the state and national government as well as bilateral and multilateral donors. Thus, the focus of some of the NGOs is very much dictated by the funding available. At the time of this study, it is money for HIV/AIDS that is available, so all the NGOs were into HIV/AIDS programmes.

It is also observed that the most active members of the NGOs world in the state are from one section of the state, the Zuru emirate. Many factors may account for this, central among them is the educational level of the Zuru people. As earlier mentioned, Zuru is the most diverse emirate in the state, both in terms of religion and ethnicity. The Christian population of the state is from the emirate. The emirate is also home to the dakarkari population and home to army officers. This in itself may be a source of conflict within the NGOs as one of the NGOs' leadership who is from Zuru noted;

> There is now less ethnic tension- before there was tension between the emirates, particularly between the emirates. Zuru is the smallest emirate, but had enjoyed the power and privileges associated with it dominance of the national army. This had created ethnic tension in the state. The situation was compounded because some of them are Christiana and more educated- that create further tension as well".

Another similarity that cut across all NGOs is inadequate and minimal role of women in the NGOs. All the NGOs; faith-based and none faith-based, women's only or gender mixed have complained of low involvement of women in NGOs activities. Few women get involved, and where they are involved, it is difficult to maintain and sustain them within the NGOs. The situation is worse, according to some of the respondents when it comes to taking up leadership responsibilities. One of the respondents said, "there are

many women who left the organisation because their husbands are not permitting them to attend meetings, we have tried to convinced them of the importance of being in the organization but to no avail, under such circumstance how can women take up leadership positions in organization"? Another one said "Yes there are a lot of challenges. Number one is the cultural background. Some men don't like their wives to participate in NGOs work because a husband that allows his wife to engage in NGO work, especially to be seen publicly championing women issues is considered to have lost control over his wife. If he allows her regularly he is called *mijin hajiya*, a husband that does not have authority over his wife. A male respondent disagrees with this assertion and contends that the main reason why men are apprehensive towards their wives's participation in NGOs was misconception about what issues women's NGOs are dealing with. This misconception occurs, argues a female respondent, because of non-involvement of men at the initial stage of women's NGOs. According to her "at the initial stage, men were marginalized-both in terms of policy, project and implementation to the extent that women deeply involved in NGOs work are looked down as outlaws who are out to corrupt other women. And sometimes even the educated ones, not to talk of the ones at home, if you try to convince them to come out and join us to make things better for others they will look at us as we are beyond our husbands' control. You understand, and some of them look at NGO activities as something that you can make money". Another female respondent said, "the only challenge we have is that some men are not really ready to release their wives to come for our meeting and to engage in our activities, probably because they don't know what we are up to. They think women's organizations exist just to compete over dressing and to go home to question the authority of their husbands, but ours is not like that, we try to educate the men and the public what we do. We are not interested in creating gender conflict between couples".

Two of the women's only NGOs (Ethnic and FBO) have reported the problem of infighting and competition between their members, particularly, fighting as a result of gossips over family issues. A member of the ethnic group said "you see us belonging to the same gender; we do experience many cases of our own gender based conflict that is related to gossips. This one says this about this one. This creates lots of problems for us, we have several cases of our members leaving the organisation. Actually our leaders are trying to resolve the conflict each time it arises through arranging meeting between those involved". Ethnicity was also found to affect the performance of the women's only NGOs. A woman leader said "our biggest challenge is how to hold the women together. This organization is said to belong to women from Zuru, but within Zuru there are other ethnic groups, which means even non-dakarkari woman can be a member. In addition, if your husband is from zuru, even if you are not from there you can become a member. So you see the organization consists of women from different background, religion and ethnicity. Our organization is a mixture of highly educated women and those who have never attended school. Under this circumstance it is difficult to build bridges and understanding. Conflict associated with these differences is things we are confronted with regularly, but we are not doing badly".

Similar gender related conflict exists in the gender mixed NGOs. A male president of MSSN complains about the lukewarm attitude of male members towards working with

women in the organization. Despite the old tradition of women's involvement in Islamic organization and the fact that women's wing of the organization has been in existence, "some brothers, up to today don't agree to associate with the sisters. This has been the case even during the time of the prophet, and during the caliphate of sheikh Usmanu Bin Fodiyo. If you can recall from Maiduguri, the Sheikh of Borno wrote a letter that they want to accept his Islamic calling but they will not because he is moving with women" He asserts that some men are viewing the mixed nature and the joint activities of the MSSN as non-Islamic despite the measures the organization is taking to mix less with the sisters during programmes. He said this is in contrast with what is happening in other states where the Muslims are used to mixed-gender activities and therefore developed liberal view on the matter. He contends that before the creation of Kebbi state out of Sokoto, he can recalled in Sokoto there was no separate camp for sister, it is only one for both sisters and brother for annual state I.V.C, but in Kebbi they can not do that, they have to look for two venues, one for the brothers and one for sisters.

Similar complains were also made about the men by the female members of the FBOs where they alleged that brothers do not have confidence on the ability of the sisters to stay on course. They therefore, monitored and interfered on the programmes of the sisters to make sure they do not go out of certain boundaries set out by the men. One woman said:

> "Honestly, no matter what a woman does in this part of the country, Kebbi state precisely, it is not appreciated. She is expected to be lead by a man. No matter how intelligent a woman is, no matter how productive she can be, no matter how helpful she is, what ever she wants to do there is always a criticism. Some will understand her; some will intentionally refuse to understand her because they don't believe a woman is an achiever. Whatever you do you have to go through them, you have to seek for their permission before doing it; you have your limit. Honestly it is a very difficult situation for me and for most women".

Given an example of such problems, another woman said "they try to criticize, and deny us our rights. Even this programme we are doing on HIV/ AIDS, there are dos and don't that they say we should note such as we shouldn't emphasize on the use of condoms, and we should be careful on the sort of funding we accept. So there is interference". Similar restriction was also noted by women in the FBOs. She notes that "the only problem we have is over the preaching we are doing, they try to show us that a woman shouldn't preach, but as far as other activities are concerned, we don't have any problem. When we are going, we normally don't say we are going to preach, but to give Da'awah. That gives us a breathing space. You see they do not think we are knowledgeable enough or have the wisdom to preach.

However, a brother countered such claims by the sister where he said that "the organization is mixed up, we have sisters and brothers and there are programmes we normally carry jointly with them and every one has the right to say whatever he or she

wants to, particularly based on the Qur`an and the Sunnah. Had it been the programme is available I would have giving you to see the structure, even there is an activity mainly only for the sisters… We have a programme for the girl's colleges which we go with the sisters and they give lecture". The statement "particularly based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah" might have provided us with a clue to the fundamental issue. That is, being a religious organization, and for the sisters to have a say or voice in it they must be knowledgeable in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In a situation where gender inequality exists in Islamic education between boys and girls, the sisters are likely to lack sufficient knowledge that will give them the capacity to have voice within the organization and the power to take independent judgment or actions without being questioned by the 'knowers' and 'custodians' of the religion, the men. This is made possible because of the gender ideology that does not construe a woman as knower and that tries to suppress her ability to acquire and provide leadership in the field of knowledge. In addition, the Kebbi state president of NLC, women's wing has similar view. According to her "in Kebbi state, we don't have many problems, whenever we meet the men exco and tell them we want to be involved, they involve us in most of the activities. We try so that all affiliated organizations do involve women. However, we do sometimes have difficulties and come into dialogue with them, talking to them".

6.2   Women's NGOs as Mitigators of Gender Related Conflict
We have explored the role of gender in generating conflict within the NGOs, this section covers another dimension to our research, that is the role women's NGOs are playing in mitigating conflict. To fruitfully examine the role of women in this direction it is important to divide the conflict into macro-level and micro-level.

6.2.1   Macro-Level Conflicts
As the name suggests, macro-level conflict refers to such conflicts as ethnic, religious, political, resource based etc. Only three NGOs reported intervening in macro level conflict. One of the women's only NGOs reported averting a conflict between the Muslims and Christian from exploding in a Federal Medical Health Centre where a Christian matron used scissors to cut the *hijab* of a Muslim junior staff into pieces because the size of the *hijab* was bigger than the one permitted by the hospital authority. This act was seen by the Muslims in the hospital as an affront on Islam and therefore planned to attack the Christians. Tension heightened as rumours over the incidence spread into the city. It took the combined efforts of two NGOs, Hospital management, State Security Agencies, traditional and religious authorities to douse the tension and prevent attack on the woman and other non-Muslims.

Furthermore, all the FBOs have claimed that the religious harmony and peace enjoyed by the state was due to their efforts in reaching out to other religions. A Women's only FBO said "honestly, here we don't have such things like that. The other religions are very cautious of what they do and you know whatever we do, we term ourselves as every body is God creator. So we don't have any religious conflict. One funny thing is that, you know we have one Islamic nursery and primary school and it is opposite a church, so on Sundays they will be doing their singing while we will be doing our own, that is our women classes will be operating. And we never had any misunderstanding". A Christian

Organisation female leader said "the problem of many of us Nigerians is that we don't know our religions and when we don't know our religion there is bound to be problems, let us take this when you see two people fighting because of religion, they are only fighting because of their selfish interest, you understand, to me as far as I am concerned no religion preaches violence, hostility and killings. God himself created everyone the way he is, a Muslim as a Muslim, a Christian as a Christian and even the free thinkers. If God wants everybody to be a Muslim, all of us will be Muslims, if he wants us to be Christians all of us will be Christians. But you see people fighting because of religion, they are liars, God alone fight for himself… Islam and Christianity is the same thing, the fundamental pillars of Islam and Christianity are the same, the golden rule in Islam and Christianity is do unto others what you want others to do unto you. Love one another as God loves us. And we should learn to forgive one another".

The MSSN, the only major Muslim student organization operating in colleges and tertiary institutions has also prided itself for dousing tensions and conflicts between Muslim and Christian students. Similarly, the role of the NGOs in preventing intra-religious conflict between different Islamic sects was also raised by the two sampled Islamic organizations. Another topical issue during the field work was political campaign and electoral violence. At the time of the field work, the state was in a state of political tension because of political manipulations during political party primaries to select candidates that would contest for election. The warning signals for political violence were obvious for NGOs to be concerned and to plan response for it. Concerned for the political situation in the state was discussed but only two NGOs were working to mitigate the political tension in the state. One of the NGOs specifically targets women for political awareness rising on voting sanctity. However, about four of the NGOs said they intend to be monitors during the election.

6.2.2   Micro-level conflict

The major and concrete roles of the NGOs in conflict mitigation are at micro levels of the family and individuals. Most of the cases reported by the NGOs were related to conflict between husbands and wives. Some of the conflicts may involve a member of the organization and her husband or an extended family member. This role is particularly played by FBOs and ethnic association. The reason for that is not far fetched. Ethnic association in Africa was seen to replicate the role of extended family in an urban setting and in areas that are far away from the home (Peil, 1983.). Thus, the Dakarkari women's association has settling disputes between members and their families as one of its objectives. Number of cases settled per annum was not available because of lack of record keeping; however, an executive member had given an estimate of two per months. According to her "if any member has a problem with her family, her husband in particular and she brought the case or her friend brought the case, we send a delegate to go and see her husband to intervene. We have selected elderly and respected women among us, and that is their role. We discussed the problem and give them advice on the approach to use, putting into consideration the nature of the husband. They have gathered enough experience and mandate that we do not wait for a case to be brought before a meeting. If a case came-up they are directly contacted to handle it".

Most of the cases before NGOs are gender related and involved married couples. Issues of contestations between husbands and wives included polygyny; plan by a husband to add another wife, extramarital relationships as well as contestation over rights between husband and wife as the two cases in box one and two show. For example, there was a case involving two members of the same NGO. One of the members of the NGO has a husband who is planning to add another wife and the second one has a restaurant which the husband patronises. When the former woman delivered a baby and the restaurant's owner visited her for christening ceremony, a fight erupted, the wife of the man (who delivered) blame the restaurant's woman of encouraging her husband to marry. She accused her of given her husband a woman to marry. The fight was so serious, resulting in some injuries that the case had to be taken to the police. However, the NGOs requested the two women to withdraw the case from the police and it was settled internally.

Similarly, religious bodies, the moral authority of the society have the legitimacy to intervene in dispute, particularly involving individuals and communities. Thus, a male Christian leader said "this place is like a court … every day you will receive one complain or the other and most of complains come from the women. They are innocent trying to bring about peace in the families. I think I don't know where the stubbornness comes from but men are naturally stubborn. And I use to castigate them here in the church. A man hurting his wife and doesn't know how to apologize".

Box 1: Example of Interventions by FBOs

Case One
A narration by a women's Islamic organisation leader reads thus, "normally the women don't come to us and say there is conflict; we hear it from a friend or during our monthly *wa'azi* (sermon). You know when these *malams* (preachers) are doing *wa'azi*, they say something as if they are referring to you. May be some one will say ah! This is just like what happens between me and my husband or between my friend and her husband. But more importantly, we collect information about women's problems through the questions women asked either directly or through letter writing during question session. We pick on those problems and organize a session to discuss such problem in a general term and provide options or advice on the way forward. We don't go openly and talk, but if we address an issue related to hers, then sometimes they do open up and say this is the problem I am having. Most of the questions we see are solely related to marital problems. Although they don't state their names, but from the questions women asked during *wa'azi*, you know they have serious problems with their marriages".

Case Two
A male Christian leader narrates an example of a woman where "she doesn't go out without asking permission from her husband. But she looks at a neighbor, adjacent to the house there is this woman that is in labor. The woman asked please help me to the hospital, must she wait for the husband? As she went out to help this woman who is in labor, the husband has accused her that this is what she does every day in his absence. I said to the husband, this is saving life, she must go. I said you always go out and come back, have you ever taken permission from your wife? He said who is the owner of the house? I said madam is the owner of the house. I said when you are marrying her you promised to love, honor her and respect her. Is this love, respect or honoring? I told him, your wife is your mother, your father, your sister, your brother and your wife. So if you can raise hands against your wife, then you can raise hand against your mother. So I put so many things into him that he boasted into tears, lying down and apologizing. It is very rear for a man to tell his wife he is sorry. We are fighting the right for women".

Other non-religious bodies were also active in mitigating micro level conflict, and all the cases given by them are related to gender. One of the presidents of such NGOs reported that the prevalence of marital conflict is so high that their organization is thinking of starting a family counseling programme. She narrated a story where a marriage was about to end because of misunderstanding over blue firms. A husband noticed some changes in his wife sexual demands because she watches pornographic movie. Consequently, he accused her of having an extramarital affair and beat the hell out of her. She reported the case to us and we questioned her and realized that she learnt the acts through the firm. We invited him, and showed him the movies which she watched. He was convinced that his wife did not learn the skills from any man, but from the electronic media". Similarly, there is collaboration between women's FBOs and women's secular NGOs. It is apparent that FBOs have limitation to the type of women's right cases they can handle due to their religious claim and the fear that such action would negatively impact on the credibility and legitimacy of the FBOs. There is the general view in the area that the idea of secular NGOs are foreign and linked to the imposition of western culture and championing women's rights is equally seen as a western agenda. Thus, in order not to be seen succumbing to western agenda, women's Islamic group prefer to handover cases of women's right abuses that need to go public such as media and courts to the secular NGOs to handle.

Box Two: Example of Secular NGO intervention.

A HIV/AIDS NGOs narrated many cases of HIV/AIDS positive husbands who are receiving treatment, but refusing their wives the right to know their status. In all the cases these wives were not even aware of the HIV/AIDS status of their husbands. According to the NGO leadership, "Once husbands are HIV/AIDS positive they do not want their wives to be notified of their status. They become more restrictive towards their wives, wanting to isolate them and not wanting them to relate with others. That is what we observed here". So, when they "noticed that a husband visits hospital but his wife does not, we made contact with the husband to talk him into allowing his wife or wives to visit the hospital to check her status. The reaction has always been negative. We made several efforts to convince him, if we are not successful than we contact either his friend, an elderly member of his family or an Imam, depending on who we think would be more effective towards convincing him. In some cases it works, but in some it does not….. In some cases we had no option but to go direct to the wives and informed them of the situation and the need to cajole their husbands to allow them to go to hospital. Some succeed and we have two cases where the husbands said they cannot afford the cost of regular hospital visits, bills and diet for themselves and their wives. We provide assistance where we can… There was also a case that we almost take to court because of lack of cooperation from the husband".

An examination on the interventions by these diverse NGOs indicates that despite the acceptance, and the legitimacy of Islamic NGOs, their interventions have tended to be more conciliatory and concerned about the effect an intervention would have on their reputation. However, the interventions by the Christian and ethnic bodies were more direct and firm as the two cases in box one indicated. Reasons for more direct and firm action on the part of the Christian and ethnic NGOs could be related to their minority status that makes them more organize and more efficient towards their members because

they are seen to provide security and protection to members in the mist of the majority Hausa/Fulani and Muslim majority. Both the Christian and the ethnic groups provide the sort of support normally being provided by the extended family.

7.   NGO's Approaches to Gender Related Conflict

The sections above discussed the role of the NGOs in generating and mitigating gender related conflict, what approaches have they adopted and are still adopting to implement such roles? It is obvious from the itinerary of activities that the NGOs are concerned for the plight of women and girls; however, they have also exposed lack of political will of the NGOs to take action that would challenge the status quo in gender relations and changed the unequal relations between women and men. Almost all the informants mentioned men as the problem or solution to the problem, yet the strategy being adopted tended to exclude the men. While there were some informants who considered dialogue with the men as the best strategy for the NGOs, some took the route of dealing with the women only.

On the approach they adopted to solve conflict between husband and wife, a woman's group said "normally it is the woman that we counsel, not the husband, it is always the woman because you can talk to her freely and she will be free to disclose her problems to you to be able to advice her. If it means getting an intervener from the family fine, we don't talk to the husband direct. We only talk to the women when there is conflict". On what strategy they adopt to get women to attend their functions considering the fact that majority of the local women are on seclusion, some of the NGOs reported dialogue with the men. This dialogue may take different forms. Some go to the husbands direct to seek for their cooperation, while others go through the male elders of the community. One of the women's NGOs secretary said it depends on how you approach the men, it not uncommon to find a case where the man would not want to cooperate and therefore it is very difficult to penetrate the women. Under such circumstance, they go through the head of the community and explain the benefit of the programme to him to mobolise the women to attend. Two NGOs said the husbands are receptive to them and wives preferred that the NGOs informed their husbands of an up-coming meeting. The organization said "we go the husband and said *mallam,* for Allah's sake I want your wife to attend our programme holding in so so place and their response has always been, *hajiya*, we appreciate your effort and she is coming. After leaving the house the husband would call on the wife to attend and you know husband's say is the last say, and we don't want to have problems for the women".

Although some few informants have called for dialogue with the men as a group, there were few programmes by the NGOs that directly engage men as a group, to open up a dialogue with them. Something that comes close to dialogue with the men is what some of the women's NGO reported doing with the Islamic scholars. Islamic scholars were seen by the NGOs as an important constituency which they most win over for the success of their work. This is because a sermon by a popular Islamic scholar would delegitimise their work. In discussing the challenges facing the NGOs, six NGOs have mentioned the Islamic scholars. Representative of one the NGOs said that "the biggest challenge we have is the challenge of the religion because the *malams* challenge what we do because

they think we are washing the mind of women to go against them or to deviate from the culture or trying to even go against the religion which is not true".

To avoid this, the NGOs try to consult with the Islamic scholars. According to the president of an organization, even though the Islamic scholars critisise them a lot, yet the NGO exploits the saying that '*malamai magada annabawa*' (scholars, the successors of the prophets) to engage the Islamic scholars, calling on them to provide guidance to us on the NGO work. She said this is important because the "society upholds to that view and the scholars are the gate keepers and stakeholders in the society, so for any positive change in the society you have to go through them. So what we do is to call the ulamas for discussion in a workshop and to inform them on what we are doing. Let them understand what we are doing, so that we they would not have wrong perceptions. We give them our publications so that they read and if they see anything contrary to Islam they alert us". Another one said "we always let men understand what we are doing, that we are not doing anything against religion or contrary to it. The men feel that we want to over take them or shoulder with them. To correct that thinking we always have meetings with them at various levels to tell them what we are doing and the need for gender cooperation since this world is made up of two people, a man and a woman. God himself knows why he did that, so if God himself has created a man and a woman in the whole world, then why don't we join hands together".

Why are men considered obstacle to women's NGOs or that they have to pass through the men to access the women? The informants have diverse but related reasons. Central among them is men's insecurity and fear over loosing control of their wives. An informant said "lack of men's support hinders women's success and why do they not give us support? It is because they fear loosing the control they have over women". Another one said it is because of "macho feeling. A husband who allows his wife to engage in NGO work, especially she is seen publicly championing women issues, he is considered to have lost control over his wife". One said, "for a woman to show her intelligence creates problems. It is viewed as a threat to his authority, and that she is challenging his authority.

Another reason provided by the informants included the use of religion to subjugate women and to perpetuate the conventional gender norms. One of the informants said "they use religion to control women. If not because of fear of god, many women will ignore their men- but we know that whatever we do, we have to give account before Allah- that is what is controlling women. Of course there is the dependency; many of our women are dependent on their husbands for most of their needs". The use of religion to subject women is not unchallenged by the women. There were few NGOs taking up the challenge and confronting the problem. The leadership of a secular women's NGOs maintains that "we are predominantly Muslims in the state, the religion did not say a woman should be violated, so we stick to that law which God has giving us, that is, they give women their rights. The Qur`an itself has stated clearly the issue of women's right, and so we have to follow that to see to it that what God has said is being done. We will not give inch for some one to violate our rights and go scot-free. We have people we work with and go to the court. Like the issue of wife-beating, some one will be beating

his wife as if he is punching a bag and at the end of it he will divorce her three times, just like that because he thinks she is nobody". This is indeed a bold statement considering the fact that there are limitations to what they can fight over. While, they can take-up the issue of wife beating successfully because of the religious and cultural protection, the same cannot be said of divorce. Even though the prophet of Islam said divorce is one of the abominable acts in the sight of Allah, under the Islamic legal system a husband has the right to divorce his wife.

Few NGOs had put the blame on the side of the women, more like victim blaming. The behaviours of the women were seen as the reason why men are not given support to the women's NGOs. A woman leader argues that "for women to be able to break through they need the cooperation of men- however, the problem is that women always want to prove a point, to prove that they are capable. You give us one step, and we take hundreds miles. This put men off". Another one contends that "all these are caused by the women themselves. There shouldn't be problems on gender issue, because both men and women are creators of God, and God created him and her for different purposes. If I stay in my position and men stay in their position, then their will be no conflict. But you find out that in a house, if a woman wants to behave like the husband, there will be conflict. So if you are a wife stay as a wife, act as a wife and a mother. This is not to say that what a man can do, a woman can not do, but when I am doing it, let me do it as a woman, let me do it as a mother, let me do it with the body of woman". It is very obvious that NGOs with this view may end up perpetuating the existing gender ideology and gender norms which generate gender inequality, the cause of gender conflict. It is therefore very difficult to imagine how the NGOs can struggle against gender inequality and protect women's right under this circumstance.

8   Conclusion

The findings of this research have demonstrated the contradictions within which many women's NGOs operate. The commitment of the NGOs in the provision of services to women and the promotion of women's rights is not in doubt, what is in doubt is the extent to which their programmes and strategies could eventual lead them to gender equity. As the data demonstrated, gender inequality is the source of gender related conflict; it is a manifestation of the subordinate and powerlessness of the women. In their effort to struggle against gender inequality, women have mobilized themselves into NGOs, however, their involvement in NGOs was again found to constitute another source of conflict, gender related conflict. This is because such action of women is a challenge to the gender norms that perpetuate gender inequality. However, involvement of the women's NGOs towards gender related conflict mitigation will go along way towards reducing gender based inequality. Thus, for the NGOs to be effective in fighting against gender inequality and gender related conflict, they need institutional support and building the capacity of the members of the NGOs. Other supports needed by the NGOs include government and financial support.

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Appendix one

Professional/ Labour Union	Religious	Ethnic	Developmental/ Rights Based	Cooperatives/others
1. National Labour Council Women's Wing [NLCWW]	1. Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria [FOMWAN]	1. Edo State Community Women's Wing Co-Operatives association Limited	1. National Council of Women Societies [NCWS]	1 Widows Association [WA]
2. Market Women Association [MWA}	2. Muslim Health Workers ummah [MUHEWU	2. Yamium Huscin Lelna [Cigaban Dakarkari]	2. Mothers and Children Support Initiative [MCI]	2. Widows and Orphans Empowerment [WOEM]
3. National Association of Women Entrepreneurs [NAWE]	3. Christian Association of Nigeria Women's Wing.		3. Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative [WRAPA]	3. Nassarawa I Vulnerable Women Co-Operatives Association Limited
4. Female Nurses and Midwives Association [FENAM]	4. Soldiers Wives Divine Traders co-operatives Association limited		4. Women and Children Care Foundation	4. Police Officers Wives Association [POWA]
5. National Association of Women Journalists [NAWOJ]	5. Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria		5. Better Life Programme for Africa Rural Women	5. Better Life for Soldiers Wives
	6. Muslim Student Society of Nigeria (MSSN)		6. Kebbi Women Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation [KEWEPA]	6. Retired Army Officers Wives Association
	7. Women Ministries		7. Women, Children and Youth Health Advocacy Group [WOCYHA]	7. Radio and Theatre Arts Workers Organisation [RATAWO]
			8. Grass Root	8. Nigeria Army Officers Wives Association [NAOWA]

			Health Organisation of Nigeria [GHON] 9. Women and Children Development Initiative (WOCDI) 10. Mother and Child Care Support	

Appendix Two

SN	Name of Organisation	Focus	Objectives	Programmes
1	Women and Children Development Initiative (WOCDI)	Girl-child engaged in street hawking	To empower women and children with skills. To strengthen the capacity of women and children to make informed decisions To promote and protect the rights of women and children through advocacy. To assist communities with up-to-date information reproductive health including HIV/AIDS issues	Educations and Trainings: Functional literacy classes Vocational Skills Training Simple agriculture and food production: Issues on hygynie, nutrition, reproductive health education or HIV/AIDS Environmental education Small Enterprises Development: Group formation and capacity building- vocational skills on computer and tailoring skills- got some assistance from NDE Provision of micro-credit Governance and

				Partnership Advocacy and mobilization: health and education advocacy and sensitization, community mobilisation to the remotest village- has established rapport with leadership and membership of communities Civic training Networking and Partnerships
2	Women and Children Care Foundation	HIV and AIDS Sufferers	To provide support to the positive people or people living with HIV/AIDS To provide drugs Engage in Enlightenment campaign Provide support to orphans eg on meeting school expenses Provide skill to positive women using the men's skills acquisition centre	Skills training for HIV and AIDS patients Legal support Public enlightenment Welfare support such as temporary accommodation
3	National Association of Women Entrepreneurs- (Women in Handcraft)	Women income generation	To organize women into trade and cooperative groups To provide trainings to women on skills acquisition To liase with government for a	Organize many skills acquisition training for women at the LGAs and community levels Attend and market women's product at national and global forums

			favourable policy environment To source market for women's products	
4	Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN)	Muslim Women		Daawah Activities 1 Monthly lectures 2 2 days adult women's education class 3 Weekly classes on Islamic idadat 4 Skill acquisition-Using tailoring 5 Sensitisation and mobilization of women during walima 6 Thursdays taalim on art of worship 6 Hajji programme during hajj
5	Mother and Child Care Support	Health Based		Health activities. empowerment, gender activities help women by organizing them Enlightenment of women on relevant issues Empower women through Family talk- and the need to be self-reliant.
6	Yamium Huscin Lelna [Cigaban Dakarkari]	Ethnic Women network	To unite and create friendship, network among Zuru women, To empower zuru women in small businesses like	Provision of credit facilities Provision of financial and material support during a celebration A monthly financial

			food selling with credit and skills training To provide welfare support and security	and material contribution to less privileged women
7	Women And Children Support Initiative (WACS),	Women's right	To provide voice to women and children To promote and protect women's right To struggle for the involvement of women decision making	Thematic areas: Human right, peace education, good governance and gender. 2007 electoral programme for women Tracking and monitoring government activities towards women and children, gender mainstreaming into the society. Programme on conflict resolution and peace building Through training of NGOs and communities Programme against discrimination through National Committee on Asymmetric Action Seek Justice for women's rights violation- court cases Sensitisation of men on women's rights and their responsibilities Engage with Ulamas through advocacy

				visit
8	Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Women's Wing	Youth in schools (female students	To unite Muslim students of the various institution To awake them up to the challenges of national building and local building. To encourage them to read some science subjects like medicine that Muslim are left behind Extra-mural classes to pass exams Our objectives are the same for men and women	Post primary institutions programmes- to monitor, and support MSS activities in secondary schools through regular visits and attendance of their programme Daawah visits to certain locations such as mosque, ngos, individual malam. Islamic vacation course- spirituality and purification, sensitization on certain relevant issues Skills acquisitions- computer for boys, beads for sisters Sisters walima Refresher course Quiz and essay writing compitation Islamic New year celebration Nana Asma'u week Hajji programme
9	Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Women's wing	Religion	To bring unity among the Christians irrespective of denomination and states, To bring peace, understanding, progress and development	Provision of services such as schools, hospitals, roads, water etc. Training and skills acquisition and equipment to start-up job Provide welfare support to

				members Rural Urban Development Alleviation Programme- self development
10	Nigerian Labor Congress, Women's Wing		To mobilize and Unified bring women together, To sensitize and to create awareness for the women to have knowledge. To mobilse women to participate in the activities of NLC. To sensitize women to participate on good governance. To involve women in governance	
11	Edo Association			
12	Women in Ministries	Women/religious	To bring women closer to Jesus To encourage women to take part in church activities	