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INTERFAITH PEACE COMMITTEES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN JOS METROPOLIS, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Jos Metropolis, once celebrated as Nigeria's "Home of Peace and Tourism", has become a focal point of recurrent ethno-religious violence since the early 2000s, with grave human and developmental consequences. This article examines how interfaith peace committees and related interfaith structures contribute to the management of religious tensions in Jos Metropolis, within the wider Plateau State peace architecture. Drawing on a qualitative desktop research design, the study systematically analyses academic literature, policy and evaluation reports, organisational documents and selected media sources. The analysis is guided by intergroup contact theory, conflict transformation theory and the concept of infrastructures for peace. Findings indicate that interfaith peace mechanisms anchored by the Plateau State Peace Building Agency, the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council, and supported by civil-society platforms such as the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre, the Interfaith Mediation Centre and Search for Common Ground programmes have created important spaces for dialogue, joint problem-solving, forgiveness initiatives and public messaging. These efforts have improved communication between Christian and Muslim leaders, supported attitude change, and, in some cases, reduced the escalation of local incidents into wider communal violence. However, persistent structural drivers of conflict, including indigene–settler disputes, land and political exclusion, socio-economic marginalisation and impunity for past violence, remain only partially addressed. The article concludes that interfaith peace committees are a necessary but insufficient component of sustainable religious peace in Jos, and argues for a stronger linkage between interfaith dialogue, inclusive representation and substantive reforms in governance, justice and development policy.

Keywords: Interfaith Peace Committees and the Management of Religious Tensions in Jos Metropolis, Nigeria; interfaith peace committees; religious tensions; Jos Metropolis; infrastructures for peace; conflict transformation; Nigeria.

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1.0 Background to the Study

Jos Metropolis in Plateau State has long been described as Nigeria's "Home of Peace and Tourism", yet since the early 2000s, it has also become a symbol of recurrent ethno-religious violence and fragile coexistence. Empirical and policy studies show that major episodes of violence in 2001, 2008 and 2010 produced hundreds of deaths, large-scale displacement, and deep polarisation between communities that self-identify as "indigenes" and "settlers" (Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Krause, 2011). These conflicts are not explained by religion alone; rather, they are driven by a combination of disputed citizenship and indigeneity, competition over political positions, land and urban space, perceptions of exclusion, and the mobilisation of religious and ethnic identities by elites (Davies et al., 2024; Higazi, 2011; Krause, 2011).

Recent work covering 2002–2022 confirms that ethno-religious crises in Plateau State continue to be associated with marginalisation, contested indigene and settler rights, land disputes, religious and ethnic intolerance, and struggles for political influence (Davies et al., 2024). The same study documents serious developmental consequences, including loss of life, destruction of social and economic activities, food insecurity, disruption of education and diversion of public resources to security operations instead of social investment (Davies et al., 2024). Similar findings from Jos and other Nigerian contexts indicate that repeated religious and communal violence undermines local business, farming, and everyday livelihoods, and creates an environment of fear that weakens social trust and shared public spaces (Ameh & Nanbee, 2024; Ukwayi et al., 2019).

Within Jos Metropolis specifically, research has shown that violent episodes have repeatedly targeted mixed neighbourhoods, market areas, places of worship and road junctions that previously functioned as shared spaces between different religious and ethnic groups (Adedeji, 2018; Higazi, 2011). The cumulative effect is a pattern of residential segregation and mutual suspicion that erodes earlier histories of coexistence and interdependence. Studies also suggest that media framing has sometimes reinforced religious polarisation, presenting conflicts largely through a "Christian versus Muslim" lens rather than

highlighting local peace initiatives or shared grievances (Nwokedi, 2024).

In response, government and civil society actors have experimented with a wide range of peacebuilding mechanisms, including judicial commissions of inquiry, security operations, community dialogues, and structured interfaith initiatives (International Crisis Group, 2012; Krause, 2011). One institutional innovation was the establishment of the Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA) in 2016, with a mandate to coordinate conflict prevention, early warning, dialogue processes and post-conflict stabilisation across the state (Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016). Evaluations of the Agency's work highlight its convening role and its efforts to support community peace architecture forums and local dialogue platforms, though they also recognise capacity and resource constraints (Davies et al., 2024; Open Government Partnership, 2021).

Alongside formal state initiatives, interfaith and inter-communal dialogue has been increasingly recognised as a central strategy for preventing and transforming religious tensions in northern Nigeria. At the national level, the work of the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), founded by Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, is widely documented; their interventions have included training youth and community leaders in nonviolent communication and mediation, and they have directly engaged constituencies in Plateau State (Piereder, 2014; Sadiq, 2019). International and local organisations such as Search for Common Ground (SFCG) have also implemented structured inter-religious dialogue and early warning programmes in Plateau communities, with evaluation reports noting improvements in communication channels between Christian and Muslim leaders and better joint responses to rumours and threats of violence (Ashton, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2012). More recently, the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council (IRC) was inaugurated in 2021 as a multi-faith body of respected religious and traditional leaders tasked with promoting reconciliation, advising government, and intervening in emerging crises in close collaboration with the Peace Building Agency (Dogarawa, 2022; The Nation, 2021). Conceptually, the Council is expected to model interfaith dialogue, provide moral leadership, and help rebuild trust across religious divides (Dogarawa, 2022).

This aligns with broader scholarship that views sustained dialogue and relationship-building between religious leaders and communities as a critical mechanism for managing identity-based conflicts and preventing escalation (Egbuchu & Davies, 2019; Piereder, 2014; Toki et al., 2015).

Despite these initiatives, recent empirical work suggests that many residents of Jos still perceive the peace as fragile and fear the possibility of renewed violence, particularly during elections, disputes over land and chieftaincy, or incidents framed as religious provocation (Davies et al., 2024; Ukwayi et al., 2019). While there is a growing body of literature on the causes and impacts of ethno-religious conflict in Plateau State, fewer studies focus specifically on how *interfaith peace committees* and similar multi-stakeholder structures operate at the city level, how communities experience their work, and what limitations they face in practice (Adedeji, 2018; Davies et al., 2024; Dogarawa, 2022).

This gap is particularly important because interfaith committees and dialogue platforms now sit at the centre of Plateau's conflict management architecture. They are expected to mediate local disputes, counter inflammatory narratives, support early warning and early response, and help communities negotiate sensitive issues such as access to land, places of worship, markets, and political representation (Dogarawa, 2022; Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016). However, questions remain about their accessibility to grassroots constituencies, their inclusiveness across gender and youth groups, their ability to influence state security responses, and their effectiveness in addressing the deeper structural drivers identified in recent studies such as perceived injustice, inequality, and contested citizenship (Davies et al., 2024; Egbuchu & Davies, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2012).

Against this backdrop, a focused examination of Interfaith Peace Committees and the Management of Religious Tensions in Jos Metropolis is policy relevant. Such a study can document how these committees are structured, how they engage with local communities, security agencies and government institutions, and how they are perceived by those who live with the legacies of past violence. It can also illuminate the extent to which interfaith

dialogue mechanisms in Jos contribute to de-escalation, reconciliation and everyday coexistence, and where they fall short or require further support and reform. Addressing this gap will add value to existing scholarship on ethno-religious conflict in Plateau State and provide evidence-based insights for practitioners and policymakers seeking to strengthen inter-religious peace infrastructure in Nigeria and comparable contexts.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Ethno-Religious Conflict and Peace building in Jos and Plateau State

The conflict literature on Jos and Plateau State is now extensive and provides the necessary background for understanding why interfaith peace committees emerged as important mechanisms of conflict management. Higazi's (2011) detailed historical and political analysis shows that crises in Jos since 2001 are rooted in the interaction of indigene–settler claims, struggles for political control at local government and state levels, and the politicization of religious and ethnic identities. The International Crisis Group's report on the Jos crisis similarly documents recurrent large-scale violence in 2001, 2008 and 2010 and emphasizes that disputes over local government boundaries, chieftaincy, land allocation and access to public office are framed and mobilized through Christian–Muslim narratives, but are not reducible to theology or doctrine alone.

Krause (2011) reinforces this interpretation by describing a "deadly cycle" in which local political competition, perceptions of exclusion and the availability of weapons have repeatedly transformed triggers such as elections, appointments or minor disputes into city-wide violence. More recent work by Davies et al. (2024) synthesizes two decades of ethno-religious crisis in Jos and Plateau State and identifies persistent drivers, including contested indigene and settler rights, weak governance, perceived injustice in resource distribution, and the manipulation of identity for political gain. The authors also document the developmental consequences of these conflicts, such as displacement, disruption of education, reduced investment and the diversion of state resources to security expenditure. Scholars focusing specifically on Jos Metropolis highlight how repeated crises have

reshaped the city's social geography. Adedeji (2018) shows that the 2010 crisis and its aftermath intensified residential segregation, with many Christians and Muslims relocating to neighbourhoods where their group forms a clear majority, leading to the emergence of "no-go areas" and a decline in everyday intergroup contact. Ukwayi et al. (2019) similarly argue that ethno-religious violence in Jos has undermined business and market activities and heightened insecurity, with traders adjusting their locations and movements along perceived religious lines. Media-analysis studies find that newspaper framing of Plateau crises has often reinforced binary Christian–Muslim narratives, sometimes at the expense of highlighting local peace initiatives and shared grievances (Nwokedi, 2024).

In terms of peace building responses, the literature shows a gradual shift from ad-hoc crisis management toward more institutionalized approaches. Commissions of inquiry, special security operations, community reconciliation meetings and NGO-led programmes have all featured prominently in Plateau's post-crisis landscape (International Crisis Group, 2012; Krause, 2011). Building on these efforts, the Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA) was established by law in 2016 as a dedicated governmental body for conflict prevention, early warning and peace building. The PPBA's roadmap outlines a multi-layered approach that includes community peace architecture forums, mediation support and interfaith engagement across the state (Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016)

Recent analyses of peace initiatives in Plateau State argue that institutional innovations such as the PPBA have created new opportunities for coordination, but that the implementation of recommendations and the addressing of deeper structural grievances remain uneven (Davies et al., 2024; International Crisis Group, 2012). This broader context of entrenched conflict drivers and partial reform shapes the environment in which interfaith peace committees operate in Jos Metropolis.

2.2 Interfaith Dialogue and Faith-Based Peacebuilding in Nigeria and Plateau

The role of religious actors and interfaith dialogue in Nigerian peacebuilding has attracted increasing scholarly and practitioner attention. Piereder (2014) examines the work of the

Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) founded by Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye and shows how sustained Christian–Muslim cooperation in Kaduna has become an important reference point for interfaith peace efforts across northern Nigeria, including outreach in Plateau State. Sadiq (2019) documents a specific forgiveness and reconciliation intervention by IMC for youth leaders from the 17 local government areas of Plateau, illustrating how interfaith facilitators seek to reshape youth narratives and reduce readiness to mobilise for violence.

Beyond IMC, other faith-based initiatives in Jos and surrounding areas have worked to institutionalise dialogue and joint action. The Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP), established by the then Archbishop of Jos, provides a platform where religious leaders, traditional authorities, youth and women convene to address local tensions, promote social cohesion and support peace education (Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre, n.d.). Global Peace Foundation Nigeria has reported on interfaith dialogue sessions in Bukuru, Plateau State, where Christian and Muslim leaders and youth meet to discuss security, social cohesion and joint community projects, reinforcing the idea that interfaith engagement is central to sustainable peace at the local level.

Within formal state structures, the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council (IRC) stands out as a high-level interfaith body. Official communications from the PPBA and state government show that the IRC was inaugurated in 2021 as a council of respected Christian and Muslim leaders mandated to advise the government, respond to emerging crises and promote reconciliation across the state. Dogarawa (2022) analyses expectations placed on the Council, arguing that interfaith dialogue can contribute to nation-building by addressing prejudice and fostering a shared moral commitment to peace among religious adherents. Literature on interfaith dialogue in Nigeria more broadly suggests that when religious leaders jointly condemn violence, engage in structured dialogue and create shared platforms, they may help shift community attitudes and provide moral authority for nonviolent responses to disputes (Egbuchu & Davies, 2019; Piereder, 2014; Toki et al., 2015). However, these studies also caution that interfaith initiatives can be limited by elite capture,

lack of grassroots inclusion and the absence of parallel reforms on issues such as justice, governance and socio-economic inequality. This tension between relational gains and structural constraints is directly relevant to how interfaith peace committees function in Jos Metropolis.

2.3 Interfaith Peace Committees as Local Infrastructures for Peace

The concept of "infrastructures for peace" (I4P) provides a useful lens for understanding interfaith peace committees. Irene (2017) defines infrastructures for peace as formal and informal mechanisms, structures and processes for conflict prevention and peace building at national and sub-national levels, drawing on African experiences such as Ghana's National Peace Council and local peace committees in Kenya. Van Tongeren (2013) describes infrastructures for peace as dynamic networks of interdependent structures and mechanisms that, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to preventing and addressing conflict, and emphasizes the role of local peace committees as potential "cornerstones" of such architectures.

Studies of local peace committees in African contexts show that these bodies often work as early-warning and early-response mechanisms, mediate local disputes, and provide a bridge between communities and state institutions. Odendaal's comparative analysis of local peace committees highlights their potential to enhance local ownership of peace processes when they are inclusive, trusted and embedded in broader support structures. Irene's (2020) examination of informal peace infrastructures in Ojoo community, Ibadan, demonstrates how community-based committees can respond to urban violence and crime, facilitate dialogue and serve as a "local infrastructure for peace" even without formal state recognition.

In the Plateau context, PPBA's own materials present the Interfaith Unit and Inter-Religious Council as core components of a state-level peace infrastructure that includes Operation Rainbow, community peace architecture forums and partnerships with civil society and media. From the perspective of I4P theory, interfaith peace committees in Jos Metropolis

can therefore be seen as local or meso-level structures designed to sustain dialogue, provide channels for mediation, and link community concerns with state decision-making. The effectiveness of such committees depends not only on their internal composition and procedures but also on how they connect to wider governance, security and justice systems (Irene, 2017; Van Tongeren, 2013).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by two complementary theoretical perspectives: intergroup contact theory and conflict transformation theory, situated within the broader concept of infrastructures for peace. Intergroup contact theory, originally articulated by Allport (1954), posits that under appropriate conditions, direct contact between members of different social groups can reduce prejudice, improve intergroup attitudes and promote more cooperative relations. Allport identified four optimal conditions for positive contact: equal status between the groups in the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and support from authorities or social norms. Subsequent meta-analyses and reviews, such as Pettigrew and Tropp's work, have provided strong empirical support for the claim that well-structured intergroup contact generally reduces prejudice across a wide range of contexts and group categories (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Blaylock, 2023).

Applied to the case of Jos Metropolis, intergroup contact theory suggests that interfaith peace committees may help manage religious tensions by creating structured, repeated contact between Christian and Muslim leaders under conditions that approximate Allport's criteria. When committee members are recognised leaders with relatively equal status, engage in cooperative problem-solving around shared goals such as community safety, and receive strong normative backing from state authorities and religious institutions, the contact that occurs within the committees can contribute to attitude change and the de-escalation of hostile narratives. The theory also draws attention to potential limitations: if contact is sporadic, perceived as coerced, or occurs in a context of sharp power asymmetries or ongoing violence, it may have limited or even negative effects (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006;

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Blaylock, 2023). Conflict transformation theory, associated most prominently with Lederach (1997, 2003), offers a complementary perspective focused on the deeper relational, cultural and structural dimensions of conflict. Lederach (1997) argues that sustainable peace in divided societies requires more than the cessation of direct violence; it requires long-term processes that transform relationships, social patterns and institutions that underpin conflict. Conflict transformation is concerned with building "platforms for change" that link actors at different levels from grassroots communities to mid-level leaders and national elites in a networked peace system (Lederach, 1997; Lederach, 2003; Berghof Foundation, 2012).

Within this framework, interfaith peace committees in Jos can be conceptualised as part of a broader peace infrastructure that seeks to transform patterns of interaction between Christian and Muslim communities, not only to manage immediate crises. By facilitating dialogue, joint analysis and cooperative action, these committees may gradually reshape narratives of victimhood and threat, support local reconciliation initiatives and encourage reforms in governance and security practices. Conflict transformation theory also emphasises that such initiatives must be linked to efforts to address structural injustices and inequalities; otherwise, they risk being perceived as superficial or symbolic (Lederach, 1997; Irene, 2017; Van Tongeren, 2013).

The infrastructures-for-peace literature integrates these insights by arguing that sustainable peace requires institutionalised networks of structures and processes that support dialogue, mediation and conflict prevention over time (Irene, 2017; McCandless & Tschirgi, 2012; Van Tongeren, 2011, 2013). From this perspective, interfaith peace committees in Jos Metropolis are understood not only as discrete projects but as elements of an evolving local infrastructure for peace embedded within Plateau State's broader peace architecture. Intergroup contact theory helps explain how participation in such committees may influence attitudes and relationships at interpersonal and intergroup levels, while conflict transformation theory foregrounds the need for these committees to connect with structural reforms and multi-level peace processes. Together, these frameworks provide a coherent

theoretical basis for examining how interfaith peace committees contribute to the management of religious tensions in Jos.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative desktop research design, relying on the systematic analysis of existing documents rather than primary fieldwork. Document analysis is appropriate where there is already a substantial corpus of academic, policy and organisational literature that can be synthesised to address clearly defined questions (Bowen, 2009; Mogalakwe, 2006).

In the case of Jos Metropolis and Plateau State, more than two decades of empirical and policy work on ethno-religious conflict and peacebuilding provide a rich evidential base for examining how interfaith peace committees operate within the broader conflict landscape (Davies et al., 2024; Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012).

Data were drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy and evaluation reports, organisational documents and selected media reports. Academic materials were identified through searches on Google Scholar and institutional repositories using terms such as “Jos ethno-religious conflict,” “Plateau State peacebuilding,” “interfaith dialogue Nigeria” and “Plateau Inter-Religious Council.” Key sources included foundational analyses of the Jos crisis (Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Krause, 2011), more recent syntheses of conflict and development in Plateau State (Davies et al., 2024), and Nigerian journal articles on business disruption, media framing and peace initiatives in Jos (Adedeji, 2018; Nwokedi, 2024; Ukwayi et al., 2019). Policy and programme documents were obtained from the Plateau State Peace Building Agency, Search for Common Ground and related platforms, alongside materials from interfaith actors such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre and the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre (Ashton, 2013; Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre, n.d.; Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016; Sadiq, 2019). Inclusion focused on documents that substantively addressed ethno-religious conflict in Jos/Plateau, interfaith peacebuilding in northern Nigeria, or infrastructures for peace in Africa, while seminal theoretical works on intergroup contact and conflict transformation were included

for conceptual grounding (Allport, 1954; Lederach, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Van Tongeren, 2013). Analysis followed a thematic document-analysis approach (Bowen, 2009). Documents were read and coded around deductive themes derived from the research questions and theoretical framework, such as conflict drivers, committee structure and mandate, dialogue practices, early-warning functions, contributions and constraints and inductive themes that emerged across the texts (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic clusters were then organised to inform the literature review and discussion, with intergroup contact theory, conflict transformation and the infrastructures-for-peace lens guiding interpretation (Irene, 2017; Lederach, 1997; Van Tongeren, 2013).

To enhance trustworthiness, data from academic, policy, organisational and media sources were triangulated, and analytic procedures were made explicit; however, as a desktop study the analysis is limited by dependence on existing representations of interfaith committees and does not incorporate primary perspectives from committee members or community actors, pointing to an important area for future field-based research (Bowen, 2009; Mogalakwe, 2006).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and discusses the main insights from the desktop review under four interrelated themes: the structure and mandate of interfaith peace committees in Jos and Plateau State; their practical activities in managing religious tensions; their contributions to peacebuilding; and the constraints and gaps that continue to shape religious relations in Jos Metropolis.

Interfaith peace mechanisms in Plateau State are embedded within a broader state-led peace architecture. The Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA), created in 2016, is mandated to coordinate conflict prevention, early warning, dialogue and post-conflict stabilisation across the state (Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016). Within this framework, an Interfaith Team works “with leaders of religious faiths in Plateau State to transcend religious divides and build an ethical, just and cohesive society,” indicating an explicit interfaith orientation in the state’s peace infrastructure. The Plateau State Inter-Religious Council

(IRC) was inaugurated in April 2021 as a high-level body of Christian and Muslim leaders to advise the government, respond to emerging crises and model interfaith cooperation; official communications describe it as a consultative and advisory council on interreligious harmony whose task is to ensure that "no group wins or loses" in the search for peace. In addition to these formal state-backed structures, there are civil society-based interfaith platforms that function as local peace infrastructures. The Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP), founded in 2011 in Jos, is described as a safe space that brings together religious, traditional and community leaders, youth and women for dialogue, reconciliation and healing across religious and political lines. The Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), founded by Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, operates from Kaduna but has repeatedly intervened in Plateau, including forgiveness programmes for youth and symbolic initiatives such as the Forgiveness Garden in Jos. Together, these mechanisms constitute a multi-layered set of interfaith peace committees and platforms at state, metropolitan and community levels.

Concerning practical activities, the documentary evidence indicates that interfaith bodies in Plateau perform a mix of advisory, mediating and confidence-building roles. The PPBA and the Inter-Religious Council hold periodic meetings and issue joint statements in response to tensions, providing advice to the governor and security agencies on sensitive religious issues and urging communities to avoid violence. DREP Centre hosts interfaith prayer sessions, dialogues and training workshops that bring together Christian and Muslim leaders, youth and women for reflection on local grievances and reconciliation, and is explicitly framed as a "safe space" for interreligious encounter in Jos. IMC's interventions in Plateau have focused on forgiveness education and nonviolent engagement with youth leaders; for example, a 2019 Daily Trust report documents a three-day "forgiveness intervention" for youth from all 17 local government areas of Plateau, where facilitators emphasised letting go of hatred, resisting political manipulation and choosing dialogue instead of revenge.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) programmes have added another layer of interfaith practice, particularly through media and community dialogue. The final evaluation of SFCG's "Preventing Inter-Religious Violence in Plateau State, Nigeria" programme shows

the radio programmes, facilitated dialogues and community outreach were designed to strengthen communication between Christian and Muslim communities, address prejudices and promote joint problem-solving around shared concerns. Respondents reported increased understanding of the conflict, greater appreciation of "the other", and practical application of learning to interfaith relations and dealing with crises. A more recent Unijos-based study on SFCG's work across Plateau and Kaduna confirms that interventions have ranged from mitigation of ethno-religious and farmer–herder violence to promotion of freedom of religion and belief, early warning and youth programming, often using joint festivals, community theatre and interfaith dialogue to create shared experiences.

These documented practices resonate with intergroup contact theory's emphasis on sustained, cooperative interaction under supportive authority as conditions for reducing prejudice and building more positive intergroup relations.

In terms of contributions, the available evidence suggests that interfaith peace mechanisms have played a significant, if partial, role in managing religious tensions in Jos and Plateau State. Evaluations of SFCG programmes in Plateau report that inter-religious radio shows and dialogue activities contributed to increased mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims, and that participants frequently applied lessons to how they react during violence, how they talk about crises and how they approach interfaith relations in daily life. The meta-review of inter-religious peacebuilding programme evaluations by CDA Collaborative, which includes the Plateau project, notes that such initiatives have been particularly effective in shifting attitudes, creating new communication channels and reducing the likelihood of local incidents escalating into wider communal clashes, although the depth and durability of these changes vary across contexts. DREP Centre's activities, as described in organisational and partner profiles, have provided regular opportunities for youth, women and leaders from different religious and ethnic backgrounds to "experience and learn together the art of dialogue, reconciliation and peace building," to equip participants to take peace work back into their own communities. IMC's work in Plateau, including the Forgiveness Garden and youth interventions, has reinforced public narratives of apology and forgiveness, with the state governor publicly acknowledging past killings and

declaring an annual day of forgiveness, which symbolically supports a culture of reconciliation. Beyond specific projects, the creation of the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council appears to have institutionalised interfaith dialogue at a higher political level. Public statements around its inaugural and subsequent meetings describe it as a permanent advisory body tasked with helping the government manage religious diversity, defuse tensions and ensure that decisions on sensitive matters are informed by joint Christian–Muslim counsel. The establishment of a Plateau Youth Interfaith Forum in 2024, emerging from an SFCG Plateau Interfaith Dialogue, indicates further consolidation of youth-led interfaith structures that are expected to "build bridges, reject manipulation, and take the lead in restoring unity across the state." These developments align with infrastructures-for-peace perspectives, which emphasise the importance of multi-level networks of dialogue mechanisms linking grassroots actors, mid-level leaders and state institutions.

At the same time, the findings also reveal persistent constraints that limit the transformative potential of interfaith peace committees in Jos Metropolis. Conflict analyses by Krause (2011) and related studies show that, despite numerous peace initiatives, the region entered a "deadly cycle" of reprisal killings, silent attacks and large-scale massacres in 2010, with more than one thousand people killed and tens of thousands displaced. Adedeji's (2018) review of the 2010 inter-religious conflict and its resolution mechanisms concludes that while various dialogue and reconciliation efforts were undertaken, they did not resolve underlying grievances linked to indigene–settler status, land and political exclusion, and that residential segregation along religious lines remained pronounced. A recent secondary data study on ethno-religious violence and peace building approaches in Jos and Plateau finds that peace building initiatives, including state agencies and interfaith structures, have contributed to some reduction in overt violence but have not yet fully addressed structural causes related to governance, justice and socio-economic inequality.

There are also indications that interfaith mechanisms face challenges around inclusiveness and representation. Official descriptions of the Plateau Inter-Religious Council emphasise senior Christian and Muslim leaders, while bodies like DREP Centre and youth forums explicitly seek to include youth, women and grassroots actors. Infrastructures-for-peace

scholarship suggests that peace committees are most effective when they are broadly representative, trusted by communities and linked to responsive institutions; where they are perceived as elite-dominated or disconnected from everyday grievances, their impact can be constrained to symbolic or short-term gains. The Plateau experience appears to illustrate this tension: interfaith peace committees have made documented contributions to communication, attitude change and symbolic reconciliation, yet the deeper structural drivers identified in conflict analyses, contested citizenship, land rights, political marginalisation and impunity for past violence remain only partially addressed.

Taken together, the findings support a nuanced reading consistent with the theoretical framework. Intergroup contact theory helps explain why structured interfaith engagement through committees, centres and programmes in Jos and Plateau has produced observable improvements in understanding and relationships between Christian and Muslim actors, particularly where contact has been sustained, cooperative and supported by religious and political authorities. Conflict transformation and infrastructures-for-peace perspectives, however, highlight that such relational gains need to be linked to broader reforms that address structural injustices and embed dialogue mechanisms within responsive governance systems (Irene, 2018; Lederach, 1997; Van Tongeren, 2013). The evidence from Jos Metropolis suggests that interfaith peace committees are a necessary but not sufficient component of sustainable religious peace: they have created important spaces for communication, reconciliation and joint advocacy, but their long-term effectiveness will depend on how far their work is integrated with concrete policies on land, citizenship, justice and inclusive development in Plateau State.

5.0 CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examined the role of interfaith peace committees and related interfaith structures in the management of religious tensions in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, using a qualitative desktop review of academic, policy and organisational sources. The review confirms that Jos has experienced recurrent ethno-religious violence driven by the interaction of indigene–settler disputes, competition over political office and land, governance failures and the

politicisation of religious identity (Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Krause, 2011). These conflicts have had profound developmental impacts, including displacement, socio-economic disruption and deepening spatial and social segregation between Christian and Muslim communities (Adedeji, 2018; Davies et al., 2024; Ukwayi et al., 2019). The findings show that interfaith peace mechanisms in Plateau State now form part of an emerging peace infrastructure anchored by the Plateau State Peace Building Agency and the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council, and complemented by civil-society initiatives such as the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre and the Interfaith Mediation Centre (Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre, n.d.; Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016; Piereder, 2014; Sadiq, 2019). These structures engage in advisory work, interfaith dialogue, mediation, public messaging, youth and women's programmes and media-based peace interventions (Ashton, 2013; Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016). Evaluation reports and case studies indicate that such initiatives have helped sustain channels of communication between Christian and Muslim leaders, improve mutual understanding, and reduce the likelihood that local incidents escalate into wider violence in some communities (Ashton, 2013; Davies et al., 2024).

However, the analysis also underscores persistent constraints. Despite the growth of interfaith peace infrastructures, structural grievances linked to indigene–settler status, land allocation, political inclusion, economic marginalisation and impunity for past violence remain only partially addressed (Davies et al., 2024; Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012). There are indications that some interfaith platforms remain elite-centred and struggle to fully incorporate youth, women and grassroots actors, limiting their perceived legitimacy and reach (Adedeji, 2018; Ukwayi et al., 2019). From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, the documented programmes demonstrate the value of sustained, cooperative contact under supportive authority, but conflict transformation and infrastructures-for-peace perspectives point to the need to connect these relational gains to deeper institutional and structural reforms. Overall, the evidence suggests that interfaith peace committees in Jos are necessary but not sufficient: they make meaningful

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contributions to tension management and symbolic reconciliation, yet sustainable peace will depend on their integration with broader reforms in governance, justice and development.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the theoretical framing, several practical and research-oriented recommendations emerge. First, there is a need to consolidate and deepen the institutionalisation of interfaith peace infrastructures in Plateau State. The Plateau State Inter-Religious Council should be supported with clear legal backing, predictable funding and a structured secretariat to follow up on its recommendations and ensure systematic engagement with security agencies, local government councils and relevant ministries and departments (Plateau State Peace Building Agency, 2016). Strengthening the operational link between the Council, PPBA's Interfaith Team and community peace architecture forums can improve coherence and responsiveness, especially during periods of heightened tension.

Second, broader inclusion and representation within interfaith peace committees is critical. Evidence that youth and women often experience violence directly but are under-represented in high-level platforms suggests that deliberate mechanisms should be introduced to include youth and women's wings, as well as representatives of minority denominations and smaller communities (Adedeji, 2018; Ukwayi et al., 2019). Building on initiatives such as youth interfaith forums and the work of DREP Centre, interfaith peace architectures in Jos should institutionalise youth and women's participation, not only as beneficiaries of training but as co-designers and decision-makers in dialogue and early-warning processes. This aligns with infrastructures-for-peace insights that local peace committees are more effective when they are perceived as legitimate, representative and embedded in community structures (Irene, 2017; Van Tongeren, 2013).

Third, interfaith peace efforts must be linked more systematically to structural reforms in governance, land administration and justice. Many of the root causes identified in the conflict literature, such as unresolved indigene–settler disputes, contested land rights,

perceived bias in appointments and weak accountability for past atrocities, lie beyond the

remit of dialogue alone (Higazi, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Krause, 2011). Interfaith peace committees and PPBA should therefore be integrated into policy processes dealing with land use, chieftaincy, urban planning and security sector accountability, by providing conflict-sensitive advice, early-warning information and community perspectives. Government actors, in turn, should demonstrate visible follow-through on recommendations emerging from interfaith and community dialogues; otherwise, there is a risk of fatigue and loss of trust among communities who perceive dialogue as decoupled from concrete change. Fourth, continuous capacity-building and learning are required for interfaith peace actors. Training in conflict analysis, mediation, do-no-harm principles, trauma awareness and digital communication can enhance the quality and sensitivity of interfaith engagements, particularly as social media and online narratives increasingly influence perceptions and mobilisation in Jos (Nwokedi, 2024). Partnerships with universities in Plateau and national research institutes can support action-research that regularly assesses the performance and impact of interfaith mechanisms, feeding lessons back into practice.

Finally, the study highlights an important agenda for further research. As a desktop review, it relies on secondary representations of interfaith peace committees; there is a need for qualitative fieldwork that captures the perspectives of committee members, local residents, youth, women, security officials and victims of violence across different neighbourhoods in Jos. Such work could explore how communities perceive the legitimacy and effectiveness of interfaith mechanisms, under what conditions they turn to these bodies for help, and how outcomes differ across local contexts. Combining this kind of field research with longitudinal analysis of conflict and peace indicators would provide a more robust basis for assessing and refining interfaith peace infrastructures in Jos Metropolis and Plateau State more broadly.

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