

# Ms. Dolapo Fakuade, Nigeria

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Nigeria is a country with diversity of culture, religion and people. I grew up amidst such diversity which I have come to believe is central to sustainable development. I was born and bred in Ibadan, Oyo State with a first degree education in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife where I graduated with a BA in History/Sociology (combined honours). I then did community service in the Niger-Delta as my national youth service, an experience which further inspired me to pursue a postgraduate degree in Disaster management in the United Kingdom. I have since been involved in several safety programmes, community projects and social cohesion activities in the United Kingdom as well as proposing practical measures of the same in some countries in Asia, Middle East, Europe and Africa. However I'm exploring using similar methods of enhancing community cohesion in a very diverse region of West Midlands in Nigeria to promote peace.

Thus in order to achieve this, my approach to sustainable peace and development are as follows:

*First*, youth empowerment through entrepreneurship and employability scheme: this will include organising workshops and trainings with practical signposting and support facilities for youths. This project will promote peace by encouraging youth from different ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria especially in the Niger-Delta to work together towards the successful outcome of the scheme.

*Secondly*, inter-ethnic exchange activities: the aim of these activities is to bring people together via shared interests such as sports, music, events which can promote peace in a truly representative manner.

It is envisaged that these approaches will help to channel the energy of youths in a constructive and positive way in order to contribute towards the initiation of sustainable peace thereby promoting development.

## STORY

Childhood in a country like Nigeria is a mixed bag of experience. Being raised in a polygamous family is often garnished with several conflicts which the society did not provide any consolation for. Nigeria continues to play host to several crisis; from political crisis (12 June xxxx, election annulment), religious conflicts and terrorism (such as massive killings in Plateau state, Boko Haram), ethnic crisis (Ife-Modakeke war), and the Niger-Delta multiple crisis to mention a few continue to hinder development in Nigeria. Being a witness and having friends and relatives who have been directly affected by these crises and its devastating consequences, the quest for peace has therefore become a mandatory one. I believe in a society that is hopeful with bright prospects for the future, but this can only be possible where peace finds abode.

Living and commuting around communities in the Niger-Delta has exposed me to how much could be achieved with the presence of multi-national organisations such as Royal Dutch Shell (British/Dutch), Exxon-Mobil (American), Chevron (American), Nigerian Agip (NAOC- Italian), TotalfinaElf (French) and Texaco Overseas (Chevron-Texaco) in partnership with communities and reputable groups. Unfortunately little is done towards ensuring sustainable peace and development even with the wealth of resources available in these regions. People die continuously as a result of cultural, structural and environmental crisis that has been created by the oil exploration, religious/ethnic intolerance and related activities in these regions. It is also sad to know that while the Niger-Delta is one of the sources of global energy supply which is important within the international economic and political system context (according to UNDP); the right to development, identity and family protection of the people in the Niger-Delta continue to be a far-fetched dream.

The existence of violence, conflict and war in Nigeria without justice and consideration of peace has in no little way fuelled the sporadic bombing and killings. Evidently, all these are currently robbing the youth of a suitable future filled with hopes, dreams and aspirations as the future is currently garnished with uncertainties. Despite living in a state of helplessness; in the spirit of “the Olympics”, the “Olympic Truce” and in solidarity with youths all over the world, we desperately call for peace. We believe peace and its sustainability is possible if we all want it and work towards it.

- Dolapo