EMPOWERING FCT INDIGENOUS WOMEN ON MEDIATION, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PEACE BUILDING FOR PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE

2026 FCT AREA COUNCIL ELECTIONS

FINAL REPORT

2ND SEPTEMBER 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Centre for Advocacy & Policy Advisory in Africa (ReCAP Africa) in strategic partnership with **National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)** and **UN Women**, successfully conducted a transformative capacity-building workshop on September 2, 2025, at NILDS headquarters, Abuja, training over 150 indigenous women from across the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in critical skills of mediation, conflict management, and peacebuilding ahead of the 2026 FCT Area Council Elections. **THEMED "EMPOWERING FCT INDIGENOUS WOMEN AS AGENTS OF PEACE,**" this strategic intervention represents a paradigm shift in Nigeria's approach to electoral violence prevention, combining traditional conflict resolution approaches with modern mediation techniques as the pilot phase of an ambitious national scaling plan that aims to train 8,809 women mediators across all of Nigeria's electoral wards by 2027 Nigeria General Elections, creating an unprecedented national peace infrastructure. The programme aligns with Nigeria's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP-WPS), the Sustainable Development Goals, and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, positioning women at the center of Nigeria's democratic transformation.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Nigeria's democratic progress has been severely undermined by recurring electoral violence, with the 2019 elections alone recording over 626 violent incidents that claimed hundreds of lives and displaced thousands, making proactive peacebuilding interventions critical as the FCT prepares for the 2026 Area Council Elections. The Federal Capital Territory's six Area Councils represent Nigeria's administrative heart and diverse composition, where indigenous women from various ethnic groups including the Gbagyi, Gwandara, Koro, Gade, Bassa, and Ebira possess intimate knowledge of community dynamics and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms that research shows can increase sustainable conflict resolution by 24% and make peace agreements 35% more likely to endure for at least 15 years. The strategic partnership between NILDS, ReCAP Africa, and UN Women Nigeria creates a powerful synergy combining grassroots expertise, institutional credibility, and academic rigor, with ReCAP Africa contributing evidence-based policy research and community engagement experience while NILDS provides academic foundation and policy expertise essential for sustainable democratic peacebuilding impact

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

This program aims to build the capacity of 150 indigenous women across the FCT's six Area Councils to serve as community-based mediators and peacebuilders for the upcoming Area Council elections. The initiative focuses on equipping these women with practical mediation skills through training in both modern techniques and traditional conflict resolution methods, while developing their understanding of electoral conflict dynamics for early warning and intervention. The program seeks to establish sustainable community-based mediation networks within each Area Council, promote inclusive democratic participation by empowering women to facilitate dialogue between community groups and political stakeholders, and ultimately reduce electoral tensions and violence through preventive peacebuilding measures

OPENING SESSION

Registration and Arrival: The workshop commenced at 9:00 AM with comprehensive registration of participants, invited guests, and expert facilitators from across the six Area Councils, the programme started at about 10:30am with Nigeria National Anthen, proceeded with the recognition of invited guests to the high table by the moderators.

Opening Remarks by Mr. Sylvester NANDI-ESOM, The Founder & Executive Director of ReCAP Africa, delivered compelling opening remarks that set the strategic context for the initiative:

"Nigeria stands at a critical juncture where electoral violence threatens the very foundation of our democracy, with over 626 violent incidents recorded during the 2019 elections alone, claiming hundreds of lives and displacing thousands more. In response to this crisis, the groundbreaking 'Empowering FCT Indigenous Women as Agents of Peace' programme launches today as a bold solution that harnesses the proven power of women in peacebuilding.

This comprehensive initiative, developed through a strategic partnership between ReCAP Africa, NILDS and UN Women, will train over 150 indigenous women across the FCT's six Area Councils as community-based mediators and conflict managers. The programme combines traditional conflict resolution approach with modern mediation techniques, recognizing that women's participation in peace processes increases sustainable conflict resolution and lasting peace.

While this FCT pilot represents a crucial first step, the true transformation of Nigeria's democratic landscape demands immediate and aggressive national scaling. The programme's three-phase expansion plan must be accelerated to train 8,809 women mediators across all of Nigeria's electoral wards by 2027, creating an unprecedented national peace infrastructure that could prevent thousands of deaths and billions in economic losses from electoral violence.

This scale-up is not merely ambitious, it is essential for Nigeria's survival as a stable democracy. Every delay in national implementation means more communities will suffer the devastating cycle of electoral violence that has plagued our nation for decades. The women we empower today in the FCT must become the blueprint for a nationwide army of peace architects who will fundamentally reshape how Nigeria conducts elections and resolves conflicts.

This is our historic opportunity to transform Nigeria from a country scarred by electoral violence into a continental leader in democratic peacebuilding, but only if we commit to scaling this initiative with the urgency and resources our democracy deserves."

DIGNITARIES ADDRESSES AND GOODWILL MESSAGES

Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development: Hajia Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim (represented by Princess Jummai Idonije) described the initiative as "timely and transformative," emphasizing that "Training 150 indigenous women in peacebuilding is an investment in Nigeria's democratic future. When women are empowered to mediate, conflicts dissolve before they ignite."

NILDS Director-General: Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman (represented by Professor Shuaibu Danwaka) highlighted that "Women are not only victims of conflict; they are agents of resolution. Empowering them with skills to mediate strengthens the very foundation of our democracy."

UN Women Representative: Ms. Beatrice Eyong (represented by Susan Agada) reinforced the global evidence base, stating that "When women are fully involved in peace processes, communities stand a better chance of preventing violence and building sustainable peace."

The ECOWAS Commission: H.E. Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), (represented by Mr. Arthur O. Obayuwana), delivered strong commendation for ReCAP Africa's groundbreaking peacebuilding initiative. The Commissioner's representative acknowledged the critical timing of this programme, noting that the ECOWAS region is currently navigating significant political upheavals that pose substantial threats to the democratic foundations and institutional stability across West Africa.

In his formal address, Mr. Obayuwana emphasized the Commission's recognition of women as authentic agents of peace transformation within their communities. He underscored the strategic importance of leveraging women's inherent capacity for conflict resolution and community healing, particularly during periods of political instability and democratic fragility.

The **ECOWAS Commission** extended an unequivocal commitment to institutional support, with Mr. Obayuwana stating: "Let ECOWAS know of the scale-up of this programme and they will support it." He issued a compelling call for the immediate replication and expansion of this initiative across all member states, recognizing its potential to serve as a cornerstone for regional peace consolidation and democratic resilience.

The Commission's endorsement reflects ECOWAS's strategic pivot toward inclusive peacebuilding approaches that harness the transformative potential of women's leadership in conflict prevention, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts throughout the West African region.

Dr. Bakary SANOU representing the **GIZ-ECOWAS CLUSTER** characterized women as "peace transformers" and emphasized the critical need for this initiative to be replicated throughout the ECOWAS region. He highlighted that women serve as foundational agents of peace within their communities and should be actively encouraged and supported in peacebuilding efforts. Dr. Sanou formally pledged GIZ's continued support for this programme, recognizing its strategic importance in advancing regional stability and conflict resolution.

In his remarks, **Dr. Sanou** underscored the essential role women play as catalysts for peace transformation and stressed the imperative of scaling this initiative across West African nations within the ECOWAS framework. He committed GIZ's institutional backing to ensure the programme's sustainability and expansion.

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

Distinguished representatives participated from:

- Federal Ministry of Finance
- Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning
- Ministry of FCT
- Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)
- Sigel Advisory Partners

TECHNICAL SESSIONS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Session 1: "Mainstreaming Women in Security and Governance in the FCT"

Facilitator: Prof. Umoh Nanji, University of Jos: Integration of women in security architecture and governance structures, examining the intersection of traditional authority systems and modern democratic governance.

Key Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding of women's roles in traditional and contemporary security frameworks
- Analysis of gaps in current security architecture regarding women's participation
- Strategies for enhanced integration of women in FCT governance structures

Session 2: "The Role of Women Political Candidates in Mobilizing Supporters for Peaceful Elections in the 2026 FCT Area Council Elections"

Facilitator: Mme Esther Eghobamien-Mshelia, Chair of Working Group on Inquiries and Focal Point for Gender, Business and Human Rights, CEDAW Committee Focus: Strategic mobilization for peaceful electoral participation and the critical role of women candidates in violence prevention.

Key Learning Outcomes:

- Techniques for peaceful political mobilization
- Conflict-sensitive campaign strategies
- Building cross-party alliances for peace

Session 3: "Grassroot Peace-building and Political Representation: The Role of Women Leaders and Women Political Aspirants"

Facilitator: Dr. Bosede Awodola Focus: Community-level peacebuilding methodologies and women's political representation pathways.

Key Learning Outcomes:

- Community-based conflict resolution mechanisms
- Political representation strategies for women
- Sustainable peacebuilding at grassroots level

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT AND CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Interactive Session Highlights
The workshop concluded with intensive interactive sessions where participants raised critical issues and received expert guidance:

Electoral Dispute Resolution: Participants from Bwari Area Council addressed concerns about electoral result discrepancies. Facilitators emphasized the importance of understanding legal frameworks and utilizing established electoral mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution.

Women Supporting Women: Multiple participants challenged the misconception that "women are women's enemies" in politics. Facilitators clarified that women often face exploitation in different contexts and stressed the critical importance of the Special Seat Bill in strengthening women's political participation.

Inclusive Leadership: Representatives from Kuje Area Council called for women in leadership positions to amplify voices of aspiring women leaders and promote inclusivity rather than exclusivity in political processes.

Transparency and Accountability: Concerns were raised about women leaders who only engage in advocacy when financial benefits are involved, with participants calling for greater commitment and transparency in women-led initiatives.
Strategic Unity: Participants emphasized that women's unity across party lines and political zones would create more strategic opportunities for collective advancement than individual, divided efforts.

Investment Perspective: The Chairperson of the Market Women Association concluded with the powerful insight that "any support given to a woman by another woman is an investment," recommending the reservation of vice-chairman positions for women across all local government areas.

KEY OUTCOMES AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

Immediate Training Outcomes and Capacity Building

The programme achieved substantial immediate results through the comprehensive training of 150 indigenous women across all six FCT Area Councils, including Abuja Municipal, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Bwari, Abaji, and Kwali. These participants developed enhanced competencies in mediation, conflict management, and peacebuilding techniques while gaining deeper understanding of women's critical roles in democratic processes and governance structures. The initiative successfully integrated traditional conflict resolution practices with modern mediation methodologies, creating strengthened professional networks among women leaders and establishing a solid foundation for sustained peacebuilding efforts across the territory.

The programme's short-term impact trajectory anticipates at least 50% of trained participants actively engaging in community-based conflict mediation, contributing to a significant reduction in election-related conflicts across FCT Area Councils compared to previous electoral cycles. Critical to success is the formal recognition and support from traditional rulers and community leaders, legitimizing women mediators' roles within existing governance structures. Comprehensive documentation of successful mediation interventions will provide valuable case studies for learning, evaluation, and programme replication across other regions.

The medium-term vision encompasses the establishment of robust institutional integration with community-based mediation capacity featuring two trained mediators per ward across all 62 FCT wards. The initial cohort will serve as master trainers, exponentially expanding the mediation network through capacity multiplication initiatives. Programme lessons and best practices will directly inform Area Council policies on conflict prevention and community engagement, while the creation of permanent peace architecture ensures long-term conflict prevention mechanisms and sustainable peacebuilding infrastructure throughout the Federal Capital Territory.

STAKEHOLDER COMMENDATIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS

International Recognition: UN Women described the programme as "a model for inclusive peacebuilding" with regional replication potential, while the ECOWAS Commission endorsed it as complementing existing regional peace and security frameworks.

Government Support: Federal Government representatives praised the programme's alignment with national development agendas and the Renewed Hope initiative, with the FCT Administration committing institutional support for implementation and scaling efforts.

Community Endorsement: Traditional rulers formally endorsed the initiative's grassroots approach and cultural sensitivity, while religious and community leaders pledged support and committed to creating enabling environments for women mediators.
Development Partner Commitment: International partners committed to supporting scaling efforts with technical assistance and financial, while civil society organizations pledged collaboration in implementation and monitoring activities

KEY ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Federal Government: The government should fast-track the Special Seat Bill to strengthen women's political representation and provide sustained funding through dedicated budget lines for women's capacity-building programmes. They must integrate women mediators into official conflict resolution mechanisms at all levels and commit to immediate national scaling with adequate resources and political will.

2. State Governments and Local Government Areas: Should enact legislation supporting women mediators and formally incorporate them into local government conflict resolution structures while allocating resources for ongoing training. They must establish formal recognition and compensation systems for community mediators to ensure their sustainability and effectiveness.

3. Research Center for Advocacy and Policy Advisory in Africa (ReCAP AFRICA): Should establish regular refresher training programmes and create formal networks linking women mediators across regions for knowledge sharing and mutual support. They must systematically monitor and document the impact of women mediators while coordinating advocacy efforts for policy changes.

4. Political Parties: Political parties should create formal spaces for women mediators in conflict resolution processes and provide comprehensive training for women candidates on peaceful campaigning. They must integrate gender perspectives into all electoral strategies and support cross-party initiatives for electoral violence prevention.

5. Development Partners: UN Women, UNDP, ECOWAS Commission, GIZ and other Development partners should provide support to ReCAP Africa's sustained funding for national scaling and offer technical assistance in programme design, implementation, and evaluation. They must facilitate learning exchanges with other countries and support advocacy efforts for enabling policy environments.

6. Communities and Traditional Institutions: Communities should officially recognize and support trained women mediators within traditional authority structures while systematically engaging them in local dispute resolution. They must establish community-based support systems for ongoing peace building efforts and ensure seamless integration of modern mediation techniques with traditional practices.

CONCLUSION, STRATEGIC VISION, AND CLOSING

The workshop on "Empowering FCT Indigenous Women on Mediation, Conflict Management and Peacebuilding" represents a watershed moment in Nigeria's democratic evolution, successfully trained over 150 indigenous women with essential peacebuilding skills that will fundamentally reshape the nation's approach to electoral violence and conflict resolution. This FCT pilot demonstrates the extraordinary potential of combining traditional approaches with modern techniques, creating culturally appropriate and scientifically validated peacebuilding methods that have received overwhelming positive responses from participants, stakeholders, and partners, confirming the model addresses a critical national need with replicable solutions for scaling across Nigeria and West Africa.

The transformational impact of this initiative extends beyond immediate training outcomes, as these empowered women return to their communities as certified agents of peace, carrying the collective hopes of a nation aspiring for peaceful, inclusive democratic governance and creating ripple effects that extend far beyond electoral cycles. However, the true measure of success lies not in the FCT alone but in the urgent national imperative for immediate and aggressive scaling across all of Nigeria's 8,809 electoral wards—an existential necessity for the country's survival as a stable democracy that positions Nigeria for continental leadership in democratic peacebuilding through the strategic partnership between NILDS, ReCAP Africa, and UN Women, creating a transformational framework that can be replicated across West Africa and beyond.

Vote of thanks was given by Dr Christopher Ngara, Ag. Director Democracy and Governance (NILDS). In his closing remarks, Dr Ngara noted that the one-day capacity building programme was a transformative workshop. He then extended his deepest gratitude to all participants, partners, and stakeholders who have demonstrated unwavering commitment to this vital initiative. He further noted that success that the event has witnessed here in the FCT represents more than just a training programme, it embodies Nigeria's potential to lead continental democratic peacebuilding through the empowerment of our women. He reiterated that “the foundation has been laid, the model proven, and our partners committed; what remains is our partners commitment to provide the unprecedented resources and will power necessary for national scaling.” As one participant beautifully articulated, "Every woman we empower becomes a guardian of democracy in her community", and it is time to create an army of such guardians across every Nigerian community. I call upon our government to demonstrate political will, our international partners to provide sustained support, civil society to coordinate for maximum impact, communities to embrace their trained mediators, and the private sector to invest in this essential transformation. The future of Nigerian democracy depends on our collective courage to act with the urgency this moment demands, and I am confident that together, we can transform this historic opportunity into lasting democratic peace for our beloved nation, thank you and journey mercies back to your respective destinations”.

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HIGHLIGHT OF THE EVENT PICTURES











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