Revue des Sciences humaines et sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations

ISSN
(E) 2958-2814
(P) 3006-306X

Volume 3, Numéro 4, Octobre 2025

Université Alassane Ouattara
UFR Communication Milieu et Société

revue.akiri-uao.org

REVUE AKIRI
Revue des Sciences Humaines et Sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/akiri

Site web: https://revue.akiri-uao.org/

E-mail : revueakiri@gmail.com

Editeur

UFR Communication, Milieu et Société

Université Alassane Ouattara, Bouaké (Côte d'Ivoire)

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

INDEXATIONS INTERNATIONALES

Pour toutes informations sur l'indexation internationale de la revue ***AKIRI***, consultez les bases de données ci-dessous :

auréHAL accès aux données de référence de HAL

https://aurehal.archives-ouvertes.fr/journal/read/id/398946

Mir@bel (RE) CUEILLIR LES SAVOIRS

https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/15150/Akiri

Scientific Journal Impact Factor

http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=23334

ORCID

https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6794-1377

Academic Resource Index ResearchBib

https://journalseeker.researchbib.com/view/issn/2958-2814

AJOL AFRICAN JOURNALS ONLINE

https://www.ajol.info/index.php/akiri

IPIndexing Indexing Portal

https://ipindexing.com/journal-details/AKIRI-(Revue-des-sciences-humaines-et-sociales,-lettres,-langues-et-civilisations)/2360

DRJI

https://olddrji.lbp.world/IndexingCertificate.aspx?jid=14086

OAJI .net Open Academic Journals Index Founded 2013

http://oaji.net/journal-detail.html?number=14071

Impact factor : SJIF 2025 : 6.586

REVUE ELECTRONIQUE

AKIRI

Revue Scientifique des Sciences humaines et sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

E-ISSN 2958-2814 (Online ou en Ligne)
I-ISSN 3006-306X (Print ou imprimé)

Equipe Editoriale

Comité Scientifique

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

Contacts

Site web: **https://revue.akiri-uao.org/**
E-mail : revueakiri@gmail.com
Tél. : + 225 0748045267 / 0708399420/ 0707371291

Indexations internationales :

Auré HAL : https://aurehal.archives-ouvertes.fr/journal/read/id/398946

Mir@bel : https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/15150/Akiri

Sjifactor: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=23334

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6794-1377

AJOL: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/akiri

IPIndexing: https://ipindexing.com/journal-details/AKIRI-(Revue-des-sciences-humaines-et-sociales,-lettres,-langues-et-civilisations)/2360

DRJI: https://olddrji.lbp.world/IndexingCertificate.aspx?jid=14086

OAJI: http://oaji.net/journal-detail.html?number=14071

Impact factor : SJIF 2025 : 6.586

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

PRESENTATION DE LA REVUE AKIRI

Dans un environnement marqué par la croissance, sans cesse, des productions scientifiques, la diffusion et la promotion des acquis de la recherche deviennent un impératif pour les acteurs du monde scientifique. Perçues comme un patrimoine, un héritage à léguer aux générations futures, les productions scientifiques doivent briser les barrières et les frontières afin d'être facilement accessibles à tous.

Ainsi, s'inscrivant dans la dynamique du temps et de l'espace, la revue « ***AKIRI*** » se présente comme un outil de promotion et de diffusion des résultats des recherches des enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs des universités et de centres de recherches de Côte d'Ivoire et d'ailleurs. Ce faisant, elle permettra aux enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs de s'ouvrir davantage sur le monde extérieur à travers la diffusion de leurs productions intellectuelles et scientifiques.

AKIRI est une revue à parution trimestrielle de l'Unité de Formation et de Recherches (UFR) : Communication, Milieu et Société (CMS) de l'Université Alassane Ouattara. Elle publie les articles dans le domaine des Sciences humaines et sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations. Sans toutefois être fermée, cette revue privilégie les contributions originales et pertinentes. Les textes doivent tenir compte de l'évolution des disciplines couvertes et respecter la ligne éditoriale de la revue. Ils doivent en outre être originaux et n'avoir pas fait l'objet d'une acceptation pour publication dans une autre revue à comité de lecture.

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

PROTOCOLE DE REDACTION DE LA REVUE AKIRI

La revue ***AKIRI*** n'accepte que des articles inédits et originaux dans diverses langues notamment en allemand, en anglais, en espagnol et en Français. Le manuscrit est remis à deux instructeurs, choisis en fonction de leurs compétences dans la discipline. Le secrétariat de la rédaction communique aux auteurs les observations formulées par le comité de lecture ainsi qu'une copie du rapport, si cela est nécessaire. Dans le cas où la publication de l'article est acceptée avec révisions, l'auteur dispose alors d'un délai raisonnable pour remettre la version définitive de son texte au secrétariat de la revue

Structure générale de l'article :
Le projet d'article doit être envoyé sous la forme d'un document Word, police Times New Roman, taille 12 et interligne 1,5 pour le corps de texte (sauf les notes de bas de page qui ont la taille 10 et les citations en retrait de 2 cm à gauche et à droite qui sont présentées en taille 11 avec interligne 1 ou simple). Le texte doit être justifié et ne doit pas excéder 18 pages. Le manuscrit doit comporter une introduction, un développement articulé, une conclusion et une bibliographie.

Présentation de l'article :

- Le titre de l'article (15 mots maximum) doit être clair et concis. De taille 14 pts gras, il doit être centré.
- Juste après le titre, l'auteur doit mentionner son identité (Prénom et NOM en gras et en taille 12), ses adresses (institution, e-mail, pays et téléphones en italique et en taille 11)
- Le résumé (200 mots au maximum) présenté en taille 10 pts ne doit pas être une reproduction de la conclusion du manuscrit. Il est donné à la fois en français et en anglais (abstract). Les mots-clés (05 au maximum, taille 10pts) sont donnés en français et en anglais (key words)
- Le texte doit être subdivisé selon le système décimal et ne doit pas dépasser 3 niveaux exemples : (1. - 1.1. - 1.2. ; 2. - 2.1. -2.2. - 2.3. - 3. - 3.1. - 3.2. etc.)
- Les références des citations sont intégrées au texte comme suit : (L'initial du prénom suivi d'un point, nom de l'auteur avec l'initiale en majuscule, année de publication suivie de deux points, page à laquelle l'information a été prise). Ex : (A. Kouadio, 2000 : 15).
- La pagination en chiffre arabe apparait en haut de page et centrée.
- Les citations courtes de 3 lignes au plus sont mises en guillemet français («…. »), mais sans italique.

N.B. : Les caractères majuscules doivent être accentués. Exemple : État, À partir de …

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

Références bibliographiques

Ne sont utilisées dans la bibliographie que les références des documents cités. Les références bibliographiques sont présentées par ordre alphabétique des noms d'auteur. Les divers éléments d'une référence bibliographique sont présentés comme suit : NOM et Prénom (s) de l'auteur, Année de publication, zone titre, lieu de publication, zone éditeur, pages (p.) occupées par l'article dans la revue ou l'ouvrage collectif.

Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté entre guillemets et celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une presse écrite est présenté en italique. Dans la zone éditeur, on indique la maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas où un ouvrage est une traduction et/ou une réédition, il faut préciser après le titre le nom du traducteur et/ou l'édition (ex : 2nde éd.).

Les références des sources d'archives, des sources orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page.

- Pour les sources orales, réaliser un tableau dont les colonnes comportent un numéro d'ordre, nom et prénoms des informateurs, la date et le lieu de l'entretien, la qualité et la profession des informateurs, son âge ou sa date de naissance et les principaux thèmes abordés au cours des entretiens. Dans ce tableau, les noms des informateurs sont présentés en ordre alphabétique
- Pour les sources d'archives, il faut mentionner en toutes lettres, à la première occurrence, le lieu de conservation des documents suivi de l'abréviation entre parenthèses, la série et l'année. C'est l'abréviation qui est utilisée dans les occurrences suivantes :
  Ex. : Abidjan, Archives nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (A.N.C.I), 1EE28, 1899.

- Pour les ouvrages, on note le NOM et le prénom de l'auteur suivis de l'année de publication, du titre de l'ouvrage en italique, du lieu de publication, du nom de la société d'édition et du nombre de page.
  Ex : LATTE Egue Jean-Michel, 2018, *L'histoire des Odzukru, peuple du sud de la Côte d'Ivoire, des origines au XIX^e^ siècle*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 252 p.

- Pour les périodiques, le NOM et le(s) prénom(s) de l'auteur sont suivis de l'année de la publication, du titre de l'article entre guillemets, du nom du périodique en italique, du numéro du volume, du numéro du périodique dans le volume et des pages.
  Ex : BAMBA Mamadou, 2022, « Les Dafing dans l'évolution économique et socio-culturelle de Bouaké, 1878-1939 », *NZASSA*, N°8, p.361-372.

NB : Les articles sont la propriété de la revue.

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

SOMMAIRE

LANGUES, LETTRES ET CIVILISATIONS

Anglais

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

COMMNUNICATION, SCIENCES DU LANGAGE, ARTS ET PATRIMOINE

Sciences du langage et de la communication

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

Anthropologie et sociologie

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

Inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize: Spotlighting Faith-based Peacebuilders in Nigeria

Mahamadi OUEDRAOGO
Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo,
Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso,
Email: mahamadi_ouedraogo@ujkz.bf
&
Djamal Dine DIASSO
Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo,
Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso,
Email: dinidiasso@gmail.com

Date de soumission : 10-09-2025
Date de publication : 31-10-2025
doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/akiri.v3i4.3

Abstract

This article examines the Commonwealth's role in peacebuilding, using the inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize awarded to Nigerian grassroots actors as an example. It is anchored in the theory of Conflict Transformation to demonstrate that while conflict cannot always be avoided among adherents of different religions, it can be transformed and leveraged to strengthen interfaith peace and social cohesion, as exemplified by Imam Dr. Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Rev. Dr. James Movel Wuye, the inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize winners. These Nigerian religious leaders were awarded this prize for their longstanding contribution to the promotion of interfaith dialogue and reconciliation. This article draws on document analysis to argue that the Commonwealth's symbolic recognition of these religious actors reflects its growing commitment to peace initiatives and highlights a local initiative, which can have a global impact. Through this case study, the article demonstrates how the Commonwealth can act as a transnational facilitator of religious pluralism by identifying, supporting, and spotlighting grassroots faith-based initiatives that promote religious harmony.

Keywords: Commonwealth, interfaith dialogue, peace prize, Nigeria, conflict transformation.

Première édition du prix de la paix du Commonwealth : des acteurs religieux nigérians honorés

Résumé

Cet article examine le rôle du Commonwealth dans la consolidation de la paix, en prenant pour exemple la première édition du prix de la paix du Commonwealth décerné aux nigérians Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa (Imam) et James Movel Wuye (Pasteur). Il s'appuie sur la théorie de la transformation des conflits pour démontrer que si les conflits ne peuvent pas toujours être évités entre les fidèles de différentes religions, ils peuvent être transformés et utilisés

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

pour renforcer la paix interconfessionnelle et la cohésion sociale, comme l'ont illustré les lauréats de ce premier prix. Ces leaders religieux nigérians ont été récompensés pour leur contribution de longue date à la promotion du dialogue interreligieux et de la réconciliation. Cet article, basé sur l'analyse documentaire, soutient que la reconnaissance symbolique par le Commonwealth de ces acteurs religieux reflète son engagement croissant en faveur des initiatives de paix et met en évidence une initiative locale qui peut avoir un impact mondial. L'article montre comment le Commonwealth peut agir comme un facilitateur transnational du pluralisme religieux en identifiant, en soutenant et en mettant en lumière des initiatives religieuses de base qui favorisent l'harmonie religieuse.

Mots-clés : Commonwealth, dialogue interreligieux, prix de la paix, Nigéria, transformation des conflits.

Introduction

Christian-Muslim clashes are frequent in Nigeria, calling into question ad hoc methods of interfaith conflict resolution. Yet, Nigeria is a member of the Commonwealth, "a voluntary association of independent sovereign states", committed to the promotion of democracy, development, and peace, as enshrined in its Charter and the Singapore Declaration (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, 1971, 2013). In fact, while often recognised for its diplomatic and development efforts, the Commonwealth is increasingly embracing non-state actors, including faith-based leaders, as essential contributors to sustainable peace in a conflict-driven world. This makes its vision intersect with that of the Khalili Foundation, a UK-based charity, which aims to foster peace, unity, and mutual respect worldwide, believing that cultural diversity is a strength, not a divider (Khalili Foundation, n.d.). Their collaboration in initiatives like youth empowerment and training in global citizenship and interfaith dialogue, is exemplified by the Commonwealth Peace Prize, which they co-launched on 21 September 2024—International Day of Peace (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024). This prize, "which aims to reward excellence in peacebuilding and celebrate long-serving standard-bearers who are also role models for young people" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024) then holds a high symbolic role, as it elevates its first-ever recipients, Dr. Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Rev Dr. James Movel Wuye to global acclaim. Formerly known as archenemies, the two religious leaders decided to turn the tragedy into a strategy, leveraging their experience to co-found the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna, Nigeria. This centre is therefore an initiative dedicated to promoting interreligious dialogue, youth engagement, and nonviolent conflict resolution.

In fact, Muslim and Christian preachers need "to show better understanding and sympathy for each other" (D. D. Diasso, 2024: 303). Against this backdrop, through the activities of their centre, the Nigerian Imam and Pastor succeeded in instilling this value of understanding and

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

sympathy in a great number of Muslim and Catholic preachers, who in turn taught it to their disciples. Their example confirms that "change happens because you dedicate the right resources to something new" (Commonwealth of Learning, 2025: 1). This dedication has garnered both religious men international recognition. Evidence for this is their winning of the inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize on 10 March 2025, when they received £50,000 "to expand their ongoing work" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025b). This article draws on their example to explore the Commonwealth's emerging role in peace diplomacy and its strategic support for faith-based and community-rooted initiatives. This leads us to ask the following questions: First, what role do faith-based actors play in peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria? Then, how can the Commonwealth Peace Prize boost local religious peacebuilding efforts? Finally, how does such recognition resonate beyond the borders of the awardees' country?

To answer these questions, we relied on document analysis to analyse the data gathered from a variety of sources such as Commonwealth documents, books, journal articles, reports, websites, and media outlets. The study is grounded in Conflict Transformation Theory, developed by J. Lederach (2003). In his book entitled *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, J. Lederach (2003) asserts that "conflict is normal in human relationships, and conflict is a motor of change"; that is to say, conflict is unavoidable in human life. Then, we shall not view it only as a problem to be resolved, but also as an opportunity to create constructive change in relationships and societies. For J. Lederach (2003), instead of focusing on short-term solutions like ceasefires, we must transform conflict by opting to build a long-term and sustainable peace environment. This can be achieved by addressing justice issues, fostering equity and establishing dialogue among local actors. By viewing the finding through the lens of this theory, the paper argues that the recipients of the 2025 Commonwealth Peace Prize play an important role in peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria and their symbolic recognition by the Commonwealth is echoed beyond Nigeria, enhancing their local peacebuilding strategy's visibility in a way that can inspire and enlighten other communities and actors worldwide.

1. Background: Faith-based Conflict in Nigeria

According to M. Saleh (2022a), inter-community conflict is one of the serious issues challenging peaceful coexistence in the world (p. 110). Discussing the issue in Nigeria, O. Samuel & N. Anadi (2021) hold that "no social problem has embarrassed Nigeria and Nigerians in the recent past like religious crises" (p. 25), all the more so as the country is populated mainly by Christians, Muslims, and traditional religion believers. Almost every day, the adherents of these religions, "especially Muslims and Christians are often engaged in conflicts", leading to

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

loss of lives and properties (U. Ushe, 2015: 117). This paints a gloomy picture of peaceful coexistence in Nigeria, rooted in political and socio-economic struggles.

In the same vein, U. Ushe (2015) mentions that religious crises in Nigeria "can be traced back to the period of independence in 1960", a period before which the relationship between the adherents of African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity (the three major religions in Nigeria) "was cordial and peaceful" (p. 120). A. Alagbu (2007, as cited by U. Ushe, 2015) adds that "religious crises in the country started after independence but were on tribal and regional basis, motivated by the desire to acquire political and economic control of the nation's infrastructures", culminating in a civil war from 1967 to 1970, mainly in Northern Nigeria, where Christians and Muslims "started talking of political control on religious affiliation" (p. 120). That religious consciousness ended up creating "a crack in the relationship of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria", leading to "successive conflicts occurring between them, sometimes degenerating into violent open wars or skirmishes" (U. Ushe, 2015: 120).

U. Ushe (2015) gives more details about interfaith conflicts in Nigeria. He states that the country has witnessed recurring violent religious conflicts, beginning with the 1980 crisis in Zaria, which involved members of both Muslim and Christian communities and resulted in widespread destruction of lives and property. He also notes that the Maitatsine riots, led by the Cameroonian cleric Mohammed Marwa (alias Maitatsine), further escalated tensions, starting in Kano (1980) and later spreading to Bulumkutu in Maiduguri (1982), Rigasa (1984), and other locations such as Gombe and Jimeta-Yola in Adamawa State (p.120). Most of the time, these clashes, apart from their deadly violence, involve the burning down of worship places, especially mosques and churches (symbols of Islam and Christianity). For example, in 2001, "in the State of Jos, a religious riot between Muslims and Christians led to the destruction of mosques, churches and several properties" (D. D. Diasso, 2024: 304), reflecting the deepening religious divide in the country.

While diversity is said to be a source of richness and religion a source of wisdom inspired by God-consciousness, in Nigeria, this is yet to come true. O. Samuel & N. Anadi (2021) confirm this when they state that though Nigeria is regarded as one of the most religious nations of the world, conflicts driven by religious motives have become commonplace there. They further note that "if not carefully handled, religion can equally disintegrate a society as much as it is believed to bind" (O. Samuel & N. Anadi, 2021: 20). However, they end with an optimistic note, as they affirm that "there is a bright prospect" (p. 35) for Nigeria overcoming the phenomenon. The actions of IMC sound like a response to their optimism.

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

2. Contribution of IMC in Peacebuilding Efforts in Nigeria

The Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) is "a nonprofit organization, and its major objective is to promote interfaith discussion and peaceful cooperation" (M. Saleh, 2022a: 189). Focusing on Muslim-Christian dialogue, it was founded in 1995 by Dr. Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Rev. Dr. James Movel Wuye. Though it is headquartered in Kaduna, in northern Nigeria, this centre has played a significant role in de-escalating interfaith conflicts in the country, beyond the northern part. According to M. Kwaja (2014), Nigerian faith-based organisations, including IMC, used mediation to deeply participate "in fostering harmony, promoting peace, rebuilding trust in various communities" in the country (as cited in M. Saleh, 2022b: 113). The success of IMC came from its inclusiveness, which allows it to work "with Christian Muslims Peace Movement and other faith-based organizations, including Women Christians Association and the Muslim Women Association to promote peace within the conflicting parties" (M. Saleh, 2022b: 114).

In the same vein, O. Isola (2014) notes that IMC plays a crucial role in building peace in Nigeria and beyond by facilitating interfaith dialogue, brokering peace agreements, rehabilitating ex-combatants, and supporting victims, especially women of religious conflict, through trauma counselling and economic empowerment. This shows that IMC uses dialogue, mediation and other local nonviolent ways to ease deadly tensions. In fact, Imam Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, having been once enemies and having each suffered personal loss during violent Christian-Muslim clashes, understood that violence begets violence. That is why, despite their initial hatred and desire for revenge, they chose the path of peace and reconciliation (A. Abattad, 2025) and later established IMC (E. Jah & D. Mabas, 2022: 13) to promote dialogue, trust, and tolerance between Muslim and Christian communities.

Their grassroots peacebuilding efforts have been vital in reducing religious violence across Nigeria, especially in its northern part, as IMC has succeeded in playing a key role in mediating conflicts in states like Kaduna, Plateau, and Borno; it was also instrumental in the Kaduna Peace Declaration of Religious Leaders in 2002 (A. Abattad, 2025). Through their tireless efforts in interfaith training and mediating crises, Imam Ashafa and Reverand Wuye serve as a viable proof that former enemies can become powerful agents of peace. Thus, they fully deserve the prize that they were awarded in March 2025. Reflecting on that award, Rev. Wuye and Imam Ashafa said:

> We are truly grateful to the Khalili Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat for this award and are humbled by the fact that it goes to a Christian and a Muslim from Nigeria. We have been fortunate to be surrounded by

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

> remarkable people and have played a role in supporting the transformation of many thousands of others. We dedicate this amazing achievement to them. We also hope that it serves as inspiration and for the next generation of peacebuilders. (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a)

As they mentioned, this prize should pave the way for other grassroots initiatives and inspire future generations in peacebuilding efforts. The achievements of IMC are invaluable because they are about building positive peace. That is to say, going beyond the apparent absence of violence, to involve the establishment of social justice and equality. According to P. Shields (2017), the concept of positive peace encompasses a wide range of principles and ideals, including justice, democracy, empathy, cooperation, efficiency, freedom, active participation, stability, harmony, and teamwork (p. 8). P. Shields (2017), quoting the biblical "blessed are the peacemakers" (Mathew 5:9, King James Version), adds that positive peace may stem from or be influenced by religious teachings (p. 8). It has been such religious teachings that Rev. Wuye and his former enemy, turned friend, have harnessed to defuse and/or calm interfaith crises. Hence, their winning of the inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize will boost their efforts.

3. Commonwealth Peace Prize and Local Religious Peacebuilding

The Commonwealth Peace Prize is a good initiative because of its potential to boost peacebuilding efforts, particularly by empowering local religious actors, as it "will be awarded triennially to a distinguished peacebuilder with a strong track record of faith and values-based engagement in conflict resolution, promotion of social cohesion, and sustainable peace" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024). The first edition of the prize is promising in that it elevates its winner's work onto a global stage. In fact, this prestigious award, though it provides modest financial support, offers symbolic affirmation and creates networking opportunities, with far-reaching implications for the Commonwealth in particular and the international community in general. The importance of this prize is further discussed below.

3.1. Support for Growth

Oftentimes, the scarcity or insufficiency of financial means hinders the performance of many local lofty initiatives like those of IMC. Therefore, by awarding a prize worth £50,000 to co-recipients Rev. James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, the Commonwealth showcases its support for their interfaith initiative. This financial support will undoubtedly enable IMC to expand its activities across Nigeria and beyond, demonstrating how such funding can help local religious actors sustain and amplify their peacebuilding interventions at grassroots levels. This will empower both religious leaders to scale their successful model and reach more communities affected by conflict. Sometimes, some good local initiatives exist but run out of

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

means to conduct impactful activities, mobilise or convince the public. Therefore, this prize and the like are welcome to help centres like IMC foster and bolster peacebuilding actions for the interest of the population. Actually, "finances are critical in interfaith dialogue as it requires hiring of halls, travelling, engagement of facilitators, publicity, accommodation, training" (E. Jah & D. Mabas, 2022: 19).

According to M. Saleh (2022a), IMC faces difficulties, particularly in the training of community members and organising regular meetings due to limited financial support. M. Saleh (2022a) also explains that delays in the monthly disbursement of funds from USAID have sometimes impeded the smooth execution of IMC activities. He reports from Imam Ashafa, who, reflecting on the long-standing nature of these challenges in 2019, said that since 1995, IMC had faced funding challenges and that at times, they have to pay the rent for their offices themselves (as cited in M. Saleh, 2022a: 118). Regarding this financial challenge for IMC activities, it is obvious that the Commonwealth prize is invaluable for its recipients' peacebuilding vision, as the money received could help in the practical organisation of their interfaith dialogues. Moreover, the Commonwealth's recognition of these Nigerian religious leaders and their centre carries a highly symbolic significance that can make faith-based peace initiatives worth consideration, support and funding.

3.2. Symbolic Affirmation of Faith-based Peace-making

By honouring the founders of IMC, the Commonwealth Peace Prize sends a powerful message, which reinforces the legitimacy and role of religious actors in successful conflict resolution. And by making the selection criteria explicitly focus on faith-based engagement and dialogue mechanisms (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024), the Commonwealth shows that religious leaders can also bring a great contribution to reconciliation by building bridges between communities of a conflict-prone area. This symbolic affirmation, far from being a religious stance or an interference of the Commonwealth in religious matters, can foster greater acceptance and support for IMC faith-based peace initiatives.

Actually, the essential in the context of IMC is not necessarily money but consideration and valorisation, which create symbolism that in turn makes peacekeeping actions and endeavours visible and emotionally resonant. Most often, religious adherents are more likely to support peace when they see the efforts of their leaders put on a pedestal. In this context, the Commonwealth Peace Prize has boosted the conviction that sustainable positive peace is achievable through the collective actions of leaders and disciples of different faiths. Thus, by spotlighting IMC and its co-founders, the Commonwealth helps transform faith-based

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

peacebuilding from an abstract policy into a lived and visible experience, which is highly symbolic in contexts where faith shapes identity and action. That is to say, the prize as well as its awarding ceremony carry a meaning beyond their financial and visible ones. This provides evidence that the Commonwealth can unbiasedly foster faith-based initiatives in a way that is likely to catalyse other initiatives.

4. The Prize as a Catalyst for Global Visibility

Beyond the financial value of the prize, its winners are invited to serve as advisers beyond their homeland. This creates a valuable mechanism for experienced peacebuilders to help shape the mentoring of younger peacebuilders across the Commonwealth member states. Through their advisory role, the awardees will be able to use their wisdom and practical experience to help the young generation of peacebuilders cultivate and value interfaith local initiatives. In fact, though they have been doing a noble work in Nigeria for three decades, they were not well-known outside. Therefore, the recognition by the Commonwealth significantly spotlights their efforts, acting as a powerful catalyst for global visibility at many levels.

4.1. The Prize as a Prestigious Profile-raising Platform

The prize awarding ceremony is a platform which elevates the awardees' profile. Actually, receiving the prize during the Commonwealth Day in London, an event attended by high-profile figures, including His Majesty King Charles III, placed the initiators of IMC on a pedestal, providing them with an unparalleled platform and a megaphone for louder preaches and large mobilisations. Wuye and Ashafa even recognised in their speech that the prize offers them immense visibility, as it brings their vital work to the attention of a global audience.

This distinction is particularly important because it confirms that the work that is being done in IMC deserves global attention for a global impact. In fact, if a local initiative succeeds in being validated by international organisations like the Commonwealth and the Khalili Foundation, it gains more credit inside but also outside, as some people need validation before conviction. That is to say, with this distinction, many sceptical and reluctant young Christians and Muslims from Nigeria and elsewhere will be convinced that Wuye and Ashafa are doing a good job. So, they can decide to join the fight for peace. Those who had already heard about IMC without considering it may also change their attitude towards it and even seek to support it or look for its support.

Upon receiving this prize, Wuye and Ashafa gained entry into the Commonwealth Peace Fellowship and various faith networks. This provides them with opportunities to expand their work by presenting it at international forums, mentoring other aspiring peacebuilders, and

influencing peacebuilding discourse and policy across the Commonwealth member countries. This will create a network through which Wuye and Ashafa will share knowledge, experience, and wisdom with peace practitioners worldwide. Wuye and Ashafa's local peacebuilding efforts have indeed received international attention, mainly through a film, which portrays their journey from conflict to cooperation, but the Commonwealth Peace Prize confirmed and amplified this visibility.

4.2. International Amplification via Media and Films

The documentary film titled *An Interfaith Partnership for Peace: The Imam and the Pastor in Nigeria* (Harvard Divinity School, 2014) serves as an example of how media and film can amplify local peacebuilding efforts to a global stage. By showcasing the real-life reconciliation between Imam Ashafa and Pastor James, once fierce enemies, the film has been internationally recognised and screened at venues such as the United Nations Headquarters, the UK House of Commons, and in over a dozen countries (A. Channer, 2025). The Commonwealth recognition adds a layer of global reach to the initiative and makes those who have just learnt about the Imam and the Pastor look for more information about them. By doing so, they are likely to come across the film about the IMC peacebuilding model. As we are living in a technology-driven world, the film will then be shared through a variety of media for more outreach and impact. This film about Wuye and Ashafa's peacebuilding efforts, and others already produced and yet to be produced, can even be watched in schools and universities as part of peacebuilding teaching. This will further amplify their message and technique, as even school children from across the world will learn about their conflict transformation initiative and get inspired.

5. Implications of the Prize for the Commonwealth and Beyond

The establishment of the Commonwealth Peace Prize and its ongoing impact have profound implications, both for the Commonwealth's strategic agenda and for the broader landscape of global peacebuilding. As the Commonwealth spans every continent, its peacebuilding initiatives have a global reach.

5.1. Institutionalising Faith-based Peacebuilding

In general, the Commonwealth does not meddle in religious affairs but recognises freedom, including religious freedom, as enshrined in its Charter, which promotes diversity and understanding. Then, the peace prize formalises the role of religion and inter-religious dialogue within the Commonwealth's peace and social cohesion agenda. By integrating faith-based approaches in its agenda, the Commonwealth strengthens its comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention and resolution. It is even normal and necessary to do so because the

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

organisation's member countries are not mono-religious. Rather, they are populated by people of different religious faiths.

Yet, as we can see in the case of Nigeria, this religious diversity is not always conducive to a peaceful coexistence among different communities. Hence, the necessity to encourage, empower and honour local peacebuilders endeavouring to make people from different faiths collaborate and work together for their countries' progress and development. Therefore, through the peace prize, which is due to be awarded triennially, the Commonwealth has institutionalised interfaith peacebuilding, so to speak. This prize then encourages a long-term vision among peacebuilders. Its focus on faith-based peacebuilding initiatives promotes the development and replication of sustainable models of interfaith reconciliation across the Commonwealth member countries. By this, it fosters approaches that are rooted in local contexts and driven by community needs, ensuring that peace efforts are not just impactful in the short term but also resilient and adaptable over time.

5.2. Strengthening Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Peacebuilding

The Commonwealth Peace Prize is not an isolated peace initiative. It is linked to and strengthens broader initiatives such as the Commonwealth Faith Festival and the Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN). The Commonwealth Faith Festival is a multi-year collaboration between the Khalili Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat, showcasing the Foundation's global projects that unite people through art, culture, and education (Commonwealth Secretariat & Khalili Foundation, 2024).

With regards to the CYPAN, it "brings together young people from across the Commonwealth to upscale and optimise grassroots, national, regional and Pan-Commonwealth efforts to promote peace, respect and understanding and preventing violent extremism" ("CYPAN", n.d.). These connections boost the visibility and prestige of the prize to mentor young peace activists and promote intergenerational projects. This ensures that peacebuilding knowledge, experience, and passion are passed down, creating a continuous cycle of engagement and leadership in peace issues among younger generations.

5.3. A Model for Grassroots Conflict Transformation and Global Peacebuilding

The Commonwealth Peace Prize, backed by the Khalili Foundation, serves as a powerful demonstration of how philanthropy and intergovernmental organisations can effectively collaborate to uplift local actors. This success story can attract further support for faith-based and interfaith efforts, not only in Nigeria but also in other parts of the world, even beyond the span of the Commonwealth. This can inspire more partnerships and investments in grassroots

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

peace initiatives. Furthermore, this prize will make the Commonwealth concretely join the ranks of international organisations that are dedicated to peace. Therefore, not only does the prize elevate its recipients to global acclaim, but it also adds visibility, value and admiration to the Commonwealth's actions in favour of peace in the world. More importantly, the prize highlighted a local initiative, making it widely known. This means that IMC will shine internationally and its expertise will be sought beyond the scope of the Commonwealth.

However, all this has been possible thanks to a good application of conflict transformation by Imam Ashafa and Rev. Wuye. Their conflicting past and their friendly present testify to the fact that conflict is not necessarily bad, provided that its protagonists are mature and willing enough to preserve the essential: peaceful coexistence. This is what J. Lederach (2003) terms as "positive change", which requires from the protagonists "a willingness to create new ways of interacting, to build relationships and structures that look toward the future". Thus, through the successful initiative of these Nigerian religious leaders (Pastor and Imam), we learn lessons for the establishment of sustainable positive peace rooted in conflict transformation.

Conclusion

The Commonwealth Peace Prize is more than just an award; it is a strategic instrument that valorises and empowers local faith-based peacebuilders, amplifies their voices globally, and institutionalises their approaches within the Commonwealth's broader peace agenda. Its impact will foster a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable peace across the Commonwealth and beyond. In fact, while Imam Wuye and Rev. Ashafa have been working for peace through their centre for three decades, they were not globally known. It has been since their prize-winning that their names have really travelled across the Commonwealth and beyond. From then on, their Interfaith Mediation Centre has gained international attention. Surely, this distinction will catalyse more attention and research on this centre (IMC). In addition, spotlighting these local faith-based peacebuilders, regarding their past, is a way of concurring with J. Lederach (2003) that while conflict is not always avoidable in human relationships, it can be "a motor of change".

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

References

ABATTAD Abimbola, 2025, "From bitter enemies to co-founders of interfaith organisation: Nigerian imam, pastor won £50,000 Commonwealth Peace Prize", *Guild of Interfaith Media Practitioners*, https://interfaithmediaguild.org/from-bitter-enemies-to-co-founders-of-interfaith-organisation-nigerian-imam-pastor-won-50000-commonwealth-peace-prize/.

CHANNER Aili, 2025, "2025 Inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize", *Initiatives of change International*, https://iofc.org/en/news/imam-and-pastor-inaugural-commonwealth-peace-prize-2025.

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING, 1971, *Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth principles*, Commonwealth Secretariat, https://thecommonwealth.org/declaration-commonwealth-principles-1971.

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING, 2013, *The Commonwealth Charter*, The Stationery office.

COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING, 2025, "Learning for Sustainable Development", *Commonwealth of Learning*, vol. 30, n°2, 16 p.

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT, 2024, "A Prize for peace: Commonwealth Secretariat and Khalili Foundation announce new award", https://thecommonwealth.org/news/prize-peace-commonwealth-secretariat-and-khalili-foundation-announce-new-award?

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT, 2025a, "Inaugural Commonwealth Peace Prize winners from Nigeria lauded for their contributions", *Commonwealth*, https://thecommonwealth.org/news/cd2025/inaugural-commonwealth-peace-prize-winners-nigeria-lauded-their-contributions.

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT, 2025b, "Commonwealth Peace Prize", *Commonwealth*, https://thecommonwealth.org/events/commonwealth-peace-prize.

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT & KHALILI FOUNDATION, 2024, "Commonwealth Secretariat and Khalili Foundation launch youth-led peace ambassadors initiative", *Commonwealth*, https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-secretariat-and-khalili-foundation-launch-youth-led-peace-ambassadors-initiative.

COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PEACE AMBASSADORS NETWORK (CYPAN), n.d., "Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN)", *YourCommonwealth*, https://yourcommonwealth.org/youth-network/commonwealth-youth-peace-ambassadors-network-cypan/.

ISSN-L: 2958-2814
ISSN-P: 3006-306X

DIASSO Djamal Dine, 2024, *The Commonwealth's contribution to democracy in Africa from 1960 to 2022: The case of Ghana and Nigeria* [PhD Dissertation (Unpublished)], Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo, 368 p.

Harvard Divinity School (Director), 2014, *An interfaith partnership for peace: The imam and the pastor in Nigeria* [Video recording], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc7khfZvd08.

ISOLA Olusola O., 2014, "Mécanismes de médiation des conflits interconfessionnels et consolidation de la paix au Nigeria—ICERMediation", *ICERMediation*, https://icermediation.org/fr/m%C3%A9diation-des-conflits-interreligieux-au-nigeria/.

JAH Emmanuel Achus & MABAS Damila Kevin, 2022, "Inter-faith dialogue, peace building and conflict transformation in Nigeria", *Wukari International Studies Journal*, vol.6, n°2, p.1-22.

KHALILI FOUNDATION, n.d., "Mission, vision & impact", *Khalili Foundation*, https://www.khalili.foundation/about/mission-vision-impact/.

LEDERACH John Paul, 2003, *The little book of conflict transformation*, Intercourse, PA Good Books, 64 p.

SALEH Musa, 2022a, "Interfaith mediation centre in promoting peace in Bauchi State, Nigeria", *African Social Science and Humanities Journal (ASSHJ)*, vol. 3, n°4, p.182–192. https://journals.jozacpublishers.com/asshj.

SALEH Musa, 2022b, "Role of interfaith mediation centre in managing conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bauchi State, Nigeria", *Journal of African History, Culture and Arts*, vol. 2, n°2, p.5-12. https://doi.org/10.57040/jahca.v2i2.203.

SAMUEL Odoma & ANADI Ngozi Obeta, 2021, "Religious conflicts in Nigeria: Between secularism and state preference for religions", *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 9, n°1, p. 20-37. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2021.91002.

SHIELDS Patricia M., 2017, "Limits of negative peace, faces of positive peace", *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, vol. 47, n°3, p.612. https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2868.

USHE Ushe Mike, 2015, "Religious conflicts and education in Nigeria: Implications for national security", *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol.6, N°2, p.117–130.