Navigating restrictions: External funding and WPS implementation

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ABSTRACT

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda promotes women's agency, gender equality, and women and civil society's role within national and international processes to achieve peace and security outcomes. The adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2242 further extends women and civil society organisations' role within peace and security activities to include activities to counter-terrorism and counter-violent extremism (CT/CVE). However, historical tensions and ongoing state restrictions have closed CT/CVE engagement opportunities for civil society. Applying Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory, I argue that access to international funds has enabled CSOs to survive despite the closing civic space in Nigeria and create WPS opportunities. Access to external resources and the ability of these actors to implement measures aligned with local women needs, as opposed to the requirements of donors has enabled these actors to achieve some WPS outcomes in Nigeria.

Introduction

In response to growing extremist threats in the early 2000s and evidence of the risks that extremist organisations pose to human and women's security, United Nations member states (predominantly Spain in collaboration with the United States) advocated for the adoption for the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2242 in 2015. As one of the first international frameworks to promote a gendered approach to understanding extremist violence, the resolution calls for a holistic approach to Countering Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (CT/CVE) (UNSC, 2015). UNSCR 2242 encourages states to better understand women's experiences through research, empower and engage them in leadership activities to address the threats that extremism poses (UNSC, 2015). The resolution also calls for states to allocate funds to women-led civil society organisations (CSOs) and provide training and resources to reduce their vulnerability to extremism (True & Eddyono, 2017; UNSC, 2015). Although aimed to improve outcomes for women, UNSCR 2242 is not without limitations. The lack of a universal definition for terrorism and violent extremism requires states to determine the actions and the consequences for those whose actions fall within the boundaries of adopted definitions, with this increasing risks for CSOs whose activities may not align with the state's CT/CVE ideologies (Charbord & Ní Aoláin, 2018; Ganor, 2011). UNSCR 2242 also encourages states to create opportunities for women to participate in CT/CVE process but fails to recognise the potential risks posed to women at the forefront (Ni Aoláin, 2016; Patel & Westermann, 2018). For instance, CT/CVE interventions often target minority communities (Gervasoni, 2017), increases the risks of the state engaging women as instruments, without providing adequate services to support them and their communities (Patel & Westermann, 2018).

To date, 56 % of UN member states have integrated the resolution in their Women Peace and Security (WPS) NAP (Women's International League of Peace, 2024), which outlines the measures proposed by state governments to fulfil their WPS commitments (Jacevic, 2019: 274). This includes measures proposed to address terrorism and violent extremism domestically. Although the WPS Agenda assumes that the measures outlined in NAPS reflect states' aims to address the domestic needs of their country, NAPs developed by the majority of Global North states are outward-facing (Lee-Koo & Trojanowska, 2017; Shepherd, 2016), do not acknowledge Global North actors contribution to conflict in Global South states (Hamilton et al., 2020); and focuses on engaging women in military roles (Shepherd, 2016; Basu & Shepherd, 2017; Wittwer, 2018). UNSCR 2242 also calls for states to highlight the measures proposed to collaborate with CSOs (UNSCR, 2015). However, most NAPs provide little to no account of the strategies to engage civil society (Hamilton et al., 2020; Jonjić-Beitter et al., 2020), and less than half of the states that have integrated UNSCR 2242 propose measures for ongoing collaboration with CSOs (Asante & Shepherd, 2020). In some contexts, historical tension between state and non-state actors impacts commitment to this principle (Njoku, 2022; Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019; Wright,

2023; Chilmeran, 2022).

The resolution also promotes measures to protect women from the threats of terrorism and violent extremism; however, it fails to account for transnational terrorist networks such as Boko Haram in Nigeria's North-East and the Islamic State of Wester Africa in Niger, that pose risks to women's security. Despite these challenges, CSOs within the Global South have developed strategies to overcome obstacles to meet their WPS commitments. In countries such as Nigeria, access to external funding has created opportunities for developing and implementing WPS initiatives despite ongoing state restrictions. Thus, this study is guided by the following research question: How does strategic use of external resources enable CSOs to address WPS implementation barriers in Nigeria? In this study, I apply Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory (RDT), which examines the significance of external resources on organisations' survival, to analyse semi-structured interviews and surveys conducted with 35 state and civil society actors in Nigeria. I argue that access to external resources, particularly support and funding from international organisations, has enabled CSOs in the country to contribute to implementation and develop strategies to overcome implementation barriers. I highlight that access to international funding, support and the strategic approach adopted to pursue its aims to implement UNSCR 2242 amid a closing civic space show that Global South states such as Nigeria and its actors should be considered WPS leaders and sites of knowledge development. These actors' approaches contribute to improving Global WPS implementation outcomes. I develop this argument in three stages. First, I explore the dynamics between state and non-state actors within the WPS space, strategies adopted by CSOs in the Global South to overcome barriers to gendered security outcomes, and the implementation of UNSCR 2242 in Nigeria. In the second section, I explain RDT, which informs the analysis of the interviews and surveys. In the final section, I discuss the findings and their implications for WPS implementation.

Dynamics between the state and CSOs in achieving WPS

Civil society's role in the adoption of UNSCR 1325 has led to the recognition of these actors' role in WPS implementation. As the "social glue that holds societies together" (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019: 430), a space for partnership and knowledge creation (Boonpunth & Saheem, 2022; Hall, 2021; O'Reilly, 2015), civil society's activities significantly influenced the adoption of UNSCR 1325. CSOs, monitoring, advocacy and negotiations have contributed to their recognition among WPS scholars as experts (Mundkur & Shepherd, 2018; Shepherd, 2021; Susskind & Duarte, 2019). Their capacity to create awareness and provide meaningful insights into the experiences of marginalised women has contributed to the Security Council's acknowledgement of civil society engagement as a key factor in successful WPS implementation.

For instance, UNSCR 1325 encourages states to consult CSOs (UNSCR, 2000); UNSCR 1820, 1889, 2122 promotes CSOs' participation (UNSCR, 2008, 2009a, 2013); UNSCR 1888 calls for their inclusion in activities to address conflict-related sexual violence (UNSCR, 2009b); and UNSCR 2242 calls for participation in CT/CVE activities (UNSCR, 2015). Although capable of contributing to achieving security outcomes for women, CSOs can also act as a barrier. CSOs' actions at times aim to increase their political influence as opposed to creating awareness of the needs of marginalised groups (Manji, 1998) and the civic space can be a site of agitation and disconnection (Mama, 2005; Martín de Almagro, 2018). For example, Pearce (2000: 13) states that some Nigerian CSOs' actions "enforce gender subordination in the disguise of women's activism". As some CSOs support, as opposed to challenge, political parties whose policies create insecurities, Tamale (2006) argues that this has contributed to a shift in the civic space from sites for activism and feminist organisation to sites for professional advancement.

The increasing politicisation of civil society has closed opportunities for CSOs' engagement in WPS implementation. Although the WPS Agenda encourages CSOs' meaningful participation in all WPS activities

(Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2015), these actors are likely to be engaged in consultation and excluded from implementation activities (Hamilton et al., 2020). The extent to and the opportunities provided for meaningful participation in consultations are informed by the relationship between the state and CSOs in the domestic context. For instance, in the Netherlands and Nepal, CSOs significantly contributed to WPS NAP development and implementation (Hamilton et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2014); however, in contexts such as Bosnia-Herzegovina (Cittadini & della Valle, 2022), Kenya (Aroussi, 2021; Mesok, 2022) and Australia (Mundkur & Shepherd, 2018), CSOs participation is limited or subject to invitations from the state. When engaged, civil society continues to experience barriers to participation. Limited resources and expertise in the policy process, opposition to military interventions, and the lack of political will (UN Women, 2015) contribute to close engagement opportunities. The increasing decline of domestic WPS funds since 2014 (Davies & True, 2022; Hamilton et al., 2020) further creates implementation barriers, requiring CSOs to reconcile their interests with states' interests to access resources at the risk of achieving WPS outcomes, or for Global South states, accessing international funds to create much needed change. Dependence on state and donor funds closes opportunities for local ownership and affects CSOs' ability to create innovative measures that align with local needs (Atibil, 2014). This also contributes to perceptions of the Global South as objects of foreign feminist policy as opposed to a site of knowledge development (Haastrup & Hagen, 2021).

To address implementation barriers, studies show that CSOs in the Global South have developed various initiatives to increase their influence and achieve gendered security outcomes. To address the lack of political response to rape in Liberia, Medie (2013) highlights that women non-governmental organisations (NGOs) advocated for the amendment of legislation prohibiting rape, developed and implemented support programs for survivors and initiated campaigns to create awareness of and improve judicial remedies for survivors. Likewise, in other African states such as Ghana (Anyidoho & Crawford, 2014) and Kenya (Mesok, 2022), training provided by CSOs and these actors' ability to utilise international funding to achieve their objectives has enabled civil society to achieve gendered outcomes despite political obstacles. I argue that Nigerian CSOs adopt similar strategies to overcome WPS implementation barriers. In other Global South states, creating counter-narratives that acknowledge women's role in Bosnian history (Cittadini & della Valle, 2022), developing and facilitating gender equality workshops in Turkey (Degirmencioglu & Kahana-Dagan, 2020; Merdjanova, 2020), and advocating for the establishment of female police stations in Guatemala and Nicaragua (Walsh, 2016), has enabled civil society to respond to women's security needs. The strategies CSOs adopt to overcome implementation barriers depend on the type of political system. In contexts where the political environment is 'closed', CSOs adopt combative measures such as public protests, while lobbying and persuasive strategies inform actions in 'open' political spaces (Kitschelt, 1986). Gender norms that position women as inherently peaceful and assume that their inclusion within security processes will lead to peaceful outcomes inform the engagement of women and women's organisations as security actors within 'open' political spaces (Alison, 2009; Simić, 2010; UN Department of Peacekeeping Operation, 2000). Although some studies highlight that women's participation as security actors increases the likelihood of peaceful outcomes (O'Reilly et al., 2015; Krause et al., 2018; True & Riveros-Morales, 2018), engaging women only when traditional security measures have achieved little outcomes (Lorentzen, 2021), and recognising them as actors primarily in private spaces (Gjørv, 2012), diminishes their value in society and creates obstacles to meaning participation (Jusufi et al., 2022). Access to networks and resources external to the implementing environment and opening in political structures increases the likely success of strategies implemented in 'closed' political environments (Kitschelt, 1986). In the Nigerian context, I highlight that external support and these actors' approach to

utilise international funds to create measures focused on local women's needs as opposed to those proposed by donors, to some extent, provided CSOs with the autonomy to implement community-based CT/CVE initiatives within a 'closed' political environment.

Implementation of UNSCR 2242 in Nigeria

The Nigerian Government initially responded to extremist threats by creating a task force and implementing various CT/CVE policies and measures. The Federal Task Force and the Joint Task Force (JTF), which consists of military and police personnel, are tasked with responding to extremist ideologies that lead to violence (Heydemann, 2014; Sampson, 2016). The JTF utilised search and seizure methods, demolitions and violence as measures to curb ideologies that support extremist views (Attah, 2019; Ibezim-Ohaeri, 2017). In addition, the state implemented anti-terrorism policies aimed at limiting financial support for terrorist organisations and ensuring the closure of illegal operations in the state (Aluko, 2023). These approaches achieved little success, as obsolete equipment, poor financing, and inaccurate intelligence information contributed to high rates of casualty deaths. For instance, between 2010 and 2022, there were a reported 10,747 civilian casualties of military interventions (Torelli, 2022). As these measures failed to recognise the gendered implications of extremist violence, international pressure and ongoing civil society advocacy encouraged the state to integrate Resolution 2242 in the second iteration of its WPS NAP (Asante, 2023; Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019). The country's WPS NAP acknowledges the gendered elements of terrorism and violent extremism, including the increasing threats experienced by women in the country's North-East (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017). It recognises terrorism and violent extremism as a national issue and proposes to uphold the pillars of the Agenda: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery, in efforts to respond to all threats to women's security (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017). The Government engaged large and prominent CSOs in the development of the WPS NAP and has increased the presence of security personnel and responses in areas in the country where women are at greater risk of extremist violence (Asante, 2023). Despite achieving some outcomes, the implementation of UNSCR 2242 has not been without challenges. Resolution 2242 encourages states to engage women-led CSOs; however, the engagement of these actors is selective and influenced by an organisation's existing relationship with government personnel (Asante, 2023).

Since adopting UNSCR 2242, the state has adopted more policies that close CSOs' civic engagement. Section 14(1) of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act prohibits individuals from wilfully providing or collecting money intended for terrorist-related incidents (Attah, 2019), and the Money Laundering (Prohibition-Amended) Act 2013 imposes life imprisonment and death sentences for those found to receive financial assistance to support terrorist-related activities (Aluko, 2023). Likewise, the Terrorism (Prevention) Amendment) Act 2013 allows security and state personnel to detain those suspected of terrorist-related activities for 48 h without providing support, including medical assistance (Aluko, 2023). However, these measures also target and close opportunities for CSOs. Through interviews with CSOs operating across Nigeria, Njoku (2022) highlights that 30 % of actors reported restricted access or the closure of their organisation's bank accounts, while CSO executives reported challenges accessing international funds due to financial constraints imposed by counter-terrorism measures. These constraints had a greater impact on small CSOs (often operating in the local context), with 38.5 % reporting that they had to halt their CT/CVE activities (Njoku, 2022). Adesomoju (2018) also indicates that CT/CVE measures have contributed to the review and closure of over 100 NGOs due to perceptions that these organisations support extremist organisations or engage in money laundering. Despite these local challenges, some CSOs (particularly those locally rooted) continue to find strategies to practice amid growing state constraints. This highlights a need for an enquiry to understand better the challenges experienced and how access to international and external supports has enabled these actors to continue implementing CT/CVE measures.

Theoretical framework and method

Resource dependency theory suggests that an organisation's ability to survive and achieve its goals depends on its capacity to attain and control resources from the external environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Resources include funds, access to experts and data, legitimacy and prestige (Ebers, 2001; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The theory highlights three priorities for an organisation's survival: "organisational survival, organisational autonomy, and mission-specific goal attainment" (Harsch, 2015: 23; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Survival achieved through financial security, relevance within its ecosystem, and the ability to exercise organisational autonomy regardless of financial reliance on external actors enables an organisation to achieve outcomes despite internal obstacles (Harsch, 2015; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Applying resource dependency theory provides insights into the approaches that have enabled CSOs in Nigeria to implement UNSCR 2242 despite its closing civic space. It further highlights that the strategic use of external funds by CSOs, particularly those in the local context, has achieved WPS outcomes despite increasing government restrictions. Although Obadare (2010, 2011) suggests that CSOs with access to international funds develop measures aligned with donors' interests, as opposed to local needs, I hypothesise that CSOs in Nigeria effectively utilise international funding to overcome some implementation barriers imposed by the state and achieve outcomes for women as opposed to the objectives of donors. I highlight that this was prominent among local CSOs, who are often at greater risk of closure and state sanctions.

Nigeria is one of many Global South states that have actively translated UNSCR 2242 in its WPS NAP and local action plans (LAPs). Like other Global South states, civil society actors experience challenges operating due to state interventions and policies. A history of tension between CSOs and the state and tensions surrounding the engagement of non-state actors in a space that the state had traditionally managed has contributed to the exclusion of CSOs (Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019). As UNSCR 2242 encourages collaboration between CSOs and the state, this also makes Nigeria a case study to explore how CSOs have achieved some WPS outcomes despite increasing state restrictions. Online surveys and interviews with state and NGOs engaged in WPS and CT/CVE activities provided some insights. Purposive and snowball sampling was applied to recruit 35 civil society and state actors from 30 registered NGOs (see Tables 1 and 2), and implemented interventions aimed to address extremist violence, gender and peace and security issues at either the local, sub-national or national level. These organisations operated individually, although collaboration between three local and sub-national operating CSOs and 2 nationally operating CSOs as part of a consortium was common, due to existing relationships between managers and past collaboration to implement interventions in key communities at risk of extremism ideologies in the country's North-East.

Half of the state actors implementing interventions at the national level did so through their roles as defence personnel, while the other actors were engaged in policy roles. The CSOs engaged in the study were predominantly women-led, with one male actor at the local level, three at the sub-national level and two at the federal level managing CSOs. Interviews with civil society actors focused on their implementation roles and the sources of resources that enabled them to overcome

Table 1
Characteristics of CSOs interviewed and surveyed.

Level of Operation	No. of organisations and	Percentage
Federal	6	21 %
State/Province	12	43 %
Local	10	36 %

Table 2
Characteristics of state actors interviewed.

Level of operation	No. of actors	Percentage
Federal	4	43 %
State/Province	3	57 %

challenges and achieve outcomes for women. Interviews were conducted with 7 CSO managers and 7 state actors, and 21 front-line CSO staff were surveyed to gain insights into their experience and the strategies adopted in the local context. Surveys provided contextual data to understand better the perspective of actors engaged in day-to-day implementation. Data collected from the interviews and surveys were analysed using Nvivo to identify key themes related to implementation, challenges, and funding sources.

Results

Leveraging international funds

Challenges to the fulfilment of Resolution 2242 were evident within political spaces, with limited access to funding and a lack of political interest in gendered approaches to terrorism, creating obstacles to the implementation of the Agenda. As Resolution 2242 encourages states to allocate and increase funding to improve gender equality and support CT/CVE interventions that empower women and respond to the gender dimension of terrorism and violent extremism (United Nations, 2015), it assumes that access to funding and women's security is a priority for all member states. In Nigeria, CSOs reported that the lack of political will to prioritise women's security needs and a preference for military intervention contributed to limited access to funding allocated to the consultation processes to develop a WPS NAP. As most civil society actors engaged in consultations operated at the national level, civil society managers identified two main factors influencing their inclusion within the NAP development process: access to external resources and relevance within the WPS space in Nigeria. These actors revealed that international funding was received from government-affiliated international development agencies based in Europe, America, and the United Kingdom to engage in initial processes to develop the country's NAP. In contrast, funding received by local and subnational organisations, which aimed to assist them with implementation activities, was from international NGOs and aid agencies operating in countries in these regions.

Government-affiliated international donors allocated funding to the Nigerian Government's Women's Ministry, the main organisation tasked with coordinating and implementing activities to achieve the outcomes outlined in UNSCR 2242. Historically, attempts to engage in CT/CVE processes or collaborate with government departments responsible for WPS implementation were met with opposition. The state's reliance on international funds obliged it to engage civil society as part of its financial reporting requirements. CSOs with access to international funds engaged in consultation activities. For instance, one CSO actor stated.

> we have not received any money, neither have I seen any of our networks receive any money from the Government. Same as the Women's Ministry that is implementing and coordinating these activities. They depend on international donors for the activities.
>
> (Interview 3, CSO, August 2020)

As international donors prioritise funding to prominent and nationally operating CSOs (Howell & Lind, 2010), these actors received funding from international donors to participate in consultations. As highlighted in resource dependency theory, external resources and relevance within its ecosystem acted as a factor for these actors in achieving their objective of the realisation of a domestic WPS NAP that recognises terrorism and violent extremism as an ongoing security issue

that affects women (on Nigerian CSOs advocacy for state intervention in the gendered implication of terrorism and violent extremism see Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019). Nationally operating CSOs leveraged a requirement to engage CSOs and produce a NAP that reflects both state and civil society's contribution by proposing initiatives to address the root causes of extremism.

Some state actors indicated that existing relationships with key government agencies informed decisions on the CSOs engaged and those excluded, indicating that elitism and "referrals from their friends and not necessarily on the account of their professional skills in security studies" (Interview 3, State actor, July 2020), were the criterion used for participation. Studies show that this perception is consistent with approaches adopted in African states, as elitism and the ability to integrate women's organisations into political systems influence the engagement of some civil society groups (Kanyinga, 2010; Tamale, 2006; Pearce, 2000). Front-line CSOs, to some extent, acknowledged this view, indicating that management's ties to political and military personnel in some communities provided easy access to survivors during attempts to implement interventions. CSO managers denied this, arguing that funding requirements played a key factor in their engagement, although their relationships and reputations within the counter-terrorism space in Nigeria encouraged the state to recognise their views. Civil society managers emphasised that in some circumstances, they were denied access to political consultations and engagement despite their existing relationships. The development of the country's first WPS NAP was often highlighted as a key example. Access to international funds at both the civil society and political levels guaranteed these actors meaningful engagement in the consultation process to develop the second WPS NAP, hence enabling them to access and exercise some autonomy in a space that is historically closed to non-state actors.

State actors further raised concerns regarding the capability of CSOs to implement initiatives based on the needs of local women, often citing that despite the millions of funding sent to Nigeria to address terrorism, there was little evidence of the effectiveness of CSOs' interventions. Some state actors indicated that the ineffectiveness of civil society's measures was due to funding restrictions, as "he who pays the piper dictates the tune" (Interview, 5 State actor, August 2020). Some CSOs acknowledged that reliance on international funding often required these organisations to develop initiatives that prioritise funders' objectives over local women's needs (on the influence of international funds on agency activities, see Obadare, 2011). However, CSOs indicated that they could effectively utilise funding to develop programs that respond to local women's needs while producing reports on activities that differ from implemented initiatives but align with funding requirements. For instance, front-line staff surveyed suggested that it was necessary, as often international perceptions of the needs of Nigerian local women differed from local women's views, and some funders assume that there are sufficient infrastructures to achieve their proposed objectives. When funding was insufficient due to infrastructures, political challenges and funders' misunderstanding of the everyday experiences of Nigerian women, some local CSOs and those operating at the state level collaborated to create a civil society consortium. The collaboration enabled actors with similar goals to combine resources to overcome funding limitations, address emerging and changing security needs, and increase their political influence to gain insights into security information and immediate access to communities at greater risk of extremism. As RDT emphasises, this strategy contributes to CSOs' relevance in Nigeria's WPS space, provides some autonomy, and ensures their capacity to survive and achieve WPS outcomes with limited resources.

One actor indicated in their survey that "funding needs to be used where it is necessary, if we change reports to please them [international funders], but we support our women and communities, that is what we have to do" (Survey 17, CSO, August 2020). This was echoed by most of the front-line CSOs operating across the country, who indicated that it is a necessity, as in some communities, women would not receive support and services unless funding is used to address immediate needs, while

others indicated that due to the quick changing nature of extremist threats in the country, with this often influenced by state interventions and growing threats, the security needs of women change by the time that local banks clear funds. Collaboration and combining resources played a crucial role in enabling CSOs to overcome funding limitations and implement immediate responses despite the delay in gaining funds.

One respondent indicated in their surveys that "new plans and programs are necessary, things change very quickly, a safe community can be unsafe tomorrow" (Survey 10, CSO, August 2020) (on women's use of donor funds to develop alternate CT/CVE measures, see Mesok, 2022). Some actors indicated that flexibility within funding contracts would address false reporting by enabling CSOs to identify and develop programs to support local women's needs. Although state actors are often in opposition stating that CSOs report "interesting stories that the donors will be pleased with…[however] somebody is lying somewhere, or somebody is failing to tell us the truth" (Interview 7, State actor, August 2020), studies show that the actions of CSOs have achieved some WPS outcomes for women impacted by terrorism and violent extremism in Nigeria (on the success of Nigerian CSOs CT/CVE activities see Club de Madrid, 2017; Idris & Abdelaziz, 2017; Kayode, 2018; Nwadinobi & Maguire, 2013).

Most CSOs supported the use of donor funds for initiatives that aligned with local needs as opposed to funders' objectives and providing alternate narratives to funders, but one civil society manager operating in the local context opposed this approach. This actor indicated that false reports closed opportunities for access to future funds to respond to emerging trends in extremism, and the re-emergence of violence in some communities further increased the risks experienced by some women. This actor stated that although.

> Several efforts have been put in place, all the success stories that have been reported, why are we still having these problems? There are a lot of weaknesses that I see…when projects are being given for conflict that has been protected for almost more than 10, 15 years, 12 years, and then you say you have given an intervention for just 2 years, 3 years, 4 and half years, 18 months, and when the results arrive at the end of the day, then wow, you have achieved [this]. How can you tell? What magic happened for something that took more than a decade [to occur], [to be] addressed and resolved and transformed in a period of 6 month or 24 months. Just be honest to us.
>
> (Interview 5, CSO, August 2020)

The actor suggested that the actions of colleagues, particularly those operating at the national level, undermined the seriousness of threats to women's security and contributed to creating the assumption that short-term initiatives such as medical and counselling services, as opposed to long-term measures such as the reintegration of ex-extremist, counter-narrative projects and programs that promotes peaceful dialogues and centers the voices of local women are sufficient to address the gendered implications of extremist violence in the country (see Table 3).

Table 3
Examples of services implemented by CSOs.

Thematic perspectives	Examples of strategies
Gender Equality and Empowerment	Engaging women in peace dialogues with community and religious leaders, protests, and peaceful marches to raise awareness of extremist threats experienced by women.
Health and Wellbeing	Medical, mental health, sexual reproductive and reintegration services.
Education and Economic	Micro-financing, sewing, and farming and employment skills development
Safety and Security	gender-based violence services (domestic, sexual assault, trafficking), facilitating negotiations between extremist actors, state and community leaders, Self-defence, safe-housing programs

Compared to state operating agencies, the initiatives adopted by local CSOs required fewer financial resources but were highly dependent on existing trusting relationships within the community. This contributed to greater autonomy among these actors. As highlighted in RDT, local CSOs' relevance within sites for implementation assured their capacity to operate. In contrast, the measures adopted by some national operating actors required greater financial resources and relevance in both the local and national context to ensure their operation and political engagement. This, to some extent, impacted their autonomy. As these organisations received funding from state-affiliated development agencies, there was often greater oversight and limited flexibility in implementing measures aligned with emerging needs. As a result, the measures proposed, and the outcomes achieved often responded to the symptoms of extremist violence.

Although UNSCR 2242 promotes the engagement of women and CSOs within leadership roles to address extremist violence, CSOs and state actors reported that the engagement of non-political actors in some CT/CVE spaces positioned civil society as a threat to the state. Local civil society groups and less prominent organisations operating at the state level indicated that attempts to engage with the state or seek resources to implement programs were often met with opposition, as "government appointees…will be afraid that they'll take their job from them so they will just slow pedal and not push for it further" (Interview 16, CSO, August 2020). Access to international funding, which enables these actors to implement local CT/CVE activities, with or without collaboration and engagement from state actors, positioned some CSOs as threats to the state, contributing to increasing restrictive measures imposed by the state. This consisted of policies aimed at delaying or creating obstacles to access to international funds and restricting information about and access to communities at risk and victims of extremist violence. Limited interest in collaborating with local and some state-operating CSOs also extended to closing opportunities to engage women and the adoption of gendered approaches. Both political and non-political actors recognised that opportunities were closed to women, particularly those without political connections' access to leadership positions and policy development processes. For example, one actor stated that "there's still a gap because I don't really see Government working with women. I don't really see policymakers engaging women. I don't really see policymakers engaging the CSOs to actually work with them" (Interview 4, state actor, July 2020), and the government "might not even be interested in taking a gendered perspective" (Interview 2, State actor August 2020) (on the closure of civic spaces in Nigeria see Njoku, 2022; Aiyede, 2004; Obadare, 2004).

When engaged by the state on the front line, actors also reported that as the country lacks measures to protect military women engaged in direct conflict, this created further barriers to the recruitment and engagement of women in military positions. For instance, a CSO actor indicated that.

> In Nigeria, we do not have a social security system…that is the department of health, education, just those social amenities, so there is no protection for the women [on the] front line. This is very important because when they work in the IDP camps, when they work in those areas, they need to be protected.
>
> (Interview 1, CSO, July 2020)

The lack of political will government WPS funding create WPS implementation challenges for CSOs. However, access to external funding, which to some extent provides opportunities to engage in political consultations, has created spaces for their perspectives to inform the WPS and ensure CSOs' survival within a closing civic space in Nigeria. Although access to international funding is often marked by restrictions, such as the prioritisation of the objectives of funders over local needs, strategies adopted by some CSOs, such as diverting funds to key interventions, reporting false interventions and outcomes, while implementing measures that are informed by local needs, has enabled these actors to achieve some WPS outcomes. Locally, organisations

utilised observations, focus groups and surveys as key methodologies to inform yearly or project conclusion narrative reports that detailed the services provided and implementation outcomes. This was complemented by regular communication with donors when required, ensuring transparency and accountability. In contrast, state operating agencies funded by government-affiliated agencies utilised various assessment methods such as surveys, questionnaires, state official reports, financial statements, pre and post-service user reports and interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions. These assessment tools enabled these organisations to produce periodic and final financial and '8 + 3' reports outlining implemented measures and outcomes (on '8 + 3' reporting requirements, see Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2019). Greater flexibility and less oversight experienced by local organisations created opportunities for innovation in the strategies adopted to overcome implementation barriers and use of measures better aligned with women's needs.

Alternate use of external resources

Gender stereotypes reinforced through cultural and religious practices also created obstacles to achieving gendered CT/CVE outcomes. State actors reported that in some communities in the North-East where extremist violence is most prominent, gendered roles embedded across cultural and religious practises required women to engage in nurturing activities while men engaged in decision-making. Others emphasised that it was culturally unacceptable for women to participate in community consultation or publicly engage in dialogue with men in public settings. These customary restrictions reinforce women's security as the responsibility of men, creating obstacles to including women within processes to discuss the implications of terrorism and violent extremism on their wellbeing or empower them to propose solutions. For example, a state actor indicated.

> in Northern Nigeria where I come from, a strong influence of Islam and the cultures of people in the North, that would not accept women in decision-making. And especially when it comes to sitting around the trees or sitting at the tables to make decisions concerning peacebuilding. The cultures in the North forbid that. I'm talking about the Hausa and Fulani culture.
>
> (Interview 4 State actor, August 2020)

States actors indicated that it was unlikely that communities in the North of the country would amend long-held traditions and customary practices to accommodate the principles of Resolution 2242. Despite this, CSOs recognise the need to empower local women to engage in community solutions. This view was often held by front-line staff and all CSOs operating at the local level, with one civil society actor indicating in their surveys that.

"local women [and] women organisations are in a better position to tell the government how to handle women…that are involved, that are coming out of these insurgency operations" (Survey 19, CSO, August 2020). This was particularly critical, as customs and gender stereotypes closed opportunities for women and women-led organisations to engage in CT/CVE activities in the country's North. Any attempts to communicate and engage women within peacebuilding dialogues will require permission from male leaders (on patriarchy in Nigeria see Offiong et al., 2021). However, as such an act challenges their role and authority within communities, it is unlikely that male leaders will be willing to accommodate such requests. One state actor indicated.

> women cannot come and initiate and lead discussions about peacebuilding in those kinds of communities. So it is in the Hausa culture, so it is in the Fulani culture, so it is in the Islamic culture. So, where are you going to domesticate some of those things? The Nigerian Government is just doing that (implementing WPS Resolutions) as a nation [through] peacebuilding [and] peace-keeping activities globally. But in terms of domesticating some of those things, it will

be extremely difficult. I would tell you categorically that if you came to Nigeria as a woman and you wanted to go and ask a few questions among some Muslim women in the Northern communities, if you don't go through men, if you don't seek the permission of men, and they granted you that permission, you can't talk to any woman. No woman would answer your questions…Given the cultural and religious biases…it will be a bit difficult to get that penetrated through these cultures and religious biases.

> (Interview 4 State actor, August 2020)

Some CSOs operating at the national and provincial levels supported these views, indicating that they have experienced challenges during efforts to empower women in some communities to become CT/CVE agents. These actors explained that as agency and leadership opportunities are limited and restricted by customary practices, families and communities are often unwilling to enable their daughters and women to be trained as CT/CVE actors or further develop their capacity through skills development or employment in the country's military. As community members believed that defence activities contradicted women's nurturing and peaceful nature, male community leaders often declined opportunities to engage some women (on perceptions of women as peaceful CT/CVE actors see Brown, 2013; Gentry, 2009; Patel & Westermann, 2018). For instance, a civil society actor indicated in their survey that "a lot of families too will not allow their girl child to train or go into the military. So I think that is against a lot of women, and it is cultural hindrances" (Survey 18, CSO, August 2020). CSOs based in the local context suggested that they had developed approaches to overcome this barrier. These actors reported that as political leadership positions within the local context were often held by prominent male figures who belong to the same background as the women that they worked with, in some contexts, it was necessary to support these political leaders' election campaigns, despite their opposition to their political ideologies and leverage these relationships to achieve implementation. For instance, four local civil society groups reported that when required, they would utilise some of their international resources to support political figures' election campaigns in exchange for these actors utilising their positions and influence in communities to encourage male leaders to enable women's engagement. These relationships also enabled CSOs to implement psycho-education programs that provide alternate narratives about women's capabilities and encourage communities to engage women in activities beyond gendered roles, such as including women leaders in dialogues between members of extremist organisations, male community leaders and local political actors. Half of the local organisations, leveraging their relationships with political figures, reported that they also engaged communities in interfaith dialogues aimed to address religious gender stereotypes that deny women's agency and encourage a whole of community approach to addressing terrorism that centres women as key security actors (on women and women's organisations as new security actors, see Alison, 2009; Simić, 2010; Krause et al., 2018; True & Riveros-Morales, 2018). International funds supported the delivery of micro-financing strategies to increase women's financial independence, reduce their vulnerability and improve their ability to overcome gendered expectations that restrict their opportunities in the community.

Despite beliefs that CSOs may not be able to engage women due to cultural restrictions, some state actors recognised that local women's participation was key to effective outcomes in the country. For instance, one actor indicated that working with local women "who have lived there (communities) for a decent number of years [and] is more familiar with the terrains of the environment… is better than guessing" (Interview 1, State actor, July 2020). State actors highlighted that this approach would promote measures that effectively address the root of extremist violence and encourage a response from the whole society. This approach which aligned with the initiatives adopted by local actors, would "give them [women] many opportunities to run away from that ideology of the terrorist which came through religious propaganda…

[and] become more close to your own (rational) ideology (Interview 4 State actor, August 2020).

Although providing external resources to political leaders enabled some CSOs to engage local women and achieve implementation, CSOs acknowledged the limitations of this approach, recognising that it enabled the achievement of short-term outcomes as opposed to long-term security for women. Some local CSOs reported that as state interest in their programs and their relationships would cease after the election period, the lack of ongoing support from political leaders within the local communities often impacted their ability to continue to implement gender programs. It often leads to the closure of programs or the need to adjust initiatives to implement short-term solutions for women. These actors reported that although their organisation attempted to maintain relationships after the election period, some political figures declined ongoing engagement, or there was a requirement to maintain relationships by providing ongoing resource support to political figures to enable their operation. This required CSOs to request meetings and outline how ongoing collaboration with their organisation can benefit political actors beyond the election period. For instance, one actor stated that "Everybody [political leaders] was silent…we wrote to see the local government chairman, and they invited us" (Survey 19, CSO, August 2020). Likewise, the state's restrictive practices impacted implementation attempts as CSOs continued to experience threats from the state (on Nigeria's restrictive counter-terrrorism measures (see Adesomoju, 2018; Aluko, 2023; Njoku, 2022). However, the organisations interviewed and surveyed reported that access to international funds has enabled them to overcome these challenges and maintain their survival. They acknowledged that the state's counter-money laundering policies required them to forfeit some donor funds to withdraw money from banks. They also provided financial incentives to military personnel within communities to obtain information about local women at risk and gain access to survivors. Although diverting resources limited the support and services created for women, forfeiting funds was necessary to operate in the country and achieve some WPS outcomes.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows that access to international donations, the ability to utilise external funds to ensure their survival, and their capability to achieve some WPS implementation outcomes despite obstacles such as a history of tensions between the state and CSOs. At the federal level, international funds provided to the state initiated steps to develop a WPS NAP that recognises the voices and perceptions of CSOs. These resources also contributed to some CSOs' ability to participate in the consultation process. The ability of some CSOs to leverage their existing relationships and resources to create spaces for their engagement was evident at all levels of Government. For instance, in the local context, CSOs utilised funds as bargaining tools to promote collaboration between local organisations and political figures, enabling these actors to achieve short-term outcomes for local women. Such actions required CSOs to produce false reports for funding organisations, often emphasising the success of their initiatives. To some extent, this creates the notion that these actors are achieving long-term security outcomes for women, although local evidence indicates others. Some CSOs recognised that this may contribute to the cessation of needed external funding based on the notion that women's security needs have improved.

Although state actors indicate that international funds are restrictive, the CSOs engaged in the study have effectively utilised funds to achieve their WPS goals, engage in implementation and continue to support women, although this has required them to report alternate activities to funders. These findings highlight and add to evidence that challenges assumptions that women's security needs are a priority for all states. It also shows the need for independent external resources and funding from UN agencies for CSOs in countries such as Nigeria, where civic spaces continue to close for non-state actors. As civil society

implementation activities are predominantly funded by international organisations, findings highlight a greater need for flexible funding contracts that foster innovation and long-term sustainable changes. The provision of flexible contracts that allow CSOs to accurately report on the strategies adopted to overcome implementation challenges, document some of the initiatives developed and evaluate the outcomes of implemented measures effectively would create an opportunity for greater knowledge development on WPS implementation and effective implementation strategies that can be applied in contexts similar to Nigeria. This will further contribute to the recognition of the Global South as a site of knowledge development, as despite the challenges experienced by CSOs and the state's lack of interest in implementing the Agenda, civil society actors in Nigeria have achieved some outcomes for women.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

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