Guardian of Harmony: A Peace Leader's Journey in Nigeria

Written by Dr. Rabab Atwi

In the heart of Nigeria, an economically strained country, a beacon of hope has risen in the form of a peace-promoting initiative started by Oluchi Achi Uzodimma, a Nigerian peace leader who was born in Northern Kaduna before moving to Abuja, the country's capital. Oluchi's educational journey began with a degree in industrial chemistry before she uncovered her passion for peace studies and conflict resolution, leading her to pursue a Master's degree in peace studies.

Oluchi experienced the devastating effects of discord at a young age. She grew up in a family fraught with division and frequent conflicts due to her dad having multiple wives. Alongside these family conflicts, Oluchi witnessed the religious tensions in Nigeria, including the crises following the introduction of Sharia Law in 2000, which resulted in the displacement of many children, particularly young girls, who lost both their homes and parental care. Rather than allowing the personal and religious challenges to break her spirit, these events fueled Oluchi's passion for peace and catalyzed her desire to create an institution that could support, protect, and create a peaceful world for children in her community.

To fulfill her vision as a peace leader and light the way for a better world for Nigeria's youth, Oluchi started the non-governmental and non-profit organization 'Child Shield Initiative' in 2006. The organization provides interventions for Nigerian children and teenagers from rural areas, ages ranging from seven to seventeen, in the thematic areas of peacebuilding, child marriage, education, and inter-religious dialogue. A key component of



Oluchi Achi Uzodimma



Photo credit: Child Shield Initiative

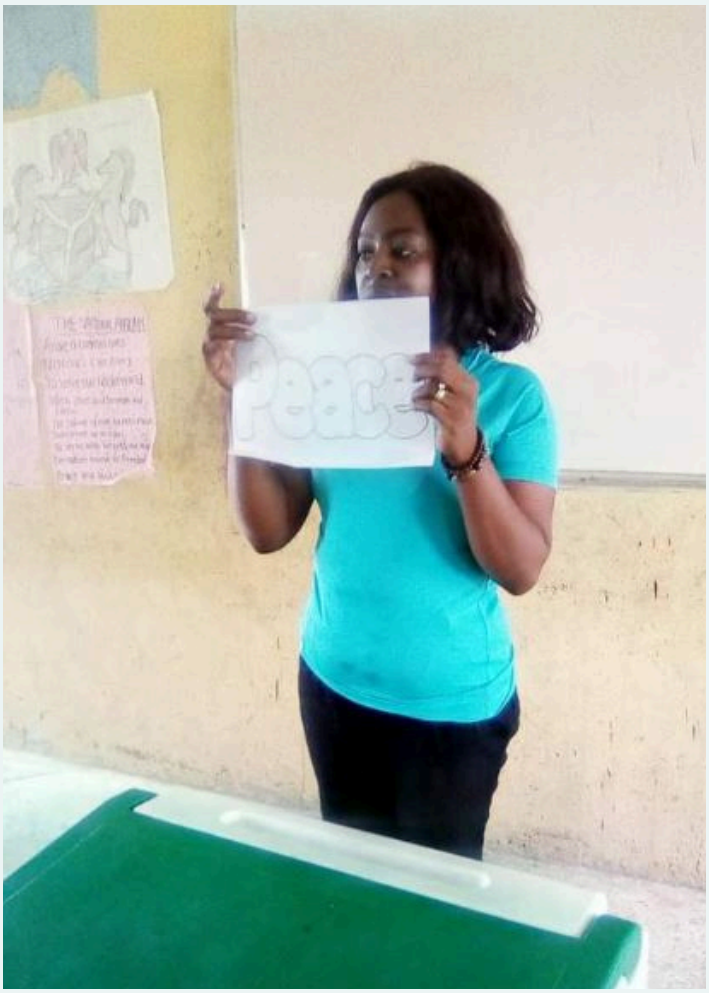
the 'Child Shield Initiative' is the 'Ending Child Marriage' coalition which aims at prioritizing the rights of children through ending child marriage in Nigeria. Another is the Peacebuilding Academy, through which children receive peacebuilding training, mentoring, and technical assistance to help them better address issues related to conflict and violence in their communities.

Thanks to Oluchi's efforts, the Peacebuilding Academy soon became a lifeline for those young people, as it was the only safe space they knew offering not just education but also emotional healing and hope for a brighter tomorrow through peace workshops, dialogue circles, and conflict-resolution discussions. Watching the children grow, learn, and laugh in the Academy has filled Oluchi with a sense of purpose and motivated her to involve additional members of her community to strengthen the support systems around the children. Oluchi's initiative extended to include parents, whose engagement in the peace-promoting activities offered by the Academy has reinforced the peace-oriented values instilled throughout the peacebuilding activities offered through 'Child Shield Initiative'.

What makes Oluchi stand out among other members of her community is her solid belief in the transformative power of peace.

For Oluchi, peace leadership engages "a community of like-minded individuals working together to achieve their aim of living in peace". Despite being surrounded by skeptics who often question the effectiveness of peaceful approaches in resolving conflicts, Oluchi remains a loyal champion of peace and harmony who has an unwavering conviction that peaceful approaches could, indeed, transform the world if adopted on a global scale.

In Nigeria, a country facing an uncertain future, Oluchi emerges as a reminder that even in times of conflict, peace can always find its way. Her story serves as a testament to the power of a peaceful leader's determination to change the world, one child at a time. Through the 'Child Shield Initiative', Oluchi has put the young generation in Nigeria on the path that would hopefully guide them away from the darkness of conflict and victimhood to the light of harmony and peace.



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Follow Child Shield Initiative on Facebook (here) to learn more about their work or to connect with Oluchi.

The author, Dr. Rabab Atwi, a graduate of Chapman University, is an adamant believer in the transformative power of peace leadership. Her work and publications on peace leadership and peace education reflect her commitment to empowering the less privileged to break dominant narratives and foster collaboration across diverse communities, hoping that this shift in the narrative could contribute to a more peaceful world grounded in equity and peace.