Project Proposal Summary

Rotarian Peace Projects Incubator's Thematic Area	New Technologies and Peace
Rotary Focus Area	Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution
Contact: Contact person within your group (Name and email)	Karen Bernstein, karenbernstein@gmail.com
Project Title: Provide a full title (and acronym if any)	Evidenced-based peace-building in Nigeria through the media
Project Partners and Participating Organisations: List all your project partner organisations, including participating Rotary clubs and districts if any	We work with a leading Nigerian peace-builder, Dr Michael Femi Sodipo and the NGO which he developed Peace Initiatives Network. We have also worked with the Nigerian office of Equal Access International and the largest Hausa-language TV station in the world, Arewa24 to develop our radio and TV interventions, respectively. We would love to connect to Rotary clubs in Nigeria as we plan for other interventions in the country and share our findings with peace practitioners and policy-makers.
Geographical Scope	Nigeria
Summary: Please provide a concise summary with a maximum of 500 words outlining the project and explaning the community needs your project will address and how these needs were identified. Ensure that you include what your project aims to achieve (objective) and how (method/procedure). What will be the main outcomes? Explain in a few sentences how you will incorporate the objective of sustainability into your project.	Dehumanization – perceiving other people as less than human – has accompanied mass atrocities and conflict throughout history. Dehumanization removes the moral prohibition against violence, genocide, and systemic discrimination – thereby enabling them to occur. Leaders use dehumanizing rhetoric as a tool to normalize group-targeted harm of vulnerable populations. In 2013, we organized a conference on dehumanization with leading scientists, practitioners, and affected people. Separately, we met with policy-makers and practitioners working to prevent atrocities and reduce discrimination. We realized that while many practitioners and policymakers - ranging from Black Lives Matter to the UN Special Envoy on the Prevention of Genocide – recognized dehumanization as a critical factor, they had limited evidence-based tools to detect and disrupt it. Since that time, research with our scientific partners in 12 countries with over 10,000 people found that blatant dehumanization - dehumanization done in an obvious way – was one of the strongest predictors of

intergroup hostility in every place. In fact, it predicted public support for targeting civilians, and support for collective punishment and war.

We created this project to develop practical evidence-based tools to reduce dehumanization and its harmful consequences and share this knowledge with peace practitioners and policymakers.

Our focus is currently on Nigeria, a country on that made the list of 'top conflicts to watch in 2019' according to the International Crisis Group. Since 1999, over 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in clashes between Muslims and Christians, particularly in the Middle Basin and north of the country. In 2019, we worked with our Nigerian local partner, Peace Initiatives Network (PIN), to hold a workshop with 25 peace-builders, media professionals and researchers to co-design a strategic communication intervention - radio programs - to counter dehumanization and support for violence between Christians and Muslims. We actualized the workshop results into radio programs.

We evaluated their effectiveness through a randomized control trial (RCT) with a representative sample of 2,140 Muslims and Christians in one of the most contentious areas in the Middle Basin. The research participants heard one of the following radio programs:

> (1) The "Treatment" Program: This radio program, which we created, told the story of Christian and Muslim men assigned to be partners at work. At first, they are wary of each other but later before friends.
> (2) The "Active Control" Program: This slightly tweaked version of the treatment program told the story of two members of the same religion who learn that their first impressions of someone can be wrong.
> (3) The "Pure Control" Program: This program contained messages about maintaining safe health practices.

From our research, we concluded that:

- Despite high levels of dehumanization and threat perceptions, Christians and Muslims were willing to interact with each other and said a lot of positive things about each other.

- Listening to the "treatment" program effectively reduced support for inter-religious violence between Christians and Muslims, and reduced inter-religious animosity.

We are now leveraging these findings into large-scale strategic communication interventions and peace-building trainings *(more details in 'beneficiaries' section)*.

Beneficiaries: Who are the beneficiares? Please include the estimated number of direct beneficiaries	We are now leveraging these findings into large-scale strategic communication interventions that will reach tens of millions of Nigerians. Our first public intervention is through the medium of television in cooperation with our local partner, Arewa24. To evaluate the impact of this intervention, we are conducting another RCT in which more than 2,000 people will be exposed to our TV intervention. We are also conducting media engagement trainings to equip 200 local peace-builders with tools to create and amplify narratives that may serve as a

	firewall against dangerous and dehumanizing rhetoric used by political elites.