

# MANAGING CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme aimed to support Nigerians with conflict resolution, at both the state and community level. Our work focused on reducing violence, promoting stability and strengthening resilience so that Nigerians feel more safe and secure in their communities.

We worked in North Eastern Nigeria in three focal states – Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe – some of the country’s most conflict-affected regions.

## Our work focused on the following areas:

- Conflict management, reconciliation and stability in communities
- The role of women in peacebuilding
- Support to women and girls affected by violence
- The reintegration of young people displaced by conflict
- Support to policy makers through research and policy dialogue

Originally a four-year programme, MCN was extended to six years and continued to January 2023.

This Special Edition of the MCN Newsletter highlights the Results Dissemination and Programme Closure Events that were held in focal states in January 2023.



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## Yobe stakeholders praise MCN for pioneering peace initiatives

Representatives of governmental, security, community and civil society organisations have commended the innovative peacebuilding work of the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme in Yobe State for contributing to improving peace and security in the state. The stakeholders and beneficiaries made the commendation at the Results Dissemination and Programme Closure Event organised by MCN in Damaturu on 17 January 2023.

Baba Ardo Zamma of the Yobe State Council of Chiefs expressed appreciation to the European Union and British Council for the laudable support to strengthen the capacity of traditional rulers in the state. He said the effort has contributed to community cohesion and reconciliation as traditional rulers have become more equipped to respond to community needs for settlement, justice, and security.

Fati I. Makintami, executive director of the Al-Iman Foundation spoke about the contribution of MCN to building the capacity of local civil society organisations in the state. Using the experience of her organisation as a case study, Makantami said the grants, training, financial assistance, and networking opportunities provided by MCN have enhanced their impact. Specifically, it has enabled them to contribute towards raising awareness about human rights issues, combating violence extremism, and preventing Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in communities in Damaturu. She said "With MCN support, Al-Iman established SGBV response platforms that are raising awareness and working to combat sexual offences in high educational institutions in Damaturu such as Yobe State University, the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the Federal Polytechnic, and the College of Agriculture."

Stakeholders applauded the MCN programme for the integrated approach it has adopted to combatting SGBV through the Family Support Units in four police divisions; five health facilities providing medical and psycho-social treatment to victims of violence; and legal reform efforts to enhance access to justice for survivors of SGBV. These have led to the adoption of a protocol for investigation and prosecution of sexual offences, the domestication of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act and the Child Protection Act, and Yobe State linking to the National Sex Offenders Register.

While presenting the impact report of the programme, Abdulkadir Sambo, MCN Yobe State Team Lead said the programme has positively impacted a total of more than 1.8 million people in 13 local government areas (LGAs). 845 traditional rulers from Bade, Damaturu, Fika and Pataskum Traditional Councils were trained in alternative dispute resolution. The rulers were supported to document disputes with the establishment of record keeping centres serviced by trained scribes. In four years, traditional rulers in the four traditional councils have handled 23,185 disputes resolving 94 percent of them successfully. In addition, MCN supported traditional rulers to develop a code of conduct to guide their operations and contribute to building public trust in traditional institutions.

Sambo noted that other notable results of the MCN Programme in the state include the establishment of 11 community peace and safety partnerships (CPSP) platforms that are engaged in early warning and early response initiatives to address challenges to safety and security. He mentioned that due to the

contributions of the platforms to realisation of a more peaceful and secure environment, some local government councils have initiated steps to sustain them.

In his closing remarks, Professor Muhammed Tabiu, SAN, MCN's National Programme Manager said the successes of the programme are the product of the commitment, collaboration and cooperation received from the government and people of the state. He expressed appreciation for the support received from the state government, traditional rulers, women and youth associations, civil society organisations and security agencies. He encouraged the different stakeholders to retain the lessons and practices of the programme to ensure sustainable peace in the state.

**"We express appreciation to the European Union and British Council for the laudable support to strengthen the capacity of traditional rulers in the state. This effort has contributed to community cohesion and reconciliation as traditional rulers have become more equipped to respond to community needs for settlement, justice, and security."**

Baba Ardo Zamma, Yobe State Council of Chiefs



Traditional rulers respond to community needs for settlement, justice and security. Source: British Council

## MCN hailed for contributing to resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in Adamawa State

Participants at the Results Dissemination and Programme Closure Event of Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) have expressed appreciation to the programme for the return of peace to some Adamawa communities affected by perennial violent conflicts between farmers and herders in the state. The event, which was held on 18 January 2023 in Yola, Adamawa State attracted participants from government ministries, departments, and agencies; community leaders, security agencies and members of civil society organisations. Beneficiaries from the affected communities attested that dialogue platforms established by the programme enable the different groups to identify pathways for shared resource use and peaceful coexistence.

MCN State Team Lead, Abdulkadir Bello said the programme has received feedback on how its interventions through

dialogue platforms and Community Peace and Safety Partnerships (CPSP) have engendered trust and symbiotic relations among resource users. He said, “Some herders now help farmers to clear their farms during the harvest period, and farmers are leaving the foliage for herders to feed their cows.”

Participants commended the MCN Programme for contributing to improved trust between members of the community and law enforcement agencies. Sikiru Akande, State Commissioner of Police said MCN had helped to create synergy between security agencies and the public. Lending credence to this, Abubakar Buba of the Community Reach out and Poverty Alleviation Initiative (CRI) said at the commencement of the Community Accountability Forum (CAF) supported by MCN, a baseline survey indicated that level of public support for police was 17 percent. However, this has since improved to 58 percent. He also said public perception of incidence of police brutality has reduced from 47 percent to 11 percent since MCN engagements aimed at making security service providers more responsive and accountable.

Alhaji Ahmed Mustapha, Ubandoma Adamawa and District Head of Girei, Adamawa Emirate Council said the MCN Programme has contributed to strengthening the capacity of traditional institutions thereby contributing to community governance and peace. He applauded MCN for training over 700 traditional rulers in the state and facilitating the adoption of a code of conduct for traditional rulers. He pledged that the traditional rulers would work with the state and local governments as well as security agencies and civil society organisations to sustain the positive impact of the MCN Programme.

Speaking on the contributions of MCN to addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), Takoni Kowabobo, Chair of the Adamawa State SARC Steering Committee said MCN has strengthened response to sexual offences in the state. According to her, the programme was able to bring all critical stakeholders together to improve service delivery to survivors in the areas of reporting, medical and psycho-social treatment, and access to justice as well as leading advocacy for legal reform. She said the Committee would work with the state government to ensure sustainability of the initiatives of the programme, especially the three sexual assault referral centres (SARCs).

Stakeholders commended MCN for promoting social inclusion which is essential to peacebuilding. In her remarks, Salamatu Abdullahi, Chairperson of the Adamawa People Living with Disabilities and Vulnerable Support Initiative thanked MCN for giving opportunity to different disability groups to undertake peace initiatives. She said this has enhanced the voice of hitherto excluded disability groups.

While thanking the participants and the entire government and people of the state for their engagement with the programme, Prof Muhammed Tabiu, SAN, MCN National Programme Manager expressed hope that the efforts to bring groups together to foster peace will continue. He stated that the programme has initiated sensitisation and advocacy initiatives to allow for the return of repentant ex-combatants and there are indications that attitudes of communities to reintegration are changing. However, he observed that the sensitisation efforts must be sustained to broaden community acceptance of reintegration, which is crucial for depleting the ranks of fighters still in the bush for fear of retribution, thereby bringing about sustainable peace.

**“Some herders now help farmers to clear their farms during the harvest period, and farmers are leaving the foliage for herders to feed their cows.”**

Abdulkadir Bello, State Team Lead, MCN



Young farmer in the North East. Source: British Council

## Borno stakeholders commend contributions of MCN to improved stability

Representatives of government, security, civil society, and community organisations have extolled the contributions of the MCN Programme to the improvement in security and stability in the state. They expressed this position while speaking at the MCN Results Dissemination and Programme Closure Event organised in Maiduguri, Borno State on 19 January 2023. The programme featured presentations of programme impact by the programme team and stakeholders as well as feedback from beneficiaries.

While presenting the impact report of the programme, Dr Ukoha Ukiwo, Technical Lead of MCN said the programme delivered good results in its five intervention areas. He said the programme supported the training of 845 traditional rulers who subsequently resolved 17,432 disputes in four emirate councils. The traditional rulers are also guided by a code of conduct aimed at promoting ethical behaviour and accountability. The programme has supported Community Peace and Safety Partnerships (CPSPs) that serve as platforms for early warning and response on security and safety risks in 10 local councils in the state.

He noted that dialogue platforms and advocacy initiatives supported by MCN have contributed to resolution of conflicts and prevention of violence. The Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) and Family Support Units supported by the programme have addressed over 1,600 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). MCN efforts have also led to adoption of key laws required for strengthening responses to SGBV in the state. The programme has made a significant contribution to strengthening community policing by providing support to voluntary policing sector (VPS) groups, notably the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), that has played a major role in counter-insurgency operations.

In the feedback session, programme beneficiaries and stakeholders shared the different ways the MCN Programme has impacted on them. Fatsuma Salihu of the International

Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) commended efforts to strengthen the traditional justice system in the state. In her words: “Before the MCN, there was no established record keeping centre in the Emirates of Borno State, but now we have working structures through which a lot of result have been achieved and communal issues addressed in an advanced manner.”

Abba Kyari who chairs one of the CPSP platforms expressed appreciation to the European Union and British Council for MCN’s work on strengthening early warning and early response mechanisms. He said, “The CPSP has really help us to address challenging issues of conflict in our locality in an amicable manner. This is because it brings together all necessary stakeholders to come to resolution of each case.”

Muhammad Bello, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Borno State Command, commended MCN efforts to address SGBV in the state through the establishment of the FSUs and SARCs that have aided prosecution of sexual offences. Speaking on the same issue of SGBV, Falmata Umar, Director, Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs said, “Posterity will be kind to MCN and its staff. The Ministry of Women Affairs has benefitted greatly by collaborating with MCN. Most important to us is the establishment of three SARCs in the state. No organisation has ever done this before MCN. We say a big thank you”.

Additionally, Obe Ndubisi of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) said, “MCN has made our gender desks more functional because of the training we benefitted from. Our personnel now have a better understanding of the stages of attending to the cases of survivors of sexual offences.”

Ibrahim Musa, a civil society activist representing people living with disabilities, expressed appreciation to MCN for providing platforms for disadvantaged groups: “I must thank MCN for the good job in helping people living with disabilities find a voice in our communities. As a result of this effort, we received empowerment support which we use to fend for our families and help others in need.”

Dauda Iliya, chairman of Borno State Chapter of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) commended MCN for reaching all actors relevant to peacebuilding. He particularly thanked the programme for building the capacity of journalists on conflict sensitive communications and election reporting as well as supporting initiatives to protect journalists working in challenging contexts.

Col Abdullahi Ishaq, Special adviser to Borno State Governor on Security, said the state government appreciated the efforts of the programme to convene platforms for multistakeholder deliberation on key issues on counterinsurgency, collaborative security and reintegration. He said the platforms convened by MCN helped to generate debate and understanding on the Borno model of reintegration promoted by the state government. However, he said that more work needs to be done to sustain state-society collaboration and he hopes that upcoming programmes will carry forward the work of MCN.

Dr Mustapha Kolo, an associate professor at University of Maiduguri said he was impressed by the intervention approach of MCN. By participating in the Community Accountability Forum (CAF) and Community Peace and Safety Partnerships (CPSP) convened with support from MCN, he appreciated that building on existing structures would enhance sustainability, the major missing link in most development interventions.

Stakeholders expressed the desire for upcoming programmes on peacebuilding in the state to sustain the momentum generated by focusing on economic empowerment, reintegration of ex-combatants and transitional justice for affected communities, and systematic implementation of the peace and security pillar of the Borno State 25 Year Development Plan.

Fatima Musa, MCN Programme Officer thanked participants for the positive remarks and feedback on the impact of the MCN programme. She attributed the success to the widespread interest and commitment of the government, traditional rulers, security agencies and other actors and institutions.

**“The CPSP has really help us to address challenging issues of conflict in our locality in an amicable manner. This is because it brings together all necessary stakeholders to come to resolution of each case.”**

Abba Kyari, Chair, CPSP platform



MCN-supported Community and Safety Partnership. Source: British Council

## Stakeholders ask EU and British Council for new peacebuilding initiatives like MCN

The majority of participants at the Programme Results Dissemination and Closure Event organised by the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme in Abuja on 25 January 2023 asked for the initiation of a new peacebuilding programme to build on the results and legacy of MCN. The event, which attracted senior government officials, traditional rulers, security officials, peacebuilding actors and civil society practitioners, offered opportunity for stakeholders and beneficiaries to provide feedback on impacts and lessons of MCN.

In his welcome address, Prof Muhammed Tabiu, SAN, MCN National Programme Manager said the programme has engaged with different stakeholders to strengthen collaboration between formal and non-formal security and justice institutions and actors. This has led to improved coordination in law enforcement, early warning and response, and tackling of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

He drew attention to the capacity building support provided to traditional rulers, voluntary policing sector groups, women and youth groups to resolve disputes and undertake initiatives to build community resilience and social cohesion in the three target states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

Lucy Pearson, Country Director, British Council Nigeria expressed appreciation to the European Union (EU) and the partners and stakeholders from the three states for the opportunity to implement the MCN Programme. She said MCN is one of the interventions British Council has delivered in Nigeria for over 80 years and demonstrates British Council's commitment to educational advancement, cultural relations, open societies and equal opportunities in Nigeria. She mentioned other programmes delivered by British Council in collaboration with the EU, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and restated the commitment of the British Council to working with Nigerians to promote peace and advance opportunities for a better life for the Nigerian people.

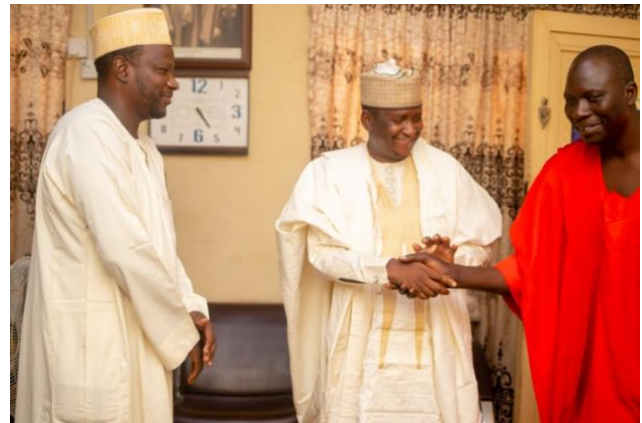
In a goodwill message from Her Excellency, Samuela Isopi, EU Ambassador to Nigeria and ECOWAS (represented by Ruben Alba Aguilera, Head of Section, Democracy, Governance and Migration, the EU commended the resilience of MCN and its stakeholders in the delivery of the programme in a region that has been bedevilled by violence for over a decade. He noted that the programme has adapted well to the conflict context and undertaken initiatives relevant to the realities on ground. He expressed the commitment of the EU to supporting peacebuilding in Nigeria as this is central to the EU's strategic objectives.

Representatives of state governments took turns to express appreciation to MCN for the peacebuilding interventions delivered in their states. Hajiji Hauwa Abubakar, Commissioner of Women and Social Development of Yobe State said MCN interventions have positively impacted on the people of the state. She said the state government is committed to sustaining notable initiatives of the programme such as the CPSP and the SARCs. However, she said the state government would appreciate either renewal of MCN Programme or creation of a successor peacebuilding programme to sustain MCN's legacy in the state. In the same vein, Hon Saleh Samanja, Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Yobe State commended MCN for facilitating strengthening capacity of justice institutions as well as ensuring domestication of laws that will enhance access to justice especially for women and girls in the state.

Zara Bukar, special adviser to the Borno State Governor on Health conveyed the goodwill and appreciation of the government and people of Borno State to the EU, the British Council and the staff of MCN for the immense contribution to government's efforts to restore peace in the state. She said the state government would encourage the EU and British Council to initiate efforts to sustain the legacy of MCN.

Saso Benson Ali, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs, Adamawa State who spoke on behalf of the state government, said government is pleased with the interventions of the programme to build capacity of traditional rulers, promote dialogue and reconciliation among groups in conflict, and address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). She said the state government would welcome further initiatives to sustain the gains brought about by MCN interventions.

Prominent traditional rulers also presented positive feedback to the programme. HRH Shehu Ibrahim Ibn Umar Ibrahim El-kanemi, CON, Shehu of Dikwa, Borno State expressed appreciation to the MCN Programme for support for traditional institutions. He noted that this support has contributed to reinforcing the relevance and respect for the traditional institutions. He called on the EU and the British Council to ensure that the support is sustained in order to sustain the gains in addressing the insurgency in the region. Similarly, HRH Alh (Dr) Umar Adamu Sanda Gwanwari of Ganye of Adamawa State said capacity building support of the MCN Programme has contributed to enhancing collaboration in dispensation of justice and community security. He said as a result of the training and code of conduct for traditional rulers, the courts and police are referring cases to the traditional rulers, thereby decongesting the courts, enhancing speedy resolution of disputes and access to justice for the people. He called on the EU and British Council to introduce another peacebuilding programme if it is not possible to extend the MCN Programme.



Traditional rulers in Adamawa. Source: British Council

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HRH Alh (Dr) Umar Adamu Sanda Gwanwari of Ganye of Adamawa State

Also presenting a goodwill remark, HRH Major Dr Sanusi Muhammad Ahmad Asha, Sarkin Kiyawa Emir of Kaura Namoda, Zamfara State said he requested to participate in the meeting after hearing about the innovative capacity building programme that targeted traditional institutions in the three North East states that have been ravaged by the insurgency. He recalled his experiences serving in the three states as a military officer at the height of the insurgency. The experience showed him the limitations of kinetic approaches and the need to engage and strengthen local governance institutions.

Without prejudice to request of the people of the North East for continuation of support, he requested the EU and the British Council to introduce a similar programme in the North West and Zamfara State, in particular, that is among the states worse affected by banditry.



Closure event in Abuja. Source: MCN

Other participants provided feedback on areas they have benefitted from the MCN programme. Alhaji Mohammad Habib Alkali of the Borno State Emirate Council thanked the programme for helping traditional rulers to better serve and retain the trust of the people. Hon Halima Kyari Joda, Chairperson, Fika Local Government Council, Yobe State commended MCN for facilitating the CPSP platform that has enabled the local council address conflicts and prevent violence. Salamatu Hamman Adama and Alhaji Abdulmumuni Abubakar of Bole Community, Yola South LGA, Adamawa State thanked MCN for helping create a platform for proactively addressing violent conflicts arising from competition for access to land and water by farmers and herders. Abubakar Bapeto, Divisional Police Officer, Girei, Adamawa State spoke extensively on how Community Accountability Forums (CAFs) and coordination meetings with Voluntary Policing Sector (VPS) groups strengthened the capacity of the police in crime prevention and law enforcement.

Hajiya Falmata Umar, Director, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Borno State and Mary Stephen, Head of Gender Unit of the Nigeria Police Force, Borno State Command thanked the MCN Programme for support to the SARC, FSUs and the SARC Steering Committee that have contributed to strengthening the response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Alhaji Mustapha Mohd Sanusi, District Head, Dulhu Madagali, Adamawa State commended the MCN Programme for the community sensitization and dialogue initiatives that have contributed to increased willingness of communities to receive repentant ex-combatants. Salamatu Abdullahi of Adamawa People Living with Disabilities and Vulnerable Support Initiative, Yola, Adamawa expressed appreciation to the programme for mainstreaming disability in its interventions. She said this has helped to give people living with disability a voice.

Finally, Mohammad Hassan, HERWA Community Development Initiative (CDI), Maiduguri, Borno State commended the MCN Programme for its capacity strengthening support to local civil society organisations in the North East. He said that by building local capacities for peace, MCN has established strong foundations for future peacebuilding and development programmes.

In his closing, Richard Garrett, Director, Open Societies, British Council, Sub-Saharan Africa, thanked all participants for honouring the invitation and speaking in glowing terms about the ways they have benefitted from MCN. He said both the EU and the British Council have received the message of request for more and would be exploring opportunities to continue engagements that make communities across Nigeria safer for people to earn their livelihoods and realise their expectations.

**“At the commencement of the Community Accountability Forum, baseline survey indicated that the level of public support for police was 17 percent. This has improved to 58 percent. Also the public perception of incidences of police brutality has reduced from 47 to 11 percent since the programme started engagements to make security service providers to be more responsive and accountable.”**

Abubakar Buba, Community Reach out and Poverty Alleviation Initiative, Adamawa State



MCN community advocacy efforts. Source: MCN

#### Find out more

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in Nigeria (MCN)

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