

MANAGING CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

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

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

Our work focuses 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

The four-year programme (2017-21) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.



Youths at the disarmament ceremony in Jere LGA. Source: MCN

KEY ACTIVITIES

This newsletter highlights the key activities undertaken by the programme in April – May 2020.

Summary of key activities include:

Conflict management, reconciliation and stability in communities:

- CPSP facilitates disarming of violent youth groups in Borno State
- Borno CPSP platforms mobilise to prevent community transmission of COVID-19
- Traditional rulers supported in Adamawa and Yobe states to prevent spread of COVID-19

Addressing sexual and gender-based violence:

- Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence supported to access services during the COVID-19 lockdown

Economic empowerment initiatives:

- 100 women benefit from economic empowerment initiative in Adamawa State

Women peacebuilding initiatives:

- Adamawa women peacebuilding initiatives record success stories

Community policing initiatives:

- MCN supported initiatives contribute to improved community policing in Yobe State
- Community Accountability Forum promotes road safety in Geidam, Yobe State

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, RECONCILIATION AND STABILITY

CPSP facilitates disarming of armed youth groups in Jere, Borno State

Youths (236) belonging to gangs with over 3,000 members in the Ngomari community of the Jere Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno state have laid down their small arms and light weapons (SALW). The disarmament ceremony, held on 21 May 2020, is the culmination of engagements by stakeholders on the local early warning and response platform called the Community Peace and Safety Partnerships (CPSPs) in the Jere LGA. The platform, facilitated by the HERWA Community Development

FACTS & FIGURES:

Traditional Justice System
(April 2020)

No of traditional
rulers trained

2,190

No of cases
resolved

8,486

% of cases
resolved

87

Initiative with support from the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme, identified the risks posed by the youth gangs to peace and security. Apart from their perennial mobilization into political violence, the stakeholders were concerned that the gangs had become informants and foot-soldiers for insurgent groups that have defied stabilization efforts and continue to attack both military and civilian targets in the state.

Stakeholders engaged traditional authorities and leveraged on their agency to sensitize and persuade the youth gangs on the need to lay down their arms and renounce violence. Present at the disarmament ceremony were community leaders, government officials and officers of the Nigeria Police Force, who coordinated the collection of the weapons. Appreciative stakeholders expressed their desire that the commitment of the youths to non-violence would strengthen community resilience and enhance prospects for peace and security.



Police take stock of arms surrendered by youth gangs. Source: MCN

“Not long ago, I saw a young man slaughtered by the violent youth group. Watching them submit their arms is a source of joy and a step towards the peace we need in our communities.”

Ba Zannah Lawan Ajimi, Chairman, Jere CPSP, Borno State

“I regret my actions because the community was not happy with us. I never believed that my relatives and community members would accept me back. My appreciation goes to the leaders and the CPSP that led us to voluntarily surrender the arms we used to threaten people.”

Saidu Gali, Gomari Community, Jere LGA, Borno State

“I wasted valuable time when I was a youth gang leader. I now earn an average of 800 to 1,000 naira daily, compared to my former life of uncertainty.”

Suleiman Ahmed, Gomari Community, Jere LGA, Borno State

Some members have committed to finding legitimate sources of livelihood and received support from family members. The MCN Programme is following up with relevant government agencies (notably, the Ministry of Youth and Sports Development; the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development; and the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation) to explore possibilities for reorientation, rehabilitation and empowerment for the youths.

Borno CPSP platforms mobilise to prevent community transmission of COVID-19

Four Community Peace and Safety Partnerships (CPSPs) platforms in Borno State have initiated activities to address the risk of community transmission of COVID-19. The platforms in Bayo, Biu, Hawul and Kwaya Kusar LGAs - convened by the Centre for Peace, Diplomatic and Development Studies of the University of Maiduguri with support from the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme - were active during the lockdown observing social distancing and guidelines for safe meetings. They have successfully engaged with stakeholders to sensitize the public on the risks of transmission of COVID-19, enforce the use of face masks, and follow social distancing rules.

Following the report of a case of COVID-19, the Bayo CPSP engaged stakeholders on human rights violations associated with the lockdown and the need for the establishment of an isolation centre facility in the LGA. Engagements with the relevant security agencies and local council departments resulted in the relocation of the military check point to the border between Borno and Gombe states. This has reduced contact between commuters and security officials, which reportedly led to rights abuses. Furthermore, the local council has started to mobilize the resources required for setting up an isolation centre.

In Biu LGA, the CPSP platform engaged with stakeholders to sensitize the public on risks of transmission, enforce the use of face masks and social distancing measures, and enhance safety on public transport. As a result, there is increased public sensitization by local health officials, enhanced compliance by commercial tricycle operators on use of masks and social distancing, and the construction of a temporary isolation centre by local authorities.

Impressed by the proactive measures of the CPSP platform, the Local Government Steering Committee on COVID-19 co-opted the CPSP committee on COVID-19 to support its strategy and programmes to prevent COVID 19. It also donated 100 face masks to the CPSP platform for use during meetings and advocacy initiatives.

The Hawul LGA CPSP engaged with stakeholders to address lapses observed in compliance with sanitation measures and social distancing required to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, including the lack of hand sanitizers in public places. Following the engagement with the local council, sanitizers and handwashing facilities have been established in motor parks, worship centres, and markets.

In Kwaya Kusar LGA, the platform engaged with stakeholders in government, traditional institutions, and religious organisations to raise awareness with the public on the risks of community transmission, preventive measures, and the need to provide sanitary facilities in public places. Feedback from the area indicates improvements in compliance with social distancing and the wearing of face masks. Also, many religious centres of worship and markets have started providing handwashing facilities and the enforcement of use of face masks.

“We appreciate the CPSP for promoting security and safety in the community and IDP camps. By working with us to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, you have demonstrated your interest in safeguarding humanity.”

Hajiya Larai Mai Umar, Secretary BIU LGA and Chairperson, COVID 19 Committee, Biu LGA, Borno State

MCN supports traditional rulers in Adamawa and Yobe states to prevent the spread of COVID-19

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme has donated personal protection equipment (PPE) and sanitary facilities to 22 emirates and traditional councils in Adamawa (8) and Yobe (14) States. Items donated include face masks, hand sanitisers, hand washing materials, and IEC materials on COVID-19 prevention.

This initiative is in furtherance of the programme’s interventions to enhance conflict management capability in the communities. So far, the programme has trained 2,190 traditional rulers and supported them to resolve disputes and administer their communities.

The donation of critical supplies enables the traditional rulers who engage in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to continue to resolve disputes in their communities. Dispute resolution services offered by the traditional rulers will be important for the maintenance of law and order in the context of reduced activities in the formal courts due to the lockdown and other COVID-19 preventive measures.

MCN also facilitated the preparation of a protocol for safe dispute resolution to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as members of the public seek the services of traditional rulers. The Programme has also engaged the traditional rulers to communicate preventive measures for COVID-19 and contact information of referral centres for persons exhibiting symptoms of the disease. This engagement is crucial given the widespread denial of the reality of the pandemic and suspicions about testing and confirmation of status.



Senior traditional ruler delivering COVID-19 messages on television. Source: MCN

“We are grateful to the European Union and the British Council for ensuring that our society is safe from COVID-19. We are going to make good use of the items presented. I will demonstrate how to use these items, so that my people will understand the value of what is brought to us.”

Alhaji Dr. Muhammadu Abali Ibn Muhammadu Idrissa, Emir of Fika and Chairman of the Yobe State Council of Traditional Rulers

“We are committed to tackling COVID-19. These flyers will be placed across the palace and mosques, and will shared with our district heads and religious leaders for self-education and sensitization. No one will get access to my palace again without using this hand washing facility and applying a facemask.”

HRH Dr. Bashir Albishir Bukar, Mai Machinama, Machina Emirate, Yobe State

ADDRESSING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MCN supports access of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to services during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme is working with stakeholders to ensure that facilities that provide services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remain accessible during the COVID-19 lockdown. The Programme has provided personal protection equipment (PPE) and sanitary facilities to five Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and 10 Family Support Units (FSU) in Adamawa and Yobe States. The initiative was implemented in partnership with the Jamial Hakeem Foundation in Yola and the Initiative Community Development Focus in Damaturu. Some of the PPE were procured with the support of the European Union-funded Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (ROLAC) Programme, as part of its COVID-19 support to SARCs across Nigeria.

The support provided is helping police officers, medical doctors, nurses and counsellors to feel safer to attend to survivors of SGBV who need their services. It also helps address the widespread fear of survivors to avoid health facilities due to COVID-19.

The MCN Programme is also supporting the communication initiatives of the SARC Steering Committees to educate the public on the availability of services for survivors of SGBV in the FSUs and SARCs. The committees have engaged the media to broadcast jingles and produce discussion programmes (on mass media and social media).

“The support from MCN came at the right time. People are always trooping into this division, which put us at the risk of contracting COVID-19. With these sanitizing materials, we are confident that our environment will be safe and will continue to educate our people on how to maintain and make good use of it.”

DSP Suleiman Ibrahim, Family Support Unit (FSU), State Criminal Investigation Department, Nigeria Police Force, Yobe State Command

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

100 women benefit from economic empowerment initiative in Adamawa State

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme has supported the empowerment of 100 women in Michika LGA, Adamawa State. The economic empowerment initiative, implemented by the Women and Youth Economic Advancement and Health Initiative (WYEAHI), selected women from five wards (Futu, Moda/Dlaka, Michika 1, Michika 2 and Tamabaragabari) who are among those worse affected by economic hardships due to the incessant attacks by insurgent groups.

The beneficiaries were trained on savings and loans and the management of small-scale businesses. They also were trained on peace building initiatives, how to advocate for the rights of women, and actions to address sexual and gender-based violence in their communities.

Following the training and mentoring exercises, the WYEAHI organised a fund disbursement event on 21-23 April 2020. Twenty beneficiaries from five women associations (Alheri 1, Alheri 2, Haske, Kauna and Nasara) were given the sum of 20,000 naira to support their businesses. The event was witnessed by community leaders and security officials.

“I consider myself lucky to be a beneficiary. I learned a lot about peacebuilding and the prevention of COVID 19. I will use the money to boost my business and support my family.”

Laraba Augustine, Haske Savings and Loan Association, Futu Ward, Michika LGA

“We now know how to treat our women better to build an inclusive and peaceful community. The project has lifted burdens and empowered our women.”

Gomma Zakawa, Village Head, Michika Ward 2, Michika LGA

WOMEN PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES

Adamawa women peacebuilding initiatives record success stories

The women peacebuilding initiative in Adamawa State - implemented by the Global Peace Development (GPD) and the Centre for Health and Development in Africa (CHEDA) with the support of Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme – has contributed to addressing issues affecting women. This is the finding of the assessment conducted at the end of project, which targeted 15 women associations from Mubi South, Mubi North and Yola North LGAs.

The project trained and mentored women on key issues, including their participation in peacebuilding and community leadership, causes of sexual and gender-based violence, and other issues affecting their general wellbeing. On completion of the training, the women's groups received grants to roll out peace initiatives in their communities.

The assessment demonstrated that these helped to enhance the self-esteem and recognition of women; raised awareness about sexual and gender-based violence; mobilised communities to take actions against drug abuse among youths; and encouraged the enrolment of female children in schools to access formal education.

“I am 39 years old and a mother of nine children (5 males and 4 females). At first, I did not believe that girl child education had any meaning. So, I married off my first three daughters without sending them to school. I now understand the reasons why girl child education is important and enrolled my youngest daughter in school.”

“Many of our children in Gella are drug addicts. This intervention has helped us. We now see the difference in their attitudes and behaviours. And the rate of drug addiction has reduced.”

Mallama Aishatu Adamu, Women Alliance Gella, Mubi South LGA, Adamawa State

“We now know when gender-based violence occurs, to voice it out and seek justice. Before, we kept quiet and allowed the pain and shame in order to safeguard our family name and the dignity of our daughters. We were afraid that no man would marry her if we reported the case. We were also discouraged from reporting rape because perpetrators compromised law enforcement agents and brought shame to the survivor and her entire family. But through this intervention, we were made to understand that we can report these cases nearby at the Social Welfare Unit of the Local Government Area.”

“The project has also helped us to take action to discourage hawking, which takes girls out of the home and exposes them to rape. As a result, hawking has reduced and our girls now go to school.”

Hannatu Markus, CAN Women Association, Gella, Mubi South LGA

“We initiated dance and drama events to address sexual and gender-based violence. This really changed the attitude of the boys who saw young girls as objects of rape and other forms of violence.”

“There used to be a high rate of drug addiction in this community. And the drug addicts were the main perpetrators of sexual violence. Through this project, we educated our youths about the dangers and implications of drug addiction and the consequences of sexual violence. These same drug addicts have now been transformed into peace advocates in their community.”

Mary Philip Kungiyar, Zaman Lafiya Women Association, Digil Community, Mubi North LGA

“We trained women and adolescent girls on how to make liquid soap, air freshener, pomade, and slippers, as well as services such as tailoring and hair plaiting. With these new skills, the women and girls can make a living for themselves.”

“Forced marriage was an issue in our community. We now discourage the practice by approaching the father of the girl to show him the impending danger of forced/early marriage.”

Mallama Didi, Kautal Hore Women Association, Doubeli, Yola North

COMMUNITY POLICING INITIATIVES

MCN supported initiatives contribute to improved community policing in Yobe

Initiatives of the MCN Programme to strengthen community policing in Yobe State are yielding results. The support focused on building the capacity of the voluntary policing sector (VPS) groups and enhancing the collaboration between formal and informal security service providers. This is finding of the quarterly assessment conducted on operations of VPS in five target local government councils: Damaturu, Fune, Geidam, Gujba, and Nguru.

The assessment indicated that the VPS were productively engaged in basic community policing, conflict management, and the protection of human rights. There was no reported incident of rights violations by members of the VPS groups. The assessment also found evidence of increasing collaboration between the VPS and formal law enforcement agencies. The VPS groups were also demonstrating more responsiveness to complaints by members of the public on service delivery, including feedback shared at the Community Accountability Forums (CAF).

Evidence of enhanced coordination include the joint patrols conducted by the VPS and the police and civil defence, which have resulted in the effective combatting of crime. For instance, joint patrols conducted in Damaturu, Fune, Geidam and Nguru led to arrests of suspected criminals and reported reduction in crime. There was also evidence of successful advocacy to address matters affecting collaboration between VPS and formal security agencies. For instance, harassment of VPS members at military checkpoints reported at the Gujba LGA VPS Coordination meeting has been addressed.

The VPS coordination mechanism has also become better at supporting the VPS groups to address key issues. In Geidam, concerns were raised at the platform about factions caused by the leadership within the groups. The platform helped stakeholders come to a resolution to the protracted leadership crisis through the adoption of a power sharing arrangement. The coordination mechanism also influenced the donation of 3 Toyota Hilux vehicles to the VPS groups to facilitate their patrols.

Stakeholders in the Geidam Community Accountability Forum promote road safety

Stakeholders at the Community Accountability Forum (CAF) in Geidam LGA (Yobe State) have mobilised to address risks of road accidents and breach of security associated with the operations of commercial tricycle operators. This followed a concern raised at the forum, convened by the Communal Support Foundation of Nigeria (COSFON) with support from the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme. The meeting that was held in February 2019 highlighted the different practices of the operators that lead to frequent conflicts between them and members of the public.

These concerns included the engagement of under-aged boys as drivers of tricycles, which was causing increasing cases of accidents that trigger skirmishes between tri-cyclists and residents; lack of an identification system for tricycle drivers, which provided cover for some drivers to use their vehicles for criminal purposes and convey suspected criminals in and out of the area; and the inability of the association of tricycle operators to enforce its regulations on road safety among its member.

Law enforcement agencies also raised concerns about the interference of the association of tricycle operators, parents and community members that have hindered the investigation and prosecution of traffic offences.

After deliberations on the issue, the CAF stakeholders facilitated the following actions:

- Set up a three-member committee to engage the Local Government Council on the issue and to bring traffic and road safety agencies and tricycle operators to a round table to resolve the matter.
- The LGA organised a roundtable meeting for traffic and road safety agencies and leadership of tricycle operators.
- The representative of the Divisional Police Officer at CAF Meetings and the Chairman of tricycle operators' association were asked to collaborate towards enforcing proscription of under-age driving of tricycles, compulsory use of identity numbers and other traffic offences.
- The LGA commissioned members of Man O' War and the National Orientation Agency Brigade to assist law enforcement agents to enforce road traffic regulations.
- The leadership of tricycle operators to implement internal monitoring and conflict resolution mechanisms to address underage driving and use of identity numbers.

Following these interventions, there is an improvement in the enforcement of the regulations banning under-aged individuals from riding tricycles and the mandatory use of identity numbers in Geidam. This enhances community safety and addresses the issue of security breach by the riders.

Tricycle operators now use numbers assigned to them and underage persons no longer drive tricycles. This has contributed to a decrease in the rate of road accidents associated with tricycles and rate of crime in Geidam and environs.

“In the past, we had issues with by tricycle operators in Geidam. There were underage drivers and a lack of identity numbers on display. Due to the work of the CAF, many crimes, security and safety issues have been resolved. We now receive less cases linked to the tricycle riders.”

Zakari Dan Liyo, Divisional Office, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Geidam LGA, Yobe State

PROGRESS AGAINST EU INDICATORS

Indicator	Target 2021	Achieved at 30 April 2020	Comment
Number of staff from government institutions and internal security forces trained	1,210	7,081	Activity Years 2-4
Number of people participating in conflict prevention and peace building activities	2,860	31,053	Activity Years 1-4
Total number of community beneficiaries	2,278,580	2,362,438	Activity Years 2-4

Tribute: Nuhu M Ndahi

With heavy hearts, the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme announces the death of a valued colleague and friend: Nuhu M. Ndahi. Until his death on 9th May 2020 after a brief illness, Nuhu Ndahi was MCN's National Monitoring and Evaluation Manager. He held the position from the inception of the programme in October 2017. He had previously served as Deputy Regional Manager of the UK aid funded Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), which was implemented by the British Council.

We remember Nuhu as a dutiful, friendly and cheerful colleague who loved his family and was passionate about his work. He was committed to the restoration of peace in the North East and this abiding interest informed his decision to live and work in Maiduguri (Borno State) even during the most trying period. He was very supportive of colleagues and partners and contributed immensely to the delivery of the programmes.

We will dearly miss Nuhu. We will miss his smiles, friendship and willingness to support. Nuhu is survived by his wife, two little children, and an aged mother. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace.

UPCOMING ACTIVITY

- Meetings and initiatives of the community peace and safety partnerships in target LGAs
- Dissemination of study on implications of COVID-19 for conflict dynamics, gender relations and social inclusion
- Community reconciliation initiatives in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Coordination meetings of voluntary policing sector groups
- Meetings of the community accountability forums in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Advocacy initiatives of SARC Steering Committees in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Youth peace initiatives in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Operations of family support units in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states
- Community peacebuilding initiatives by women associations and youth groups in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states

ONGOING CHALLENGES

- The COVID-19 pandemic and other public health challenges
- Partial closure of public institutions due to COVID-19
- Restrictions of travel due to COVID-19
- Continued unrest in the North East and the impact to travel and work outside state capitals
- Capacity of civil society organisations and state institutions

Find out more

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