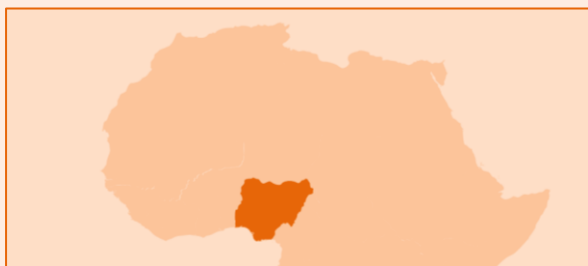


SUCCESS STORY

Enhancing state and community level conflict management capability in North-Eastern Nigeria (MCN)



EU Trust Fund for Africa - Sahel & Lake Chad



EUTF PARTNER:
British Council



COUNTRY: Nigeria



BUDGET:
EUR 21.0M



From **01/2017**
to **01/2023**

Objective of the project

To enhance state and community level conflict management capability to prevent the escalation of conflict into violence in several locations in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Key successes

- > 2,404 traditional rulers and women community leaders trained.
- > 1.5 million people benefitting from the initiatives of Community Peace and Safety Partnerships.
- > 13 local councils supported in the establishment of Community Accountability Forums.

The Boko Haram insurgency in the Nigerian BAY states between 2013 and 2015 disrupted the delivery of services and aggravated division between and within communities. One of the major

sources of conflict, aggravated by extremist groups, centred around different land use interests of farmers and herders. The project Enhancing state and community level conflict management capability in North-Eastern Nigeria (MCN) successfully initiated a dialogue between farmer and herder associations to foster mutual understanding, build trust, and jointly develop land use rules. The Community Peace and Safety Partnerships (CPSP) and similar initiatives, supported by MCN, provided a platform for farmers and herders to discuss conflicts, identify potential opportunities for cooperation, and develop concrete operational guidelines. The latter stipulated, for instance, that farmers were able to plant and harvest their crops within a particular time of the year before herders went into farmlands to graze and fertilise the land with cow dung in preparation for the next farming cycle. In the words of Malam Musa Lawan of an Adamawa-based cattle breeders associations:

'The relationship between farmers and herders has improved greatly over time, because of the cordial relationship that CPSP was able to create between them. Some herders even help farmers clear their farms during the harvest periods and the farmers are leaving the foliage for the herders to feed their cows, without invading the farms. Now everyone is living happily due to the intervention of CPSP.'



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How did the EUTF help?

MCN reached 231,659 direct beneficiaries and 4.1 million indirect beneficiaries out of 13.4 million total inhabitants in the BAY states, focusing on alternative conflict management mechanisms, reconciliation and stability within communities, the engagement of women in peacebuilding, enhanced reintegration of ex-combatants and returnees, and research to influence decision-makers and opinion-formers.

Over the course of the project, the share of respondents thinking that conflict prevention and response mechanisms were very relevant, valuable, and effective increased from 36% to 57%.¹ The final perception survey also revealed that 92% considered their community to be very or quite stable, whereas only 8% considered their community to be very or quite unstable – although the share of



respondents who thought that the community was very stable decreased from 52% to 47% over the course of the project.² Furthermore, annual fatalities in non-crime related violent events fell from 76 (July 2016-June 2017) to 11 (February 2022-January 2023) in the project target area. The following outputs contributed to these results:

- The project **trained 2,404 traditional rulers** in alternative dispute resolution, human rights, and legal processes, thereby strengthening an important source of justice within the communities. A code of conduct for the traditional justice system was elaborated and approved by the state governments in Borno and Adamawa.
- **34 community peace and safety partnerships** were supported by MCN over the course of the programme, focusing mostly on community safety and crime. The partnerships assembled key community stakeholders to meet periodically and address disputes which had the tendency to escalate into violent conflict if not resolved.
- **17 Sexual Assault Referral Centres** in BAY state hospitals, equipped and strengthened through MCN, served 5,121 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). 781 SGBV cases were addressed further by the police or other law enforcement agencies. In addition, MCN helped establish 11 Family Support Units within police offices to address SGBV and contributed to incorporating SGBV in the Criminal Law and Administrative Procedures Act in Borno State.

Keys to success

In focusing on peacebuilding through informal institutions, civil society action, and citizen engagement, one of the greatest challenges the project faced was building trust among communities. **The project successfully applied different strategies to generate trust and secure the buy-in of project partners**, which was key to achieve its objectives.

Long-term engagement: The British Council's history of engaging with communities and authorities in the BAY states, as well as MCN's extended implementation period (six years), provided time to progressively build trust. As a

¹ MCN conducted five annual perception surveys during its implementation period (2017–2022). The data cited refers to the changes between 2017 (baseline) and 2022 (final perception survey). The surveys included at least 100 randomly selected residents of each of the main local government areas where MCN had been active. Surveys were also conducted in the control states of Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba (neighbouring the BAY states), where MCN was not active.

² The decrease might be linked to the general perception of deteriorating security in the country, as indicated by control group data: in the control group outside MCN target areas, the number of respondents thinking their community was very stable fell from 75% in 2017 to 43% in 2022.

³ ACLED Dashboard, consulted in January 2024. Retrieved [here](#).

Disclaimer

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union through the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). Its contents are the sole responsibility of Altai Consulting and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

The research for this success story was conducted from January to April 2024, was based on project documentation, and presents the situation at that moment.

result of prior DFID-funded projects on reconciliation and justice, the British Council was familiar with the local context and actors, enabling the project to progress more smoothly.

Manage expectations: Operating in an environment where mostly humanitarian actors were active, the project actively conveyed the message that its approach did not entail individual financial or material support. Continuous communication and sensitisation helped generate support and avoid frustration among the target population.

Local ownership: MCN partnered with 32 local civil society organisations to jointly implement activities, making sure the interventions were context- and conflict-sensitive. Activities were integrated into existing local structures, for example by establishing and strengthening Family Support Units within police stations and Sexual Assault Referral Centres within hospitals.

Flexible and adaptive implementation: Accounting for the dynamic (post-)conflict setting, project activities were adjusted to the context. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the project provided personal protection equipment and sanitary facilities to traditional rulers to allow them to continue their services, while the formal justice system was on lockdown. Similarly, while activities focusing on reintegration of returnees and ex-combatants were initially rejected by citizens, as popular perceptions gradually shifted over the course of the project, MCN re-engaged in reintegration activities.

Building on success

MCN provided a set of established, recognised, and effective approaches and cooperation formats to prevent and address conflicts before they escalate into violence. These strategies will continue to be extremely valuable in the future, considering that conflict-related violence in the BAY states remained extremely high: throughout 2023, 3,016 people died in violent events in the three states, representing 13% of all fatalities in violent events in West Africa during this time period.³ If continued and scaled up, the models developed by MCN could be a central element to effectively counter the escalation of conflict into violence.



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