

## **NORTHEAST CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND STABILIZATION PROGRAM (NE-CMS) - PHASE III**

### **Strengthening accountability and governance in Borno state**



A government community dialogue in Damboa LGA

#### **BACKGROUND**

The prolonged crisis in the Northeast of Nigeria, Borno State is as the result of distinct complex root causes, which, if left unaddressed, will continue to undermine long-term peace and stability in the affected communities. The broken social contract between the government, traditional leaders, and citizens has consistently been one of the primary drivers of recruitment and support for non-

state armed groups and continues to be a critical grievance of local communities.

Compounding these challenges are traditional systems reinforcing the exclusion and marginalization of women and youth whose needs, remain unheard and unmet, and narratives of youth as perpetrators of violence are more likely to happen. Moreover, pre-existing social and political conflicts within local communities, including interethnic, intergenerational conflict and tensions between IDPs and host communities have been exacerbated by the crisis, and yet, until they too are managed, any viable solution to the crisis will be hardly achieved.

#### **APPROACH**

The North East Conflict Management and Stabilisation (NE-CMS) programme worked across twenty-one (21) communities and five (5) Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps in six LGAs of Borno state, namely Damboa, Dikwa, MMC, Jere, Gwoza and Konduga.

The programme worked to improve security and reduce support for violence in Borno state and build the capacity of citizens to hold government accountable for effective service delivery; create safe spaces to manage social and political tensions; and promote the role of women and youth as confident and accepted local peace agents. Through these interventions, communities reestablished relationships with the state and diverse local stakeholders and developed new structures and systems for addressing the root causes of conflict.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Mercy Corps works with global and local partners to deliver innovative solutions. Our partners include:

- UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)
- Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
- Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)
- Okapi Consulting/Radio Ndarason International
- Herwa Community Development Initiative
- Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI)
- Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
- Women in New Nigeria (WINN)

#### **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The programme worked with community members and local government officials to rebuild the relationship between citizens and the state. Good Governance Committees were trained on dialogue, civic engagement, and advocacy and supported to identify local needs and advocate for government response and broader policy change that can institutionalize the process around community rehabilitation. The Consortium also engaged government officials in training, learning visits, and professional conferences on participatory governance, and facilitated regular dialogues with communities, traditional leaders, media, and civil society to build trust and nurture spaces for collaboration that encourage participatory planning for government service delivery.

## COMMUNITY SOCIAL COHESION

The programme engaged local communities to address the underlying social tensions that perpetuate conflict and supported Conflict Management Committees through training on conflict analysis, ongoing mentorship to plan and facilitate community dialogues and joint inter-communal actions that contribute to better communication, trust, and social cohesion. Working closely with Psychosocial Support Groups, NE-CMS provided training on trauma healing and support to identify and refer individuals living with trauma. These groups also undertake sensitization and cultural and religious healing events that address conflict-related psychosocial barriers to peacebuilding.

## INCLUSION OF YOUTH AND WOMEN

Mercy Corps supports local Youth Support Networks and Women's Councils to serve as safe spaces where youth and women can learn new skills, build confidence, and generate unique solutions to community peacebuilding challenges. Mercy Corps provided training and mentorship to these platforms, utilizing peer-to-peer techniques for addressing conflicts, advocating for the needs of youth and women within the broader community, and implementing local initiatives that contribute to youth and women's empowerment, inclusion, and community development. These activities aim not only to empower these traditionally marginalized groups, but also to change community narratives about youth and women, so that they are valued as constructive peace agents within the society.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Total reached: NECMS Programme reached 1,823 people with 48% being women while 89% are young people aged 14 - 34 years.



## KEY IMPACT HIGHLIGHT ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP INCLUDE:

**Mercy Corps:** Building on the strong foundations established and momentum generated during Phase II, during Phase III local committees have demonstrated increased maturity in the execution of their mandates. Good Governance Committees (GGCs) have become more effective in their ability to engage state authorities during dialogues and advocacy efforts, and to produce tangible rehabilitation projects that addresses local community needs. Conflict Management Committees are more nuanced in their preparation for dialogues, and are able to put arrangements into concrete actions. Youth Support Networks show growing confidence in their potential to carry out diverse roles within the community.

In addition, Town Hall Meetings instituted under Phase III have improved the transparency and visibility of Mercy Corps supported activities within the wider community, with community leaders pledging their public support to coordinate with the local committees. Mercy Corps implemented these initiatives in collaboration with local civil society organisations, namely: Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), HERWA Community Development Initiative (CDI), and Women in New Nigeria (WINN).

**Humanitarian Dialogue (HD):** HD's work focused on expanding the dissemination of the Alternative Narrative (AN) document to reach key

stakeholders in Borno State, with the aim of reducing vulnerabilities and support to Boko Haram's messages. To this end, the Alternative Narrative (AN) approach has contributed to the achievement of the programme's intended impact to improve security and reduce support for violence in Borno state. The onset of COVID-19 pandemic affected the kick-off of the programme due to a temporary pause of in-person engagements. This challenge however provided an opportunity for adaptation and innovation through the development of a social media track and expansion of radio programming. HD worked with its community partners: the Borno Peace Champions (BOPCHA) and Women in Dialogue (WID) to open a sensitisation page on Facebook (Borno Peace Forum) to disseminate COVID-19 and peace messages.

**Okapi/Radio Ndarason International:** In September 2018, Okapi started an Alternative Narratives (AN) radio programme, after coordinating with HD and leveraging the AN document as the reference. This programme continued beyond the initially envisaged period of collaboration into 2021, and will hopefully continue beyond the end of NECMS. Despite some difficulties, including direct threats from Boko Haram, Okapi managed to exceed its overall targets during the programme period. Okapi produced and broadcasted 54 AN programmes encouraging more

space for debate about different interpretations of Islamic texts, 108 radio programmes aimed at strengthening social cohesion, and 594 radio programmes designed to improve social cohesion. In addition, Okapi trained 30 Community Youth Reporters (CYR) and received 858 CYR reports sent by the 10 best CYRs (those who have actually been engaged by Okapi) during the project period, and used 704 of them in the news and programmes. Finally, Okapi produced 23 different programmes every week, plus daily news programmes. These programmes reached 4.4 million Kanuri-speakers across North East Nigeria – at a conservative estimate.

**CIVIC:** In response to the programme's goal to foster a good relationship between the government, military and civilians, while ensuring their protection, CIVIC led advocacy and capacity building efforts for the adoption of the National Policy for the Protection of Civilians. The policy is currently awaiting action from the Federal Executive Council (FEC). CIVIC has continued to advocate for the adoption of the policy through support to networks of CSOs based in Abuja and Maiduguri, and is coordinating with the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) to support members of the National Assembly interested in legislation to further codify Protection of Civilians (POC) in Nigeria.

Throughout the life of the



programme, CIVIC trained 95 individuals of the Nigerian security services in 'protection of civilians (POC)' and 'civilian harm mitigation (CHM)'. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 restrictions, CIVIC was able to record significant impact as post training surveys indicate that all trainees were more knowledgeable concerning principles of POC and CHM and understood how those principles would apply to their operations.



## Maina Ali's Story: How improved military civilian relationship restored his business

how to engage with the military, they were educated on their rights and how to defend them. According to Maina, *"The knowledge I have gained from CIVIC has been priceless, because I went from not being able to talk to a military person to having them as loyal customers for my business."*

**M**aina Ali, aged 30, was born and has lived in Molai community, Jere LGA in Borno state most of his life. He lives with his wife and two young children. Tailoring has been his main source of income for the past 7 years, although he used to work in the animal husbandry sector before.

A major challenge in the community is access to food because the farmers cannot go beyond a 1km radius to farm due to frequent attacks from armed bandits. In addition, the military does not allow the farmers to plant crops that are of a certain height as this can serve as a cover for the armed bandits. In 2018, Maina lost everything in his shop due to an arson attack by Boko

Haram.

For as long as he could remember, the relationship between the military and the community has been rife with mistrust and fear. The community members feared the military could harm them, while the military did not trust the community members because they felt they were working with the armed opposition groups. Although Molai knew how to sew military uniforms, he was too afraid to pitch his services because he feared they might suspect him cooperating with AOGs.

Then the Center for Civilians In Conflict (CIVIC) came to his community to sensitize them on

Now the security situation in Molai has improved because the community shares information to the military freely when they see something suspicious, which helps the military to carry out their jobs more effectively. Maina is happy to have benefitted from the training from CIVIC because not only it has helped the community as a whole but also it has boosted his business. He has become the go-to tailor for making and amending the uniforms of the military in his community. His hopes for the future is that he would have scaled up his business and have more people working under him so he can train them to become excellent tailors as he is.

### CONTACT

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