

NORTHEAST CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND STABILIZATION (NE-CMS) PROGRAM

Strengthening accountability and governance in Borno state



IMPACT STORIES

MAY 2021

From the Program Manager's desk

It is with great pleasure that I share my thoughts about Mercy Corps' Northeast Conflict Management and Stabilization Program (NE-CMS), Phase III which was implemented in five Local Government Areas (LGAs) – MMC, Jere, Damboa, Dikwa, and Gwoza in 20 communities across Borno State over a period of 22 months.

The program aimed at improving peace and resilience among communities in the face of drivers of conflict and violence in Borno State.

The program had impact and recorded several achievements through nurturing constructive relationships among the Borno State local government, military, traditional leaders, and the communities, reinforcing trust and social cohesion by reducing barriers to collaboration around shared interests among diverse actors, and making spaces for inclusiveness of marginalized social groups, especially youth and women.



The program established five local committees with a total number of 217 members (164 Males, 53 Females) in the Conflict Management Committee (CMC), 230 members (174 Males, 56 Females) in Good Governance Committee (GGC), 235 members (136 Males, 99 Females) in Psychosocial Support Group (PSG), 300 members (182 Males, 118 Females) in Youth Support Network (YSN), and 296 members in Women Council (WC) across 20 communities. The committees were engaged in various capacity building training (dialogue, advocacy, trauma healing, and civic engagement) including government stakeholders to bridge the gap towards social cohesion, trust building, and delivery of services by the civilian government.

The NE-CMS Program through its varied approaches reduced communal violence and resolved community disputes, improved social cohesion among community members, improved community access to government for accountable service delivery as well as promoting strong relationship building between the community and the government.

Donors in the future should strongly consider longer-term funding for programs seeking to achieve high impact related to peacebuilding, reconciliation, and security. While this program effectively addressed the complexity and holistic nature of these goals, one-year tranches are insufficient to plan strategically for meaningful investment, and risk missing opportunities for deeper engagement, and trust building that could further program goals. We hope to see that peacebuilding programs be extended to more communities in Borno and other states in Northeast Nigeria.

Paul Enahoro Enude
Program Manager, NE-CMS

Addressing root causes of crisis in Borno state

The prolonged crisis in Northeast Nigeria is because of distinct complex root causes, which, if left unaddressed, will continue to undermine long-term peace and stability. The broken social contract amongst the government, traditional leaders, and citizens is used as one of the primary drivers of recruitment into, support for non-state armed groups, and continues to be a critical grievance of local communities¹.

Compounding these challenges are traditional systems of exclusion, whereby youth needs remain unheard and unmet, and narratives of youth as perpetrators of violence. Moreover, social and political conflicts within local communities—including interethnic, intergenerational, political, and IDP-host community conflict—often pre-date and are exacerbated by the crisis.

In a bid to manage the socio-cultural tensions and empower communities, especially women and youth, to engage in governance processes, Mercy Corps through funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) formerly United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) implemented the **Northeast Conflict Management and Stabilization (NE-CMS) program**.

About NE-CMS

The NE-CMS program works with local communities across Borno State to build their capacity to hold government accountable for effective service delivery; engage youth as positive change agents; and create safe spaces to manage social and political tensions.

The program started as a pilot in August 2016 and is in its third iteration that will end in May 2021. Through conflict assessments and a series of dialogue on the mitigation and prevention of conflict across communities, the NE-CMS program has tackled a range of socio-cultural conflict. NE-CMS works in a consortium with International partners (Center for Civilians in Conflict, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, and Okapi Consulting - Radio Ndarason) and National partners (Herwa Community Development Initiative, Christian Association of Nigeria, Jama'atu Nasril Islam, Women in New Nigeria, and Youth Empowerment Initiative) with Mercy Corps as the lead partner.

NE-CMS operates across 20 communities in five (MMC, Jere, Damboa, Dikwa, and Gwoza) local government areas across Borno state, Nigeria.

Our Impact



1220 Youth and Women trained on topics related to youth leadership



250 Participants trained on advocacy and **85** participants trained on good governance



300 Participants trained on dialogue facilitation

¹ Mercy Corps' September 2016 study, [Gifts and Graft: How Boko Haram Uses Financial Services for Recruitment and Support](#).



Strengthening participatory governance through Government-Community Dialogue sessions in Jere LGA

Kachalla Modu speaking during a Government-Community Dialogue

The NE-CMS supported Government-Community Dialogue forum seeks to engage local and state government officials in a variety of opportunities for networking. The aim is to improve their relationships and foster communication with diverse citizens who have played significant roles in promoting participatory governance.

Although this dialogue aims to strengthen the overall systems, structures and relationships through which participatory governance takes place. The initiatives that emanate from the dialogue focus more directly on local community grievances and demands related to rehabilitation and service delivery.

Kachalla Modu, Deputy Director Administration for Adult Education of Jere LGA, at the dialogue session held in Jere LGA on 12 March 2020 commended Mercy Corps for successfully building the capacity of local government officials in conducting dialogue sessions. He revealed that because of the dialogue sessions, *“Local government area officials have developed very good relationships with the Good Governance Committees and community members.”*

According to him, before the Government-Community Dialogue, government and community members viewed each other with suspicion, however they now view themselves as “partners in progress”. The Deputy Director Administration opined that the story is the same at all the LGAs where Government-Community dialogue sessions take place.

Government officials have also developed their stakeholder engagement skill due to the dialogue sessions. According to the Deputy Director Administration, local government officials now successfully engage with community members to elicit their input and support for community projects.



Good Governance Committee (GGC) of the State Low Cost community advocate for social amenities

*Abba Butu Munguno,
Chairperson, Good Governance
Committee of the State Low Cost
Community*

“Mercy Corps was one of the first NGOs to come into my community, they trained us on how to approach the government and other voluntary organizations to help us address our needs and we are really better off thanks to the skills we were given.” Those were the words from Abba Butu Munguno, the chairperson of the Good Governance Committee (GGC) of the State Low Cost community, on how being part of the committee has benefited him. He brings on his leadership skills from his years of service at the Ministry of Poverty and Alleviation, from where he is now retired.

At the peak of the insurgency, Abba tells us how his community was close to the former operation base of the armed opposition group, which made everyone, live in constant fear of one another and the level of mistrust was high. Some of the other challenges that his community faced are poor electricity and lack of water facilities.

However, after the training on advocacy approaches from Mercy Corps, they were able to come together as a community to discuss their needs and air their concerns during town hall meetings at the traditional leader’s house. At the dawn of 2020, the Good Governance Committee of State Low Cost main goal was to engage and mobilize relevant stakeholders in the state and local government to ensure the drilling of boreholes, unclogging of water drainages and provision of streetlights in the community.

The GGC took steps to make this goal a reality, such as ensuring that their needs are captured in the appropriation budgets of the LGA and relevant ministries or agencies. They followed up by tracking the budget during its implementation and lobbying of key government officials; writing percussive letters to Chief Executives of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and following through to ensure that the letters are responded to. In addition, they organized advocacy visits to key management staff of concerned MDAs and working with Radio Ndarason to carry out media advocacy.

By December 2020, the main advocacy goal of the State Low Cost GGC was achieved. Abba alluded to the capacity building the GGC has received from Mercy Corps as the reason for their success. “Personally, the advocacy training has helped me be a better leader and become the go-to person for advocating or teaching other groups how to advocate for their rights and needs. This has been very fulfilling for me,” speaking on how



it benefited him as an individual. He also expressed profound appreciation to Mercy Corps for the quarterly refresher training on advocacy.

Advocating for the rights of farmers in his community

Goni seated in front of the mosque that he leads as the religious scholar

Goni Modu Zarambe, aged 40, is an Islamic religious scholar (Imam) and farmer who comes from and resides in the Old Maiduguri community in Borno state. He received training on dialogue facilitation, trauma healing and support to Borno state on COVID-19 from Mercy Corps' NE-CMS program.

Given the insecurity in his community, there were several restrictions on movements for farmers and where they were allowed to farm. He was able to use the negotiation skills he gained to convince the military commandant in his community to allow himself and some other farmers plant close to where their military base is located. The military men agreed but warned them not to plant any crop that went too high and gave them specific periods to carry out their farming practice.

One day, armed opposition groups attacked the military base. The military men suspected the farmers had something to do with it, so they cut down their crops and seized their tools as a result. Goni and his fellow farmers were devastated but Goni decided he needed to try to find a solution.

Using the knowledge he gained from the trauma healing training, he approached the military post to speak with the military commandant to reconsider. On getting there, the soldiers told him to go back because they did not want to grant his request and they even threatened to shoot him if he moved any closer. However, Goni stood his ground and kept requesting to see the commandant. His resilience was rewarded when the commandant overheard the ruckus and told them to bring him in.

When Goni finally had the audience of the commandant, who was not the same person he had made the initial agreement. He took time to explain what the former arrangement was, with the help of a translator. The new commandant accepted responsibility and apologized for the damage caused, as he was not aware of the prior agreement. He granted permission to Goni and other farmers to resume their farming. *"I feel happy I was instrumental in helping my community members. I am grateful because it was the training that gave me the courage to advocate on their behalf,"* shares Goni on what inspired him not to give up on his advocacy mission. His hopes for the future is for peace to reign in his community and he wishes for the opportunity to return to school.



Supporting women with business skills through the Women Council

Fatima Dauda holding the stickers for the shampoo she plans to get NAFDAC registration for

Fatima Dauda, 22 years old, is a leader of the Women Council in her community, Gwange, in Borno state. She is the youngest in her group; however, she was elected as the leader because of her patience and determination to support the women in her community.

When the Mercy Corps' NE-CMS program came to her community, she received trainings on trauma healing, psychosocial support, advocacy and civic engagement. Fatima took it upon herself to step-down what she learned from these trainings to other women in the community. With the skills she acquired from the trauma healing training, she is able to identify when someone is traumatized from their behaviors or actions and is able to get them to confide in her before finding other ways to help them.

Fatima used the advocacy skills she gained from Mercy Corps to advocate for a dam for her community. She used her civic engagement skills to select women that can host the skills acquisition classes. Mercy Corps supported the women with funds to procure the items needed by her group to learn skills in soap making, petroleum jelly, and shampoo making; now they are working on getting the NAFDAC number for the products they make. *"I have changed for the better because of all the skills I have gained, people now identify me as a leader and reach out to me for help. I am more confident in what I can do than before," said Fatima.*

During the COVID-19 imposed lockdown, families were affected because breadwinners were without jobs and even women could not go out to make their daily income. She cited that lack of empowerment is the biggest challenge for women in her community and poses a solution, *"I believe that if more women are empowered, the burden would be less on their husbands and they can better cater for themselves and their children. This is why I am passionate about teaching women skills."* Fatima has finished her diploma in Animal Production and Technology and hopes to one day be a medical doctor and a national women leader for Nigeria.



Making the community a better place with the Youth Support Network

Zanna Hassan addressing some youths in Gwange 1 community

Zanna Hassan, aged 25, owns a small business where he sells food items to support his parents and seven older siblings in Gwange 1, Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) Borno state. In April 2013, he lost his uncle, who was targeted and killed by Boko Haram. Leading him and his family to flee to Jos, Plateau state for their safety, where they lived for 2 years before moving back to Borno.

Gwange, where Zanna was born and raised is known for being a dangerous community because of the high rate of crime. *“If people hear you are from Gwange 1, they automatically assume you are a thug. When in reality only about 30% of the youth engage in gang activities,”* shares Zanna on the misconceptions of youth in their area. He went further to highlight that the youth face several challenges such as lack of job opportunities, access to marketable skills and young girls especially those that hawk items are susceptible to rape and gender based violence. However, Zanna is well known in his community for being a hardworking and respectable young man.

When Mercy Corps NE-CMS program began working with the youth in his area, providing trainings on advocacy, civic engagement, psychosocial support and trauma healing, it was no surprise that he was elected as the Youth Support Network leader in Gwange 1. With support from Mercy Corps, the Youth Support Network has been able to buy sanitation materials used to clean the drainage systems, buy mosquito nets and renovate three boreholes in his community. *“Thanks to the support from Mercy Corps, it has not only made me popular in the community but I am also well-known for being a leader. I plan on passing down everything I have learnt to others so there can be more leaders.”*

In February 2021, after a bombing attack that left many injured and several killed, Zanna was able to mobilize youths to transport injured people to the hospital and donate blood to the injured. He was encouraged by the number of youth that rose to the challenge to help. *“One thing I am most proud of is being able to lead the merging of six different Youth Support Networks into one association that is officially registered under the Borno State government. I currently serve as the treasurer of this association now.”* Zanna sees a bright future for himself, with thoughts to venture into politics. *“Youth voices are important because we are the future and the elders would not always be there to lead. We can do more if we are given more opportunities to lead.”*



Changing perception and attitude through community dialogue meeting

Aisha at the Gwoza community cap-sewing center where she educates other women on how to be cooperative and respectful citizens.

Aisha Dada Ali is a single mother to one child and from the Bulabulin community in the Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA). Before the insurgency in Gwoza, life was full of ease; they enjoyed interaction with diverse groups and numerous cultural practices. However, all those little joys ended when the insurgency operations began. This has disrupted peoples' means of livelihood and caused untold hardship in the communities.

“When humanitarian support came into our community, many people had a lot of misconceptions about the aid. Our leaders were being used to support the distribution processes but we the people were ignorant of such processes and we were disrupting the processes.” Aisha narrates how these conflict issues arose in her community since International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) started providing aid assistance in Gwoza.

It was not until Aisha got selected by Women in the New Nigeria and Youth Empowerment Initiative (WINN) to participate in the dialogue meetings in the community that she experienced a mindset shift. Initially, she did not see this as an opportunity to discuss and mitigate our community issues but as a waste of time. However, after paying close attention to the facilitator and the discussions, she realized that this is where they can resolve their differences as a community.

Aisha began her transformational journey through NECMS community dialogue where before now she was disrespectful and arrogant to her community leaders during aid distributions but this had changed now, she sees the humanity in every human being and she supports her community members to have a similar understanding.

At their women's community cap sewing center, she is able to enlighten other women on the need for respect, tolerance, understanding, empathy and forgiveness. *“After realizing my mistake during the dialogue meeting, I apologized for my actions to my community leaders. The dialogue has helped change my perspective on many things. I now feel like I can control my emotions and attitude towards issues. I even promised to continue educating and enlightening other women in the community to be respectful and law-abiding citizens at all levels,”* shares Aisha. *“Violent confrontation cannot solve the conflict in our community, however with peaceful means; we can resolve our differences together.”*



Strengthening the capacities of local government committees on partnership building and social mobilization for community level COVID-19 response

The District Head of Damboa, Alhaji Zanna Lawan Maina making his contribution during the Partnership Building and Social Mobilization Training.

As part of NE-CMS COVID-19 response strategy, the program engaged the local government COVID-19 committees and task forces by providing technical guidance to them to ensure the concerns and needs of rural community members are not excluded and to encourage transparent and inclusive operations in the COVID-19 response planning and coordination activities. NE-CMS supported the review of the Borno state government's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (PRP). The review workshop revealed the dire absence of viable community structures capable of mobilizing and galvanizing community support for COVID-19 actions. The inability to convene these structures at the community level was highlighted.

With this in mind, the NE-CMS program convened the Partnership Building and Social Mobilization Training for government, traditional leaders, women and youth groups and civil society organizations. The specific objectives of the training were to provide information on building community partnerships and social mobilization for collaboration on COVID-19 vaccine rollout; explore a range of tools and approaches for establishing sustainable partnerships and implementing social mobilization activities and explore strategies for enhancing Social Inclusion and Women's Participation in community partnerships and social mobilization efforts.

At the end of the training, the District Head of Damboa, Alhaji Zanna Lawan Maina, thanked Mercy Corps for "bringing different stakeholders together to strengthen their capacity in building sustainable partnerships to combat the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic." He said that the training has given him the opportunity to know that "no single group or entity, not even government can successfully stop the rising incidence of COVID-19 in the state if they work alone." He added, "I will personally ensure that all relevant structures at the community level are co-opted into the COVID-19 response." He further enjoined all participants to take the training seriously and to ensure that they implement the action points assigned to them once they return to their bases.

On Alhaji's Zanna's return to Damboa, he convened a meeting with key stakeholders from the Local Government Council, viable associations and groups including all the Bulamas in Damboa. He encouraged them to come together and accept the COVID-19 vaccine as the intention is only to save lives. A steering committee made up of members from all the communities in Damboa was quickly set up to work out the modalities for sustaining the platform and sensitize their community members to accept the COVID-19 vaccine.

Now the people of Damboa are willingly taking the vaccine. According to the District Head *“the way people are keen on taking the COVID-19, every indigene of Damboa will end up taking the vaccine”*. He attributed the success of the vaccine rollout in Damboa to the training on building sustainable partnership. He said, *“Bringing the people together to talk about COVID-19 and the vaccine helped to build trust between the people and the government.”* He said he has demonstrated good leadership by taking the vaccine.

NE-CMS Achievements in Pictures



Community member from Damboa Local Government area receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Water Borehole advocated for by the Good Governance committee in the State Low Cost community in MMC, Borno state.



Streetlights advocated for by the Good Governance committee in the State Low Cost community in MMC, Borno state.



**MERCY
CORPS**

About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

Visit: nigeria.mercycorps.org

Facebook: [@MercyCorpsNigeria](https://www.facebook.com/MercyCorpsNigeria)

Twitter: [@MercyCorps_NG](https://twitter.com/MercyCorps_NG)