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PEACE BREEDERS

System and Structure Strengthening Approach Against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism (SARVE II PROJECT)

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Members of the girls safe space, during a documentation on the functionality and effectiveness of the women and girls' safe spaces in Kogi state.

Photo Credit: ActionAid Nigeria/Peace Eneja

WHAT'S NEW?

1

The SARVE II project collaborated with the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) to organise a one-day Stakeholders Consultative Forum on Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) in Nigeria. The meeting provided a platform for multi-stakeholders' appraisal of the current Policy Framework and National Action Plan (PF and NAP) on preventing and countering violent extremism in Nigeria and discuss ways Religious Leaders, Traditional Leaders, Community Leaders, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can strengthen their role in providing an enabling environment in order to preserve community and religious values of culture, tradition and moral.

2

1500 young men and women from 24 communities in Kogi and Nasarawa state have graduated from the livelihood programme and were provided business starter packs. The beneficiaries were trained on Hair Dressing, Poultry, Barbing, Fashion Design, Welding, Carpentry, Graphics Design and ICT, Fish Farming, Shoe and Bag Production and Catering, with provision of start-up kits and rented shops worth a total of 78 million Naira (189462.00 USD). This is part of SARVE II project's efforts to strengthen young people to withstand and prevent violent extremism.

3

As part of effort towards supporting governance at all levels (Federal, State and Local) to create enabling environment that prevent violent extremism, the project developed and circulated two policy briefs. The first centred on Policy Options in Responding to Nigeria's Ecosystem of Violence while the second was on Corruption, The Nest of Violent Extremism In Nigeria. These policy briefs were used as advocacy tools to engage policy makers and implementers, just as they were shared with all state security advisers and office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA).

4


Also, in the news, the community leader of Ette Community constituted a committee to take learnings and understudy the Community Action and Response Team (CART) set up by ActionAid Nigeria and Participation initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID) in Kogi State. This is a significant stride in sustaining the SARVE II project as it will enable the community expand its manpower in community policing for a safer and peaceful Ette where development can thrive.

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A photograph showing two men in a community setting. One man, wearing a blue shirt, is reaching up to adjust or inspect a transformer mounted on a metal structure. The other man, wearing a light brown shirt, is looking on. The transformer is a large, grey, cylindrical unit with various electrical components and wires. In the background, there are some buildings and a fence.

Members of the CART during the repair of the faulty transformer in Laminga community.

THE SWITCH: A COMMUNITY MOBILISING FOR PEACE

Despite appeals to the government for over eight months to repair the 11KVA step-down transformer that supplies electricity to the people of Laminga community, efforts proved abortive, and this negatively affected the socio-economic activities and undermined the security situation of the community. Criminals seized the gloomy night-time to unleash criminal activities. Women who mainly sell ice candy, cold sachet-water, and some businesses that required electricity were no longer thriving. Majority of the women could not afford to use a gasoline generator due to the cost of fuel and this had rendered many youths unemployed.

Laminga is in Nasarawa local government area of Nasarawa state, about 91 miles (147 KM) away from the capital, Lafia. The community has diverse ethnic and religious groups and have managed to live in peace and harmony with one another. Farming and animal rearing is the mainstay of economic revenue in the community; however they experience perennial clash with herdsmen, especially during the rainy season.


As the lack of electricity loomed, Suleiman, the Secretary for the Community Action and Response Team (CART) became worried about the increased youths' restiveness and conflict which often occurred at night. Lack of electricity meant streetlights were not functional and made it difficult to trace the perpetrators at the time of the incidence. It became unsafe to move around in the community when it was dark. Suleiman saw the need to act quickly and fix the power supply which will brighten the streets and popular criminal hideouts in the community.

At the next CART meeting, the group agreed to pay an advocacy visit to their state house of assembly and engage their constituency representative, about their current situation. The house member took the case forward, mobilized support from the state government and successfully installed a new transformer in the community which now supplies power to every household. Now the streets are light up again and many businesses restored. To complement the government's effort, the community members further mobilised funds on their own to cater for the transformer servicing and fencing.

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*Light is life. When the light went off, most of our businesses collapsed and this fuelled crimes and violence in the community. But now even our women and young people have means of livelihood to keep them engaged, **Said Suleiman***

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Mabel (middle) and her friends from the girl's safe space

THRIVE: THE INSPIRING STORY OF MABEL

To tackle violent extremism, ActionAid Nigeria, and partner in Kogi state, Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID) have continued to prioritise the safety of women and girls especially those in vulnerable communities where patriarchy and injustice persists and fuels conflict.

Mabel had a horrible childhood experience. At age 5, she was sexually abused by an unknown man in her community. For fear of losing her life as she was told by the abuser, she never mentioned the incidence to anyone, including her mother who was her closest friend. She also had a very strained relationship with her father, who preferred a male child to take over from him and retain the family name. As a result, Mabel didn't get enough care and attention as she rightfully deserved. Mabel lacked support from every male mentor she had and this triggered her dream of becoming a woman advocate to support efforts in ensuring that women and girls thrive. With this, she began to observe the lives of many women in her community who she found

inspiring and worthy of emulation including her mother who is currently coordinating the women safe space in her community.

Mabel always admired the head girl in her school and desired to be in such leadership position. She figured it will offer her the chance to meet and interact with other young girls. In November 2019, when ActionAid Nigeria and partner set up the girl's safe space in her community as part of the initiatives in creating enabling environment for the prevention of violent extremism as well as providing a platform where young girls can discuss and engage on various issues that affect them, Mabel was among the first 10 girls who registered to be part of the group. Following her punctuality and activeness during meetings, she was appointed to coordinate the safe space. She finally got the moment she always dreamt about and was determined to make the best of it. She went on to recruit 10 girls into the safe space and soon, they expanded into another cell within the community, made up of 20 girls each.

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*“I used to be a very nervous and shy person; I could barely speak in public places. My past experiences at home affected me so much that I developed low self-esteem, but being part of the girl safe space has changed all that. I am very confident of myself and can speak up and share my opinion without any fear of rejection or abuse, **she testified.**”*

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Mabel also participated in the 2020 youth peace camp organised by ActionAid Nigeria where she had the opportunity to be mentored by a female Camp Director while representing her community in cultural dance during the

extracurricular activities in the camp. She intends to fully live her dreams as an activist and philanthropist, advocating for the rights of the girl child and amplifying their voices.

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*“Thanks to ActionAid for bringing the girls safe space to my community. Now I have learnt how to speak up and report abusers and so have many other girls in the community. Girls are starting to feel safe again, **said Mabel.**”*

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SHAPING PEACE

THROUGH MENTORSHIP AND DIALOGUE



On the 12th of February 2013, a major crisis between herders and farmers hit hard on B. A. D community and left many homes destroyed. Barikin Abdullahi community popularly called B. A. D by the people of Nasarawa state is a large community located on the outskirts of state capital, Lafia. The crisis left remnants of anger and youth restiveness; reoccurrence of conflicts among young people became the new normal.

For 27-year old Silas, life was not any different from what it has become for many youths in B. A. D. He did not always make trouble but would fight with every power in him once anyone pushes him to the wall. He was not quick to forgive and would swiftly retaliate any wrong done to him. This was his nature and lifestyle.

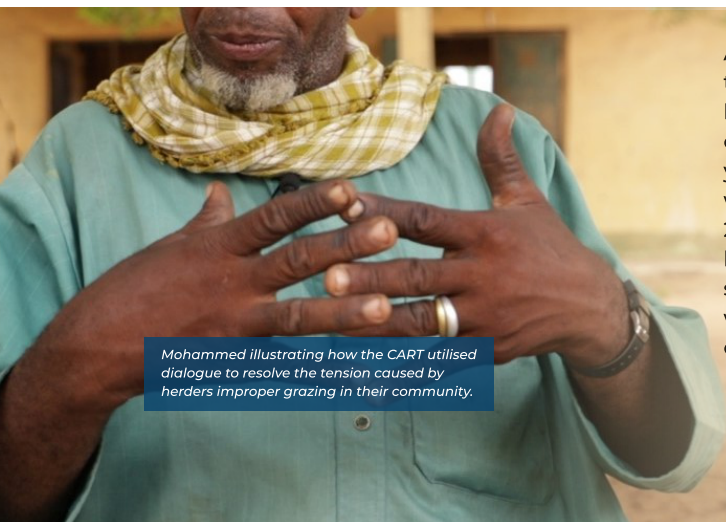
Silas had lost his father as a teenager. As the first child of his parents, he has been the father figure to his siblings. He knew he had to support his mother whose sole source of income was farming, so he began nursing the ambition of owning a business early on. Upon graduation from Nasarawa State University with a BSc in Geography Education in 2016, Silas had gone ahead to complete the compulsory National Youth Service in Ebonyi state and during this period he saved some money from his monthly stipend.

Brainstorming on business ideas after searching for white-collar jobs to no avail, Silas recalled that only a few good barbers successfully rebuilt their business following the 2013 crisis. He engaged one of the barbers named Hakeem and indicated interest in becoming a good barber. Silas understudied Hakeem and soon became a pro at popular haircut styles for both young and older men in the community, including children. As soon as he was set to kick off the business, he took N78,000 (189.31 USD) from his savings to rent a shop and purchased some basic work tools. As an established barber, Silas makes an average of N1,800 (4.37 USD) as profit daily; despite his budding business, his aggressive nature remained.

Fortunately, Silas had an attitudinal change after participating at the 2020 Youth Peace Camp organised by ActionAid Nigeria in Nasarawa State. He learned that dialogue is a better approach to conflict than retaliation. On returning home, Silas saw the need to kick out idleness among youths in his community and decided to enrol 9 young people as interns to learn the haircut trade at no cost. One of his mentees popularly known as Movement, used to be a notorious troublemaker in the community and was always seen where there is conflict. Now through Silas's constant mentorship, Movement has totally changed from being an addicted smoker and troublemaker to a calm and productive member of the community.

"If I had not met ActionAid, Global Peace Development, and Beacon Youth Initiative, I wouldn't have thought about some of these decisions I have made to help build other young people like me in my community. I would have remained in my selfish and nonchalant shell. Now I am happy for the changes I see in myself, in my friend, Movement, and in my community. From here on, everything will get better" said Silas, with a big smile on his cheek, as he shows off his haircut skills.

Still in B.A.D, Muhammed migrated with his family from North Katsina to settle in Nasarawa two decades ago. His honest and jovial nature drew him closer to the people. Mohammed's pastoral farming business was also thriving; he made sure that his cattles grazed only in approved areas far away from the locals' farmland, and his peace seeking nature earned him a membership of the Community Action and Response Team (CART), a group set up by the SARVE II project consisting community members to detect and avert conflict before it escalate.



Mohammed illustrating how the CART utilised dialogue to resolve the tension caused by herders improper grazing in their community.

At the peak of the farming season, more herders had trooped into the community in search of feeds for their cattle. Some unknown herders grazed in restricted areas including farmlands of some community members. When Muhammed heard that a group of youths were planning an attack on the herders as retaliation, he went along with 3 CART members to meet with the herders, while 2 young CART members were deployed to ease the already brewing tension among the youths. After series of dialogue, the strain in the community was reduced and peace was restored, while a resolution was reached on how affected farmers will be compensated.



Jimoh demonstrating handwashing with his friend Kaka at their newly repaired borehole in Aku.

BEYOND SURVIVAL: BECOMING THE LEADING VOICE IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE

Having lived all 35 years of his life in Aku, Jimoh has seen first-hand the devastating effects of conflict on families in and around his community. Although the community has maintained a peaceful atmosphere for the past four years since the last herders/farmers crisis hit, tension and youths' restiveness began to escalate following the community's need for an accessible source of clean water.

Aku is a small community located in Adavi local government area of Kogi state, about 5 kilometers away from the state capital, Lokoja. The community is popular for its rich farming capacity, including pastoral farming dominated by Fulanis who have migrated and settled in Aku. Like many other households in the community, Jimoh also depends largely on farming for survival.

For 9 years, the community has struggled with no immediate access to clean water. Young people and women usually walk long distances to streams in nearby communities like Osaragada and Osara to fetch water, but this started to cause conflict. Young people got involved in physical fights at the streams which sometimes led to serious injuries.

After series of reports, Jimoh was concerned about escalating conflict. As the Chairman of the Community Action and Response Team (CART) in Aku, he knew he needed to act quickly and find a permanent solution. He called for a meeting with members of the CART and they agreed to repair the damaged motorised borehole previously provided by the Federal Government for the good people of Aku. After assessing the borehole and conducting a market survey, they found that it will cost only N65,000 (170.62USD) to restore the damaged parts. Jimoh and 6 other CART members were nominated by the community to raise funds. Jimoh led the team every weekday for 4 weeks, moving door-to-door, collecting N1000.00 (2.62 USD) from each household. The team raised a total of N76,000.00 (199.50 USD) which was used to successfully fix the damaged machine and the rest of the money was used for maintenance.

Now, the community members are excited about accessible portable water which has helped to keep peace in Aku.

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*We even accommodate other people from nearby communities to come and fetch water. My mind is at peace now, **Said Jimoh** with a sizzling smile.*

”

PEACE AMBASSADORS SPOTLIGHT.

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I began nursing an entrepreneurship dream after participating at the mentoring session at the 2020 Youth Peace Camp in Nasarawa. As soon as I got home I volunteered at a small business firm which enabled me to develop more practical skills in business management. Now my younger brother and I have commenced a fabrics distribution enterprise in our local market, and we make a lot of profit. This has kept us very productive and useful to our family and community. Thanks to ActionAid, Global Peace Development and Beacon Youth Initiative.

Mazani, Toto community

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ActionAid made us understand that lack of basic needs such as an accessible source of clean water could trigger conflict. For years our community has lacked adequate water for consumption. I decided to work closely with other CART members to mobilise resources. We were able to raise enough money to sink a borehole in the community and buy a generator and water pumping machine for the community. Thanks to ActionAid and PIBCID”

James, CART member Ujagba Community.

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Following series of community policing training for CART members organised by ActionAid Nigeria and PIBCID, the CART in my community has averted several conflicts through quick detection of the early warning signals. In recognition of our work and efforts in keeping peace within the community, myself, and all CART members in Aku have been recruited into the state vigilante group as well as the Osara Division Police Community Relation Committee (PCRC). Thank you for supporting us.

Abbas, Aku Community

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In the past, I had nothing to keep me busy and productive. When I was not chatting with friends, I had many ugly thoughts in my head. Since enrolling in ActionAid Nigeria's skill acquisition programme I have something more important to do after. My tailoring lessons were interesting, and I have better skills to offer. Now that I have completed the training, I can make fashionable dresses for myself and others too. I can't wait to start my own fashion design enterprise.

Sekenat, Ette Community.

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In my entire life, I have never seen an organization like ActionAid Nigeria. Sincerely I see a lot of changes in the lives of our young men and women. The community is living more peacefully now compared to the past. I can move freely in the community without fear of being attacked. I lack words to truly express how I feel about this development. I hope that in the future ActionAid will begin to involve children in this kind of intervention, because it will be good to start early enough to shape their minds towards creating a more peaceful society.

Wakili, Alizaga Community.

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SARVE II

PROJECT SUMMARY

The **“System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalization to Violent Extremism”** SARVE II project was informed by the need to decrease the vulnerability of at-risk young men and women to violent extremism, strengthen community systems and structures to address violent extremism, and create an enabling environment for preventing violent extremism. The commencement of a second phase was as a result of the impact and achievements recorded in the 1st phase of the project which was designed to systematically address the source of extreme restive violence that played out in Kogi state as a result of its numerous porous borders by digging deep into the fundamental causes of the type of violence in the state and to create workable community-driven solutions to prevent and address internal conflicts and general restiveness.

With funding from the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), SARVE II is now being implemented in Kogi and Nasarawa States in partnership with ActionAid Nigeria's Local Rights Partner in Kogi State; Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID), and Global Peace Development (GPD) & Beacon Youth Initiative (BYI) in Nasarawa State. The project is also working closely with the office of the Governors, Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development; Ministries of Agriculture; Ministries of Youth and Sports Development; Ministries of Education; Ministries of Commerce & Industries and other relevant MDAs, Community Based Organisations and youth groups in the states. The project is being implemented to reach 36,000 direct beneficiaries in six LGAs in Kogi State (Igalamela/Odolu, Ankpa, Adavi, Okehi, Lokoja, and Kogi) and six LGAs in Nasarawa State (Obi, Lafia, Nassarawa-Eggon, Akwanga, Toto, and Nassarawa).

Community Sponsorship

ActionAid Nigeria appreciates the little you can afford. A one-off donation is a fantastic start, but the kind of extreme poverty that children are facing are long term problems, and they need long term solutions. ActionAid is committed to making a sustainable difference and changing lives for good. **JOIN US!**

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