



Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)
Programming in North-Central Nigeria:

AND **RESEARCH FINDINGS**
RECOMMENDATIONS



ActionAid Nigeria's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, engaging members of the Community Action and Response Team (CART) in Tundun Adabu during the training of local volunteers for Community awareness on COVID-19.

This research findings and recommendations was published as part of ActionAid Nigeria System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalization to Violent Extremism (SARVE II) project in Kogi and Nasarawa State.

SARVE is an innovation of ActionAid Nigeria aimed at supporting communities to build resilience against violent extremism through enhanced capacity and structures to utilize available resources in preventing radicalization, respond to, withstand and overcome the adverse impact of violence should it occur.

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Tasallah Chibok
Director of Programmes

Acronyms

AAN	ActionAid Nigeria
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
IGSR	Institute of Governance and Social Research
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
WEP	Women Environmental Programme

PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (PVE) PROGRAMMING IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONTEXT AND ISSUES

Social Injustices, lack of access to economic and social opportunities and inequality leading to growing discontentment and intense agitations are prime among the drivers of violence in Nigeria. The North East Region of Nigeria has for years been going through extreme violence which these malaises provoked and this violent behaviour is also being experienced in other regions of the country either as a result of attempts of recruitment to violent sects and/or spillover of unengaged youths rising from unemployment. While the response to these by other regions may not be that fatal, opportunities for radicalization to violent extremism are rife in other areas too because they are equally characterized by these factors. The rising violent protest by the Niger Delta Militants, Indigenous People of Biafra, Boko Haram insurgency in the North and Middle belt and the activities of herdsmen among many others are evidence of such potentials.

As part of efforts to understand and address violent extremism issues in North-Central Nigeria, ActionAid Nigeria (AAN), Women Environmental Programme, (WEP) and Institute of Governance and Social Research, (IGSR) with funding from Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) conducted a baseline study on the prevention of violent extremism in Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Plateau States. The baseline assessment aimed to provide a more precise understanding of perceptions about violent extremism in respect of the GCERF Strategy's four leverage points to address drivers of violent extremism (social cohesion, community agency, equal access to opportunities, and sense of purpose).

The following are the context of the preventing violent extremism (PVE) project:

- Social cohesion means communities and their members maintain and build cohesion during times of societal change. Community members' feel a sense of belonging to a group or community where different ideas, ideologies and identities are embraced and incorporated, and that does not resort to violence.
- Community agency speaks to the capacity of communities to mobilise, organise and represent their interests. Communities actively and effectively engage with authorities on topics that are relevant to them. Community agency contributes to a more effective dialogue between state authorities, other stakeholders, and local communities.
- Equal access to opportunities lifts barriers that limit access to social and economic opportunities for self-improvement and for achieving community

members' aspirations.

- Sense of purpose refers to when individuals become more resilient to radicalisation and violent extremism through a stronger and more positive sense of self. Individuals have confidence, critical thinking, and other life skills that can enhance their sense of self-worth.

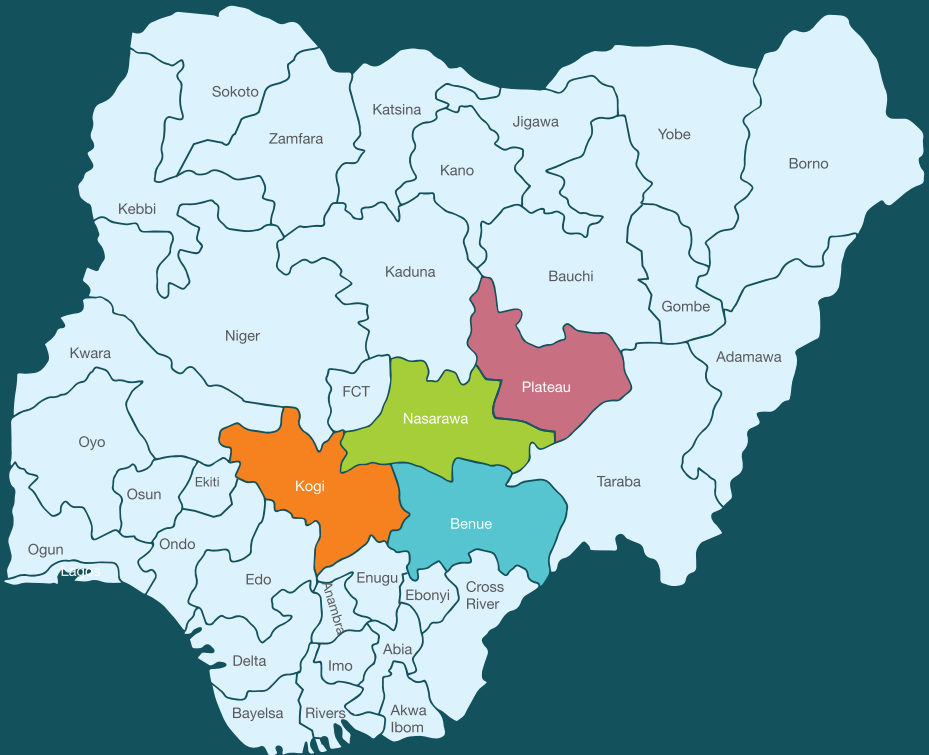
GENERAL FINDINGS

- Most of the respondents were farmers, about a quarter are students and less than 10% reported that they are currently unemployed. In terms of educational attainment, more than half of the respondents had at least a primary school education.
- Across the four states, almost 40% of respondents do not feel capable of mentoring a family member, neighbour and friends to identify early sign of violent extremism.
- Almost 30% of respondents still see violence as a justifiable means to achieve a goal.
- Less than 30% of respondents across the states reported they promote non-violent actions
- While the proportion of those who reported that they communicate positively with other group is high (over 70% for all the states), only about 30% reported that they participated in activities (more than five activities) with other groups within the last three months.
- Very few persons reported that they have access to meaningful livelihood, despite the fact most reported they engaged in an economic activity (main occupation).
- In all the states, respondents affirm that there is cohesion between communities and ethnic groups, however, there has been inter fighting due to boundary disputes and a lot of killing by suspected herdsmen. Both youths and adults have the same opinion on this.
- Quite a high proportion of respondents feel represented by their local leaders (community leaders), however, quite a high proportion reported that their voices are not heard when dealing with Government and those in authority.
- Over 70% of respondents say they trust their community leaders and that they work for their good, however, about 60% of youths say their voices are not heard especially by people in governance.
- Unemployment varies across the states; in Nasarawa a higher proportion

say they are engaged because almost all adults and out of school youth are engaged in farming while a lower proportion (30%) are engaged in Kogi state.

- Access to both financial and social opportunities tend to be low among females compared to males in all the states. It is also not of equal proportion within the states with adults claiming more than youths.
- In terms of equal opportunities, Fulani in Plateau and Nasarawa state feel marginalized as opportunities are only given to the locals.
- More than 75% of the respondents say they have a strong sense of purpose and believe that the future is bright, however, they add a note of caution that things must change for them to realize their dreams; this was especially prominent in Kogi state.
- The BRAVE analysis which measure on five subscales, cultural identity and connectedness, bridging capital, linking capital, violence-related behaviours, violent-related beliefs shows that communities' resilience to violence extremisms is as high as 70% (being the highest score possible).

STATE-SPECIFIC FINDINGS



 Kogi State

 Nasarawa State

 Benue State

 Plateau State

SOCIAL COHESION

Just about 19% of youths and 36% of adults reported promoting a non-violent action within the last three months preceding the survey. Female youths appear to be the least in promoting non-violent action while adult males are the highest. About 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “My community accepts that people use violence to solve problems”.

About 17% of youths and 14% of adults do not agree that their community uses traditional conflict mediation mechanisms to address issues. About 85% of respondents agree or strongly agree to the statement “traditional conflict mechanisms are effective”. Most of the respondents (over 80%) agree or strongly agree that community members co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with other groups and communities and trust people from other communities. However, just six out of every ten respondents are aware of any platform created, accessed and used by communities to promote peace and conflict transformation.

COMMUNITY AGENCY

Most youths (about 60%) and about half of adults do not feel that their voices are heard when dealing with government or those in authority. However, over 80% of the respondents feel their leaders want to do what is best for the community and about 75% of youths and over 80% of adults feel they are represented by their local leaders.

EQUAL ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Only 17% of youths and 29% of adults feel their income is enough to sustain them and their dependents. There is little difference between male and female respondents among youths and adults.

Just about six youths out of every ten agree or strongly agree that their community is fair and inclusive. Among adults, it is a bit higher as almost eight out of every ten respondents feel their community is fair and inclusive. Most youths (male and females) do not feel economically, socially and politically empowered (over 55%). Among adults, almost half also feel disempowered. About 40% of all respondents feel economically, socially and politically marginalized in their communities.

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Most community members in Benue state (about 76%) feel they have skills to address conflict in a non-violent way. A higher percentage of adults feel they have skills to address conflicts in a non-violent way compared with youths. Over 80% of respondents feel they have something positive to contribute to their community. Almost the same proportion feel valued by the people around them. About 90% feel confident about their future.



KOGI STATE


Total Respondents and Characteristics Of Respondents

In Kogi State, a total of

 **914**

persons responded to the questionnaire.

THE PROPORTION OF MALE TO FEMALE IS

  **49:51**

while youths to adults is about

53:47

Most of the respondents' main occupation is farming, most have a secondary school education

AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

18% of youths and 23% of adults know someone in the community who exhibits an early warning sign of violent extremism. Among the youths, more males (23%) compared with females (13%) know someone in the community who exhibits signs of violent extremism.

Among adults, almost three males compare to two females among every ten respondents know someone who exhibits early warning sign of violent extremism.

Over 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statements: violence helps one to earn the respect of others, violence helps one to show how strong one is, violence helps one gets what he or she wants and sometimes violence is the only way to make our society a better place.

SOCIAL COHESION

Just about 11% of youths and 16% of adults reported promoting a non-violent action within the last three months preceding the survey. Female youths appear to be the least in promoting non-violent action (6%) while adult male are the highest (21%). Over 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “My community accepts that people use violence to solve problems.”

About 21% of youths and adults do not agree that their community uses traditional conflict mediation mechanisms to address issues. About 25% of youths and 20% of adult respondents do not agree or strongly agree with the statement “traditional conflict mechanisms are effective.”

Most of the respondents (over 80%) agree or strongly agree that community members co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with other groups and communities. They also agree or strongly agree that they trust people from other communities. However, just six out of every ten respondents are aware of any platform created, accessed and used by communities to promote peace and conflict transformation.

COMMUNITY AGENCY

Most Kogi youths (about 65%) and about 45% of adults do not feel that their voices are heard when dealing with government or those in authority. However, over 79% of youths and about 74% of adults feel their leaders want to do what is best for the community. About 75% of youths and 77% of adults feel they are represented by their local leaders.

EQUAL ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Only 7% of youths and 8% of adults feel their income is enough to sustain them and their dependents. There is little difference between male and female respondents among youths and adults. Just about 65% of youths and adults agree or strongly agree that their community is fair and inclusive. Most youths and adults (male and females) do not feel economically, socially and politically empowered (over 65%). About 40% of all respondents feel economically, socially and politically marginalized in their communities.

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Most community members in Kogi state (about 74%) feel they have skills to address conflict in a non-violent way. A higher percentage of males (youths and adults) feel they have skills to address conflicts in a non-violent way compare with females (youths and adults). Almost about 80% of respondents feel they have something positive to contribute to their community. The same proportion of youths and adults feel valued by the people around them. About 90% feel confident about their future.



NASARAWA STATE

Total Respondents and Characteristics Of Respondents

In Nasarawa State, a total of

 **869**

persons responded to the questionnaire.

THE PROPORTION OF MALE TO FEMALE IS

  **50:50**

while youths to adults is about

59:41

Most of the respondents' main occupation is farming, most have a secondary school education and married.

AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

As high as 37% of youths and 57% of adults know someone in the community who exhibits early warning sign of violent extremism. The difference among males and females (youths and adults) is very marginal. The proportion of persons who know someone who exhibits violent extremism is relatively high. Communities with people with such tendencies are prone to violent extremism.

Among youths and adults, males and females, one in every ten respondents feel violence helps one show how strong one is. Over 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statements: violence helps one to earn the respect of others, violence helps one gets what he or she wants and sometimes violence is the

only way to make our society a better place. There is little difference between the views expressed by youths and adults, males and females in the way they responded to these statements.

SOCIAL COHESION

Just about 23% of youths and as high as 57% of adults reported promoting a non-violent action within the last three months preceding the survey. Female youths appear to be the least in promoting non-violent action (17%) while adult males are the highest (59%). About 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “My community accepts that people use violence to solve problems”.

About 20% of youths and just about 9% of adults do not agree that their community uses traditional conflict mediation mechanisms to address issues. About 25% of youths and 16% of adult respondents do not agree or strongly agree with the statement “traditional conflict mechanisms are effective”.

Most of the respondents (over 90%) agree or strongly agree that community members co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with other groups and communities. Most respondents (over 80%) also agree or strongly agree that they trust people from other communities. However, just about half of youths are aware of any platform created, accessed and used by communities to promote peace and conflict transformation.

COMMUNITY AGENCY

About half of Nasarawa state youths and just about 30% of adults do not feel that their voices are heard when dealing with government or those in authority. Over 80% of youths and about 73% of adults feel their leaders want to do what is best for the community. About 82% of youths and 91% of adults feel they are represented by their local leaders.

EQUAL ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES.

Only 24% of youths and 20% of adults feel their income is enough to sustain them and their dependents. There is little difference between male and female respondents among youths and adults. Over 70% of respondents agree or strongly agree that their community is fair and inclusive. Among youths, it is a bit higher among males as eight out of every ten respondents feel their community is fair. Most youths (male and females) do not feel economically, socially and politically empowered (about 55%). Among adults, almost half also feel disempowered. Almost 50% of all respondents feel economically, socially and politically marginalized in their communities.

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Most community members in Nasarawa state (about 81% for youths and 90% for adults) feel they have skills to address conflict in a non-violent way. There appears to be little difference between male and female responses concerning their ability to address conflict in a non-violent way. Almost about 90% of respondents feel they have something positive to contribute to their community. The same proportion of youths and adults feel valued by the people around them. About 90% feel confident about their future.



PLATEAU STATE



Total Respondents and Characteristics Of Respondents

In Plateau State, a total of

 **738**

persons responded to the questionnaire.

THE PROPORTION OF MALE TO FEMALE IS

  **53:47**

while youths to adults is about

54:46

Most of the respondents' main occupation is farming, most have a secondary school education and married.

AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

As high as 42% of youths and 48% of adults know someone in the community who exhibits early warning sign of violent extremism. More male youths (48%) know someone who exhibits early signs of violent extremism compared with female youths. For adults, there is just a marginal difference between male and female. The proportion of respondents that knows someone who exhibits early signs of violent extremism is very high. Communities in settings like this are more likely prone to violent extremism. About 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statements: violence helps one to earn the respect of others, violence helps one to show how strong one is, violence helps one gets what he or she wants and

sometimes violence is the only way to make our society a better place. There is little difference between the views expressed by youths and adults, male and female in the way they responded to these statements.

SOCIAL COHESION

Just about 35% of youths and about half of adult respondents reported promoting a non-violent action within the last three months preceding the survey. Female youths appear to be the least in promoting non-violent action (32%) while adult males are the highest (56%). Over 90% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “My community accepts that people use violence to solve problems”.

Less than 10% of youths and adults do not agree that their community uses traditional conflict mediation mechanisms to address issues. About the same proportion of youths and adult respondents (less than 10%) do not agree or strongly agree with the statement “traditional conflict mechanisms are effective”.

Most of the respondents (over 80%) agree or strongly agree that community members co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with other groups and communities. About 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they trust people from other communities. However, just about half of youths are aware of any platform created, accessed and used by communities to promote peace and conflict transformation.

COMMUNITY AGENCY

Most Plateau youths (about 70%) and about 60% of adults do not feel that their voices are heard when dealing with government or those in authority. Over 80% of youths and about 87% of adults feel their leaders want to do what is best for the community. 92% of youths and 87% of adults feel they are represented by their local leaders.

EQUAL ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

25% of youths and 29% of adults feel their income is enough to sustain them and their dependents. There is little difference between male and female respondents among youths and adults.

About seven youths out of every ten agree or strongly agree that their community is fair and inclusive. Among adults, it is a bit lower (six in every ten). Most youths (male and females) do not feel economically, socially and politically empowered (about 50%). Among adults, a little below half also feel disempowered. About 40% of all respondents feel economically, socially and politically marginalized in their communities.

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Most community members in Plateau state (about 83% for youths and 93% for adults) feel they have skills to address conflict in a non-violent way. A higher percentage of males (youths and adults) feel they have skills to address conflicts in a non-violent way compare with females (youths and adults). Over 90% of respondents feel they have something positive to contribute to their community. The same proportion of youths and adults feel valued by the people around them. Over 90% feel confident about their future.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS BASED ON CURRENT ISSUES IN THE FOUR STATES.

Across the four states, most community members are aware of violent extremism, the main drivers listed by them include disagreement over ownership of natural resources, feeling of marginalization, poverty etc. Some communities are making self-efforts to address the issues, but overall, very little progress is being made. Community members to a large extent know the early signs of violent extremism but to what extent this knowledge is being used to minimize cases of violent extremism is low as the proportion of person who are promoting non-violent actions is relatively low across the states. In the four states, most people especially the youths cannot mentor others on preventing violent actions. With almost three youths out of every ten feeling that violence is a justified means to achieve a goal in Benue state, this should be a cause of concern. Quite several persons feel that their voices are not being heard. This is a recipe for violence as when people feel that they are not being heard, they resort to violence to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Across the states, a very high proportion of respondents do not have access to meaningful livelihood.

This is compounded by the fact that farming which is their main occupation is challenged by the frequent crisis with herdsman. Lack of access to meaningful livelihood can fuel violence. Other than Nasarawa state, Benue, Kogi and Plateau states appear not to take advantage of what women can do to prevent violent extremism as very few of them know the role women can play to prevent violent extremism. Women as mothers, wives and sisters can be a huge force in promoting peaceful coexistence. In Nasarawa State, a reasonable proportion of adults feel marginalized. This is not a very good feeling as it can breed violent extremism. There is a lot of positive in this domain as most community members do not agree that violence is a good weapon to get things done. This is a huge capital the project can build on.

Community members have faith in traditional conflict management mechanism. This is a huge resource that can be leveraged on by all stakeholders involved in the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism in the states and country. While quite a number feel marginalized, access to economic and social activities need attention as relative number of community members do not feel they have access to economic and social opportunities.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT APPROACH ON PVE

On 24 August 2017, President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Presidential Directive to the Policy Framework and National Action for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism which was then launched on the 28 November 2017. The Policy Framework was proposed to be implemented for three years while collaborating with Civil Society Organizations. The policy has four specific objectives.

- Strengthening Institutions and Coordination in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.
- Strengthening the Rule of Law.
- Access to Justice and Human Rights.
- Engaging Communities and Building Resilience; and Integrating Strategic Communication in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Programme.

The Policy Framework was developed by a National Working Group which include Government Bodies, Faith-Based Organizations, Community Based Organizations, women and young people also contributed to shaping the framework and the policy is evidence-based.

Although there are existing policies and frameworks on preventing violent extremism in Nigeria, experience and published research shows that these policies are not well translated into action most especially at the community level. To curb Violent Extremism in Nigeria, states must adopt the framework and support grassroots structures to implement the policy. In a 2016 report on population density and armed robbery in Nigeria, although the spatial analysis of crime rates alludes to high crime rates in the Southern region, however, Nasarawa state has the highest rate of crime of 7 cases of robbery per 100,000 persons. Kogi state showed an average crime rate of 2 cases per 100,000 while Benue and Plateau states each revealed 1 case per 100,000 persons. Government of these states with support of international donors and civil society organisations should work together in implementing these plans and adopt additional strategies from this study and other research to reduce violent extremism

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **STRENGTHENING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE:** Awareness of community members on violent extremism is already very high. This knowledge has not however translated to concrete action. Key stakeholders and state players should consider identifying creative actions and programmes to translate this awareness to positive behaviour as it relates to the prevention of violent extremism.
- **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:** Youths and women should be supported through livelihood initiatives, and opportunities should be provided for them to be empowered economically. Economic empowerment can get them very involved to reduce the prevalence of violent extremism.
- **LAND DISPUTE:** This continues to be one of the main drivers of violent extremism. Creative efforts involving all stakeholders at the community level should be targeted to address this.
- **MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:** It is also very urgent and important to productively engaged the youths who are the instruments used during violence eruption and ensure that strict measures are also put in place to curb them engaging in violence. State government should involve young people in governance, as the findings shows that inclusion in governance is key to youth representation in decision making. In general, youth appear to be less resilient than adults across all indicators, which shows that focusing on them is a good strategy.
- **INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP:** Although some indicators show a good picture, the question on how often you do things together with people from other communities and trust shows a very challenging and probably a good focus for PVE work. The Focus Group Discussions also show the intercommunity (farmers and herders) to be the real problem in most of the communities. Thus, a good amount of work should be devoted to inter-group work and making them interact with each other constructively.
- **CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** People in general trust conflict resolution mechanisms, but a significant proportion does not see it as effective. Government and CSO interventions can build on that and improve it.
- Finally, the relationship between the State and communities are tricky and puzzling. On one hand, most of the people, especially youth, do not feel heard by the government, but they do trust their local leaders and feel they are doing the best for the community. Thus, further work and research on this is needed, it is possible- and is hinted by the FDGs – that people have a better and good relationship with their communal and local leaders, but do not have the same with the local and national government. Thus, needs to be reflected in the design of the programmes and approach to tackling violent extremism.



Hanatu, Smallholder woman farmer in Lafia Community peeling cassava roots for commercial processing of granulated cassava (garri).

System and Structure Strengthening Approach
against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism Project,
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