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ActionAid Nigeria believes that a Nigeria without poverty and injustice is possible.

System and Structure Strengthening Approach  
against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism Project,  
SARVE I and II are proudly funded by



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**SARVE II**  
System and Structure Strengthening Approach  
Against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism

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# PEACE BREEDERS

**A COMPENDIUM OF IMPACT STORIES**

System and Structure Strengthening Approach against  
Radicalisation to Violent Extremism (SARVE II) Project  
in Kogi and Nasarawa States.





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## FORWARD

For many years, youths and women in conflict prone areas have suffered severe psychological and physical loss that has resulted in unemployment, marginalisation, gender-based violence and exclusion. Like most states in Nigeria, Kogi and Nasarawa states have not been left out. The progressive unemployment statistics over the years show that a great percentage of young people seek to be engaged.

ActionAid Nigeria realises the importance of youth engagement as an integral part of preventing violent extremism. It was therefore pertinent to leverage opportunities presented through GCERF funded SARVE II project to provide a platform for awakening youth consciousness towards becoming self-reliant and productive while also building their capacity to engage different stakeholders in their communities on youth related issues.

ActionAid Nigeria, having worked in Kogi and Nasarawa states before and during the SARVE project's phase one and two and in strong partnership with the Participation Initiative For Behavioral Change In Development, (PIBCID), Global Peace Development and Beacon Youth Initiative, sees the young people as catalysts for change and continues to take keen interest, following the achieved gains of the SARVE I project, in ensuring that young and vulnerable people are protected from the influence of violent extremists. Hence, youths are properly engaged and equipped to contribute to the development of their states and the country at large.

In the 33-month life span of the SARVE II project, ActionAid Nigeria has been able to impact,

through its community engagements, 1,614 persons (youth-600 men, 505 women: 509 adult women) with valuable life and economic empowerment skills reducing their vulnerability to violent extremism and built the capacity of 120 mid and higher-level media professionals in conflict sensitive reportage, feminist journalism and peace building. In addition, 60 police officers of which 15 are women and 45 are men, were trained to respond to rising issues on violent extremism through the fundamental Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) while working closely with existing community policing structures.

Other landmark achievements include the establishment of 12 Conflict Management Alliance (LOCOMA) structures in 12 LGAs in Kogi and Nasarawa States to prevent and escalate conflicts from the communities and promoting peace at large. Also, through the project we supported the enactment of the Kogi Youth Development Commission Law, designed for youth inclusion and engagement in governance, and creation of more employment opportunities within the state towards reducing youths' vulnerability to violent extremism.

This publication highlights the impact of the SARVE II project on the lives of the target groups and relevant institutions.



Ene Obi  
Country Director  
ActionAid Nigeria

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As the curtain closes on the second phase of the "System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism (SARVE II) project, we look back in satisfaction and with hearty cheers to everyone who have made our work these past 33 months quite action-packed and unforgettable. The Board, entire Management and Staff of ActionAid Nigeria are appreciative of all those who played major roles in certifying the continuous smooth implementation of Project in Kogi and Nasarawa States.

In foremost, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), who is the donor of this project, is highly appreciated for their consistency in ensuring that the contract is sustained, and activities are carried out with zero financial difficulties. We also recognize the zeal, passion, and commitment with which GCERF's country manager, as well as other staff, continued to follow up with the team, providing tremendous technical support and insightful contributions that advanced the work at all levels while contributing to its huge success. This is very much appreciated.

The delivery of our valuable and esteemed partners, Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID), Global Peace Development and Beacon Youth Initiative in Kogi and Nasarawa states respectively, during the project implementation was matchless with great tenacity applied in community engagement.

To the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), who is the custodian of the National Action Plan and Policy Framework for PCVE implementation in Nigeria, we say thank you for the collaborations and confidence in the work we do. Our working together has strengthened CSOs/ Government partnership in PCVE implementation in Nigeria.

Huge appreciations to Nasarawa and Kogi state government who in their efforts to promote and maintain a peaceful state where development can thrive, supported, and cooperated with all the peacebuilding initiatives driven by the SARVE II project, such as the peace walks, cultural peace fiesta, peace

camp, stakeholders' engagements, summits, capacity building workshops and policy engagements. The government contributed to the positive results attained from these activities.

To our community leaders and facilitators who have played key roles like grass root mobilization and engagement, we sincerely appreciate you for your contributions to the recorded gains. Our various resource persons drawn from the academia, media, Civil Society Organizations and Security outfits have been remarkably wonderful towards the achievements of our goals and objectives.

To all the youth who participated in this project and carry the plague of peace as vanguards against extreme radicalization to their respective communities and peers we say thank you for being there and for ensuring that you continue to be the ambassadors of peace and peaceful coexistence in your community and beyond.

Special appreciation to our media networks who guaranteed continuous and consistent PVE sensitization, provided media platforms for PVE engagement and ensured adequate online and traditional coverage/visibility across all activities carried out during the project implementation.

In anticipation of the phase III of this project, we are leveraging on this opportunity to recognize and appreciate the sacrifices of members of SARVE II team who effortlessly delivered on their roles with little supervision from management. Congratulations on this remarkable milestone achieved. To all those who have played useful roles but are not mentioned here, we are eternally grateful to you all.



Suwaiba Muhammad Dankabo  
Director of Programmes  
ActionAid Nigeria

 **ACRONYMS**

<b>AAN</b>	ACTIONAID NIGERIA
<b>BYI</b>	BEACON YOUTH INITIATIVE
<b>CART</b>	COMMUNITY ACTION AND RESPONSE TEAM
<b>GPD</b>	GLOBAL PEACE DEVELOPMENT
<b>GCERF</b>	GLOBAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE FUND
<b>NDLEA</b>	NIGERIAN DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY
<b>NSCDC</b>	NIGERIA SECURITY CIVIL DEFENCE CORPS
<b>PIBCID</b>	PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE IN DEVELOPMENT

 **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.

SARVE II presents a number of inspiring statistics. To bring the project to life 130 media professionals from Kogi and Nasarawa states were trained on conflict sensitive reportage and counter narratives, as part of efforts in preventing and countering violent extremism. In addition 39 radio programmes episodes have been held in Kogi and Nasarawa states and FCT with increased awareness on PVE and peace building. Also 1500 youths and 1000 women from Kogi and Nasarawa states were engaged

and empowered with livelihood skills and economic empowerment. 396 local volunteers from 24 communities in Kogi and Nasarawa states supported a community wide awareness and sensitization of the door to door campaign to contain the spread of the pandemic during the global lockdown.

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).



## ACTIONAID NIGERIA: WHO WE ARE

ActionAid Nigeria is an affiliate of ActionAid International, which is a global alliance of organisations working to achieve a world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity. As a large and visible development organization, we work in more than forty countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Our expertise lies in community-led approaches to development and working through partnerships with the poor and other grassroots organisations.

ActionAid Nigeria started operations in Nigeria in 1999 as a Country Programme of ActionAid International, we have transformed into an autonomous national organization registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. We work across the 36 states in Nigeria and have offices in Lagos, Borno, Yobe and Abuja which houses the headquarters.

ActionAid Nigeria has a strong national governance structure-a Board and a General Assembly-consisting of reputable Nigerians providing strategic oversight.

## OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES



### VISION

A just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression.

### VALUES

Mutual respect, Equity and justice, Integrity, Solidarity with people living in poverty and exclusion, Courage of conviction, Independence, Humility.

### MISSION

To achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication by working with people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, people's organisations, activists, social movements and supporters.

## MORE ON SARVE II PROJECT

The System and Structure Strengthening Approach Against Radicalisation To Violent Extremism SARVE II project was projected to last for 33 months.

During its time span



**36,000**

direct beneficiaries  
(18,700 youths 912,600 male and 5,600 females)



**4,160**

women,



**7,320**

men



**6,320**

in school children  
(3,160 male and 3,160 female)



**129,360**

Indirect beneficiaries  
(40,200 females and 89,160 males)

were reached through constant support of benefitting communities to build tolerance, strengthen local and community agencies where violent extremists' groups exploit weak governance to perpetrate injustice. The project also provided positive socio-economic alternatives and livelihood skills as an alternative to what violent extremists claim to offer.

## BACKGROUND TO IMPACT STORIES

They are called 'Peace breeders' as seen in the title of this booklet, and this metaphor from agriculture is an apt one. Breeding implies a process of growth, nurturing, multiplication and development. Emerging from a culture of violence, neglect, and humiliation, they have risen above the limiting quality of life which encircled them as they grew up. They have embraced the new which is forward looking, inspiring, cohesive and upbuilding. The old was a world defined by thuggery, theft of ballot boxes, nervousness, rape, a patriarchal social pyramid, tensions over water, violent sacking of communities, drug addiction, rigid social walls, neglect, terror and isolation. This was a low quality of life which easily exposed them to radical influences and an escalation to forms of violence.

Now, these men and women of varying ages living in Kogi and Nasarawa states have turned a new leaf, another image emerging from nature and agriculture. They are the champions of peace and development in their communities.

In many cases the transition the individual undergoes is very stunning and takes on the quality of a film: for instance, a political thug who is reformed and becomes a poultry farmer, or another who used to snatch ballot boxes now transforms into a shoe maker. The distance between thuggery and farming, between ballot box snatching and shoe making, is a long one and clearly hints at success of the intervention by ActionAid.

In addition, a shy and withdrawn woman throws off the unnatural chains society imposes on her, and reveals her inner warmth.

Sometimes, it is a community or a mass of individuals which undergoes transformation. An example is Koton Karfe in Kogi state once prone to violence but now a more peaceful community on account of the SARVE II Project, in which the people and their traditional ruler became involved in the quest for peace. This project has sown noble seeds in just two of the nation's 36 states, and Nigeria will reap handsomely when the harvest comes.

Those individuals at the forefront of all these changes are the peace breeders and are a key growing mass in the resilience to violent extremism. These are the golden fall outs of the SARVE II project. Beneath are their gripping stories:



 **IMPACT STORIES**



## REBUILDING COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS IN OSARAGADA & OKPAPATA

Under the influence of the SARVE II Project members of Osaragada and Okpapata communities in Kogi state turned away from a culture of violence, created a platform to report early warning signs of violence and began to identify and resolve security issues in their areas. The call for and establishment of a civil defence post was a turning away from the violent past by the youths, and a volition to work with authorities. The block moulding machine gifts gave the youth a source of livelihood. The sum of these changes encouraged the locals not to take laws into their hands and to find better ways of resolving conflicts

Overtime, youths in Osaragada community have borne the pains of insecurity. Osaragada, located along the expressway, about 40km from Lokoja, Kogi State capital and 30km to Okene a neighbouring town, has had its fair share of security challenges and threats; ranging from herdsmen attacks, to armed robbery invasion and false arrest by the police searching for escapee robbers.

Okpapata particularly was in a state of insecurity, some of which were pioneered by idle youths in the community. Through the SARVE project, ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) in partnership with Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID) supported the establishment of the Community Action and Response Team (CART), a nine (9) member committee comprising of representatives of Community leaders, Women, Men, Youths and Herdsmen, who are residents in the community. CART had the mandate to create a platform for reporting early warning signs of violence and act as linkages between the

community, security agencies and relevant stakeholders. AAN and PIBCID through funding from GCERF also trained CART members on Conflict Sensitivity, Participatory Vulnerability Analysis amongst others.

Communities were supported to map stakeholders and develop action-plan towards resolving identified security issues in their areas. For Osaragada community, this action was led by the established CART who went on advocacy visit to the State Headquarters of the Nigeria Security Civil Defence Corp (NSCDC) in Lokoja with a sole demand of setting up a civil defence post in the community. After several follow up visits, the Osaragada security post of the Defence Corp was finally established in February 2019. This has ultimately resolved the lingering security threats in the community as the youth and women no longer take laws into their hands in self-defence and can now go about their normal daily businesses without fear. Also, through the construction of a block moulding machine and skill acquisition training coordinated by the SARVE Project, the youth have also been engaged as they now have a source of livelihood that has taken them off the streets.

*“As a farmer I can now go to the farm to cultivate and harvest without the fear of being robbed, beaten or having the herdsmen destroy my crops. We no longer take justice into our hands again. We are grateful. THANK YOU ACTIONAID/PIBCID and GCERF for the SARVE Project in my community”*  
**Denise, Osaragada community member.**





## KOGI YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION : A TALE OF YOUNG PEOPLE ORGANIZING AROUND POWER

*In June Governor Yahaya Bello granted approval for the composition of the Kogi State Youth Development Commission with a youth Lawal Ozomata James, as Chairman of the body. This is another first which puts Kogi state ahead of other states in Nigeria, in terms of the establishment of a specific commission dedicated to the youths. The aim is to get the youth engaged in productive ventures, and to develop resilience to radicalism and violent extremism. The establishment of the commission is significant in the move to tackle idleness, youth restiveness and unemployment.*

Law making and policy influencing under the Federal Republic of Nigeria's constitutional system is rigorous. The amendment process as prescribed in the constitution is cumbersome. It requires substantial efforts, time and resources to delete a word or insert a clause in the constitution. Despite these obstacles, Kogi State Government passed into law the Kogi State Youth Development Commission bill, after only ten months of its conception.

Supported by ActionAid Nigeria under the System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism (SARVE) Project in Kogi State, the Youth Development Commission Bill is the first privately sponsored bill ever assented to by an Executive Governor in Kogi State. After an arduous law-making process, Kogi State House of Assembly passed the bill into law on the 14th of November 2018, reportedly all 25 members of the Assembly voted in favour of the bill. Five months after the passage of the bill, history was made on the 24th April 2019 when the Executive Governor, Alhaji Adoza Yahaya Bello, after extensive consultations with his cabinet members and advisers signed the bill into law and affirmed the bill as laudable and timely for transiting the Kogi Youth from “vice prone” activities

to value-adding activities, such as technical work, agriculture, and information technology.

Hon. Ahmed Mohammed who sponsored the bill described the newly enacted law as a necessary tool for youth development. According to him, “the journey of the bill was not an easy one as we had to lobby all my colleagues for support. Today, I am happy because we made history as this bill is the first private bill to be signed into law in Kogi State.” The road to the successful passage of the bill into law required good planning and determination. The SARVE Project provided the road map for success as it was designed to unearth the fundamental drivers of violent extremism in Kogi State, create practical community-driven solutions to address these drivers, and create an enabling environment to build community resilience to violent extremism.

The successful passage of the Youth Development Commission Law hinged on the definition of a clear goal and well planned and inclusive activities that addressed the drivers of violent extremism for youth (a history of hostility between communities, a lack of social cohesion, high youth unemployment, illiteracy, extreme poverty, and a perceived lack of opportunities be they political, economic, or social, and a reduced sense of purpose), while also creating an enabling environment for future Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) action. As part of the SARVE Project, the AAN consortium formed the youth advocacy clusters, which brought youth focused organisations together to develop their advocacy skills. The Consortium provided capacity building for these organisations including helping them to identify key stakeholders, power holders, and gatekeepers who may have influence over youth centred issues.

The youth focus organisations supporting the bill became known as “the Kogi Youth Advocacy Cluster” and was a key element of success. The Youth Cluster adopted a strategic young-people led approach with its own leadership team, established values, and recruited constituents/supporters and identified its opposition and competitors. Another group was promoting a similar youth bill, but the Youth Cluster did not believe that it adequately addressed youth empowerment and other youth specific issues. As part of their plan, the Youth Cluster recruited competent young people to build the movement at the Local Government Area and State levels, and they established monitoring mechanisms and evaluated efforts made at every step of the journey.

Another key element of success is the way the Youth Advocacy Cluster addressed power dynamics. The Youth Cluster organised its actions around two categories of power: 'power with' and 'power over'. The 'power with' groups identified other communities of interest that were relevant to the bill, or whose support were required to push this bill, including the media, state assembly members, and community leaders. While some youth advocates within the clusters were involved in engaging their Constituency Assembly members and elected officials at the local government levels, the State leadership of the Youth Cluster interfaced with relevant commissioners of line ministries, special advisers to the Executive Governor, and the Chief of Staff to the Governor. In all interactions, the Youth Cluster representatives were consistent and clear in building awareness about the importance of the bill and in making their demands of “the establishment of a commission to cater for their needs.” To build public support, the Advocacy Cluster organized a series of road walks, town hall meetings, advocacy visits, and round-tables to build awareness about

their needs and possible solutions.

According to the coordinator of the Kogi Youth Advocacy Cluster, Okwutepa Aminu Oseni, “The passage of the bill by members of Kogi state House of Assembly and subsequently assented by the governor, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, is a welcome development. This is a notable milestone in the quest to drastically cut down high levels of youth unemployment which has greatly contributed to several social vices among the youth in Kogi state.”

“The bill will also create opportunities for youth in the state to discover their capabilities, build capacities to be self-sufficient and contribute positively to the revenue base of the state,” he said.

The Commission's work will empower youth through the creation of more opportunities. It will promote youth inclusion and improve their sense of purpose while laying the ground work for the creation of a sustainable enabling environment for building resilience to violent extremism amongst youths in Kogi State.

Today, with the inauguration of the Commission Board members, attention now is on the full implementation of the dictates of the law and support for the commission to fulfil the dreams and aspirations of the Kogi Youth Advocacy Cluster members who pushed for the enactment of the law and subsequent appointments of board members.

ActionAid Nigeria through the SARVE II project has again organised an unbundling capacity building for the commission board members as inaugurated for effective service delivery and youth mobilisation.



## GOOD SOIL: PLACING THE MEDIA AT THE CENTRE OF ENDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM.

*APART FROM THE CONFLICTING GROUPS IN SOCIETY, ANOTHER VERY IMPORTANT BLOC WHICH NEEDS TO BE CAREFULLY GUIDED SO THAT IT GUARANTEES PEACE RATHER THAN STOKES THE FLAMES OF CRISES IS THE MEDIA. THIRTY (30) JOURNALISTS FROM KOGI AND NASARAWA STATES WERE TRAINED ON ADVANCED CONFLICT SENSITIVE REPORTAGE BY ACTION AID NIGERIA. IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR AGENDA SETTING ROLE, THE JOURNALISTS WERE ENCOURAGED TO PRODUCE REPORTS WHICH ENHANCE PEACE AND UNITY.*

Following the incessant insecurity outrage in Nigeria caused by radical conflicts and violence, ActionAid Nigeria in partnership with Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change (PIBCID) and Global Peace Development (GPD) trained thirty (30) journalists from Kogi and Nasarawa states on Advanced Conflict Sensitive Reportage. This was aimed at enlightening Journalists on ways of reporting matters arising from conflict prone areas, including early warning signs of radicalization and threats to peace and life.

Through agenda setting, the media can shape the society and affect the lives of the people. The method in which conflicts are reported can also affect its resolution or lead to its exacerbation. Many times, conflicts occur due

to lack of accurate information about the parties involved and how this information is rendered. Journalists can clearly play an important role by providing parties with accurate information that they can rely on in making informed decisions.

Participants were made to understand clearly that false information can trigger chaos, therefore there is need for journalists to properly investigate and fact-check stories before disseminating to the public. Hence Journalists were encouraged to project stories that promote peace and unity in the society, instead of messages of war and conflict.

At the end of the training, a communique on Advanced Conflict-Sensitive Reportage showing the roles journalists must play in curbing violent extremism in Nigeria was developed by the participants and circulated. The participants also came up with story ideas and jingles to promote peace in Kogi and Nasarawa States, including driving an online campaign tagged #TogetherForPeace.







## SOWING SEEDS OF PEACE: TURNING AROUND THE LONG PAINFUL STORY OF KOTON KARFE

**T**he long history of violence in Koton Karfe, Kogi state has been halted through the intervention of ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) which inspired the 'door to door election peace campaign.' This saw the locals engaging in a peace march, involving the traditional ruler of Koton Karfe in their peace building efforts, and reaching out to many socio-cultural groups. A new level of genuine cooperation has started to bloom in a community that often witnessed land and border disputes with its neighbours. In 2019 Koton Karfe achieved a first an election without any violence, death or disturbance.

Abdullahi Ibrahim, 34 struggled to find the words to express how his once restive community is now at peace with itself and other surrounding communities. He paused; took a hard look at the parched dusty floor surrounded with assortment of wastes from dry flakes of cassava chaffs..

You could tell he was in deep thought. He was not lacking words but seeking the right word to convey his new refreshing experience. He said: "I was born into this community, I grew up here and attended school here, but I have never experienced the new level of cooperation in this community." In an emotional laden voice he emphasised: "I have never experienced an election period where there is no news of one form of casualty or even death"

Koton Karfe is a mountainous territory. The community is surrounded by rocks. It is a place historically known as a place of refuge in times of war. When war breaks out, the people hid in caves some of which can still be sited but which are now historical monuments. Issues of land disputes and the determination of boundaries put them at conflict with the neighbouring Osuku and Onzo communities.

"We have found a new way to resolve all crisis in this community" said Ibrahim, boasting of the impact of the Community Action and Response Team, CART in advancing the community's approach to conflict resolution. Ibrahim noted that before the 2019 gubernatorial election members of CART met and agreed on new strategies to mitigate electoral violence in the community. The members organised what they termed "door to door election peace campaign".

They met with different socio-cultural groups in the community preaching peace ahead of the election. It was the first time they organised such program and it worked.

As the 2019 gubernatorial election approached, Ibrahim along with the CART members mobilised about 200 young men and women to the palace of the traditional ruler. "We marched to the Emir's palace. It was our own peace rally. We briefed him about the activities

of ActionAid in the community and shared our experience of how we want to implement what we have learnt from ActionAid's CART program" he said.

Perhaps shocked by the reasoning of the CART group, the traditional ruler put them to test by appointing the group into the community peace council, made up of vigilante and night watch groups.

Their resolve to experience for the first time a violence free election was put to test.

Ibrahim gave an account of how an early morning distress call from the traditional ruler disrupted his sleep just a few days to the election: "As early as 6.00 a.m. one morning, crisis was already brewing as youths from other communities invaded their community and began tearing down election posters and pulling down billboards of their opposing candidates. Some members of the community were already mobilising for a reprisal attack.

"We saw those gathering cutlasses, machetes and other weapons but we quickly intervened through negotiations. I asked those who wanted to fight and kill themselves for the politicians, how many of the children of those politicians were present? I asked them how the politician has improved their lives" he said.

Like magic those words pricked their conscience, and they dropped their weapons. Ibrahim said the knowledge acquired at the CART engagements inspired them to engage in peace building activities, which has helped them achieve a violence free election in the community: "For the first time Koton Karfe recorded no election related death or any violence during the 2019 gubernatorial election" Ibrahim insists.





## »» END OF A NIGHTMARE

*IN UJUGBA VIOLENCE WAS A COMMON RECURRENCE. ON ONE OCCASION THE COMMUNITY WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY SACKED WITH ATTACKS REGULARLY THREATENING HARVESTS AND LAND. SKILLS LEARNT AT THE CART AND ACTIONAID NIGERIA TRAINING PROVED VERY EFFECTIVE IN RESOLVING PROTRACTED HERDER/FARMER CONFLICTS IN THE AREA. THIS ALSO HAD THE EFFECT OF HELPING TO BRING AN END TO VIOLENCE DURING LOCAL ELECTIONS*

Herders and Farmers clashes were a regular occurrence at Ujagba in Kogi state, and gained prominence in media reports. In November in 2015, the entire community was almost sacked because of the level of attacks and reprisal attacks.

The inhabitants of the community wanted peace, but it was going to cost them their crops, food and land. It was too much to sacrifice for peace, so they braced for defence. When they began to count their losses in terms of human beings and properties, they had reached their wits end: "We knew we could no longer continue. On one of the occasions farms were destroyed during the harvest period, there was food shortage as well. We knew we needed peace at all cost, but we couldn't find the way to achieve that desire for peace" said Joseph Yusuf, a member of Community Action and Response Team (CART) in the community.

They reached their point of exhaustion when they discovered that a traditional chief in their community had compromised: "We discovered that one of us; a chief of this community would go to the herders to collect money. This was one of the reasons for the delay in finding a solution," Yusuf said.

The herders attack abated as soon as the Chief was deposed. But that was not the end to the incessant attacks. Monday Achimugu, the Chairman of CART for the community decided to apply some of the skills acquired during the training and different engagements with ActionAid: "We had to negotiate, we had to go to the Fulani community and asked for a cease fire, and we signed a pact which brought relative peace of mind," Achimugu said.

The peace management skills also helped them organise the community for a violence free election. Okpapata, Ojiofa and a few other surrounding communities experienced some forms of electoral violence but the CART members at Ujagba had organised a peace procession to register their desire for a peaceful election. They moved from house to house on a different kind of campaign; they asked the people to vote and not kill.

Like magic the strategy worked. It was reported that the 2019 gubernatorial elections at Ujagba was crisis free.







## BUILDING ECONOMIC RESILIENCE THROUGH SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES

*In Osi, Kogi state a woman who has no access to land except if it is owned by her husband, pauses and ponders the future. She has no source of income and this often led to domestic disputes especially as this relates to the upkeep of the children. Through the agency of ActionAid Nigeria's (AAN) women safe spaces initiative, she awakens, regains her voice and begins to engage in small scale economic activities such as weaving local fabrics for designers in her neighbourhood. This births new ideas and makes her less dependent on her husband. She can now take care of the feeding of the children and pay a few school charges.*

Hafsat, a 40 year old mother of five and a member of the Community Action and Response Team, (CART) in Osi community of Kogi State is the third wife of a retired military officer. She, like many other women in her community is perturbed due to the constant misunderstanding between couples and the popular opinion that men do not live up to their responsibilities.

Hafsat has no access to land and can only farm on the land acquired by her husband. Since she cannot afford to pay a labourer to till the farmland, she has discontinued farming and has no source of income. She often quarrels with her husband for not providing for the family and sending her children to school as

she wanted more for her children. The highest education attained by her first child was secondary school education.

Women are the most vulnerable in conflict prone areas, and they also play a pivotal role in peace building processes. Sadly, the patriarchal nature of most communities in Nigeria has not given women much space to play this role. For the most part, the old mindset of women belonging to the kitchen and to their husbands is what still holds true in most communities. This makes the recognition of women in communal power a major challenge. But this is beginning to change. Hafsat is one of 1000 women benefiting from the 24 Women Safe Spaces set up in all its 24 SARVE II project communities with the aim of engaging women to curb conflicts at the family level, which when left unattended often leads to radicalisation. The program will also build the confidence of community women to demand for their rights at the community level.

As soon as Hafsat heard about the women's safe space held every Monday from her neighbour, she decided to give it a try hoping that spending few hours with other women in the community would take her mind off her immediate problems. Surprisingly, at the safe space, she met other women facing similar challenges and learned how they are managing such issues.

The key lesson from the women's safe space that stood out for Hafsat was the fact that being independent and having a means of livelihood, rather than depending solely on her husband for survival, would help solve most of her biggest problems. She also figured that having constant misunderstanding with her spouse would only compound the issue. Rather, through dialogue, they can both agree on what will work best for the family. Ever since, her relationship with her husband has improved.

Hafsat now makes Two Hundred Naira (N200) daily

by weaving local fabrics for designers in and around her community. She knows that her wage is very little, but it is certainly a start! She uses the money to cater for her children's feeding, school charges and to complement what her husband can offer.

*"Now I have peace of mind, thank you ActionAid for bringing the women safe space to my community and I hope to save enough money so that I start my own tailoring business" she said happily.*

Hafsat is contributing to resolving issues faced by women in the community.







## OUTCOME OF 2019 YOUTH PEACE CAMP ON PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: SULEIMAN'S AMAZING TRANSITION FROM THUG TO POULTRY FARMER

**H**ow a drug addict often found at the epicentre of local fights experienced a remarkable turnaround as a fall out of the 2019 Action Aid Nigeria Peace Camp in Kogi state. He has gone for rehabilitation, is now a poultry farmer and has identified that unemployment and low access to education-major triggers of violent extremism- are living issues in his community.

*“My mother used to have restless mind and sleepless nights because of all the troubles I caused in the house and in the community. If there was a fight somewhere in my vicinity, I must be right there in the middle taking or giving blows, but now, I am no longer like that. What I learnt from the peace camp has changed me and I am even more happy to be engaged in this livelihood skills training by ActionAid Nigeria”. Suleiman Abdulahi, 21 years.*

There were notions Suleiman never understood; how engaging in conflict could slow down his development and even that of his community, Ukowa and that he could resolve misunderstanding among age grades through dialogue. After his secondary education in 2011, his parents could no longer afford to finance his education. Out of boredom, Suleiman, started hanging out with other boys in the community who soon introduced him to drugs and thuggery. He became highly addicted to the drugs and was known for always getting into fights in his neighbourhood.

Suleiman's notoriety informed his enrolment by the CART leader in his community for ActionAid Nigeria to be part of the 2019 Youth Peace Camp in Kogi

state, Suleiman was excited for the opportunity to travel. As it was the first time Suleiman was leaving his community, he was excited about the Peace camp. During the session on the Effect of Drug Abuse on Youth Development presented by the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Suleiman learned how drug abuse could affect him psychologically, make him prone to violence and hamper the realisation of his aspirations.

After further counselling by the Peace Camp mentors, he decided to stay away from drugs, and thereafter enrolled for a rehab programme with the support of the CART leader in Ukowa. He is happy to have been rehabilitated after three months and is now participating actively at the SARVE II Skill acquisition programme, where he learns more about poultry farming for business. Now, he is helpful at home.

*“My mother is happy with me now and I will continue to make her happy”, he expressed.*

Suleiman is determined to stay focused and make huge profits from the poultry business so he can finally attain higher education. He is eager to live an exemplary life and use the knowledge gained from the Peace camp to sensitise other youths on the need to shun violence and maintain peace. He aspires to provide practical solutions to some of the needs within his community such as unemployment and access to education which, according to him, are the major issues faced by Ukowa youths which makes them vulnerable to violent extremism.







## PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

### From Ballot Box Snatching To Shoe Making: Yusuf's Dramatic Story

*The story of a famous political thug in Koton Karfe who turned away from violence on account of the impact of the CART project and is now engaged in skills acquisition. He who enjoyed disrupting political meetings and snatching ballot boxes, some of the fingerprints of violent extremism, has now put his skills to better use and is an example in his community*

Since 2005, Yusuf, now 29, had finished his secondary education but was unable to further his education due to insufficient funds. But he always had interest in business. He joined his parents in a small-scale fish farming business which he and his siblings largely depended upon for survival. Sadly, the recurrent flood in Koton Karfe affected the business, leaving them with little money to make ends meet. Yusuf got frustrated by the unstable means of survival. As the first child of his parents, he felt a huge burden to assist financially.

He began to engage in menial jobs at construction sites where he met a few other friends who introduced him to political thuggery. They convinced him that he would make more money from working for politicians than he would ever make working at the construction sites.

"At that moment, I thought it was a better choice to make quick money, so I joined them" he narrated. "Anytime they needed to fight in a political gathering or scatter a ballot box, I was called, and I was not even afraid that I might lose my own life in the process" he regretted.

Yusuf became notorious in political violence such that the news got to his parents. They tried to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't listen and became more aggressive with everyone. Until he met Abdullahi, the Koton Karfe Youth leader, who is also a member of the Community Action and Response Team (CART) explained to him the implications of violence to himself, his family, how it can slow down progress and development in his life and even his community. Yusuf did not pay attention still, but Abdullahi persisted in talking to him and invited him for their weekly peace gatherings set up by the Peace Ambassadors who attended the 2019 Youth Peace Camp. There, Yusuf met other young people like him who were living a better life and working together to promote peaceful coexistence in their community. He felt challenged by his peers and began to withdraw from bad influences.

The youth leader, Abdullahi introduced the skill Acquisition Programme and assisted him in filling the registration form. He was excited when he was selected for the programme and enrolled in shoe making. Yusuf was part of the 750 young persons in Kogi state that participated in ActionAid Nigeria's Skill Acquisition Programme and he graduated in November 2020.

"I am no longer engaged in violence; I am always happy every morning knowing that I have somewhere to go that will make my life better, and this makes my family happy too" he said with a smile.

Yusuf remains optimistic about his future with plans to start a shoe design company.







## BEYOND COVID-19; PRIORITISING THE SAFETY OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

**D**uring the COVID-19 lockdown, security threats across the country increased at the most alarming rate. Strained relationship between security actors and the public remain one of the drivers of violent extremism. This is no different for people living in more vulnerable and high-risk communities, like Ette whose main road became a location for rape, kidnappings and violence. ActionAid Nigeria organised a workshop for police officers in Kogi state, which encouraged them to identify early warning signs of violence and to resolve such before they escalate

Ette, a small community in the heart of Kogi Local Government Area has long been attacked by extremist groups. Despite its topographical beauty, rich soil and large river for agriculture and fish farming, the narrow, bushy, yet motorable path leading to the community remained a nightmare for conveyors since it became a hotspot for rapists, armed robbers and kidnappers.

“Our women and girls did not feel safe travelling to town alone on this road. Whenever we suspect anything, we the CART members always alerted the police but sometimes they arrived very late after the incidence had occurred. This is why some of our community members did not trust them again” said Oiza, women leader and CART member, Ette Community.

With the police no longer trusted in the communities, locals started to take charge of their own safety and security by fishing out perpetrators of violence and punishing them. But this was wrong. Community policing groups are there to support the efforts of security agencies in identifying and resolving threats within their communities, and not to replace them and take matters into their own hands.

Although the CART had continued to make cautious efforts to curb the recurrence of these horrible incidences on Ette road, ActionAid Nigeria together with its partner in Kogi State, Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in development (PIBCID), saw the need to bridge the already existing gaps between the community policing groups and security agencies, hence it organised a 3-day security training for 30 police officers in Kogi state.

The police officers were enlightened on the need to work closely with the community policing groups to identify some early warning signs of violence and address them before they escalate. At the end of the training, participants capacity was built to respond to early warning signs of conflict and threats to peace. This is a huge step in ensuring that the people of Ette and other communities alike are safe again.







## INTEGRATING GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE

**How Blessing rose & became a blessing to women in Alizaga**

**B**lessing Sunday lives in Alizaga, a community in Nasarawa state. There the male is at the head of the social pyramid and females are denied many things. She had to teach herself English and mathematics not by going to regular institutions, but by drawing close to her peers who were already schooling. Associating with the women safe space set up by ActionAid Nigeria has given her a place in the local groundnut oil production trade. This has shielded her from extremist ideas and she has become a mentor to many other women in the groundnut oil trade.

Traditionally, women's responsibilities are categorised into care giving and other home-keeping duties, but rarely decision-making or career plans other than their customary expectations.

In Alizaga, the old belief that the girl child does not have any economic contribution to her father's family but is only meant to grow up and get married to a man whom she will serve still holds true. But Blessing has refused to accept this. As a little girl, she had a big dream of becoming a business expert. She had so much interest in education that even when she was denied the opportunity, she never relented in learning. She would often visit her friends who were still in school and ask them to teach her English language and mathematics.

"I learnt most of the English I speak from my neighbours because I had to forfeit my education for my brothers. I only completed Primary School education, but I am working hard to make sure my daughters attain the highest level of education", she narrated.

Having lived all 32 years of life in Alizaga community, Blessing Sunday understood that the patriarchal nature of her community will not always work in her favour. She joined the women safe space set up by ActionAid Nigeria and partners in Nasarawa state, Global Peace Development and Beacon Youth Initiative, an informal platform where women and girls meet to discuss issues that affect them without any threats of violence, fear of judgement, abuse, or neglect. There she learnt how to develop and manage a business.

She made an enquiry and discovered that the demand for cooking oil was high in and around her community, so she decided to venture into groundnut oil production. She successfully got a loan of N30,000 from the women's contributions and commenced her business. In one year, she was able to repay the loan and has also saved enough capital to support her children's education which remains her top priority. Blessing is now an active member of the women safe space, supporting the efforts to empower women and girls in her community by training 23 other young women in groundnut oil production.



Excluding women in certain activities and decisions that affect them will only enhance extremist's agenda. ActionAid Nigeria is changing the norm by empowering women in vulnerable communities to be better versions of themselves. Together with UN women, Nasarawa state Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and

partners, a State Action Plan for Peace and Security of Women and Girls in Nasarawa state was developed, to serve as a framework of action for inclusive governance where women and girls play central and leadership roles in peace and security processes.





## THE SWITCH: A COMMUNITY MOBILISING FOR PEACE

*A broken down transformer did not just throw the whole of Laminga into darkness, it crippled many businesses and criminal elements took advantage of the situation to wreak havoc. This pushed the CART members there to speak to the representative of the community in the State House of Assembly. Now Laminga has a brand new transformer and joy has returned. Members of the community tax themselves to regularly service the transformer and to provide a fence for it.*

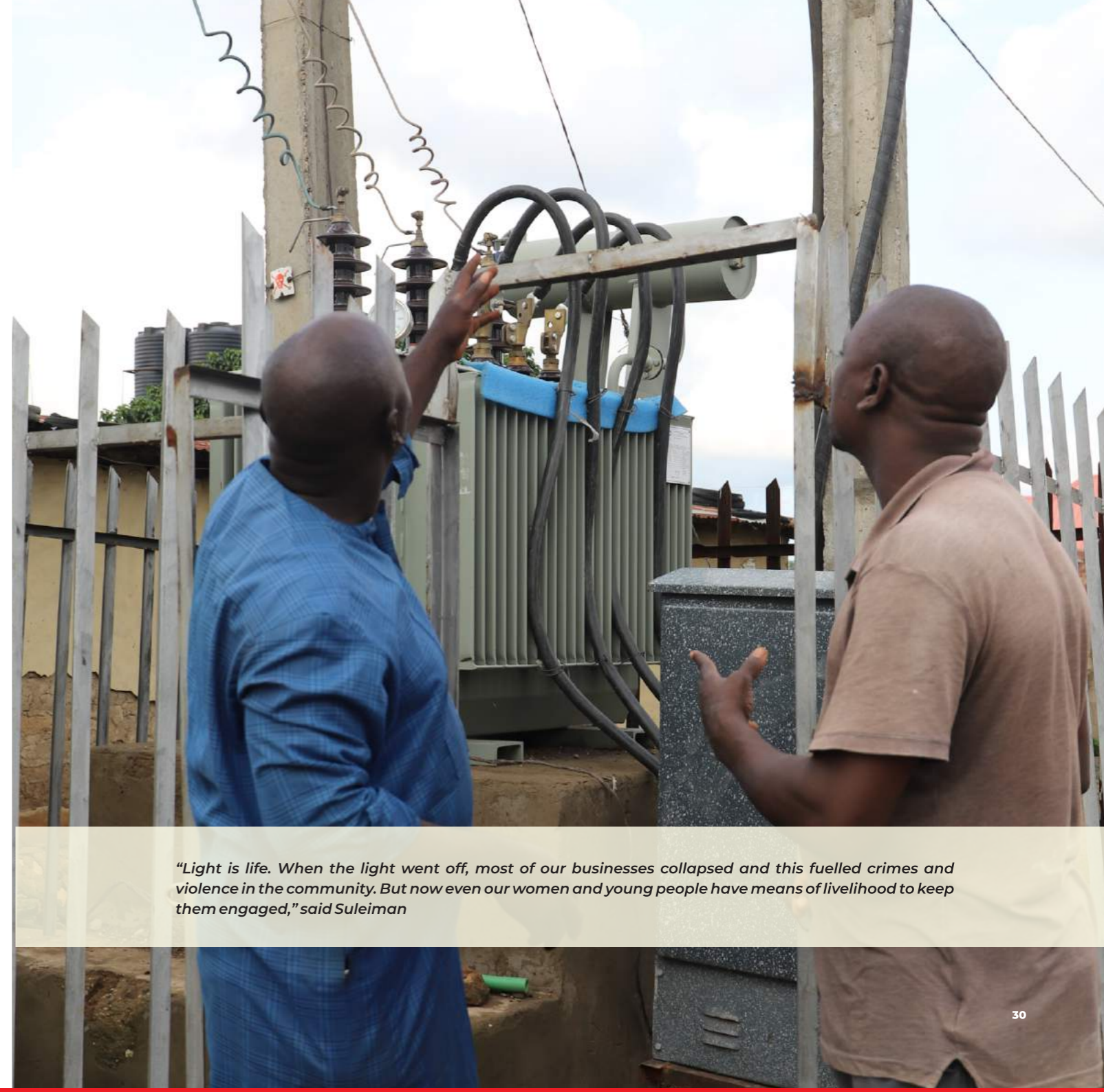
Despite appeals to the government for over eight months to repair the 11KVA step-down transformer that supplies electricity to the people of Laminga community, efforts proved abortive, and this negatively affected the socio-economic activities and undermined the security situation of the community. Criminals 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 has 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 incident. It became unsafe to move around in the community whenever it turned 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 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 lit up again and many businesses have witnessed a revival. To complement the government's effort, the community members further mobilised funds on their own to cater for the regular servicing of the transformer and fencing of the space where it is located.



*"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*





## SHAPING PEACE THROUGH MENTORSHIP AND DIALOGUE

### HOW GOOD CAME OUT OF B.A.D

**H**ow the 2020 Youth Peace Camp in Nasarawa state transformed Silas, an otherwise rebellious youth who is now ready to reach a compromise for the sake of peace. He has also commenced a process of weeding out idleness among youths in his community by employing 9 apprentices in his shop at no cost to them. Pastoral Fulani are also active members of CART in the community

On the 12th of February 2013, a major crisis between herders and farmers hit 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; recurrence 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 cause problems but would fight with every ounce of power in him once anyone pushed 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 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 early in life he began nursing the ambition of owning a business. 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 unsuccessfully searching for white-collar jobs, Silas recalled that only a few good barbers successfully rebuilt their business following the 2013 crisis. He engaged Hakeem one of the barbers and indicated interest in becoming a good barber. Silas understudied Hakeem and soon became an expert 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. However, despite his burgeoning 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 or altercation. 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.

Muhammed migrated with his family from North Katsina to settle in B.A.D 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 cattle grazed only in approved areas far away from the locals' farmlands. His peace loving nature earned him a membership

of the Community Action and Response Team (CART), a group set up by the SARVE project consisting of community members to detect and avert conflict before it escalates.

At the peak of the farming season, more herders had trooped into the community in search of feed 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 a 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.





## EXPLORING INNOVATIONS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

**H**ow ActionAid Nigeria employed social media during the pandemic to guide youths away from violent extremism. One of the methods used was the KONA video contest which helped the youths to focus on their role in peace building efforts through online entertainment. The top 3 winners won cash prizes, while all 26 participants won a spot to attend the annual Youth Peace Camp in November 2020

When the spread of COVID-19 threatened the laudable progress made towards peace building and communal cohesion in communities, ActionAid Nigeria together with partners in Kogi and Nasarawa states swung into action. Young people were beginning to indulge in activities such as spending more time on social media that was increasing their vulnerability to violent extremism.

Trending hashtags and online competitions were the core attraction points for young people online. The SARVE II project's #Togetherforpeace campaign had already gained popularity among youths in Kogi and Nasarawa prior to the pandemic, hence its incorporation in project's activities during the lockdown worked perfectly for youth engagement.

The KONA (Kogi and Nasarawa) video contest

was an innovation of the SARVE II project targeted at engaging young people between the ages of 18-29, on their role in peacebuilding processes through online entertainment, especially during the COVID-19 #StayHome when formal and informal schools were closed.

150 youths registered for the competition with only 26 participants who submitted a 90 second video skit each on how young people can promote peace during the pandemic with the goal of winning a cash prize along with other consolation prizes after scoring high on the screening criteria, which were clarity, creativity, suspense, persuasion and public votes on Facebook

The judges included, Mark Angel, ActionAid Nigeria's brand ambassador and comedian, Social justice influencer and actress, Hilda Dokubo and the Director of Organisational Effectiveness, Funmilayo Oyefusi, while Communications Coordinator, Lola Ayanda and Resilience Programme Coordinator, Anicetus Atakpu hosted the online grand finale which was livestreamed on YouTube via Zoom. While the top 3 winners received cash prizes, all 26 participants won a spot to attend the SARVE II 2020 annual Youth Peace Camp which held in November 2020. Here are the testimonies from the winners...

“



*Participating in the KONA video contest was really challenging but I am happy it gave me the opportunity to educate my peers on their roles in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism which is worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the cash prize given to me and my little savings, I have been able to purchase a new laptop which I now use to keep myself productively engaged by learning new tricks in video production*

**Kure, 25 years old, 2nd runner up KONA video contest 1.0.**  
Kogi state // Cash prize: N40,000 (\$100)

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*The KONA video contest 1.0 taught me a lot of things like paying attention to details. I never really sat down to think about my role as a youth in peace building until the competition. It was an eye opener for me. Although I was only one mark away from the winning, emerging the 1st runner up made me excited and encouraged. I have used the cash prize given to me to purchase a soft box for my photography business*

**Johnson, 23 years old, 1st runner up, KONA video contest 1.0.**  
Kogi state // Cash Prize: N60,000 (\$150)

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*Sincerely I did not know I was going to emerge the winner because the competition was tough, with amazing entries from other participants. It was a great privilege to have worked alongside other young persons like me to showcase our roles in peace building during this pandemic even while engaging online. I have used my cash prize to purchase a brand-new laptop which is more efficient for my video editing and production. I plan to create more educative videos like this*

**David, 27 years old, Winner, KONA video contest 1.0.**  
Nasarawa state // Cash prize- N200,000 (\$500)

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## THRIVE: THE INSPIRING STORY OF MABEL

**S**exually abused at the age of 5, living with a father who never hid his preference for a male child, Mabel grew up aware of the social walls that crippled and limited her. This quality of life gave her rare intuitions and made her to grow up consciously seeking female mentors. The women safe space initiative is a platform where women and girls open up on much that affects them. It has healed and revived her, making her less withdrawn and less nervous and endowed her with a voice, a vision and an identity

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 incident 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 activity 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.

"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.

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.

"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.



## **BEYOND SURVIVAL:**

### BECOMING THE LEADING VOICE IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE

**A**t a point youth restiveness began to rise on account of the lack of a reliable source of water in Aku, Kogi state. In order to avoid a conflict over water, the community inspired by the CART training, raised monies over a 4 week period to repair a damaged motorised borehole. Now they have a reliable water source, which reduces daily pressure on the local stream where fights used to break out, and everybody is happy.

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 been peaceful 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 Fulani who migrated to 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 was starting to cause conflict. Young people got involved in physical fights at the streams which sometimes led to serious injuries.

After series of reports, Jimoh became concerned about the 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 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.

The community members were excited about accessible portable water which has helped to keep peace in Aku. "We even accommodate other people from nearby communities to come and fetch water. My mind is at peace now" said Jimoh with a smile.





## QUICK WINS

	130 media professionals from Kogi and Nasarawa states were trained on Conflict sensitive reportage and counter narratives as part of efforts in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.
	1500 youths and 1000 women from Kogi and Nasarawa states engaged/empowered with livelihood skills/economic empowerment.
	396 Local Volunteers from 24 communities in Kogi and Nasarawa states supported a community wide awareness and sensitisation of the door-to-door campaign to contain the spread of the COVID- during the global lockdown. No recorded case of COVID-19 was reported across all the project's communities.
	3000 young men and women have gained insights from experts, entrepreneurs, and young business mentors on how to productively engage, organise and create the change they want to see in their communities through the Youth Summits held in Kogi and Nasarawa states.
	39 radio programme episodes have been held in Kogi, Nasarawa and FCT with increased awareness on PVE and peacebuilding.
	2122 young men and women (890 Female and 1232 Male) mentored on life skills development, inter-ethnic and religious tolerance and confidence building through youth peace camp.
	40 PCVE steering committee members trained on Monitoring & Evaluation of the PCVE National Action Plan Framework.
	82 state and non-state actors trained on sustainability for State Conflict Management Alliance Kogi and Nasarawa.
	24 Girls Safe Spaces / Women Safe Space/ and Community Action and Response Team (CART) established across 24 communities.
	2 State Conflict Management Alliance established to improve conflict management mechanism by encouraging broader societal participation in peacebuilding and improving effectiveness of security agencies in prompt response of early warning and reference.

## SARVE II PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE RESEARCH ON PVE

### SARVE I

[Kogi State Action Plan for Peace and Security of Women and Children](#)

[Herdsman and farmers crisis in Nigeria, the way out](#)

[Report on Preventing Violent Extremism in Kogi state](#)

[Report on Preventing Violent extremism in Nasarawa state](#)

[Policy Brief on Creating Alternative to Youth Restiveness and Violent Extremism](#)

[Peace Breeders: Volume 1. Issue 1](#)

[Peace Breeders: Volume 1. Issue 2](#)

[Policy Brief: Preventing Violent Extremism: Reaching and Empowering Women](#)

[Peace Breeders: A Compendium of Impact Stories](#)

[Young Men and Women Driving Change Through Advocacy: The Youth Development Commission Bill in Kogi, State Nigeria.](#)

[A Mentor's Guide To Facilitating Peace Club Activities Among Young People.](#)

[Final External Evaluation Report](#)

### SARVE II

[Policy Brief- Youth development Initiative and Preventing Violent Extremism in Nigeria \(SARVE II\)](#)

[Peace Breeders Vol. 2 issue 2](#)

[Peace Breeders Volume 2 Issue 3](#)

[State Action Plan \(SAP\) For Peace And Security Of Women And Girls In Nasarawa State \(2020 - 2024\)](#)

[Preventing Violent Extremism \(PVE\) Programming In North Central Nigeria](#)

[Policy Brief On Policy Options In Responding To Nigeria's Ecosystem Of Violence](#)

[Policy Brief On Corruption - The Nest Of Violent Extremism In Nigeria](#)

[Comprehensive Report Of The Stakeholders' Consultative Forum On PCVE Implementation In Nigeria](#)

[Peace Breeders Volume 2 Issue 4](#)



## »» CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

**Y**outh restiveness, an idle population, large scale unemployment, patriarchy, mutual suspicion, illiteracy, combined with ignorance, long term neglect, widespread superstition, scarce resources and non-existent or collapsing infrastructure constitute the sobering landscape within which radicalism sprouts, mutates and violent extremism rears its head.

Many find themselves in a dilemma and do not know where to turn to in the event of crises. This may push the individual or communities to violent extremism with its untoward ripple effects –affecting friend and family– which often spread beyond the borders within which the initial reaction occurred. In this sense violent extremism can evolve into a huge regional problem.

However good governance is key to improving life in the communities and the provision of facilities such as water, electricity, markets, roads and hospitals, which will make individuals feel like valued human members of the community, always reduces tension and crises. This is true for Nigeria as it is for any other country on the globe.

The SARVE II project in both Nasarawa and Kogi states reveals this very clearly. This noble effort by ActionAid and its partners like CART as well as women for change initiative, can be replicated in many other parts of the country, such as the South South where huge environmental issues affect countless lives and livelihoods on an hourly basis, triggering discontent, the rise of cult groups, unspeakable poverty, and waves of migration.

A similar scenario presents itself in the North West where long term neglect of the pastoral herders which goes back to the 1960s, has rendered many of them

poor. Up till today if a pastoral herder loses a cow to disease or death, the state does not compensate him. There are no safety nets for this group, as well as for many in Nigeria. They have taken to kidnapping and banditry and flourish in the vast tracts known as 'ungoverned spaces' where they have camps. Government is 'not felt' in so many parts of Nigeria. This absence of the state triggers violent extremism.

In the South East widespread neglect going back many decades, unemployment, lack of opportunities, an astonishing absence of infrastructure such as roads, all cohere to spark off agitation which have continued for many years, reaching a climax in recent years.

That a thug can suddenly have a change of mind and become a shoe designer, or evolve into a poultry farmer, or an otherwise shy and reserved woman suddenly reveals a beautiful inner friendliness, draws attention to the beauty and power of the ActionAid project. The provision of a transformer, a sudden new inspiration to begin a trade, the setting up of a Youth Commission in Kogi, repairing a motorised borehole, friendly dialogue instead of silence, have all played a role in breeding hope and joy, in a place where anger and tension once flourished.

The core individuals in the community who stand at the forefront of change are referred to as Peace Breeders. The need for good governance, the provision of infrastructure, a healthy spirit of helping where help is needed, and a capacity to forgive, dialogue and move forward, are huge takeaways from the SARVE II project. It is bound to have similar impact in other troubled parts of Nigeria.









