

Evaluation of
Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
Project to Prevent Violent Extremism
in State A, Nigeria

Centre For Community Development and Research Network
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its efforts to support communities to build resilience against violent extremism, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) funded Organisation A to implement a pilot project for prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in State A, Nigeria from 2016 to 2019. The project “A” was implemented by Organisation A with its local partner, Organisation B with the aim of improving the ability of communities to cope with violent extremism, including addressing issues that create conditions for radicalization, such as unemployment, out of school cases, poverty, livelihood challenges, exclusion and inequality.

One of the primary activities of this project was the establishment of four Community-Action Response Teams (CARTs) in four communities in two Local Government Areas (LGA) in State A – the communities A and B of LGA 1 and communities C and D in LGA 2 – to engage in efforts to prevent and resolve conflict in these communities. The members of each CART – which included traditional and religious leaders, women leaders and youth leaders, among other community members – received training on conflict resolution, hazard mapping, conflict analysis and advocacy to support alternative dispute resolution, recognizing early signs of violence and reporting to local authorities, and engaging in community mobilization for the prevention and resolution of conflict and violent extremism.

In 2020, GCERF engaged the Center for Community Development and Research Network (CCDRN), a Nigerian non-governmental organization that produces research on and implements humanitarian and development programming in the country, to review the project with an aim of understanding the impacts of the Action Aided efforts to establish the CARTs.

This evaluation includes an assessment of the CART Members’ knowledge and skills that were imparted to them through their participation in the project, a perception survey of community members in which the CARTs were active, and case studies of particular outcomes of the CARTs’ work in the communities. Each of these parts of the research is presented in a separate section of this report, but the comprehensive findings of this research are summarized below along with our recommendations for the CARTs and for future similar interventions.

Summary Findings

The project “A”/CART intervention was highly relevant to the communities in which they were introduced, as members of these communities expressed considerable concern about violence, particularly between different groups, such as farmer and herder populations. And, while community members also expressed considerable awareness of violence-prevention, conflict resolution and community mobilization efforts in their communities, apart from “community leaders,” CARTs (or Organisation A, which community members largely identified as one and the same) were the most recognized actor responsible for violence-prevention efforts in their communities. Moreover, the intervention by the CARTs was identified as unique among violence-prevention efforts in their introduction to these communities of techniques and mechanisms for conflict resolution that were not previously present in the communities. CARTs are seen as effective and trusted in both their conflict resolution and community mobilization efforts because of their reliability and readiness to act to prevent and mitigate conflict and the sincerity of the motives of their interventions.

A notable example of the CARTs’ effectiveness in these communities is the role identified by community members in catalyzing and facilitating the processes that brought about peace agreements between sedentary and herder communities. Additionally, CARTs were also identified as effectively advocating for peaceful elections, monitoring elections and resolving voter concerns about elections, all in collaboration with other community groups. Notably, while the CARTs are recognized as being the mechanisms that were instrumental in these efforts, Organisation A is also readily recognized for having established the CARTs and is mentioned even more than the CARTs as being the actor responsible for these efforts.

In each of the communities in which they were introduced, CARTs continue to be seen as playing important roles in “sensitizing” community members about violence and extremism and engaging other actors in early warning and early response activities that help identify and resolve tensions that could potentially spark violence. CARTs

are also recognized both by community members at large and government leaders as critical representatives of community interests in their advocacy toward and collaboration with the government to address broader community concerns and whose credibility and influence has helped not only to reduce conflict and violence but also to advance development priorities and attract development support to the community. However, when asked about particular examples of CARTs' collaboration with government, such as in support of the government's microcredit program, most respondents were not familiar with these examples other than a small number who reported that the CARTs were involved in mobilizing and registering women in particular for the government microcredit scheme.

Finally, considering specifically the effectiveness of project "A" in contributing to the development of the capacity of CART members to engage in conflict resolution efforts, the CART members demonstrate only a moderate and highly uneven level of knowledge of the topics imparted to them through the CARTs. While CART members demonstrate a particularly strong level of understanding of the expected roles, responsibilities and characteristics of the CARTs along with a fairly strong understanding of conflict and violence as imparted to them through the CART trainings, they show considerably less understanding of the tools and techniques imparted to them. Notably, however, the demonstrated level of knowledge of the CART members can be seen as still meaningful in terms of a result of the project, as the CART members' self-assessment of their level of understanding and learning about these topics reveals that they generally had very little or even no knowledge at all of these topics prior to participating in the CARTs and learned modestly from their participation – thus, their demonstration of even moderate albeit uneven knowledge many months after their dedicated trainings is meaningful in suggesting that their exposure to the CARTs did contribute to the development of their capacity. While it is beyond our analysis to identify what influenced these findings about the knowledge and learning of the CART members, our review of the project documents made available to us leads us to suggest that the documentation of the training of CART members is considerably lacking and somewhat inconsistent.

Summary Recommendations

Stemming from these findings, we propose the following recommendations.

- CARTs could improve their contributions to PVE by continuing their engagement with community actors, particularly with youth groups and women's groups (both of whom community members and key informants identify as critically important actors for conflict resolution and effective community mobilization for promoting peace and introducing practices for conflict resolution into these communities), as well as with government broadly but even more specifically civil defense, police and vigilantes, all of which are identified as critical to effective efforts to prevent violence.
- CARTs could also improve their contributions to PVE by continuing to expand their role in mobilizing the population on development opportunities that are made possible with peace and reinforce peace.
- Any future programming of a similar approach should more carefully document the schedules for training and the curriculum and materials for training, including reference materials for the CART members and notes regarding implementation of the trainings, and incorporate careful assessments of CART members' knowledge, including beginning with meaningful baseline assessments.
- The lack of greater representation of women in the CARTs is a concern that should be intentionally addressed in any future iterations of such programming.
- Beyond supporting specific efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and promote peace in particular communities in Nigeria, GCERF should consider also working to establish a robust community of actors undertaking such efforts to build indigenous capacity for conflict resolution and violence prevention in Nigeria, of which there are myriad beyond Organisation A / the project "A". As a notable funder of such interventions with an interest in advancing the field of preventing and countering violent extremism, GCERF could play an important role in the development of such a community of practice that would facilitate the exchange of learnings and the development of good practice for these efforts in Nigeria that would contribute to the scaling of the influence of these efforts and make them more sustainable.