

RESULTS FROM ROUND 2 FUNDING IN NIGERIA (2019–2021)

ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL PAPER PUBLISHED IN 2022

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CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

This paper reflects on the results and lessons learned by GCERF and its grantees during GCERF's second round of investments in Nigeria. GCERF invested USD 5 million in three consortia led by the following organisations: ActionAid Nigeria (AAN), Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR), and the Women Environmental Programme (WEP). From 2019 to 2021, these consortia led and implemented community-level Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) projects in the North Central region.

The people of North-Central Nigeria have faced multiple violent threats. In 2017, Boko Haram and ISIS – through the ISWA, were orchestrating violence directed at States in the North Central region through direct and indirect attacks, including through the exploitation of existing farmer–pastoralist conflict. In the first half of 2017, active recruitment of violent extremists increased, particularly in Kogi State and Nasarawa State. The 2018 Global Terrorism Index identified the region as an emerging hotspot due to the instrumentalisation of farmer–pastoralist disputes.

These ongoing threats informed GCERF discussions with the Nigerian government and other stakeholders, and the decision to commit to a second round of investment in these targeted regions. This second round reinvested in programmes in Benue, Kogi, and Plateau States and expanded coverage to Nasarawa State, which was a new state for investment. (Figure 1)



Lead CSOs in Nigeria:

Action Aid Nigeria (AAN)

Women Environmental Programme (WEP)

The Institute for Governance and Social Research (IGSR)

Figure 1: GCERF investment in Nigeria (2019–2021)

RESULTS OVERVIEW

The projects achieved or overachieved most of their targets (output and outcome), with only 32% of the indicators underachieved. Interventions that focused on improving knowledge among individuals (such as training on PVE, conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, and digital literacy) enjoyed the most success, with all targets achieved. Those focused on behaviour change at the community level also had high success rates despite their challenging nature (i.e. community response structures and conflict management mechanisms that were established and functional, peace agreements signed).

However, interventions aimed at changing individual perceptions and behaviours had more mixed results, with higher achievement against indicators measuring perceptions of safer surroundings and non-violent attitudes, and lower achievements related to the perceived inclusiveness of local leaders and government. This is unsurprising given the more challenging nature of this type of intervention. Finally, programmes that focused on improving livelihoods and employment had also mixed results, with higher achievement in terms of developing people's skills and confidence but less in securing employment or a source of income.

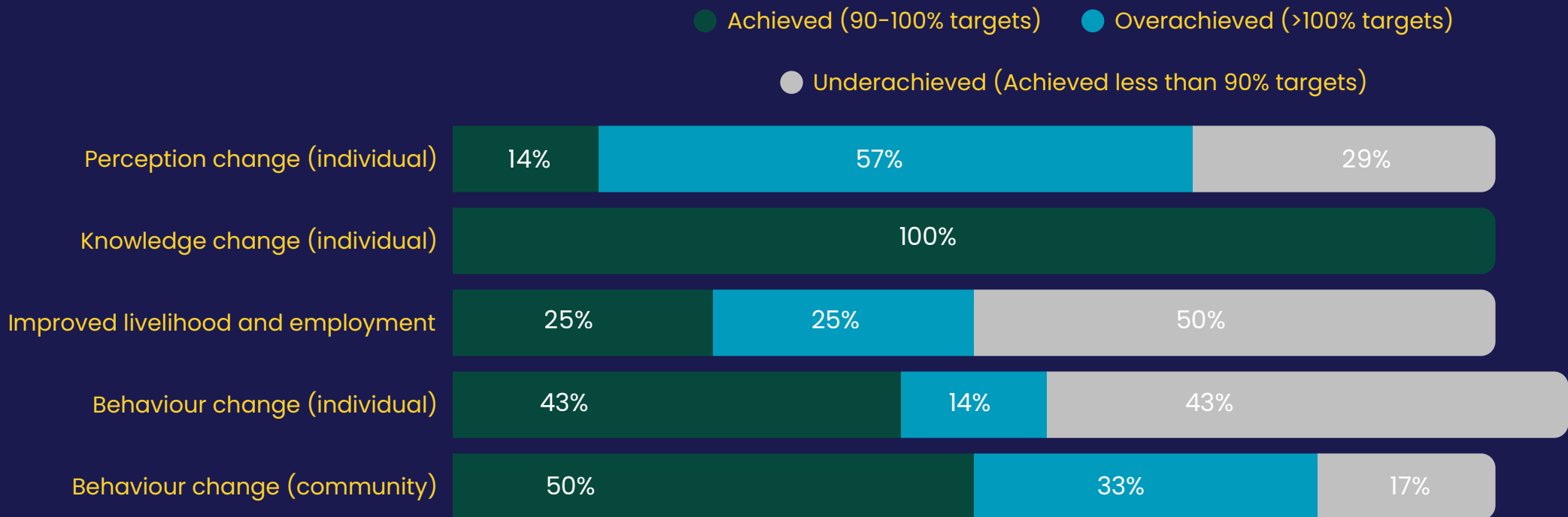


Figure 2: Achievement of Outcomes by Type of Change in Nigeria

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY RESULTS

YOUTH AND WOMEN

The programs focused on engaging key population groups, especially women and youth. These groups were provided a mix of activities such as advocacy training, safe spaces, livelihoods, PCVE training. Some key highlights:

KEY HIGHLIGHTS ABOUT YOUTH AND WOMEN

- 78%** AAN organised peace fiestas and walks that engaged over 8,400 women and youth. A total of 78% of the women and girls who engaged in 24 AAN-fostered safe spaces in communities and schools reported that they felt more valued and gained self-worth.
- 90%** Through investment in livelihood initiatives, 50 cooperatives were established, targeting 450 youth, by AAN and WEP. In WEP project, 90% of those involved in the cooperations reported an increase in a stable and steady source of income following the project's end.
- 74%** In WEP project, at the end of the project, 74% of community members reported to have promoted non-violent actions, of which 77% expressed an increased mediation with community members to prevent conflict.
- 89%** In the Plateau region, 89% of the 4000 youth ambassadors trained by IGSR had commenced to observe peaceful and harmonious coexistence among persons of different backgrounds in communities.
- 96%** Projecting into the future, of the 11,000 community members who participated in 4,700 sessions on peace and PVE, 96% reported having confidence in their future.

A Youth Commission Bill was passed in Kogi State and a Commission established thanks to a youth-led advocacy campaign supported by AAN.

COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

Another focus was interventions that engage local leaders at the community and State levels and create mechanisms and structures that could serve as vehicles for early warning, solution of disputes and overall community engagement. Some key highlights:

KEY HIGHLIGHTS ABOUT COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

24 In AAN program, it resulted in the establishment of 24 Community Response Action Teams (CARTs, see Box 1) and the training of more than 200 CART members on conflict management and early warning signs.

65% 18 months following the project end, all surveyed CART members reported that their CART remained functional. In Nasarawa, 15 of 23 respondents (65%) said the CART in their community was fully functional. At the state and local government level, various community conflict prevention initiatives established two conflict-management alliances with 542 members.

240 Across all programs, 240 periodic town halls were hosted, and had reached 4700 community members. Over 800 people (including 671 security actors) were trained in community policing, referral mechanisms, and conduct in line with human rights principles. More than 1200 local religious, traditional leaders were specifically trained by WEP in P/CVE.

30 24 peace agreements were signed between community members and religious groups. IGSR worked with over 30 conflict-transformation platforms, showcasing community-driven action to prevent conflict and promote peace. At the end of the programme, an early warning system was being used proactively, with more than 80 early warning signs of violent extremism reported.

BOX 1: COMMUNITY ACTION AND RESPONSE TEAMS (CARTS) LED BY ACTION AID NIGERIA

Community Action & Response Teams (CARTs) are seven- to nine-member teams that received capacity-building training and mentorship. The CARTs aim to prevent violence and resolve conflicts by facilitating dialogue and reporting early warning signs to the appropriate authorities at the Local Government Area and State levels.

The ex-post evaluation found that the CARTs remained operational after the project's completion due to community ownership and linkages to local authorities and leadership. The evaluation also found that CARTs were a successful P/CVE tool as they empowered at-risk youth and therefore helped counter marginalisation and vulnerability to violent extremism.

The success of the CARTs stems from capacity-building through peace-oriented training and mentorship that equipped team members to mediate conflicts and relay early warning signs to authorities, from community-led mechanisms that involve residents in decision-making, and from relationship-building and close coordination with government officials, traditional elders, and security agencies.

“ Today, everyone in the community can voice their opinion and concern to me or any leader or authority. This is as a result of the peaceful co-existence training received from CART. Five years ago, community people could not voice out their opinions to a leader for the fear of being belittled. - Male Religious Community Leader, Kogi



LESSONS AND INSIGHTS

A share of the lessons learned, and insights outlined below are based on the ex-post evaluation commissioned by GCERF a year and a half after project completion. The ex-post evaluation covered the three programmes and included four case studies: the AAN CARTs; AAN and WEP advocacy work related to Youth Commission Bills; the IGSR Youth Peace Ambassadors and Peace Camps; and WEP livelihoods initiatives.

Lesson 1: PVE programmes can be more impactful if they are implemented in concentrated geographical clusters and in areas where violence is not yet systematic.

Ex-post evaluation showed that while it was relevant to select States with high levels of violence, the programmes had a higher impact in Local Government Areas where violence was not yet entrenched. Furthermore, when areas of programmatic interventions are geographically close, it increases the likelihood of spill-over, replication, and learning. More specifically, geographical proximity was an important factor in encouraging support between communities; the sharing of practices, and, in the case of the AAN CARTs, led to the organic replication of the initiative.

Lesson 2: Participatory and community-led beneficiary selection is essential and needs to be complemented by mediation and customised solutions.

Adopting a community-led and participatory approach to beneficiary selection has yielded positive results, but it is challenging to implement. Grantees had to balance their own strategic priorities with the community's criteria for who should be involved. Some stakeholders were also skeptical of having diverse individuals in the same activity. To overcome these hurdles, programs developed different approaches. One grantee, for example, used former beneficiaries to help facilitate and mediate the selection process. Another grantee improved its system by using a mobile-based application form.

Lesson 3: Engaging young people through various types of activities is linked with reduced violence and increased resilience.

Youth-focused activities – such as livelihoods, peace, and skills training – built on each other and demonstrated significant value, even when more tangible outcomes (such as increased income) were not achieved. Young people engaged in these activities reported increased confidence and self-worth and better critical thinking skills. Other community members widely acknowledged the benefits of solid youth engagement, including its impact on reducing youth idleness and social delinquent behaviours and increasing engagement with the community.

Lesson 4: Community conflict-prevention/resolution mechanisms are potent tools for early warning and conflict resolution when implemented through careful capacity-building, inclusive community processes, and the engagement of local authorities/ networks.

CARTs provided a constructive space for facilitating interfaith and inter-community dialogue and reporting early warning signals to the appropriate authorities, thus reducing violent disputes and increasing peaceful resolutions. The evaluation found that these mechanisms and dialogues were maintained and used by communities even after the programme's completion. Their low set-up costs, high levels of respect from communities, and ongoing contributions to community resilience mean they are powerful tools to consider for replication.

Lesson 5: Investment in safe spaces and related activities for women and girls benefits their active participation in programme activities and women's community groups but does not necessarily extend to positive impacts on women's broader role and influence.

The evaluation found a clear link between such safe spaces and improvements in the participation of vulnerable young men and young women and noted they were relevant and valuable for PVE programmes. For women specifically, the safe spaces effectively encouraged participation and improved confidence. However, it was unclear whether this has translated into improvements in women's roles and influence on community-wide affairs. Therefore, creating such spaces needs to be coupled with community dialogue and advocacy activities for their impacts to go beyond the individual level.

Lesson 6: Livelihoods programming requires more investment to impact beneficiary incomes, but yields other valuable gains.

Livelihood activities were seen as useful by both beneficiaries and communities and led to improvements in participants' capacity for financial management and skills. This, in turn, enabled them to start a business and secure work within six months of the project ending, join cooperatives, and see incrementally increased income at the individual or household level. Livelihood activities need to incorporate better access to finance, equipment, and materials, and to facilitate market linkages, before they can achieve more significant and long-lasting impacts on living standards.

CASE STUDY

Youth Camps and Ambassadors Network

IGSR trained more than 4,000 youth peace ambassadors at youth peace camps. The evaluators found that the training curriculum was innovative, combining physical, socio-emotional, and practical skills. It also brought together young people from different backgrounds and profiles (role models, including those with experience of conflict). Once trained, the youth peace ambassadors returned to their communities and became part of a network of peace ambassadors. The evaluators also found that the youth peace ambassadors positively impacted their communities, reducing violence, improving relationships, and decreasing community members' reliance on alcohol and other substances.

“ Five years ago, whenever there was a conflict situation... the community usually carried out jungle justice. It was as if almost everyone in the community had a retaliation mentality. At this present moment, every conflict is sorted out amicably because the youth are now better enlightened because of the continuous teachings from the IGSR programme. The peace ambassadors are always preaching about peace. - Female Youth Peace Ambassador-Kanke.



Youth Peace Camp in Nigeria

