

PEACE BREEDERS

System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism in Kogi State

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Kogi youths preach peace through a walk in commemoration of 2017 Global Peace Day. Photo: ActionAid

Programme Overview

System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism Programme is an innovation of ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) aimed at supporting communities to build resilience against violent extremism through enhanced capacity and structures to utilise available resources in preventing radicalisation, respond to, withstand and overcome impact of adverse violent extremism should it occur. AAN is partnering with her local rights partner Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID) and other relevant stakeholders to tackle radicalisation and violent extremism in Nigeria with a specific focus on Kogi State.

The 30-months programme which targets 9,200 youths, 10,200 women and 22,500 members of five communities (Ofuloko, Okpakpata, Osara, Aku/Osaragada & Fulani) across two local government areas (Adavi and Igalamela/Odolu) is slated to close-out and pass the baton to the communities and state government by December 2018.

Quick Facts

1,309

youths (516 females and 793 males) sensitised on prevention of radicalisation, violent extremism and the need for peaceful coexistence.

477

Women

648

Community Leaders & Elders

engaged towards building resilient and sustainable ability, capacity and structures to utilise available resources to prevent radicalisation, respond to, withstand, and overcome impact of adverse impact of violence extremism, should it occur.

97

youths (49 females & 42 males) trained on Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA) and conflict sensitivity.

96

women and 15 community leaders trained on vulnerability analysis, conflict sensitivity, leadership & mentorship.

4

youth cooperatives established and registered with 176 members for livelihood activity

5

women cooperatives established and registered with 248 members under the planned livelihood activity.

TOGETHER FOR PEACE

Amina Bature could not hide her joy. She wore a broad smiles as she walked alongside top government officials from Kogi State, and waved the campaign banner with the inscription – Join the campaign – #KogiTogether4Peace. This was an unlikely company for people of her social class, but it was one that the government needed to convey its message.

It is September 21st, all roads lead to Kogi State government house Lokoja. Today, as the world marks the world peace day to highlight the importance of peace for human progress and prosperity, Kogi State resonates the same message. Hundreds of people, young and old, from every tribe and communities gathered at the famous Ganaja junction and headed towards one destination - the government house, where they hoped to deliver a one line message – *Kogi Together for Peace*.

For many reasons, Kogi state had become a flash point of sort for high profile kidnapping, extreme violence and communal clashes. While many claim that the perpetrators of such criminalities are not necessarily resident in the state, other argument is centred around Kogi's weak border system which makes it attractive to criminal element from the 10 states that border it.

ActionAid with Participation Initiative for Behavioral Change in Development, PIBCID is working with communities and relevant government agencies to systematically address the source of restive violence playing out in the state through the System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism Project.

The project was designed to dig deep into the fundamental causes of violence in the state and begin to create workable community driven solutions to

preventing and addressing internal conflicts and general restiveness.

At the project take off, Ofuloko, Okpakpata, Osaragada/Aku and Osara communities were identified as strategic for the pilot.

The initial baseline conducted before the commencement of the project highlighted critical findings that dots across several communities. For instance, poor education or the lack of access to education constituted an impediment to progress. In Okpakpata, Aku/Osaragada and



There is no more fighting in my community, various training that we have received from ActionAid has improved the way we live, even our husbands encourage us get busy trading instead of staying idle at home. The tension between families has also reduced-

- Aishat Musa -



Osara communities, only about 3% of the population are literate; while Ofuloko community records about 8% literacy rate.

The other disturbing finding is the height of socio-economic exclusion as most communities are far-flung from the government. Most of the communities are cut off from civilisation, thus creating agitation and frustration.

The project seeks to aggregate the challenges that easily prompts violence and create response systems and structures within the community to resolve, engage relevant authorities and improve how communities communicate.

This methodology created awareness in the citizens that they can engage government and dialogue with neighbouring communities rather than taking up arms and sticks against one another.

However, poverty is still biting hard amongst the populace and making survival difficult for families as the cost of living has also jumped. Expectedly, the **state** government tells their side of the story. **“We want to secure the state first. Security is our priority, if a place is not secured, there is no way you can invest there. The governor is investing heavily on security”** said Akoh Adaidu, the special adviser on special duties. Adaidu's stance will fall on deaf ears; especially the ears to those who believe that security is not only the purchase of hardwares but social investments, food security and education.

The state has commenced an ambitious civil service reform to clear the state from ghost workers but the reform comes with a cost; workers salaries have been delayed for months causing regular tool downing.

ActionAid's project in Kogi can only provide a spring board for the kind of actions that can be taken to address the multi-dimensional challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment and general unrest ***"If the government does not take appropriate actions to scale up and expand what we are doing, our walk for peace today would have been in vain, but we hope it will not be in vain"*** said Gbenro Olajuyigbe, ActionAid's programme manager.

The core objective of the project is to evolve a community led governance system and structure that is empowered with skills to engage other groups. In realising this objective, ActionAid is also supporting the economics of the people through investment in several livelihood initiatives.

The project sufficiently covered the interest of most vulnerable segments of the society, women, young people and deprived communities.



FULANI COMMUNITY SIGN PEACE PACT TO END CRISIS

In a most unprecedented move to put an end to incessant violent bloody attacks between the Fulani herdsmen and Okpakpata community, the leadership of the Fulani and Okpakpata has entered into a written agreement signed by

leaders of both communities.

Okpakpata, a community where the scars of bloody attacks will linger for a long time, can finally heave a sigh of relief. The peace agreement spells out ways by which farmers and herdsmen can live and work

According to 2012 figures from the National Bureau of Statistics 1 out of 4 children are out of school in Kogi, although the state debunked the figures, no empirical evidence shows otherwise. Kogi is a mix bag of fortune, with great potentials in agriculture and natural resources and a challenge of violence, which is now declining. As the walk for peace grinds to a halt at the government house, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor, Isah Omede poured endless eulogies on ActionAid's efforts to bring peace to Kogi state; he vowed governments' commitment to sustain the work of ActionAid through further collaboration and participation. ***"We will continue to collaborate with ActionAid to promote peace of Kogi state, peace is important to this government because without peace there cannot be prosperity and progress"*** he noted.

Highlighting areas that requires greater focus, ActionAid's programme manager further challenged the state government to put action to rhetoric ***"We have seen some level of cooperation with the government but we want to ask that focus should be more on developing human infrastructure rather than physical infrastructure"*** he said.

together without crisis. The community has designated pathway for herds, far away from farmlands, but in the event that cattle's stray into farmlands, the matter will be reported to the Community Action Response Team (CART). This is a community conflict prevention and resolution system developed by ActionAid to neutralise tendencies of self-help in times of crisis.

An elated Abdulahi Riga expressed satisfaction with the peace accord. Riga is a popular herds businessman in Kogi state and has borne the brunt of the clashes on his herds, associates and family. ***"I am very happy, we sat down to agree to end the violent attacks in our communities. I have lost a lot of cows, I have lost my brothers and sisters, I have lost my boys that takes the cows around but now we need to forget the past and make peace"*** he said in pigin English.

Okpakpata Community Leader, Simon Ikani also pulled off the lid of joy "We have suffered so much in this crisis, we have lost so many people but we are glad that the Fulani's agreed to all the terms of the agreement. We pray that all the parties will abide by the agreement and live in peace together" he said.



“
What I have observed that is making people to be radicalised is unemployment. Poverty is one of the biggest challenge of people in my community
 ”

- Elizabeth James -



“Our Problem is Poverty not Violence”

Elizabeth James, 48 was raised not to ask questions. Although she had acquired the National Certificate for Education, NCE; still, she thought it was forbidden to look at a man’s face when speaking to him. “Our husband have the final say, no matter what we feel. Even when the decisions are wrong; we were not supposed to ask questions” said the primary school teacher.

Elizabeth never heard of the rights of women, **“It is through ActionAid that we realise that women have right, women cannot even purchase lands before but now we can. There is no fighting again in our community; women are no longer sitting idle as before”** she said.

The level of self-awareness has also improved; especially with regards to how people relate with each other.

“Formerly we don’t give out lands to other tribes but today our community is a multi-tribal community. We relate with people well now, even the Igbos have lands in our community, we engage and involve them in our community meetings” she said.

The pain of violence still lingers. Elizabeth lost her uncle in 2008 to a bloody clash between the herdsmen and farmers; he was caught in the middle of the clash and was killed - that memory she said never leaves her.

She succinctly maintained that poverty is the main driving force for radicalisation and any form of crime in most communities.

THE COST OF PEACE

Inspired by the efforts of ActionAid in his community, Usman Muhammed, chief imam (spiritual leader of the mosque) of the Zango central mosque called a meeting of the clerics around the community. It was not another kind of meeting - the cleric was determined to act against



incessant kidnapping, armed robbery and all forms of criminal activities around the surrounding communities.

The cleric gathered young people from different communities and they were made to swear an oath to denounce all forms of violence, kidnapping and armed robbery - about 75 young men showed up. The young

lads laid down their arms and swore not to engage in any form of violence.

“If not for ActionAid, we would not have done this kind of thing” the chief imam said. The cleric maintains that religious leaders can help in ensuring peace in any community or nation. **“People listen to us, they believe that God has vested some level of authority in us, so they listen and obey us”** he said.

The chief imam's action yielded a magical result; kidnapping dropped, armed robbery ended and peace was restored back to the community. “Some of them that went back to crime died in the process because they had broken their oath” he said.

He however points to the void that exists when people are not employed **“We have fought and won the battle of kidnapping, violence and armed robbery in our community but because people must survive, if they remain without job or any means of survival, they will become easy prey to people who can turn them to tools for violence”** - he concludes.

FROM CHAOS TO PEACE BUILDING



At 62, Hajia Hajaratu Momoh has witnessed all forms of violence and conflicts in her community. The soft wrinkle on her face is an expression of painful experiences. Living in the heat of incessant herdsmen attacks, armed robbery, domestic violence, communal clashes and rape of women can make the bravest turn a fearful weakling.

Osara community is a typical rural community with mass of green land; this community has a feel of nature.

Its green fields and fertile lands attract both farmers and herds to plant crops and feed respectively. "Our community was once a place where terror was unleashed, we lived in fear everyday" Hajaratu recalls.

Osara community experienced a few of the herdsmen attack and brutal killing of neighbours that

left such unimaginable scar in her mind. "When there is violence in a place, no one will want to stay but when you are too poor to find another alternative, you will have value for peace, you will pray everyday and hope that there is no violence". Hajaratu explains.

Observably, where there is poverty and inequality, violence and criminality thrives. In Osara, the daily struggles for survival of ordinary people makes the people vulnerable and ready machineries for merchants of extremism.

As it appears, the activities of ActionAid in this community is yielding tremendous results.

“
We have seen changes in our community since ActionAid began to train our women, young boys and girls. We are very grateful because we are now empowered with skills. We know how to communicate among ourselves and with other communities when herdsmen destroy our farmlands. Instead of fighting, we now communicate with the Fulani community; now compensation is paid and the problem is resolved amicably without quarrels.
 ”

- Hajaratu Momoh -





“
*We have noticed reduction
 in violence against women
 in the communities and some of
 the women are now better
 engaged in profitable
 activities. The strategies of
 ActionAid is working and that is
 why we are partnering with
 them to finish up the job
 they initiated*
 ”

Halima



“ActionAid has inspired us to do more”

Working in the Nigerian civil service could be a tough job. Many jostle for civil service employment because of the perceived job security, but when faced with the harsh reality of some civil servants in a few states, the enthusiasm dampens. Irregular pay, poor output, low morale, weak structural capacity to evolve and implement human interest policies are some of the harsh realities faced by civil servants in the country.

Halima Peace (real name withheld) may not be smiling today. Like many of her colleagues in the civil service, she still bubbles with the energy to do more but constraint by lean budget, the impact of government in communities has only become complimentary.

“Although we have evident constraint”, she tries to explain “ActionAid has given us the reason to want to go the extra mile”. When asked about the plan of her department to sustain the development and empowerment projects initiated by ActionAid, Halima said “Government at all levels are drivers of policies but without the tools, we cannot achieve much”.

“True, no matter the inspiration and energy to drive a policy, if there are no funding and the right capacity, it will hit the rocks. We are motivated by the consistent programme of

ActionAid to reduce poverty, and empower women with essential life skills. My department is pushing new sets of policies that will sustain the gains already achieved” she said.

Encouraged by testimonials from participants of ActionAid’s projects, especially the peer education project which has enhanced self-esteem of community women and has empowered them with skill acquisition and personal development, Halima’s department is working to design a model that will be shared and implemented in all communities in the State.

“
*We know that government
 cannot do everything, NGOs
 too cannot do everything, so
 we are working as partners to
 sustain the various projects
 so that we do not reverse the
 progress already achieved*
 ”





“
I am changed now
because I have
learnt a lot of things.
I am training my
children to value
education and my
community has
changed too

- Aishat Musa -



“I Now Resolve Disputes In My Community”

In Osarangada-Aku community, it is a man's world; men make all the decisions. It is believed that women exist merely to take instructions from the male folks. 'It has always been so' confirms Aishat Musa.

Like other women in the community, the 36 years old mother of 4 children, keeps her opinion to herself because she has been taught that her opinion does not count at home or in the community.

Through ActionAid's System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalization to Violent Extremism project, Aishat and other women in her community discovered themselves. The series of structured leadership programs has enhanced her communication and advocacy skills to the point of engaging other women to cultivate a peaceful disposition towards their spouses and other members of the community.

“I can tell you that husbands and wives are no longer quarreling like before, things are changing in my community, violence is reducing” she boasts.

Aishat now plays a mediator role in her community. “If there is conflict in the community, the chief of the community sends for me and asks for my opinion” she said with a pinch of pride. She narrated series of violent crisis, armed robbery attacks and ethnic clashes which was a regular occurrence before ActionAid's project. The community has devised a self-monitoring system that helps to prevent extremism and criminalities.

“There is no cheating when there is communication; ActionAid has helped us to learn how to communicate amongst ourselves and live better together.”

Initially, Aisha never believed that people from different communities can cohabit without violence; now, she affirmed that education is the key to ensuring peaceful cohabitation with people of any tribe or faith.

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TORCH BEARERS



Akoh Adaidu
Special Adviser on
Special duties

"We want to sincerely thank ActionAid for their effort. They have challenged us to do everything as a government to remain committed to the peace and security of the good people of Kogi State".



Abdulkarim Haruna
Osara Community

"There will be no violence if we can get work, It is hunger and joblessness that makes young people involve in crime".



Amina Bature
Fulani Community

"We never believed we could step our foot inside government house, it is like a dream, we now feel that we are all one. We need the government to give education to our children, build hospital for us, provide water and assist our women with empowerment programmes. We are very peaceful people and we want everyone to live together in peace".



Ahmed Attah
Special Adviser on Health

"A lot of efforts and emphasis has been put in security. The governor has invested massively in security and our collaboration has helped to improve security in the state. Security is top on governments thematic agenda".



Zubair Matthew
Osara Community

"It is true that we experience so much violence in our communities but it is reducing gradually. ActionAid is helping to educate the youths to concentrate on our work and not be used for violence".

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

01 Training for Community Action and Response Teams (CART). October 2017

02 Support Youth Action Plans & Livelihood Activities (Provision of Block Moulding Machines and Cassava Processing Machines) October 2017 – March 2018

03 Conduct Women Peer Education on Sustaining Household Peace (linked to action plan from the community initiatives) October 2017 – March 2018

04 Advocacy to Traditional Institutions on Provision of Lands for Women (linked to action plan from the community initiatives). October 2017 – March 2018

05 Sensitisation on Peace Building and Harmonious Living Through Radio Jingles on Prime 105.5 FM, Confluence 94.1 FM, Grace 95.5 FM & Toa and Ocheja Radio. October 2017 – March 2018

06 Training of Cooperative Leaders (Youth & Women) on Book-Keeping and Financial Management. November 2017

07 Capacity Building for Sub-Recipients (SRs) (linked to capacity development plan) November 2017

08 Quarterly Town- Hall Meeting in all Project Communities November & February 2018

09 Support Women Action Plans and Livelihood Activities (Provision of Cassava and Maize Processing Machine) November 2017

10 Meeting with the Nigerian Police, State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) as Members of the Committee on Peace (linked with quarterly stakeholders meeting) January 2018

actionaid

📍 Plot 477, 41 Crescent,
Off Sa'adu Zungur Avenue,
Gwarimpa, Abuja

📍 1A, Adebayo Solanke Street,
Ikeja, Lagos

☎ +234 (0) 812 8888 825-7
✉ info.nigeria@actionaid.org
🌐 www.actionaid.org/nigeria

📘 ActionAidNigeria
🐦 @ActionAidNG