

# ENGAGING COMMUNITIES FOR PEACE IN NIGERIA

Triumphs over Adversities: Stories  
MAY 2019



# Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN)

**is a four-year USAID funded program implemented by Mercy Corps in collaboration with the Pastoral Resolve, its local partner.**

Launched in 2015, the program was designed to reduce violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt states by peacefully preventing and resolving conflicts between farming and pastoral communities in Benue and Nasarawa states. The program scope, cost and duration was extended in

2017 to include capacity building of Northeast-based CSOs with mandate in peacebuilding as well as support USAID Mission staff and implementing partners to mainstream Do No Harm/conflict sensitivity cross-sectorally through technical capacity building workshops.

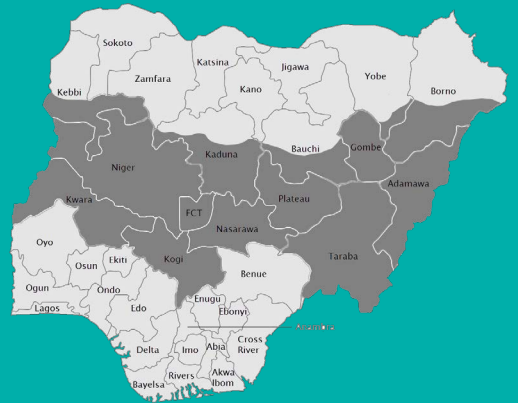
*With the project's completion in sight, Mercy Corps reached out to community partners and participating civil society organizations to share their experiences in their own words.*

These  
are their  
stories.



## Middle Belt

*Adamawa, Southern Bauchi,  
Southern Borno, FCT, Gombe,  
Southern Kebbi, Southern  
Kaduna, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa,  
Niger, Plateau, Taraba, Southern  
Zamfara.*





Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps

## › Ardo's Story

I have lost a lot to the conflict between farmers and pastoralists. I lost a close relative, my property and some of my cattle to the violence. Since then, things have gotten a lot better as efforts have been made by various stakeholders to bring both groups together to hash out our differences and luckily I found the greatest gift, love.

During one of the peace committee meetings between farmers and pastoralists, I met my wife, Mairo (Mary in English) who is from the farming community.

I expressed my intention to marry her to her and her father who gave his blessings.

*“The rest is history, like they say.”*

*- Ardo Danlami, Pastoral Community Leader  
Ashige Community, Nasarawa State*

# Zaki's Story

Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps



“We know these pastoralists, they were born and grew up here in Benue state. This conflict in Benue has led to heightened violence and hatred between farmers and pastoralists.

The farming community lives in relative peace with the indigenous pastoralists, we know they are good people.

I do not like that they had to leave their settlements because of the security issues. But I am glad we had an opportunity to interact better during the Mercy Corps training and peace committee.

*Now, we understand ourselves better and know it can only get better.”*

*- Zaki Tim Bee, Farming Community Leader  
Zongo Community, Benue State*



*Photograph by Ezra Millstein for Mercy Corps*

## › Moses's Story



“As a fisherman, the conflict over natural resources between farmers and pastoralists affects us too. Clashes at the water points between the pastoralists and us was a regular occurrence at some point, which often led to violence.

However, with the help of conflict management trainings, we are now able to see that the conflict does not pay either groups.

*We settle issues among ourselves and even go as far as settling domestic disputes with our newly acquired skills. Families are a lot happier now.”*

*- Moses, Fisherman  
Tunga Community, Nasarawa State*



Photograph by Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps



## Veronica's Story

“I enjoy speaking to large groups of women about the triggers of conflict in our communities and how to mitigate it. As women, we are often overlooked and our needs overshadowed by that of the men. Being a part of the Anyiin Peace Committee has given me a better platform to air my views and encourage other women to understand our roles in influencing our men and our youths positively.”

*- Veronica Suswam, Woman Leader and Mentor  
Anyiin Community, Benue State*

# Ramatu's Story



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*

*“In 2014, there was a violent conflict between the major ethnic groups - Eggon and Alago in the Tudun Adabu and Odoibu communities.*

This caused a lot of anguish for many of us. Some of us lost relatives, some lost property while others were either displaced, left injured or stranded in neighboring communities. Many people remained unaccounted for, we have a close family friend we have neither seen nor heard from since the spate of violence whom we presumed was dead.

Following security intervention as well as peace building efforts from various stakeholders, we have been able to rebuild our relations in the communities.

I am glad I attended a conflict prevention forum organized by Mercy Corps in 2016, because I reunited with my close family friend. In my wildest dreams, I never thought I would live to see that day.”

*- Ramatu Edro, Trader  
Tudun Adabu Community, Nasarawa State*



Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps

## › Lami's Story

“Gidan Buba community is in a deep, remote area of Nasarawa State and so we lacked a lot of social amenities like delivery rooms, conducive schools, market stalls and alternate sources of water supply from the far streams.

Among other provisions, Mercy Corps and PARE constructed a delivery room attached to the community primary health care center.

Many women are happy with this development including the women from the pastoralist community who are very private and now utilize the rooms for childbirth. Delivery is now ensured in safer environs with women of all groups as beneficiaries, a far cry from the situation in the past.”

*- Lami, Housewife,  
Gidan Buba Community, Nasarawa State*



*[Photograph by Ezra Millstein for Mercy Corp*

## › Mubaba's Story



“I lost almost everything. I lost family members, friends, cattle and other property as we tried to escape for our lives from the Anti Grazing Law enforcers in Benue in January 2018.

Coming into the border community of Tunga, Nasarawa, we were apprehensive that the farmers would attack us because of our high number.

However to our greatest surprise, we were accommodated and we later learned that the community members had anticipated our arrival in one of their peace forum meetings. This has been a huge relief for my family and myself as we now feel safe.”

*- Mubaba, Herder  
Tunga Community, Nasarawa State*



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*



# Shindi's Story

“I miss my friend Saleh Tambaya from the pastoralist community of Anyiin. I wish they did not have to leave in the manner they did. Some of them left their property in our care with the hope of returning when things became calm. Having lost touch with many of our pastoralist neighbors, I asked for Saleh’s contact at one of our IBN trainings in 2018. I was happy to learn about Saleh’s wellbeing and that his family found a safe haven in Nasarawa.”

*- SP Shindi, Farmer  
Anyiin Community, Benue State*

# Yakubu's Story



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*

“The violence in Tudun Adabu/Odobu between Eggon and Alago in 2014 was terrible! Neighbors were attacking neighbors, friends turned their backs on one another, and colleagues could not stand the sight of each other just because they were of a different tribe. At that time, as an Alago farmer from Odobu Community, I could not come into the Eggon dominated Tudun Adabu community for fear of being attacked.

Today, things have improved tremendously because of interventions by the government and peacebuilding efforts by other organizations. I am set to marry the love of my life who is Eggon from Tudun Adabu and I am currently waiting by her door to discuss our wedding plans!”

*- Yakubu Gambo Akosi, Youth Leader  
Tundun Adabu Community, Nasarawa State*



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*



# Oliver's Story

“I was skeptical about Mercy Corps’ interventions at first. The conflict had gone so deep we did not trust anyone at some point. Today, I am happy that we are able to sit down to discuss our issues using our acquired dispute resolution skills as well as benefit from some of the social projects such as the borehole jointly as one community.”

*- Oliver Zasha, Mediator  
Zongo Community, Benue State*



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*

## › Aliyu's Story



“I enjoy mediating disputes and curtailing disagreements before they erupt into bigger issues in Gidan Buba. I have been doing this for members of the community for as long as I can remember. Suddenly, the calls for mediating disputes dramatically reduced in 2017, which made me happy but worried at the same time.

After reaching out to community members, I was informed that they had been trained in dispute resolution methods by an organization called Mercy Corps and they are now able to resolve their differences by themselves. That was great news.”

*- Aliyu Muhammad Buba, Community Leader  
Gidan Buba Community, Nasarawa State*



*Photograph by Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*



# Galim's Story

“The intervention could not have come at a better time. The anti-grazing law triggered a lot of violent clashes and attacks in neighboring communities. The pastoralists in Anyiin were terrified and told us that they had to leave. One of them trusted me with his property for safekeeping until he returns. I hope he is fine. I look forward to his return.”

*- Galim James, Farmer  
Anyiin Community, Benue State*

# Solomon's Story



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*

“I never thought the day would come where farmers and pastoralists would engage in trust-based economic transactions because of all the atrocities in the past. Mercy Corps’ activities brought us together and we got to know a little more about one another. During a funeral ceremony for one of the members of my congregation, a pastoralist gave one of his cattle to me on credit.

*Truly, no situation is permanent.”*

*- Solomon Igbawau, Preacher  
Zongo Community, Benue State*



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*



# Karima's Story

“With the assistance of Mercy Corps, I do not have to wake up at 4:00 AM to fetch water. I am now able to fill my buckets from the borehole in the town center, making it easier to feed my family and do household chores. It gives me time to do other things. We also got a delivery room.

*My friends are now comfortable with visiting the hospital for maternity concerns because of the improved privacy.”*

*- Karima Jagaba, Mother  
Gidan Buba Community, Nasarawa State*



*Photograph by: Michael Madukwe for Mercy Corps*

## › Maide's Story

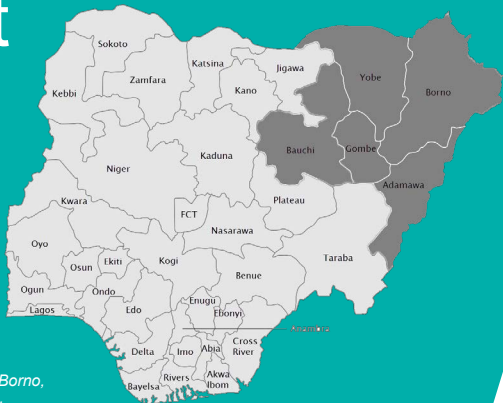


*“I do not have to walk long distances to fetch water anymore.”*

This borehole right in the middle of town provides me with all that I need to perform household chores and feed my family. I particularly like the rush of the water from the tap.”

*- Maide Ango, Matriarch  
Anyiin Community, Benue State*

# North East



*Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno,  
Gombe, Taraba, Yobe.*

 *North Eastern Nigerian States*



*Photograph by: Paul Thomas for Mercy Corps*

## » Mohammed's Story

“Before now, we entered communities without analyzing the context. After we got the training from Mercy Corps, we changed our approach and there are better results to show for it. Especially with the small grant that just concluded. The impact is tremendous.”

*- Bishop Mohammed Naga,  
Christian Association of Nigeria, Maiduguri, Borno State Branch*



*Photograph by: Paul Thomas for Mercy Corps*

## › Mallam Tijjani's Story

Jama'atu Nasrul Islam (JNI), one of the civil society organizations Mercy Corps trained, was able to increase understanding among people from different religious groups.

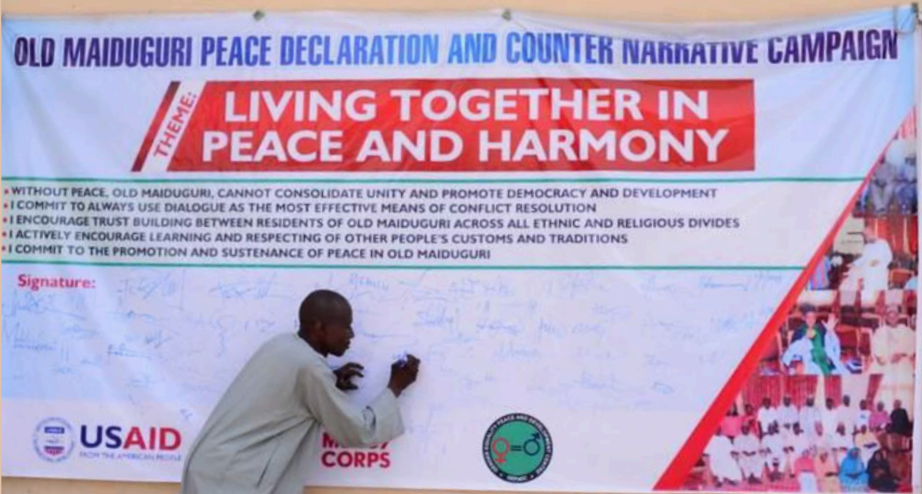
It started with stakeholder mapping for strengthening inter and intra religious dialogue among religious leaders, a training session that was held in January, 2019 in the old Maiduguri community of Jere LGA.

“Before this meeting I did not believe I could sit

under the same roof as non-Muslim. But when I saw the invitation was from Jama'atu Nasril Islam, the mother of all Islamic organizations, I decided to attend.

I learned that it is not prohibited to associate with a non-Muslims, and that by coming together we can bring understanding, peaceful coexistence, social cohesion, and connectedness to our community.”

*- Malam Tijjani Modu, Jama'atul Nasril Islam  
Jere LGA, Borno State*



## › Shettima's Story

Photograph by: Paul Thomas for Mercy Corps

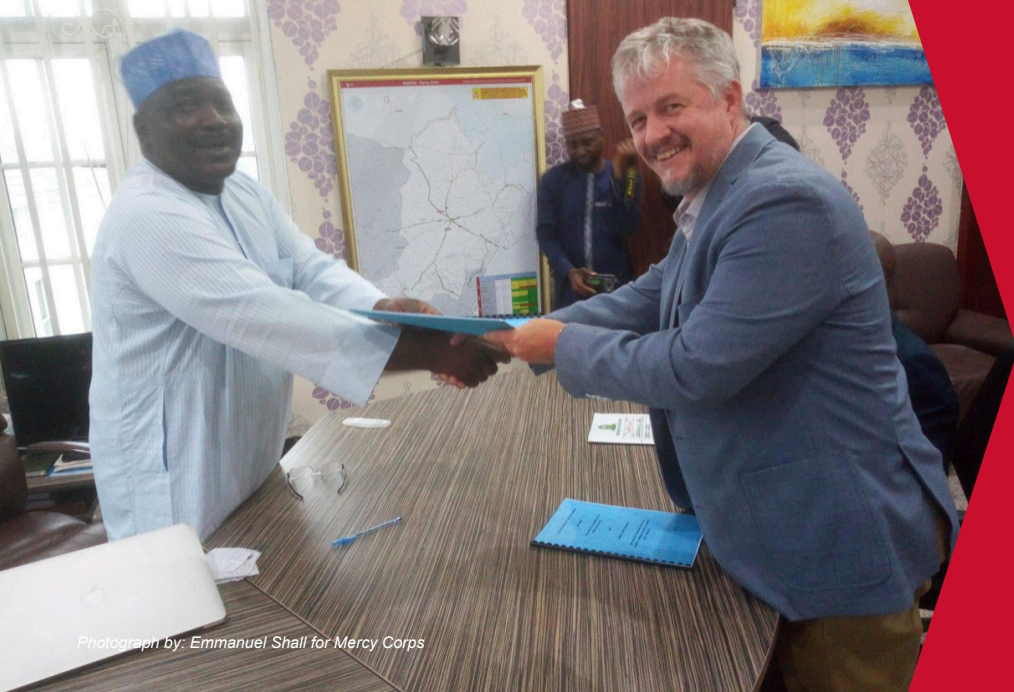
Using their skills in conflict management, the Gender Equality Peace and Development Center (GEPaDC) focused on community ownership of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Their work took place between January-April, 2019 in the Old Maiduguri community, where tensions between relatives of known Boko Haram members and the affected community were high.

GEPaDC launched a counter-narrative peace campaign which included a Peace Declaration banner and sign-up to socialize the concepts with local members. They also worked with the community's Chief Preacher to include topics on peacebuilding during Friday pre-prayer ser-

mons, which attract an average of 2,800 people. At the end of the trainings, Chief Preacher Abba stated the following:

“After I attended the capacity training on peacebuilding, I learned the importance of carrying out conflict analysis and the need for early warning and early response. I made a commitment to always include a topic on peacebuilding and conflict resolution during my Pre-Hudba (pre-Friday prayers) sermon to promote peaceful co-existence in Old Maiduguri”

*- Shettima Lawan Abba,  
Chief Preacher Old Maiduguri*



*Pictured above are Tijanni Tumsa, Vice Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Northeast Initiative (PCNI) and Darius Radcliffe, Mercy Corps Country Director at the signing of the organizations' Memorandum of Understanding.*



*This agreement, which included training for 120 civil society organizations operating in the Northeast, was an important acknowledgement of Mercy Corps' credibility, success, and commitment to peacebuilding in Nigeria.*



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## About Mercy Corp

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

*WITH SUPPORT FROM*



*Photograph by Ezra Millstein for Mercy Corps*



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*Photograph by Ezra Millstein for Mercy Corps*

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