

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR PEACE II

FROM INSIGHTS TO ACTION

Learning and Impact Report
(October 2025 – March 2026)



TETRA TECH International Development SPRING

PEACE
STARTS WITH
HEALTHY YOUTH

ABOUT YIAVHA

The Youth Initiative Against Violence and Human Rights Abuse (YIAVHA) works to unite and engage youth from various religious backgrounds in peacebuilding, governance, and human rights efforts to foster reconciliation, peace, and development. Established in 2014 but formally registered in 2016, YIAVHA has worked across the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria with youth on peacebuilding, good governance, and human rights protection. YIAVHA has conducted over 134 training sessions on human rights advocacy, peacebuilding, dialogue, climate smart agriculture, and non-violent conflict resolution, directly reaching more than 8712 people across the region and indirectly reaching 172,669 via social media engagements. Learn more about YIAVHA's work at www.yiavha.org.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKA	Also Known As
CPAR	Community Participatory Action Research
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDF	Inter community Dialogue Forum
KII	Key Informants Interviews
LGA	Local Government Area
LPH	Local Power Holders
MSC	Most significant change story
NDLEA	National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NOA	National Orientation Agency
YIAVHA	Youth Initiative Against Violence and Human Rights Abuse
PADP	Plateau Agricultural Development Programme
PIA	Project Implementation Areas
PSPBA	Plateau Peace Building Agency,

Executive Summary

For years, communities in Riyom LGA have experienced recurring violence driven by farmer–herder tensions, deep mistrust, and limited opportunities for inclusive dialogue. These dynamics restricted movement, disrupted livelihoods, and excluded women and young people from decisions affecting their safety and well-being.

The “Building Bridges for Peace II: From Insights to Action” project was implemented to address these challenges through a community-led approach to peacebuilding. The intervention combined inclusive dialogue platforms, youth-led initiatives, joint livelihood activities, and targeted drug awareness campaigns to rebuild trust and strengthen local mechanisms for conflict resolution.

This report draws on baseline and endline data collected across participating communities, complemented by qualitative insights from community members and stakeholders.

Within six months, the project recorded notable improvements in participation and perceptions. Engagement in dialogue processes increased from 36% of respondents who reported participating in dialogue while 64% indicated that they had not participated in such meetings at baseline to 90% of respondents participating in dialogue and only 10% indicated not participating at endline. This indicates a shift toward dialogue as a more consistent and trusted mechanism for addressing local conflict. Awareness and participation in joint farming activities expanded significantly, supporting both relationship-building and shared economic interests. Exposure to drug awareness interventions also increased from 20% to 99%, addressing a key contributing factor to youth vulnerability and community tensions.

Beyond these quantitative changes, qualitative findings point to meaningful shifts in social cohesion. Respondents reported reduced tensions, improved relationships, and increased freedom of movement across communities. Women and young people, previously underrepresented, are increasingly participating in and influencing local decision-making processes. In the words of a community member. As a community member who has lost relatives and previously experiencing anger over her losses noted “Before, just seeing them made me angry. Now we visit each other and live in peace.”

While these findings reflect strong progress within a relatively short implementation period, they primarily capture changes in outcomes and perceptions. Sustaining and deepening these gains will require continued support, particularly in strengthening local ownership, institutional linkages, and economic collaboration.

Overall, the findings suggest that community-driven approaches that combine inclusive dialogue, youth and youth engagement, and shared livelihoods can contribute to measurable improvements in trust, cooperation, and conflict management in fragile contexts. The project directly reached **2,651** beneficiaries and indirectly reached **121,744** via social media engagements.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

Riyom Local Government Area (LGA) remains one of the recurrent conflict hotspots in Plateau State, where cycles of violence have been shaped by longstanding tensions between farming and herding communities. Key drivers include competition over land and grazing routes, economic insecurity, divisive narratives, and limited inclusion of young people and women in community decision-making and peace processes. Recent evidence further indicates that increasing levels of drug abuse among young people have contributed to heightened aggression, reduced social cohesion, and the escalation of local disputes.

In response to these dynamics, the Youth Initiative Against Violence and Human Rights Abuse (YIAVHA) implemented the Building Bridges for Peace (BB4Peace) project between December 2023 and September 2024 with support from the [Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law](#) (Netherlands). The project applied a Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) and systems-thinking approach to analyse conflict dynamics in Riyom LGA. Through participatory mapping processes, community stakeholders identified key drivers sustaining violence and co-developed locally owned solutions aimed at strengthening trust and cooperation.

Phase I piloted community-led interventions including youth joint farming initiatives, intercommunity dialogue platforms like the citizens' security meetings and intergenerational dialogue through storytelling, and interfaith exchanges. These activities contributed to observable improvements in communication, increased reliance on nonviolent dispute resolution mechanisms, and enhanced access to shared farmland in selected communities¹. However, implementation findings revealed that the growing prevalence of drug abuse among youth significantly undermined peace gains by reinforcing mistrust, increasing impulsive behaviour, and amplifying conflict triggers. Although substance abuse had emerged during the initial systems analysis, it was not prioritised as a primary intervention area at the time. Learning from Phase I demonstrated that addressing drug abuse is essential to sustaining peacebuilding outcomes.

Building Bridges for Peace II therefore builds on these lessons and incorporates emerging evidence from the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG) study “Drugs and Violent Conflict in North-Central Nigeria,” alongside broader regional and global research highlighting the relationship between substance abuse, youth vulnerability, and conflict dynamics.² The project integrates targeted responses to drug abuse within existing community structures while strengthening dialogue mechanisms and collaborative livelihood opportunities.

¹Youth Initiative Against Violence and Human Rights Abuse (YIAVHA). From Conflict to Cooperation: A Community-Led Approach to Farmer–Herder Peacebuilding in Riyom, Plateau State, Nigeria. BB4Peace Phase I Documentary Video (2024). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIIPGyZhR14&t=3s>

² *Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG). Drugs and Violent Conflict in North-Central Nigeria; see also United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023) World Drug Report; and United Nations Development Programme (2023) Journey to Extremism in Africa, which highlight the links between substance abuse, youth marginalisation, and vulnerability to violence and conflict across Africa.*

Phase II supports young people to assume leadership roles within local conflict resolution platforms, facilitates collaboration with government institutions such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Plateau Peacebuilding Agency, Plateau Agricultural Development Programme, and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) on prevention and awareness initiatives, and expands economic cooperation through joint farming activities. By adopting a systems-based approach that simultaneously addresses economic pressures, substance abuse, and intercommunal tensions, the project seeks to strengthen community resilience and position young people as central actors in sustaining long-term peace and stability in Riyom LGA.

1.2 Theory of Change and Project Objectives

The project was guided by two interrelated objectives designed to address both the social and economic drivers of conflict:

1. **To strengthen youth leadership in peace and security** by empowering young people to actively address key local drivers of violence, including drug abuse and exclusion from decision-making, through inclusive, youth-led initiatives.
2. **To promote social cohesion and community resilience** by expanding collaborative livelihood initiatives, such as joint farming, thereby reducing farmer–herder tensions and rebuilding intercommunity trust.

These objectives are mutually reinforcing and grounded in the theory of change that **if** young people are empowered to lead inclusive and cooperative responses to local conflict drivers, **then** they will model positive behaviours, foster dialogue, and promote shared economic activities. **In turn**, this will rebuild trust between divided groups, strengthen local conflict resolution systems, and encourage collective problem-solving. **Ultimately**, these changes are expected to contribute to reduced violence, enhanced social cohesion, and increased community resilience.

1.3 Locations

The project was implemented in eight communities in Riyom LGA:

- Lwa and Shong II (Location Also Known As “ Chinkwogo”)
- Bachi and Dian
- Bangai (Farmers and Pastoralists communities)
- Sopp and Ranchol

1.4 Beneficiary Reach

The project directly reached **2,651 beneficiaries** through community dialogues, youth-led activities, and livelihood interventions. In addition, **121,744** were reached indirectly through digital outreach and tracked social media engagement including impressions, views, unique users, etc, which amplified key peacebuilding messages and project activities.

Infographics were also utilized below to present key data and outcomes in an accessible and visually engaging format.



Fig. 1: Number of indirect beneficiaries (Social media)

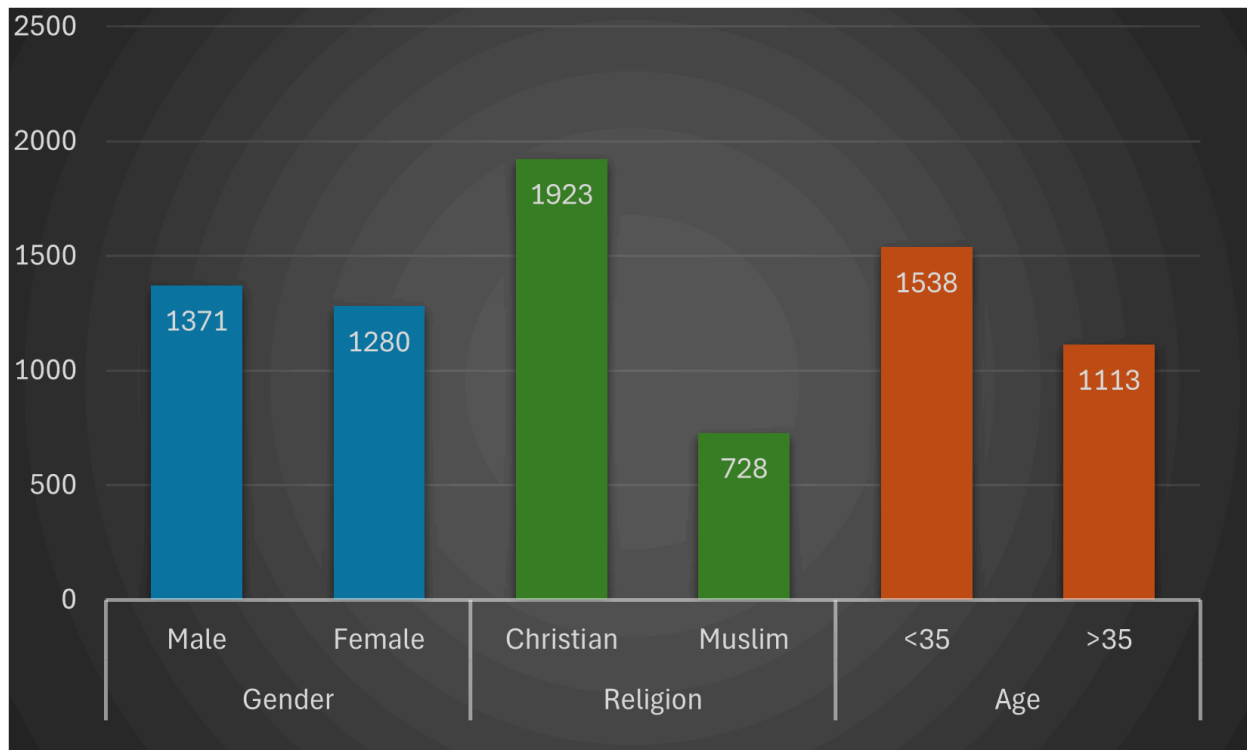


Fig.2 Disaggregated number of direct beneficiaries by gender, religion, and age.

2. Methodology

2.1 Assessment Design

The endline assessment applied a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's impact.

Quantitative data were collected through 120 structured surveys administered by community focal persons in each community using accidental (convenience) sampling.

Qualitative data were gathered through 8 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted via purposive sampling, 8 Focussed Group Discussions, and 4 Most Significant Change (MSC) story workshops with project participants. The MSC workshops enabled community members to define and share the changes resulting from the project that they perceived as most significant. This participatory approach ensured that the assessment captured the communities' perspectives on impact, rather than relying solely on the program team's expectations.

Additional insights were obtained through direct observations during community engagements and a review of previous project reports, providing context and supporting triangulation of findings.

2.2 Data Analysis Approach

Data from surveys, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Most Significant Change (MSC) stories were analysed using a thematic and triangulation approach to generate a comprehensive understanding of project outcomes. Qualitative data were coded into emerging themes reflecting behavioural, relational, and community-level changes, while quantitative survey findings were analysed descriptively to validate and strengthen insights generated from the qualitative data collected across the project communities. A comparative analysis was further applied to examine differences and shared priorities across the four project cluster communities, ensuring that findings reflected both measurable results and community-defined experiences of change.

2.3 Limitations

- I. **Sampling limitations:** The quantitative surveys were administered using convenience sampling among accessible community members within the project locations. While this approach enables data collection within a complex security environment, it may not fully represent the perspectives of all population groups, particularly individuals who were unavailable, displaced, or unwilling to participate due to security concerns or social sensitivities. As such, the findings should be interpreted as indicative of trends rather than statistically generalizable conclusions for the entire population.
- II. **Social desirability bias:** Given that Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Most Significant Change (MSC) workshops involved participants directly engaged in project activities, there is a possibility of social desirability bias influencing responses. Some participants may have shared views they perceived as aligned with expected project outcomes or socially acceptable narratives within their communities. Consequently, reported positive outcomes may slightly overstate the extent of actual behavioural or attitudinal change.
- III. **Attribution challenge;** Attribution of outcomes remains a methodological challenge within complex peacebuilding contexts. Some of the observed changes may have been influenced by external factors such as government initiatives, seasonal farming cycles, or interventions implemented by other actors operating within the same communities. This means that not all reported changes can be attributed solely to the BB4Peace II project, even where participants associated outcomes with project activities.
- IV. **Sensitivity of conflict and drug-related topics:** Data collection on sensitive issues related to conflict dynamics, criminality, and substance use posed additional limitations. Due to fear, stigma, or mistrust, some respondents may have withheld information or avoided discussing certain experiences openly during interviews and discussions. As a result, certain challenges or negative experiences may be underreported within the assessment findings.
- V. **Timeframe of assessment:** the endline assessment captures project outcomes at a specific point in time, whereas peacebuilding processes often require longer periods for behavioural and relational changes to fully consolidate and become observable. Many outcomes identified may therefore represent early or transitional results rather than long-term impacts. This implies that some effects of the intervention may still be emerging and not yet fully measurable at the time of assessment.

3. What We Did

1. Inter-Community Dialogue Forums (IDF): The project conducted 15 Inter-Community Dialogue Forums across four clusters involving youth, women, religious leaders, and local power holders (LPH) from neighbouring farmer and herder communities. The dialogues provided platforms to discuss emerging conflict risks and jointly develop communiqués that will shape collective action and impact. Four communiqués were produced, of which three were formally signed, while one remained unsigned due to disagreements over community name representation.³ A Central Dialogue Forum was also convened at the LGA level, bringing together community representatives and 14 government agencies, traditional rulers, and religious associations to review progress and address unresolved peace and security concerns.

2. Youth-led drug awareness and prevention campaigns: In collaboration with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Orientation Agency (NOA), and previously trained youth leaders, the project implemented four role-based drug prevention sessions reaching 240 youth and community gatekeepers across the cluster communities. Facilitated by experts from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), community theater community and representatives of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the sessions covered understanding drug abuse in local contexts, early warning signs, prevention strategies, rehabilitation pathways, and community early-response roles. Using participatory, role-based community theatre discussions involving elders, women, and youth, participants analysed causes and consequences of substance abuse and developed practical solutions, including intensified youth sensitisation, advocacy to community leaders, school and worship centre-based awareness, and stronger involvement of women in prevention efforts. Complementing this, 16 public drug-free awareness campaigns were conducted in schools, mining sites, and places of worship, T-shirts, wristbands and placards with numerous inscriptions, and stickers distributed to promote behavioural change and community awareness.

3. Youth joint farming cooperatives and livelihood support: Eighty farmers and pastoralists participated in a joint farming initiative across four cluster communities, cultivating potatoes on 0.8 hectares of land. Participants received farm inputs and technical support from an agricultural extension service provider, fostering collaboration, rebuilding trust, and strengthening shared responsibility.

³ The communiqué was not formally endorsed by all parties due to differences in community naming. Representatives from Lwa noted that the settlement had been referenced as “Shong II,” which falls under a different chief, rather than “Chinkwogo,” the name they considered appropriate. As consensus on this terminology could not be reached, the document remained unsigned by these representatives.

4. Key Results and Impact

1. Collaborative livelihood initiatives as a driver of peace.

Collaborative livelihood initiatives emerged as a strong driver of peace, particularly through joint farming and the self-initiated women's Village Savings and Loan Scheme (VSLA). At baseline, only 2.2% of respondents identified joint farming as a strategy for promoting peace and dialogue, compared to 90% at



endline, suggesting a significant shift in how communities perceived collaborative livelihood initiatives as mechanisms for strengthening peaceful coexistence. According to survey findings, participants reported that joint farming created a platform for regular interaction, trust-building, and joint problem-solving, which contributed to improved relationships among community members. One participant from the pastoralist community noted, *“Joint farming brought us together; we work, talk, and solve problems together.”*

Beyond collaborative farming activities, other interventions such as inter-community dialogue forums and role-based sessions were deliberately designed to promote intercultural exchange and social interaction among previously divided communities. Findings from the survey indicate a significant increase in the frequency of intercommunity engagement. At baseline, only 22.7% of respondents reported that intercommunity engagements occurred frequently, compared to 86% at endline. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who stated that such engagements rarely occurred decreased from 24% at baseline to 11.4% at endline, while those who reported that engagements never occurred dropped significantly from 53.3% at baseline to 2.6% at endline.

These findings suggest that the project contributed to increased interaction and collaboration among communities with longstanding antagonistic relationships. For instance, during the 2026 Eid celebrations, members of the joint farming initiative visited one another across community lines, with residents of Bangai intentionally organizing Salah visits to their Muslim neighbours and sharing the interactions publicly online. Such actions reflect growing levels of trust, social connectedness, and willingness to engage across divides. Additionally, survey findings showed a 30.5 increase in respondents who believed that intercommunity collaboration contributes to community peace.

S/N		Baseline	Endline
1	Question	How relevant is Joint farming as a peace driver	
	Answer	Relevant =2.2% Not Relevant= 97.8	Relevant =90% Not Relevant= 10%
2	Question	In the last 6 months, how often do farmers and pastoralists in your community collaborate together?	
	Answer	Occurs frequently =22.7% Rarely occurs =24% Never occurs =53.3%	Occurs frequently= 86% Rarely occurs =11.4% Never occurs =2.6%
3	Question	Do you think that collaborative interactions lead to community peace?	
	Answer	Yes =22.3% No=77.7%	Yes=52.8% No =47.2%

Table. 1: perception of respondents on the relevance and frequency of joint farming and collaboration, and the frequency of dialogues.

2. Increased awareness and community action on drug abuse prevention: This emerged as a significant outcome of the intervention across the project implementation areas (PIAs). At baseline, awareness and engagement on drug abuse prevention were generally low. Only about 20% of respondents reported exposure to any form of drug awareness messaging, while just 2.2% indicated that they had engaged with institutions such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) on drug-related issues. Knowledge of the risks, causes, and signs of drug abuse was also limited, with only 15.6% of respondents demonstrating adequate understanding at baseline.



By the end of the intervention, survey findings showed substantial improvement across these indicators. Exposure to drug abuse awareness messaging increased to over 99%, with respondents reporting participation in sensitisation campaigns, dialogue sessions, and community discussions. Engagement with the NDLEA and NOA within project duration also increased significantly from 2.2% at baseline to 98.33% at endline, suggesting improved collaboration

between communities and formal institutions responsible for addressing drug-related challenges. Beyond increasing awareness, the intervention contributed to bridging the gap between community members and government structures established to support prevention and response efforts. In addition, the proportion of respondents demonstrating a strong understanding of drug abuse increased from 15.6% at baseline to over 64% at endline.

Beyond increased awareness and institutional engagement, findings also suggest an emerging shift toward community-led prevention and response mechanisms within the PIAs. In neighbouring communities such as Bachi (farming) and Dian (pastoralist), respondents described the emergence of a coordinated informal monitoring system led by young people from both communities. According to participants, young volunteers discreetly monitor access to and use of drugs within the communities and report concerns to community elders who secretly mandated them. Elders from both communities then collaborate to verify reported cases and determine appropriate responses, ranging from counselling and guidance to referrals to law enforcement agencies where necessary, particularly in situations where community-level interventions are insufficient. A community leader from the pastoralist community of Dian explained that, *“any child’s name that is given to us that he went to buy drugs, his name will be forwarded to us, we join our hands to fight against it.”* He further cited an example where reports concerning young people involved in drug abuse were jointly investigated and confirmed by community leaders, after which counselling processes were initiated. Supporting this perception of change, a youth participant stated that, *“where they used to go and hide to abuse drugs has been cleared.”*

Among young people, there were also indications of behavioural change linked to increased awareness, community responsibility, and participation in project activities. A youth focal person from one of the communities narrated that,

“Though I used to abuse and sell all kinds of drugs because of the profit that comes from it, after I was made the leader of this project in my community having the mandate to educate and mobilise community people, I had to stop, knowing the harm it has caused others... not staying away from such acts will undermine the message for people to stop drug abuse.”

Overall, these findings indicate a transition from low awareness and limited institutional engagement toward improved knowledge, stronger collaboration with relevant government agencies, and the emergence of more proactive, community-driven approaches to drug abuse prevention among young people and community stakeholders.

3. Reduction in violence and fear: Reduction in violence and fear emerged as an important change reported by community members across the project implementation areas (PIAs). At baseline, KII and FGD respondents described living in an environment characterised by fear, insecurity, and restricted movement. According to participants, incidents such as farm destruction, theft, reprisals, and threats of violence were common, contributing to heightened tensions between communities. Women in particular reported facing significant risks while carrying out routine livelihood activities such as farming and fetching firewood, especially in isolated areas perceived to be unsafe.

A woman from Sopp, one of the farming communities within the PIAs, explained that, *“Women constantly live in fear; a woman cannot go to fetch firewood in the bush alone for fear of*

being raped.” Such accounts reflected the extent to which insecurity affected everyday life, mobility, and social interaction within and across communities before the intervention.

By the end of the project, participants reported noticeable improvements in safety, mobility, and intercommunity relations. Respondents indicated that movement across communities had become safer, while four previously unsafe roads were reportedly being used again by community members. Participants also reported reductions in incidents of farm destruction and theft, alongside increased reliance on dialogue and collaborative problem-solving mechanisms to address tensions and disputes rather than resorting to violence.

These findings suggest a gradual shift in community perceptions of safety and security, as well as increased confidence in peaceful engagement across conflict lines. During the Most Significant Change (MSC) story evaluation, one female participant stated that, *“Now we can go to the bush and fetch firewood without fear.”* This testimony reflects the broader perception among participants that daily life activities previously associated with fear and insecurity had become safer and more accessible following the intervention.

4. Strengthening dialogue, trust, and peaceful conflict resolution: One of the most significant impacts recorded across the project communities was the strengthening of dialogue mechanisms, trust-building processes, and peaceful conflict resolution practices. Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative assessments indicate that the project contributed substantially to the establishment, revitalisation, and regularisation of community dialogue platforms, which improved communication and reduced tensions among previously divided groups.

Survey data strongly supports this outcome. At baseline, only 36% of respondents reported that they had participated in or were aware of dialogue or peace meetings within their communities. By the endline assessment, this figure had increased significantly to 99.17%, demonstrating a remarkable rise in both awareness of and participation in community dialogue processes. This improvement is closely linked to the project’s sustained community engagement strategy, including intercommunity dialogue sessions, role-based engagements, collaborative peacebuilding activities, and continuous stakeholder interactions that encouraged communication and relationship-building among conflicting groups.

Similarly, respondents reported a notable increase in the frequency of dialogue meetings within their communities. The proportion of respondents who indicated that regular dialogue meetings were taking place rose from 28.6% at baseline to 72.5% at endline, reflecting a 43.9% increase. This suggests that dialogue platforms became more institutionalised and consistent within the target communities over the course of project implementation.

Community confidence in dialogue as an effective mechanism for conflict prevention and peacebuilding also strengthened during the intervention period. While perception was already relatively high at baseline, with 95.6% of respondents agreeing that dialogue contributes to reducing conflict, this further increased to 100% at endline. This indicates strengthened collective belief in dialogue-based approaches as practical tools for addressing insecurity, managing grievances, and fostering peaceful coexistence.

Qualitative findings further reinforced these outcomes. Participants consistently described dialogue platforms as safe and constructive spaces that enabled communities to better understand one another’s concerns, perspectives, and grievances while creating opportunities for joint problem-solving. A participant from a pastoralist community noted that, *“If you don’t talk, you don’t know where it hurts.”* Similarly, a youth participant from a farming community explained that, *“Because of this, we resolved some issues. Now, we have a mutual understanding between us and the Fulani people.”*

Overall, the findings suggest that dialogue mechanisms within the project communities evolved beyond reactive meetings convened only during crises into more regular, structured, and trusted peacebuilding platforms. These platforms contributed meaningfully to improved communication, increased trust, strengthened social cohesion, and enhanced mutual understanding among previously divided groups.

Indicator	Baseline	Endline
(Dialogue participation) Have you participated in a dialogue/ peace meeting or heard of any in your community in the last 6 months?	Yes=36% No=64%	Yes=99.17% No=0.83
(Frequency of meetings) How regular do dialogues or peace meetings occur in your community?	Regular =28.6% Not Regular =71.4	Regular =72.5% Not Regular =27.5
Perception that dialogue reduces tension To what extent does dialogue impact conflicts?	Reduces tension =95.6% Doesn't reduce tension= 4.4	Reduces Tension= 100% Doesn't reduce tension=0

Table. 2 the frequency of dialogues, participation of level, and the significance of such dialogues to reduced tension in project implementation areas.

5. Strengthened social cohesion and intercommunity relationships:



Strengthened social cohesion and improved intercommunity relationships emerged as important outcomes of the project across the participating communities. Survey findings indicate notable attitudinal and behavioural changes in how community members related with one another over the course of the intervention.

At baseline, 38.8% of respondents described relations between

communities as tense and prone to violence, while 61.2% reported feeling unsafe within the broader intercommunity environment. By the end of the project, however, 75.83% of respondents described intercommunity relations as largely peaceful, while the proportion of respondents who reported feeling unsafe decreased to 24.17%. These findings suggest significant improvements in perceptions of safety, trust, and peaceful coexistence among participating communities.

Communities also reported increased levels of intercommunity interaction and social engagement evident in more frequent visits between neighbouring communities, improved day-to-day interactions, and participation in shared social and cultural activities, including visits and celebrations during the 2026 Eid festivities. Such developments indicate growing levels of trust, cooperation, and social integration among groups that previously experienced prolonged tensions and mutual suspicion.

One male participant involved in the joint farming initiative reflected on the significance of these changes by stating that, *“For the first time in over 15 years, we visited each other during Sallah and ate together.”* This testimony illustrates the extent to which relationships between communities had improved, particularly in contexts where fear and suspicion previously limited movement and interaction across community boundaries. Participants went further to explain that crossing into neighbouring communities before the intervention was often associated with fear of violence or attack, making such social exchanges largely impossible.

Overall, these findings suggest that the project contributed to rebuilding social ties, increasing confidence in peaceful coexistence, and strengthening community-level trust and cooperation among previously divided groups.

6. Increased youth and women participation in peacebuilding and community leadership

Before the intervention, young people and women were largely excluded from community decision-making processes and had limited opportunities to influence discussions related to peace, security, and community development, despite being among the groups most affected by conflict and insecurity.



By the end of the project, findings suggest notable improvements in the participation and visibility of youth and women within community peacebuilding structures and activities. Youth participation was reported by 20.8% of respondents while at the endline it increased to 79.17%, reflecting their growing involvement not only as beneficiaries of the intervention but also as

active contributors to peacebuilding and community mobilisation efforts. According to participants, young people played important roles in facilitating dialogue sessions, mobilising community members for joint activities, supporting awareness campaigns, and responding to emerging issues within their communities.

Women's participation and representation within community leadership and engagement spaces also improved during the intervention period. Respondents reported that women became more actively involved in awareness campaigns, particularly on issues related to drug abuse prevention, peaceful coexistence, and community sensitisation. Participants further noted that women increasingly contributed to discussions and decision-making processes that were previously dominated by men, suggesting gradual shifts in community attitudes toward women's inclusion in leadership and peacebuilding activities.

In addition to increased participation in dialogue and community processes, women also strengthened their collective voice and economic resilience through the establishment of a savings group initiative, which created additional opportunities for cooperation, support, and engagement among women across the project communities.

These findings suggest a gradual transition from exclusion toward more inclusive participation and representation, where young people and women are increasingly recognised as important actors in promoting peacebuilding, community resilience, and social cohesion.

One female participant reflected on the significance of this change by stating that, *“Before, only one woman attended meetings with the chief; now every village is represented.”* This testimony highlights the extent to which women's participation in community-level discussions and decision-making processes expanded during the course of the project

7. Strengthened community-based peace systems and sustainability



Beyond the immediate outcomes achieved during implementation, the project contributed significantly to laying the foundation for more sustainable and community-owned peacebuilding processes across the participating communities. At baseline, conflict management structures within many of the target communities were largely reactive, informal, and dependent on external interventions. Opportunities for structured dialogue between conflicting groups were

limited, particularly around highly sensitive issues such as land access and land use, which were often deliberately avoided due to fear of escalation, entrenched grievances, and deep-seated mistrust.

By the end of the intervention, a notable shift had emerged in the willingness and ability of communities to engage in structured dialogue on issues previously considered too sensitive for open discussion. One of the most significant changes observed was the reopening of conversations around land management and land use practices, issues that historically served as major triggers of tension and violence within the project areas.

Through facilitated engagements and dialogue platforms established under the project, community members including traditional leaders, youth representatives, farmers, pastoralists, and other land users increasingly began to sit together to discuss land-related concerns within a more organised, inclusive, and less confrontational environment. The transition from avoidance of sensitive discussions to active engagement on underlying conflict drivers represents an important step toward rebuilding trust, improving communication, and creating pathways for collaborative problem-solving.

The assessment also found emerging evidence of strengthened community-level accountability and local response mechanisms. Youth groups, community leaders, and other local actors demonstrated increasing involvement in monitoring and responding to issues such as crime, farm destruction, cattle-related disputes, and substance abuse within their communities. This reflects a gradual shift away from complete dependence on external actors for conflict response and an increasing sense of local ownership and collective responsibility for peace, security, and social stability.

Furthermore, qualitative findings suggest that the project helped strengthen local confidence in community-led peace structures and created spaces where communities could begin to address grievances before they escalated into violence. These evolving mechanisms provide an important foundation for sustaining peacebuilding efforts beyond the project lifecycle.

Overall, the findings indicate a transition from fragmented, reactive, and crisis-driven responses toward more deliberate, structured, and locally driven peace processes. The ability of communities to engage on previously avoided issues, maintain dialogue platforms, and collectively respond to emerging tensions demonstrates growing resilience and contributes to the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding efforts within the project communities.

8. Digital engagement and narrative influence

The project leveraged digital platforms as a strategic tool to amplify peacebuilding messages and challenge dominant conflict narratives. In a context where insecurity is often framed in absolutist terms particularly as one-sided terrorism, project messaging introduced alternative perspectives that emphasized dialogue, coexistence, and locally driven solutions.

During the implementation period (October 2025–March 2026), the project recorded strong growth in digital performance, reflecting improved outreach and content strategy. Performance gains were largely driven by visual storytelling across platforms such as TikTok and Facebook, including short video testimonies from community members. These testimonies helped humanise the impact of dialogue and demonstrate practical examples of improved security and intergroup relations.

Notably, videos focused on drug abuse awareness and project learning generated the highest engagement recorded by the organisation, with up to 671 saves on TikTok. High save rates are a strong indicator of content relevance, suggesting that audiences considered the material valuable for repeated viewing or private sharing which is an important marker of sustained interest and message retention.

Beyond quantitative metrics, qualitative feedback indicates that digital content contributed to shifting audience perceptions. Engagement patterns suggest increased openness to dialogue-based approaches, particularly among users exposed to narratives highlighting peaceful

coexistence. For example, one social media user, responding to a project video on the power of dialogue, noted:

“This video is an eye-opener to the possibilities that dialogue holds. Just as mentioned, it's not a one-time event; hopefully, peace gets restored.”

Beyond social media engagement, the project gained recognition across local, national, and international media platforms, further strengthening the visibility and credibility of the initiative. Independent journalists and researchers examining the farmer–herder crisis highlighted the project as an example of an innovative, locally driven peacebuilding approach. This included references in coverage by [the BBC](#) and the programme [Crossing Continents](#), which featured YIAVHA while reporting on conflict dynamics in Plateau State and documenting joint farming initiatives promoting peaceful coexistence between farming and herding communities. The project was also featured by [Lethal Crysis](#), a Spanish documentary platform with over five million subscribers, where the Inter-Community Dialogue Forums (IDFs) were recognised among initiatives fostering dialogue and social cohesion.

The inclusion of the project in independent media reporting and investigative work provided additional external validation of the project’s relevance, innovation, and growing influence within broader conversations on peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Overall, the project’s digital engagement component generated an estimated 121,744 engagements, significantly complementing community-level interventions by expanding awareness, influencing public narratives, and strengthening the visibility of locally led peacebuilding efforts both within and beyond Plateau State.

S/N	Social Media Platforms	Engagements				
		Post	Comments	Likes/emojis	retweets/shares	Views
1.	X (Twitter)	33	7	106	40	1095
2.	Facebook	44	207	1849	182	45341
3.	LinkedIn	34	21	373	51	
4	Tiktok	30	42	18547	174	52158
5	Instagram	37	3	101	3	1083
6	Youtube	4	1	15	0	163
Sub Total		182	281	20991	450	99840
Grand total		121,744				

Table 3: Social media reach

5. Most Significant Changes (MSC Findings)

The following sections detail what each community identified as the Most Significant Change (MSC) resulting from the project. These responses illustrate how project initiatives contributed to shifts from conflict and division toward cooperation, trust, and shared responsibility and how relationships, behaviours, and systems have changed as a result.

I. Sopp and Ranchol communities

The most significant change in Sopp and Ranchol was the restoration of dialogue between communities that had avoided sensitive conversations for years due to conflict tensions. Through project-supported dialogue forums, leaders from both communities met, openly discussed land use, security concerns, and social relations, and jointly identified solutions to longstanding disputes.

This renewed communication translated into practical cooperation, including joint farming and improved coordination around safety. Community members reported reduced hostility, fewer incidents of aggressive grazing, no reported cases of rape compared to the pre-intervention period, and improved safety for women accessing firewood in previously unsafe areas.

Community members identified this change as significant because it reflects a shift from how they now have found a part to collaborate and how in the past, they were not able to discuss these issues due to fear of escalation. They expressed hope that, with these discussions along with key resolutions, they would be able to experience peace where they are part of the solutions.

II. Bangai (Farmers and Pastoralists Communities)

In Bangai, the most significant change was the emergence of collective responsibility for community security and development. Previously, incidents such as motorcycle theft often triggered tension and blame between groups. However, community members now collaborate to investigate and address such issues, reducing suspicion and preventing escalation.

Improved relationships also contributed to economic and governance gains, including strengthened village savings and loan activities, safer access to farming routes, and the establishment of an intercommunity Land Management Committee to address land-related disputes. Increased social interactions, including visits during religious celebrations, further reinforced trust.

As highlighted by community members, they reported that the change was significant because challenges that once divided the community are now addressed jointly, reflecting a shift from reactive conflict responses to cooperative problem-solving.

III. Bachi and Dian Communities

In Bachi and Dian, the most significant change was the restoration of shared access to land and social spaces that were previously restricted due to fear and suspicion between Berom and Fulani groups. Community members reported that farming lands, grazing areas, and mining ponds are now jointly accessed, alongside increased social interaction through festival visits and participation in joint farming initiatives.

Trust-building efforts have reduced suspicion and improved accountability in addressing issues such as farm destruction. The inclusion of women and youth in peace processes strengthened participation, while drug awareness activities led traditional authorities to enforce community-level restrictions on drug sales.

Community members see this change as significant because it reflects the normalization of cooperation in everyday life, indicating that peace is becoming embedded in social and governance practices.

IV. Lwa and Shong II (Location AKA “ Chinkwogo”) Communities

In Lwa and Shong II (Location AKA “ Chinkwogo”) (Location AKA “ Chinkwogo”), the most significant change was the growth of trust and behavioural transformation resulting from dialogue and awareness activities. Drug awareness initiatives contributed to reduced harmful practices, while improved relationships led to increased visitation, shared meals, and stronger social interaction across communities.

Community members reported that three roads previously considered unsafe are now used freely for farming and grazing without fear of attack, indicators of restored confidence and freedom of movement.

This change is significant according to community members because improved mobility reflects a deeper shift from fear to trust, highlighting strengthened intercommunity relations and the potential of the power of collaboration towards the peace of their communities.

6. Learning

The project’s Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) processes enabled continuous reflection and real-time adaptation of strategies to respond to evolving community dynamics. Implementation across farmer–herder communities demonstrated that effective peacebuilding requires approaches that are locally owned, economically relevant, and flexible to context. The following key lessons informed adaptive adjustments during implementation and will guide future programming in similar settings:

- I. Community ownership drives sustainability beyond external facilitation:** A central learning from the project is that sustainable outcomes depend more on strong community ownership than on external facilitation alone. The establishment of community-based dialogue and coordination structures, alongside the identification of trusted local focal persons, enhanced the legitimacy and acceptance of the project. Planning and

mobilisation were led by individuals known within the communities, which significantly reduced the suspicion often associated with externally funded interventions.

Community focal persons played a decisive role in organising activities, including determining participants, scheduling meetings, and selecting venues. Conducting activities within the communities further strengthened ownership by making participation more accessible and inclusive. This approach helped to mitigate the politics of exclusion often experienced in externally convened meetings, ensuring that a broader cross-section of community members could engage meaningfully in the process.

- II. **Integrating dialogue with practical collaboration strengthens trust:** The project demonstrated that linking dialogue processes with collaborative livelihood initiatives significantly reinforces peacebuilding outcomes. Joint farming activities brought farmers and herders together and made collective decisions on farm management, and built practical interdependence. These interactions created consistent opportunities for relationship-building beyond formal dialogue settings.

Youth beneficiaries involved in joint farming also actively participated in intercommunity dialogue platforms alongside community local power holders, contributing to discussions on safety and conflict resolution. Importantly, the relationships built through farming served as an entry point for more open and constructive conversations, helping to ease tensions before engagement in formal dialogue forums. This integration of economic cooperation with dialogue strengthened trust, deepened mutual understanding, and enhanced collective commitment to peaceful coexistence.

- III. **Women-led and youth-led initiatives accelerate inclusion and accountability:** The project demonstrated that intentional structuring of women-led and youth-led spaces significantly enhances inclusive participation.. Across key components, particularly the intercommunity dialogue forums and the role-based drug-free awareness sessions, participants were organised into separate women, youth and male elders groups for targeted reflection and engagement.

These structured safe spaces enabled women and young people to openly express concerns, articulate priorities, and develop collective advocacy positions like deliberately requesting for roles in community safety and security. As a result, their contributions became more visible and influential within broader community decision-making processes. This led to tangible outcomes, including commitments by traditional authorities to expand women's representation in local governance structures. Post-project evaluation findings indicate that, in some communities, women's representation in traditional council engagements increased from one representative to four.

Additionally, both women and youth groups were able to secure specific mandates based on proposals they developed during these engagements, demonstrating a shift from passive participation to active influence. This approach not only strengthened inclusion

but also improved the responsiveness and legitimacy of community-level decision-making.

- IV. **Multi-stakeholder collaboration enhances legitimacy and access:** Partnerships with government institutions and community actors, including National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, National Orientation Agency, Plateau Agricultural Development Programme, and traditional authorities, significantly strengthened both the credibility and reach of the project. These collaborations demonstrated that coordinated engagement between formal institutions and trusted local actors increases acceptance, improves access, and enhances overall effectiveness.

For instance, NDLEA is often perceived primarily as an enforcement agency, with its visibility largely associated with arrests. This perception has historically limited community openness to its awareness activities, particularly in sensitive locations such as mining sites. Through the project, this barrier was addressed by leveraging the trust and legitimacy of community focal persons, who are recognised as representatives of traditional leadership and serve as gatekeepers within their communities.

By working through these trusted local actors, NDLEA was able to gain entry into previously hard-to-reach areas and deliver drug awareness sessions in a more accepted and non-threatening manner. The collaboration created a complementary dynamic, combining the technical mandate and expertise of NDLEA with the social capital and access of community structures. As a result, communities that had previously resisted engagement became more receptive, including mining site populations who agreed to participate in peaceful awareness sessions due to their trust in community focal persons and familiarity with YIAVHA's presence and work.

- V. **Managing local power dynamics requires continuous engagement:** Implementation highlighted the critical importance of deliberately navigating local leadership structures throughout the project lifecycle. From the outset, structured community entry engagements were conducted to clearly communicate the project's goals, objectives, and theory of change, while also defining the roles and expectations of all stakeholders. This approach embedded in YIAVHA's operational practice ensured transparency, built trust, and secured informed community endorsement.

These engagements were carried out across 13 communities; however, only 8 communities demonstrated the level of commitment required to fully participate in the project. This process of early clarification and consent was essential in ensuring that implementation was focused on communities with genuine buy-in, thereby strengthening the quality of participation and reducing the risk of resistance or disengagement.

Continuous dialogue with traditional authorities and other local power holders throughout implementation further reinforced this foundation. It enabled the project team to effectively manage emerging challenges, navigate sensitivities, and obtain necessary support, including security clearance where required. This experience underscores that sustained engagement with local leadership is not a one-time activity but a continuous

process that is essential for maintaining legitimacy, managing expectations, and ensuring smooth programme delivery in complex conflict settings.

- VI. **Youth empowerment is most effective when aligned with traditional leadership:** Youth leadership emerged as a strong driver of mobilisation, innovation, and community engagement. However, where roles and boundaries were not clearly defined, the concentration of influence among young people occasionally created tension with existing authority structures. In some communities, particularly where youth are not traditionally positioned in leadership roles, this shift led to challenges in managing new responsibilities, such as participant selection for meetings and the distribution of incentives (e.g., T-shirts, wristbands, stickers).

These tensions were not one-sided. While some traditional leaders expressed concerns over perceived shifts in authority, there were also instances where youth actors operated in ways that appeared disconnected from established community structures, further reinforcing friction. This highlighted the need for deliberate alignment between youth-led initiatives and traditional governance systems.

Strengthening intergenerational dialogue, clarifying complementary roles, and the project team's active mediation of emerging tensions were critical in maintaining balance and ensuring progress toward the project's theory of change. Going forward, there is a clear need to emphasise shared leadership models that intentionally integrate youth energy and innovation with the legitimacy and continuity provided by traditional authority structures.

- VII. **Flexibility and context-responsive programming are critical in fragile settings:**

Implementation in a volatile context required continuous adjustments to timelines, locations, and engagement strategies in line with Do No Harm principles and organisational duty of care. This experience reinforced that adaptive programming is essential for responding to evolving risks without compromising overall project objectives.

In practice, several activities were modified in response to emerging security and contextual concerns, including changes to target communities, activities, meeting dates, venues, participant composition, and modes of engagement. Budgets were also realigned based on ongoing feasibility assessments to ensure that resources matched shifting priorities and realities on the ground. In some cases, additional informal follow-up engagements were conducted outside of planned budgets to sustain dialogue and maintain momentum.

These adaptations were made possible through continuous MEL feedback and close coordination with community actors, allowing for timely and informed decision-making. Importantly, this level of flexibility was not limited to the implementing organisation alone as it required responsiveness and alignment from communities and the donor. The

experience demonstrates that shared flexibility across all stakeholders is critical to delivering effective and resilient programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

VIII. **Trusted neutral facilitation enables engagement across conflict lines:** The role of YIAVHA as a neutral and trusted third party was critical in facilitating participation among previously divided groups. Communities that had initially resisted engagement became more willing to participate when dialogue processes were convened in a safe, impartial, and well-managed environment.

YIAVHA's neutrality, combined with its experience in facilitating sensitive and high-tension discussions, proved strategic in opening space for constructive engagement. Beyond serving as an entry point, the organisation's established track record in other project communities functioned as a powerful credibility reference. Community members often cited prior interventions as evidence of YIAVHA's integrity and effectiveness, which increased their confidence in the process.

During implementation, some communities acknowledged that previous dialogue efforts had not yielded results; however, they expressed willingness to engage under YIAVHA's approach, driven by trust in its methods and reputation. This demonstrates that credible, neutral facilitation is not only essential for initiating dialogue in polarised contexts but also for sustaining engagement and enabling meaningful progress in complex conflict environments.

7. Challenges and adaptation

While the project recorded significant progress, implementation took place within a complex and fragile context characterised by insecurity, historical tensions, and entrenched social inequalities. These conditions shaped both the pace and approach of delivery, requiring continuous adaptation to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

- I. **Security and access constraints:** Security risks were a challenge throughout the project. Ongoing incidents in surrounding areas and the unpredictability of violence affected movement, participation, and the scheduling of activities. In several instances, locations, timelines, and modalities of engagement had to be adjusted to ensure the safety of participants and facilitators, in line with Do No Harm principles and organisational duty of care.
- II. **Low initial trust and reluctance to engage:** Deep-rooted mistrust between communities, shaped by years of recurring conflict, initially limited openness and willingness to participate in project activities. In several instances, community members were hesitant to engage across group lines or sit together to discuss sensitive issues such as land access, resource use, and security concerns. This slowed early-stage implementation and required a more deliberate and phased approach to engagement.

Recognizing this risk from the outset, the project adopted proactive confidence-building measures to foster acceptance and trust. These included conducting informal consultations beyond formal project activities, engaging respected community gatekeepers and trusted local actors to facilitate entry, and drawing on evidence from previous successful interventions to demonstrate the credibility and practicality of the

approach. These efforts helped to gradually build confidence, reduce resistance, and create an enabling environment for more inclusive and sustained participation.

- III. **Social hierarchies and unequal participation:** Existing power dynamics within communities also influenced participation. Traditional authority structures, while essential for legitimacy, sometimes limited the meaningful inclusion of women and youth in dialogue and decision-making processes, restricting the diversity of perspectives in early engagements. People sometimes may not want to speak so that they are not accused of speaking out of community power guidelines.

8. Adaptive Strategies

In response to these challenges, the project adopted a set of deliberate and context-responsive strategies:

- I. **Flexible and adaptive programming:** Activities were continuously adjusted to reflect evolving security dynamics and community realities. This included changes to implementation locations, meeting formats, participant composition, and timelines. This flexibility ensured that engagement could continue safely without compromising the overall objectives of the project.
- II. **Inclusive and context-sensitive dialogue approaches:** The introduction of tailored dialogue formats including separate sessions for women, youth, and elders which created safer spaces for open expression. These platforms enabled marginalised groups to articulate their concerns and priorities more freely, gradually building their confidence to participate in broader, integrated dialogue processes.
- III. **Continuous engagement and trust-building:** The project prioritised sustained engagement over one-off interventions. Repeated dialogues, consistent follow-ups, and an ongoing community presence helped to gradually rebuild trust, strengthen relationships, and deepen mutual understanding. This iterative approach allowed communities to move from initial hesitation to more open and constructive collaboration over time.

Overall, these adaptive responses were critical in navigating a challenging operating environment. By remaining flexible, inclusive, and responsive to local realities, the project was able to sustain momentum and achieve meaningful progress, even within a context of uncertainty and fragility.

9. Sustainability and Scale-Up Strategy

*T*he project's sustainability is anchored in strong community ownership, integrated livelihood systems, and adaptive local leadership structures that continue to function beyond direct donor support. From inception, deliberate efforts were made to embed peacebuilding within existing community systems, ensuring continuity, legitimacy, and long-term relevance.

1. **Strengthening local leadership and ownership structures:** The establishment of intercommunity dialogue platforms and joint farming leadership structures has created durable mechanisms for conflict resolution and collaboration. The intentional integration of traditional

authorities with community-nominated youth focal persons has enhanced legitimacy, strengthened accountability, and ensured continuity of peace efforts across generations.

Evidence of sustained ownership is already visible in Bangai, where Fulani and Berom community members independently convene follow-up meetings involving youth, women, and elders. These engagements have led to self-initiated actions such as Village Savings and Loan Schemes and continued dialogue processes without external facilitation. Moving forward, consolidating these locally led structures alongside the use of existing public facilities for meetings will be critical to sustaining momentum without reliance on continuous donor funding.

2. Embedding Livelihood Practices within Peacebuilding Efforts: The integration of livelihood collaboration into peacebuilding has proven to be a key driver of sustainability by creating tangible incentives for cooperation beyond the project. Joint farming initiatives, supported with reusable agricultural inputs and linked to extension services, have strengthened interdependence between farmers and herders.

Locally negotiated agreements on land use, manure access, and collective savings have further reinforced cooperation. In communities such as Diang and Bachi, participants have reinvested proceeds from joint harvests into subsequent farming cycles, demonstrating a transition from project-supported activities to self-sustaining systems. Supporting the formal registration of cooperatives will be a strategic next step to enable access to government agricultural programmes and reduce dependency on external funding.

3. Resource mobilisation and continued capacity strengthening: While strong foundations for sustainability exist, continued progress will require targeted investments in community capacity and resource mobilisation. Priority areas include the implementation of community communiqués, deepening of joint livelihood initiatives, strengthening of dialogue platforms, and sustained awareness efforts addressing drug abuse and emerging conflict drivers.

Capacity strengthening will focus on mediation and conflict resolution, cooperative governance, financial management, climate-smart agriculture, and organisational leadership. Equipping community structures with these competencies will enable them to independently manage and sustain peacebuilding processes over time.

4. Scaling the “Building Bridges for Peace” approach: The project has demonstrated a replicable and adaptable model for peacebuilding in fragile contexts. The “Building Bridges for Peace” approach integrates inclusive dialogue, livelihood collaboration, youth and women’s participation, trusted third-party facilitation, multi-stakeholder engagement, and intercommunity exchange learning.

Given funding uncertainties, scale-up will follow a phased and context-sensitive replication model. Initial expansion will prioritise neighbouring communities to consolidate gains and strengthen regional cohesion. At the same time, the approach will be codified into practical knowledge products including toolkits, learning briefs, and implementation guides to support adaptation and uptake by other practitioners, organisations, and local government actors.

10. Conclusion

This impact assessment report shows that the Building Bridges for Peace project contributed to meaningful improvements in trust, cooperation, and community-led conflict management across participating communities. Through the integration of dialogue, joint livelihood activities, and

inclusive participation, farmers and herders increasingly shifted from suspicion toward collaboration, resulting in safer social interactions, improved access to shared resources, reduced harmful behaviours, and stronger local accountability mechanisms. The active involvement of women and youth expanded ownership of peace efforts and strengthened community resilience.

While some gains remain fragile due to persistent structural and security challenges, the project demonstrates that sustained engagement, locally driven solutions, and multi-stakeholder collaboration can gradually transform conflict dynamics and lay a practical foundation for long-term peace and coexistence.

11. Annexes

Annexes

Annex I: Communique between Bangai Berom and Fulani found [here](#)

Annex II: Communique between Bachi and Dian found [here](#)

Annex III: Communique between Sopp and Ranchol found [here](#)

Annex IV: The project's youtube learning video found [here](#)