



I-RENEW

INCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT ENHANCED BY WOMEN

SUCCESS STORIES

**Strengthening intrafaith cohesion in
Plateau and Kaduna communities**

Plateau State Government Endorses
Youth-Led Peacebuilding Platform
Inspired by Search for Common Ground

About the I-RENEW PROJECT

The **Inclusive Religious Engagement in Nigeria Enhanced by Women (I-RENEW)** is a 24 months project funded by the European Commission with the overall goal of empowering women religious actors and youth activists to promote freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and inter- and intra-religious peaceful coexistence in Plateau and Kaduna States. Search worked with its local partners, the Dialogue, Reconciliation, and Peace (DREP) Centre and the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations (FOMWAN), to implement activities such as trainings, tracking and monitoring of FoRB-related conversations, women and youth solidarity activities, university sensitization, community-based initiatives, and advocacy visits, among others.



KEY OBJECTIVES

INCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA
ENHANCED BY WOMEN (I-RENEW)



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empower women religious actors and youth activists to promote FoRB and inter and intra-religious peaceful co-existence in Plateau and Kaduna states.



STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Strengthen the capacity of women religious leaders and youth activists to play an active role in promoting FoRB and peaceful co-existence across different beliefs.



CONTRIBUTE TO A SOCIAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

To contribute to a social and policy environment that is conducive to inclusive FoRB efforts.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Establishment of PYIF

Establishment of the Plateau Youth Inter-faith Forum (PYIF), a platform for young people of diverse religious backgrounds engaging in dialogue, fostering mutual understanding, and promoting interfaith harmony various communities.

Deepening the capacity of traditional religious leader on FoRB

Improved capacity of traditional and religious leaders on religious engagement in Kaduna through efforts of the Kaduna Peace Commission (KPC).

Expanded public awareness on FoRB issues

Commencement of the Radio and TV program on DSTV and Radio. This initiative has expanded public awareness, fostering inclusive dialogue, and providing a platform for discussing FoRB issues



Strengthening intrafaith cohesion

Creation of the Intra-faith network in Plateau by Cohort Blessing Lubo, a successful promotion of Intra-faith cohesion thereby strengthening unity within faith communities

Empowering women religious teachers to conduct step down training

Effective empowerment of women religious teachers, enabling them to conduct step-down trainings within their religious circles. fostering knowledge transfer, strengthening community engagement, and ensured sustainability in capacity-building efforts.

ABOUT SEARCH

Search for Common Ground (Search) is a prominent international non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to transforming the way the world deals with conflict through media, dialogue, and community engagement. Operating across many countries including Nigeria, Search continues to implement interventions across diverse regions in the country since 2004 when TV series programming started and from 2010 physical presence was established enabling the coverage of intervention in many sectors to address the root causes of conflict and foster peaceful co-existence in the Country.



Our Mission:

We transform conflicts so people can live free from violence and realize the benefits of durable peace. We are locally rooted and globally networked. Our unique value lies in the collective impact of our globally integrated team and partners, from those most directly affected by violent conflict in our communities to those with access and influence on the major powers that influence conflict dynamics.

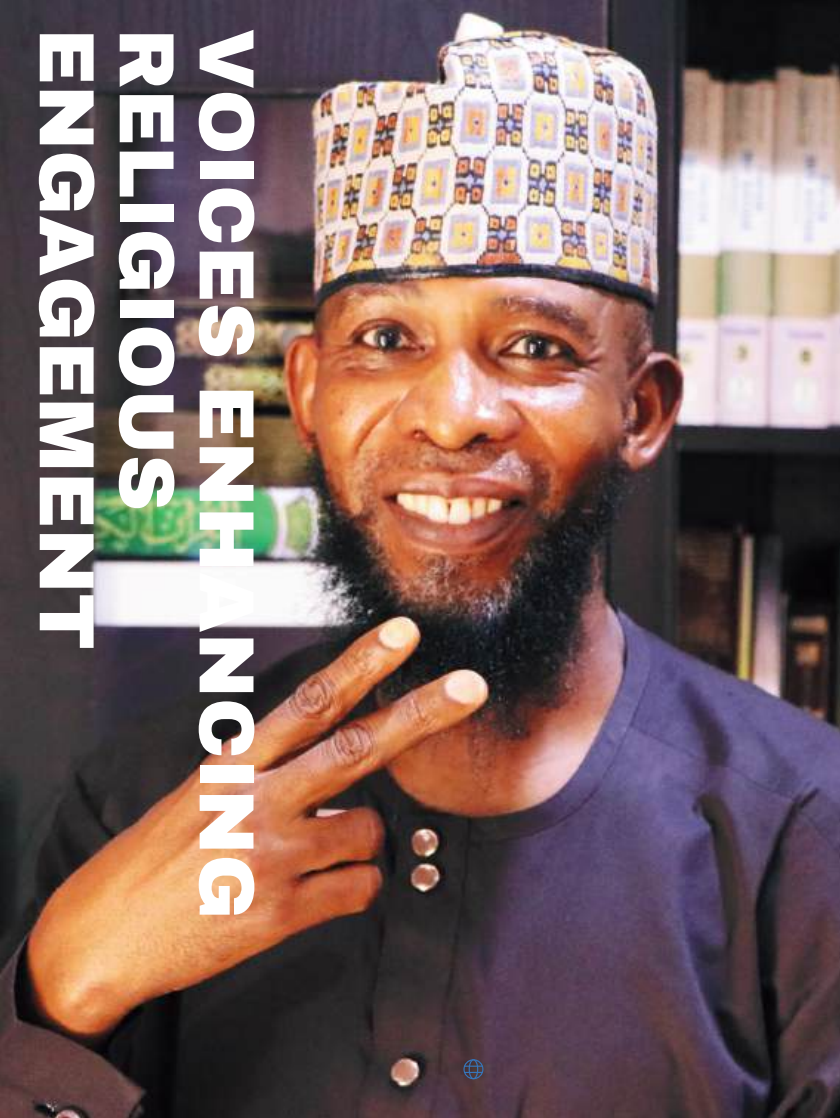
Our Vision

We envision a world where conflict doesn't mean violence, but rather is a source of progress. Our vision is a world where people live in healthy, safe and just societies, where cooperation across differences is a norm. Our vision is of a world where:

Differences stimulate social progress, rather than precipitate violence.

Respect for and cooperation with those we disagree with is considered the norm for individuals, communities, organizations, and nations.

VOICES ENHANCING RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT



Pharm. Caleb Marcus

"Youths are often the ones mobilised during crises, and women suffer most when violence erupts,"



Blessing Wilfred

"We couldn't sleep. We couldn't go to our farms. We couldn't go anywhere without thinking something would happen,"



Isaac Bobbai

"Honestly if not for what I learned from Search, I would not have forgiven and let go of the hurt I feel against the Muslim people"



RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

“Social media is a great tool as it can be used to build and destroy. As youth are we serious about using social media to build peace? Because if peace is not thriving then negativity will thrive.”

Christiana K. Clement



FROM A COMMUNITY WOMAN LEADER TO A PEACE AMBASADOR

Maraba Ridu community in Chikun LGA is one of the locations in Kaduna state affected by conflicts between groups particularly Christians and Muslim.

Mrs Juliana, woman leader of Maraba Ridu community, despite her leadership role in the community, she despised the Muslims and would not have any relationship with them. She rejected food and gift items from them and perceived them as troublesome, unimportant and hardly worked with them in matters concerning the community.

Juliana's attitude towards the Muslims began to change after she participated in Search's activities, through the JISRA and I-RENEW projects. These engagements transformed Juliana's perception and attitude towards the Muslims. She thereafter, involved them in matters concerning the communities, recognized them in women community meetings and collaborated with them to address community issues and encouraged her fellow Christian women to change their attitude towards the Muslims.

Beyond these, Juliana was inspired to promote peace and unity amongst members of the community. She led several peace processes and resolved issues among members of the communities. Juliana narrated some achievement since her engagement with Search in Kaduna:



"I led other women in Maraba Ridu community to talk to the community leaders, during their community leaders forum meeting. We convinced them to set up a committee to mediate in conflict. This was accepted and the committee was named the Peace Development and Security Committee. Since then, members of the committee have intervened in conflict, including cases of sexual and gender-based violence. We have been able to resolve some conflicts. For instance, We were able to resolve a case of child abuse that was reported by a JTF member. A woman was caught maltreating her sister's children kept in her care due to insecurity. She burnt the palms of the children, accusing them of disobeying her instructions. When we caught her, we ensured she was arrested by the police and returned the children back to their mother.

"We also intervened in a case between a Christian woman and some Muslim boys. A woman traveling from Kafanchan to Maraba Ridu, stopped at the junction, after calling her son to come to pick her up. She became pressed and decided to ease herself by the Mosque. Unfortunately, some Muslim youths saw her and insisted that she had to pack the urine with her hands. Luckily, her son arrived, and our youth leader who was a witness called my attention. I and some women immediately went to the venue and intervened in the conflict. We spoke to the woman about the wrong she had done and she apologized to the boys and they forgave her. This would have caused serious conflict between Christians and Muslims if we had not intervened".

Today, Juliana is recognized, not only as the Majiya(Woman Leader) of Maraba Ridu Community, but as a Peace Ambassador, connecting people affiliated to different religion together.



PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT ENDORSES YOUTH-LED PEACEBUILDING PLATFORM INSPIRED BY SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

On May 2nd, 2024, Search for Common Ground Nigeria convened a landmark event the maiden edition of the Plateau Interfaith Dialogue (PID) designed to deepen conversations around Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and strengthen peacebuilding efforts in Plateau State, a region historically affected by ethno-religious tensions.

The dialogue brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, religious leaders, and civil society actors, united in their commitment to promoting peaceful coexistence across religious and ethnic lines. One of the most impactful outcomes of this gathering was a bold recommendation: to create a platform that gives young people a central role in building peace across religious divides.

The Plateau State Government embraced this vision wholeheartedly. Recognizing the importance of engaging youth in sustainable peace efforts, His Excellency Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, Executive Governor of Plateau State, adopted the idea and took swift action. On the heels of the PID, the Governor officially inaugurated the Plateau Youth Interfaith Forum (PYIF), a platform originally conceptualized through Search for Common Ground's initiative. This bold move not only affirmed the government's commitment to inclusive peacebuilding but also marked a historic milestone.

Composed of 25 young men and women from diverse religious and ethnic communities, PYIF is now the **first youth-focused Interfaith Forum established by any sub-national government in Nigeria**. The forum symbolizes Plateau State's forward-thinking approach putting youth at the forefront of peacebuilding and interfaith collaboration.

The Plateau State Government's adoption of PYIF reflects a growing recognition that young people are not just beneficiaries of peace but powerful agents of it. This pioneering partnership between government and civil society is laying a new foundation for sustainable harmony in the state.

Looking ahead, Search for Common Ground is working closely with the Plateau State Government, the Plateau Peace Building Agency, the Office of the Special Adviser on Religious Affairs, and other stakeholders to ensure that the PYIF grows into a lasting platform for youth-led dialogue and action.

Together, we are transforming vision into reality making youth voices central to the journey toward a more peaceful Plateau State.



SHEIKH UMAR'S JOURNEY OF PEACE IN JOS

In the heart of Jos, Plateau State a region often fractured by intercommunal tensions Sheikh Umar Faruk Muhammad stands as a quiet force of resilience, forgiveness, and peace.

Known by many as “Ustas” or “Sheikh,” Umar is a respected community leader, a father, and a peace advocate. But behind his gentle wisdom lies a harrowing story of loss and healing one that speaks to the power of dialogue.

On January 10, 2010, violence erupted in his neighborhood. What began as whispers of unrest soon spiraled into devastation. Sheikh Umar was away dropping his children off at school when chaos consumed his home. His two wives, a newborn baby, and his elderly father were caught in the crisis. With no way to return home, he wandered for days in a singlet and trousers displaced, broken, and desperate.

“I became a beggar,” he recalls. “Even eating was difficult. My clothes were stolen, my house destroyed, and I didn’t know where my family was.”

But amidst the ashes, something else emerged: his belief in compassion. He forgave those who looted his home, even those he later saw wearing his personal belongings.

Years later, Sheikh Umar found new strength through *I-RENEW* (Inclusive Religious Engagement Enhanced by Women), a project implemented by Search for Common Ground. Through the initiative, he participated in training on digital peacebuilding, early warning and response, and countering misinformation.

One particular exercise left a lasting impression. Participants were asked to write a word representing peace, then asked to tear it. Many did without question. But Sheikh Umar refused.

“Why should I tear peace?” he asked. “People don’t ask questions. That’s how conflicts start.”

That single act echoed a larger transformation. With the knowledge gained from Search’s training, Sheikh Umar became even more intentional about his role as a bridge builder. He now leads conversations around tolerance, shares counter-narratives when fake news surfaces, and mentors youth to think critically before acting.

Today, his relationships across faiths are stronger than ever.



Christians worship with him, work with him, and serve beside him in the community. “Even my mosque maintenance staff is Christian,” he says with pride. “It’s not about religion, it’s about character.”

For Sheikh Umar, the I-RENEW project didn’t just reinforce his values, it gave him tools to act boldly in truth and empathy.

“The program came at a time when the world wanted to divide us,” he reflects. “But it reminded me to keep my ears and eyes open and never let others use me for their gain.”

His story is a powerful reminder that peace isn’t passive. It’s built one action, one message, one restored relationship at a time.

EMPOWERING FAITH LEADERS FOR POSITIVE MESSAGING



Rhoda Sadus, a dedicated legal practitioner and prominent woman religious leader residing in Jos, Plateau State, emerged as a key advocate for peace after participating in a transformative 3-day training session. The program was part of the Inclusive Religious Engagement Enhanced by Women project, specifically designed to empower faith leaders in Plateau and Kaduna states. It aimed to broaden the understanding of how religious leaders' actions, words, and policies can either contribute to peaceful coexistence or exacerbate tensions within society.

In Nigeria, the influence of faith leaders is profound. However, their messages, at times, can unintentionally deepen divides within communities. The training program addressed this by equipping faith leaders with the skills to craft positive and conflict-sensitive messages, particularly in the digital sphere. Rhoda, a fervent participant, quickly grasped the power of her role in shaping narratives that could either unite or divide her community.

Rhoda's reflections during the training highlighted her deep sense of responsibility. "If you are a religious leader and you have people who follow and see you as a mentor, you should be very careful about the kind of messages you send out," she emphasized. This understanding sparked a commitment within her to foster peace and understanding not just within her own congregation but across broader platforms.





Rhoda's participation in the training became a catalyst for further action. Recognizing the urgent need for these essential skills among other faith leaders, she took the initiative to organize a training session with her colleagues at work. Her goal was to ensure that more religious leaders could benefit from the lessons learned, further spreading the message of peace and tolerance.

Through her proactive efforts, Rhoda has become a driving force for promoting conflict-sensitive messaging in Plateau State. Her dedication to nurturing a culture of peaceful coexistence, especially within religious spaces, serves as a model for others in her community. By organizing additional training sessions, she has successfully multiplied the impact of the original program, ensuring that more religious leaders are equipped to contribute positively to their communities.

Rhoda's continued efforts demonstrate the sustainability of the Inclusive Religious Engagement project. Her actions underscore the importance of faith leaders in fostering peace, not only within their congregations but across societal lines. Her ability to inspire others to adopt conflict-sensitive approaches is a testament to the effectiveness of the program.

Rhoda expresses her gratitude for the training, noting, "This program has given me the tools and confidence to ensure that my words and actions, as a religious leader, contribute to peace and not division." Her story serves as an inspiring reminder that religious leaders hold significant power in shaping societal narratives, and when equipped with the right skills, they can be agents of unity and understanding.

Rhoda Sadus is now a key player in advancing peacebuilding efforts in her community, proving that one individual's dedication can create a ripple effect, inspiring others to join in the pursuit of a more harmonious society.

If you are a religious leader and you have people who follow and see you as a mentor, you should be very careful about the kind of messages you send out.



Rhoda Sadus
Faith actor, Plateau state

25 JOURNALISTS EQUIPPED WITH CONFLICT SENSITIVITY EXPERTISE



No fewer than 25 Top journalists from Plateau and Kaduna state have benefited from Search's training on Common Ground Journalism and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting within the framework of Freedom of Religion and Belief on the I-RENEW project.

The training was held in Kaduna, Northeast, Nigeria with the aim to equip journalists with skills to generate inclusive, fact-based, non-inflammatory content for radio programming in relation to FoRB and to strengthen awareness of the public on FoRB and exclusion-related issues. The overall objective of the Inclusive Religious Engagement in Nigeria Enhanced by Women (I-RENEW) project is to empower women religious actors and youth activists to promote freedom of religion or belief and

inter and intra religious peaceful coexistence in Plateau and Kaduna States. Specifically, to strengthen the capacity of women religious leaders and youth activists to play an active role in promoting FoRB and peaceful coexistence and to contribute to a social and policy environment that is conducive to inclusive FoRB efforts. Since the project is focusing on women and youth, Search partnered with the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists in Plateau and Kaduna states to identify female journalists from print, electronic and online platforms to strengthen their capacities to play their roles as purveyors of accurate and unbiased information on religious conflict.

The Search media team led by the National Media Specialist deployed its specialized curriculum on common Ground journalism within the framework of FoRB for the training which lasted for 3 days in Kaduna as part of a national capacity strengthening campaign. At the end of the training, participants were split into print and electronic media groups to come up with their action plans after identifying FoRB related issues they wish to address through their radio/TV programming or reportage with clear timelines.



Funded by European Union



A FORUM BORN FROM DIALOGUE, POWERED BY YOUTH IN PLATEAU STATE

In Plateau State, where religion and politics have often intersected with conflict, a new youth-led initiative is charting a peaceful path forward. The Plateau Youth Interfaith Forum (PYIF) is empowering young people from both Christian and Muslim communities to build bridges, reject manipulation, and take the lead in restoring unity across the state.

The Plateau Youth Interfaith Forum was inaugurated by the Plateau State Governor Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, on September 2, 2024. The forum emerged from the Plateau Interfaith Dialogue organised by Search for Common Ground earlier that May. The dialogue brought together youth leaders from various backgrounds to reflect on the root causes of religious tensions in the state and identify youth-led solutions.

When Dickin Pharmacist Marcus Auda speaks about peace, his voice carries the authority of someone who has lived through conflict and is determined to rewrite the story. As the Co-Chair of the Plateau Youth Interfaith Forum (PYIF) and immediate past chairman of the youth wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Plateau State, Marcus is part of a bold youth-led initiative that is changing how peacebuilding is done in Nigeria.

Marcus was a panellist at that event. It was there that he and others recognised a significant gap, while an interfaith council for elders existed, there was no structured space for young people, those most affected by conflict, to lead interfaith discussions and actions.

This realization birthed PYIF, a youth-driven platform aimed at fostering unity among Christian and Muslim youth in Plateau. While it started as an idea within an NGO dialogue, today it is proudly owned by the youth of the state and backed by the government.

According to Marcus, the platform gives young people the chance to appreciate both their differences and their shared values. In a region where politicians sometimes use religion to sow division for their own gains, PYIF instead promotes respectful dialogue, religious freedom, and collaboration. One symbolic moment of this was the interfaith IFTAR event held in March during the muslim fasting period, where Christian and Muslim youth came together to break fast, an achievement that reinforced the power of shared experiences. "Youths are often the ones mobilised during crises, and women suffer most when violence erupts," said Pharmacist Auda. "This forum gives us the chance to change that narrative."





Under the guidance of Search for Common Ground, PYIF members have also received key training on Common Ground Approach, advocacy, early warning and response systems, and the use of digital tools for peacebuilding. These skills are not just theoretical; they're actively being put to use across the state Marcus said.

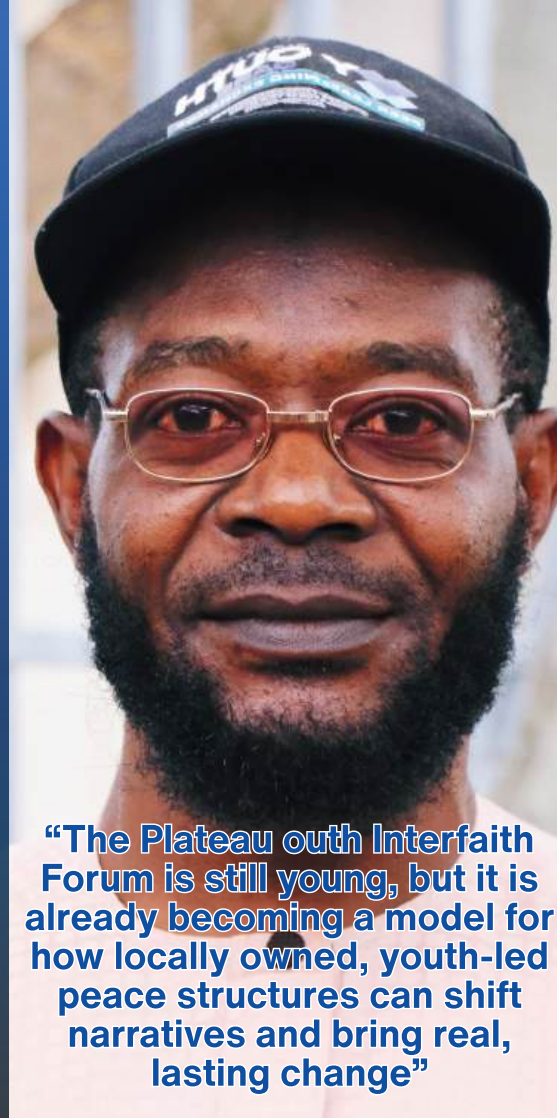
For many youth, the PYIF is more than just a platform; it's a symbol of empowerment. They now have the tools, training, and structure to shape the future of their communities. They also feel seen and valued no longer reduced to the label of "troublemakers," but recognised as peacebuilders.

"It is not easy for someone to invest in a problem that doesn't directly affect them. Search for Common Ground and others have shown us that peace is everybody's business. For that, we're truly grateful," Ali Ali, a PYIF member shared.

Inclusivity is also a key focus of the 25 PYIF members, women are well represented from the youth wings of both Christian and Muslim organisations, to ethnic nationality groups and interfaith women's associations. The National Council of Women Societies and the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria both have active female members in PYIF.

The main challenge has been ensuring that the momentum continues beyond the lifecycle of donor-funded projects. But the establishment of PYIF as an independent structure supported by both youth and government offers a solution. With this platform, young leaders can implement their ideas and access new funding opportunities to scale their impact.

Marcus praised the support shown by the Plateau State Government. The governor's personal involvement in inaugurating the group was more than symbolic; it was a clear endorsement. Key government agencies like the Plateau Peacebuilding Agency and the Office of the Special Adviser on Religious Affairs have also played critical roles. The forum is currently establishing an official office to provide young people with a permanent home for coordination and action. "We want to thank Search for Common Ground for lighting this fire," Ali said. "But now, we are running with it. Youth are no longer just the victims or the accused, we are the peacebuilders in the Plateau.



"The Plateau outh Interfaith Forum is still young, but it is already becoming a model for how locally owned, youth-led peace structures can shift narratives and bring real, lasting change"

ISAAC BOBBAI'S JOURNEY TO FORGIVENESS: A TESTAMENT TO FINDING COMMON GROUND

Isaac Bobbai, an attendee at the Faith Leaders' training on the Common Ground Approach facilitated under the Inclusive Religious Engagement Enhanced by Women (I-RENEW) Project, had a noticeable unease during the initial stages. His discomfort was palpable, particularly when engaging with participants of the Islamic faith.

This reluctance to engage caught the attention of Mr. Nelson, the session facilitator, who took the initiative to address Isaac's apparent withdrawal.

As conversations unfolded, Isaac revealed a deeply rooted resentment that spanned over three decades, stemming from a harrowing experience that scarred his life. Recounting the traumatic events, he shared, "In 1992, a crisis erupted in our area, Narayi Kaduna state. My parents suffered at the hands of our Muslim neighbors, and 18 years later, my home was destroyed in another uprising."

The enduring pain from these incidents led Isaac to harbor a strong aversion towards Muslims. His negative perceptions were so entrenched that even during his university years, when offered accommodation in a hostel primarily occupied by Muslim students, he opted to sell his bed space.



He sought refuge in a community he perceived as predominantly Christian, aiming to distance himself from what he believed was a threatening environment.

Attending the Common Ground training for faith leaders became a turning point for Isaac. The sessions sensitized him to the significance of forgiveness and peaceful coexistence, regardless of religious differences. Isaac recounting the impact the project has on him said, "Honestly if not for what I learned from Search, I would not have forgiven and let go of the hurt I feel against the Muslim people"

He learned to discern that the actions of a few individuals shouldn't define an entire community. Reflecting on this transformative experience, Isaac expressed gratitude to Search for Common Ground for the invaluable opportunity provided by the program.

SCORING PEACE: HOW A YOUTH FOOTBALL MATCH BRIDGED DIVIDES IN KADUNA

In a region where tension and mistrust have long divided communities along religious lines, something as simple as a football match became a powerful symbol of unity. Thanks to the I-RENEW initiative, youth from both Muslim and Christian neighbourhoods came together, not just to play but to reconnect, rebuild trust, and demonstrate the true power of sport in peacebuilding.

Rigasa and Boru are neighbouring communities in Kaduna State with a long-standing divide shaped by religious and social tension. Rigasa is predominantly Muslim, while Boru is largely Christian. Years of insecurity and “little hazards,” as one football coach put it, created a wedge between the two, making cross-community interaction rare, especially for young people. The result was a silent separation, with many youth never having stepped into neighbouring communities.

The turning point came with the launch of a peace football tournament organised by the I-RENEW project. The coach of a Christian youth football team recalled that when his players first received the invitation to play in Rigasa, a predominantly Muslim area, they were afraid. But he encouraged them to go, reminding them that the goal was unity, not just victory.



The team travelled to Rigasa and participated in what turned out to be a peaceful, joyful match. For many players, it was their first time engaging with youth from the other side. The match fostered unexpected friendships, and lines of communication opened. In the days that followed, the teams remained in contact, arranging return matches and building a consistent exchange between the two sides. Since then, they've played multiple games, including matches involving under-13, under-15, and main teams from both communities.

The once-silent walls between Rigasa and Boru are coming down. Football matches have led to regular contact, mutual visits, and a sense of camaraderie between players, coaches, and even community members. Where there was once fear and hesitation, there is now laughter, teamwork, and shared experiences.

“We are one now. This tournament showed us that peace can exist between Muslims and Christians. And football made it happen,” the coach said.





The tournament didn't just bring peace; it left behind lasting tools to sustain it. Jerseys were provided, and small financial support was given to the teams, enabling them to grow and compete in future games. The coaches have become informal ambassadors of unity, continuing to foster relationships across religious lines through sport. The matches now serve as regular opportunities to reinforce peace and show younger players that collaboration is possible and powerful.

The football tournament planted seeds of peace, but the work continues. The coach and his peers are now working to keep the momentum alive by organising more matches and deepening the relationships already formed. There is a renewed belief that peace is not only possible but practical when young people are given safe platforms to interact, engage, and excel. "We are grateful for the jerseys, the support, and most importantly, for bringing us together. What started as a football match has become a movement of peace."



Christian Community at Kaduna State University Unites to Build Chapel After Decades of Setbacks



For over 20 years, the Christian community at Kaduna State University (KASU) has worshiped without a dedicated place of prayer unlike their Muslim counterpart. Despite peaceful coexistence between Muslim and Christian staff and students, the absence of a chapel has remained a significant gap until recently.

The context

Kaduna State University is home to both Muslim and Christian communities who have shared a mostly cordial relationship since the inception of the university. While a national policy mandates that public institutions provide worship spaces for both faiths, only a mosque has existed at KASU for decades.

Efforts to construct a Christian chapel date back several years but were repeatedly derailed. At various times, land was allocated, only to be revoked later due to technicalities or opposition. In one instance, after a foundation had already been laid, the structure was demolished, a painful blow to the Christian community. The matter remains under legal review.

Despite the obstacles, the Christian community pressed on.

The process

Led by Dr. Hillary Zaggi, a sociology lecturer and General Secretary of the campus Christian community, Christian staff and students remained united in their goal. With support from Search, they engaged university authorities respectfully, following proper procedures to obtain planning approvals from the university's Directorate of Physical Planning, KASUPDA, and the Bureau of Interfaith.





After years of setbacks, the university management allocated a new site, and construction of the chapel finally began.

The chapel project is entirely community-driven. Christian staff members contribute monthly from their salaries, and students are actively involved. As Dr. Ziggi explains: "It is from our own monthly contributions and what we get from our salaries that we've built this far."

The initiative has also drawn support from Muslim colleagues, particularly those committed to promoting interfaith dialogue. Some have provided advice and encouragement, reinforcing a spirit of peaceful coexistence. The effort gained visibility through media platforms such as IRENEW, a radio program by Search for Common Ground aired on Liberty FM, where Dr. Ziggi discussed the importance of religious inclusion.

The outcome

Construction of the chapel is now underway on a site officially approved by university authorities. The Christian community continues to fund the project through internal donations. Muslim allies and interfaith advocates have offered moral support. The initiative is strengthening campus unity and reinforcing peaceful religious coexistence.

Impact

Currently, Christian students worship in classrooms, often having to vacate during lecture hours. The new chapel will provide them with a dedicated and uninterrupted space to practice their faith. "We look forward to finishing this project so our students will finally have a space to call their own," said Dr. Ziggi. Beyond the building itself, the project is serving as a model of resilience, peaceful advocacy, and interfaith understanding.



Cleaning Up, Building Trust: Youth in Hayin Baki Unite for Interfaith Peace and Action



In Hayin Baki a community popular for hosting both Christian and Muslim retired military veterans in Kaduna State, young people are showing that peacebuilding can start with something as simple and as powerful as cleaning their community together.

In Hayin Baki, the relationship between Christian and Muslim youth has always been cordial, but often lacked structured opportunities for collaboration.

According to the district head Alhaji Mahmud Galadinma, Sarkin Hayin Baki, “both faith groups lived in peace, and shared activities through the IRENEW project strengthened the bond. The visit of the I-RENEW project by Search for Common Ground created an opportunity for the two groups to work together, this left a lasting mark in the community”.

The I-RENEW project team reached out to the community with a proposal to work together on improving local sanitation. Youth from both Christian and Muslim communities were mobilised.

The Christian youth leader Apostle Peter worked closely with his Muslim counterpart, Galadima, to gather volunteers from both sides.

When the day came, dozens of youth gathered with joy and enthusiasm. Together, they cleared out piles of rubbish and transformed an unkempt area into a clean, livable space. The initiative didn't just involve hard work, it was a joyful moment of unity.

According to Galadinma, “we laughed, mingled, and worked side by side as if we had always been one team. At the end of the day, we shared light refreshments and celebrated what we had accomplished together”.

The clean-up effort also had an unexpected ripple effect. Pictures of the activity were shared with local authorities, and the government soon responded by stepping in to complete further clean-up work. The once-neglected area now stands as a clean, orderly space, a visible reminder of what cooperation can achieve.





The cleanup effort successfully brought Christian and Muslim youth together for a shared goal. More than just removing waste, the initiative helped build deeper friendships, created mutual respect, and sparked a movement toward more collaborative efforts. The visibility of the project even inspired the local government to act, recognising the power of youth-led initiatives.

The youth of Hayin Baki now see themselves as partners in building a stronger community. Encouraged by the success of this initiative, both Christian and Muslim youth leaders have begun planning additional activities. Ideas include joint football matches, continued sanitation efforts at cemeteries of both faiths, and other service projects to keep their relationship growing and active. "We laughed together, we worked together, and now we're planning even more," the Christian youth leader shared. "This relationship should not end, it should grow stronger."

The I-RENEW project has not only improved the physical environment of Hayin Baki but also laid a strong foundation for continued interfaith collaboration. With both communities now actively planning future events, the spirit of unity and shared responsibility is alive and thriving. Youth in Hayin Baki are proving that peace doesn't need to be complicated; it can begin with a broom, a handshake, and the courage to work together.



HOW WOMEN ARE COOPERATING TO BUILD PEACE IN MARABAN RIDO

"My name is Blessing Wilfred I'm a member of this community," she begins, her voice steady with quiet pride. "And I just want to talk about the security we have now, how things have changed."

Not long ago, Maraban Rido in Southern Kaduna Northwest Nigeria was a community gripped by fear. Residents couldn't move freely. Even farming a way of life for many, became a risk. "We couldn't sleep. We couldn't go to our farms. We couldn't go anywhere without thinking something would happen," Blessing recalls.

But today, things are different. "We've achieved so much when it comes to security. Thanks to the Joint Task Force (JTF), we now have peace." She explains that their presence and commitment have made a real difference. "They always show up when we call. They come with courage and dedication. They've done more than what the government even expected of them."

Blessing urges the government to recognise and support the JTF. "They need help. The government should come to their aid because they're doing an amazing job here."

What makes Maraban Rido unique is its unity across religious lines. Muslims and Christians live, work, and protect their community together. "We mingle," she says. "Even the JTF teams are mixed. Our market, our schools, our organisations, you'll see both Muslims and Christians working hand-in-hand. There is no discrimination."



What makes Maraban Rido unique is its unity across religious lines. Muslims and Christians live, work, and protect their community together. "We mingle," she says. "Even the JTF teams are mixed. Our market, our schools, our organisations, you'll see both Muslims and Christians working hand-in-hand. There is no discrimination."

When asked about the role of women in peacebuilding, Blessing acknowledges that while security work often falls to men, women in Maraban Rido are not left behind. "They may not be on the frontlines, but we are included. They consult us, they advise us, and they carry us along." She also points out that women play a key role in motivating, advising, and praying for those who take risks to keep the community safe.

With cooperation, vigilance, and shared responsibility, Maraban Rido is transforming from a place of fear into a model of peaceful coexistence. "Truly," Blessing says, "we have achieved peace and we're grateful."

I-RENEW **ACTIVITY UPDATE**



LEVERAGING RELIGIOUS ACTORS IN PROMOTING PEACE IN KADUNA STATE

The I-RENEW project held a two-day policy roundtable in Kaduna State. Key stakeholders discussed strategies for inclusive religious engagement, emphasizing women's role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The event aimed to foster understanding, identify challenges, and propose interventions on critical themes impacting peace and inter-religious harmony.





Funded by European Union

FACES OF OUR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Faces of those contributing to the Inclusive Religious Engagement Enhanced by Women project in Plateau and Kaduna States



Implementing partners:



ACTIVITIES PICTURES





Learn more about Search

Search holds the proud distinction of being the world's preeminent peacebuilding organization. Our mission carries us to the forefront of the most pressing conflicts where we strive to make a profound difference in the lives of millions. As an organization with deep local roots that extend globally, we operate in 33 nations and have had a transformative presence in Nigeria since 2004.

In Nigeria, we are utilizing consensus-based advocacy training, conflict resolution training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and the facilitation of dialogue processes that engage all levels of society.

OUR CORE VALUES



- We are purposeful in creating a more diverse and inclusive culture at Search
- We know that no one succeeds alone, so we embrace courageous engagement and collaboration
- We listen deeply to new ideas, welcoming multiple and fresh perspectives



- We are hopeful and undaunted by what may seem insurmountable
- We imagine solutions for some of the most complex problems
- We are unafraid to try new things and to experiment



- We take on big challenges
- We are not discouraged by our failures, instead we learn from them
- We prefer action over perfection and we never give up



- We build relationships based on respect
- We seek to understand each others' circumstances and experiences
- We encourage the potential in each person and celebrate their growth and success



- We each have a vital role in achieving the mission of Search
- We take pride in what we can accomplish together
- We are constantly learning, adapting and improving

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