

THE NIGERIA YOUTH CARE

Nigerian Youth Collective Action for Religious Engagement Project



Success stories

AMPLIFYING

Youth voices for religious to raise
Public Awareness and Promotion
of Freedom of Religion or Belief

About THE NIGERIAN YOUTH CARE PROJECT

Search for Common Ground, in partnership with Young Leaders Network (YLN), is working towards empowering diverse youth in Bauchi, Plateau, and Gombe States to advance interreligious tolerance and freedom of religion and belief (FoRB). The project offers capacity-building, trust-building, and technical support for a youth-led religious advocacy network and young influencers and online community stewards with broad appeal across identity groups and generations. Ultimately, through strategic youth-led digital and real-world initiatives, the project is contributing to shifts in policies, attitudes, and behaviors in favor of religious tolerance and freedom in the targeted states.



KEY OBJECTIVES

NIGERIAN YOUTH CARE (COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT) PROJECT



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

To foster youth leadership in influencing the state-level policy environment to be more inclusive and conducive to inter-religious tolerance and religious freedom.



YOUTH-LED ONLINE INITIATIVES

To support youth-led online initiatives that further inter-religious tolerance and religious freedom

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE YOUTH CARE PROJECT



NETWORKS ESTABLISHED

Bauchi Youth Religious Advocacy Network (BYRAN):

The project established BYRAN, a youth-led platform that actively promotes and advocates for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and youth inclusion through state-level engagements, policy dialogue, and awareness campaigns

As an outcome of the Youth FoRB Conference:

The Bauchi Interfaith Group (BinG) was established with selected key community members to promote constructive dialogue, strengthen interfaith collaboration, and advance discussions on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB).



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & LEADERSHIP

Successfully implemented the BYRAN Initiative

Using the Search Youth 360 Approach (Hadin Kan Al-Ummah Gudum da Yelwa): Through the search Youth 360 Approach the BYRAN were able to design and implement the "Hadin Kan Al-Ummah Gudum da Yelwa" initiative, aimed at promoting FoRB and community dialogue as a tool for promoting peace

Established Digital FoRB Champions to promote online advocacy and positive youth engagement:

The Youth Care project engaged 24 digital influencers to promote FoRB messages across various social media platforms, including X, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, reaching a broader religious audience.

Build the capacity of Digital FoRB Champions to strengthen their skills in online advocacy and awareness creation:

In collaboration with BUILD UP, 24 FoRB champions enhanced their proficiency in AI, Canva, and digital advocacy tools. This included specialized training in Phoenix digital software for digital scraping and content verification.



ADVOCACY & AWARENESS

Amplified youth voices and inclusion in social engagement and policy development:

Consistent engagement with youth and key stakeholders led to a significant breakthrough: a Bill drafting committee's visit to the Honorable Commissioner to submit a memorandum. This initiative aims to establish a "Peace, Security, and Conflict Mitigation Forum." The Ministry has pledged to champion the forum's creation, marking a crucial advance in fostering lasting peace within the state.

Strengthened Public Awareness and Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB):

Through extensive radio programs, awareness campaigns, community theatre, sports activities, and peace walks, the project successfully raised public awareness on FoRB. It also highlighted the importance of youth and women's inclusion in decision-making processes and peacebuilding initiatives.



Digital peacebuilding training for youth leaders



- Search has empowered young people from Bauchi, Gombe and Plateau States to engage in digital advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of freedom of religion or belief online in their respective States and communities.
- We support young people with training in digital peacebuilding covering modules such as non-violent communication, creating alternative peacebuilding messages, miscommunication, safety online etc.



DIGITAL PEACE BUILDING TRAINING



Youth

Empowerment and Leadership in promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief
Bauchi, Gombe and Plateau States



- We invest in youth empowerment by providing leadership training, mentorship programs, and resources.
- Equipped with these skills, young leaders champion freedom of religion or belief in their communities.
- By nurturing youth leaders Network, Search ensures a sustainable future where religious freedom thrives, creating a ripple effect beyond Bauchi and Gombe states.

Young leaders championing freedom
of religion or belief in their communities.

SUCCESS STORIES



Embracing Diversity: Doris's Journey from Fear to Friendship

When Doris Ali remembers the conflicts that shook her community, the pain is still vivid. “Our house was almost burnt down, and my father was threatened one night by someone who came intending to kill him,” she recalls. “It wasn’t an easy experience at all. We had to report to community stakeholders to intervene.”

For Doris, like many others, these moments of fear shaped how she viewed people from different religions and communities. Suspicion and resentment crept in, leaving little room for trust. “I used to dislike people from other religion. I thought they were simply bad people,” she admits.



**“I used to dislike people from other religion.
I thought they were simply bad people”**

But Doris's story did not end there. Her life took a new direction when she became part of the Bauchi Youth Religious Advocacy Network (BYRAN), created under the Nigerian Youth CARE project.

Through trainings and exchanges, Doris began to see beyond her earlier fears. The project introduced her to values that reshaped how she interacted with others: love, unity, empathy, and respect for diversity. Now, I treat people with the understanding that they are humans first," she explains with a smile. "Those I once considered enemies, I now call my friends."

This transformation went beyond her personal life. In her role as Public Relations Officer of BYRAN, and in her own organization, Child is Gold Foundation, Doris carried her new mindset into practice. She championed inclusivity by introducing a small but powerful change: during organizational training, everyone prays according to their own faith.

"Before, we would have one person pray for all. Now, each individual prays according to their faith. It's a way of showing respect and embracing diversity."

For Doris, this shift symbolizes much more than prayer—it is a demonstration of coexistence and recognition of Nigeria's rich religious landscape.

Her confidence has also grown tremendously. "I remember when BYRAN was first established, I was invited for an interview," she says. "Back then, I lacked the knowledge and declined.

But now, I can boldly stand and speak about freedom of religion and belief. The project gave me that courage." Colleagues affectionately call her the "preacher of empathy," a title she wears with pride. It reflects how deeply she has embraced the project's values and how passionately she shares them with others.



Looking back, Doris describes her experience with the Nigerian Youth CARE project as life-changing. "It has taught me to embrace diversity, to see people as humans, not as threats. It has made me a better leader, a more confident advocate, and a stronger voice for unity."

Her journey is one of resilience and strength. From facing direct threats to her family's safety to becoming a confident youth leader who champions inclusion, Doris embodies the spirit of transformation. She is no longer defined by fear; instead, she radiates agency and dignity.

"If I had one chance to tell people about this program," she says firmly, "I would tell them: embrace diversity."

That is the big message for all Nigerians. Search for Common Ground has taught us that, and it has changed my life."

Doris's story shows that even in the face of trauma, young people can rise, transform, and lead their communities toward peace. Her courage is a beacon, reminding us that when youth are empowered to choose empathy over suspicion, Nigeria's future shines brighter.

“Those I once
considered enemies,
I now call my friends.”



Rebuilding Trust and Restoring Hope: Garba's Journey with the Nigerian Youth CARE Project

For Garba Surama, the scars of conflict run deep. Growing up in Kagadama, a community in Bauchi State, he witnessed firsthand how religious tensions could tear apart families, friendships, and neighborhoods. In 2007, violence sparked by a dispute between young people escalated into a community-wide conflict. Homes were destroyed, including Garba's family house, and friends he once played football with were killed.

"I lost everything. Our house was burned down, and I lost two of my closest friends, one Muslim and one Christian," he recalls. "From that day, trust was broken. Even after the crisis, I would lock myself inside the house once it was 6:00 p.m. The fear stayed with us."



"The pain of displacement and the loss of childhood friends could have left Garba in bitterness. Yet, his story is not one of despair, but of resilience and transformation. Through the Nigerian Youth CARE project, Gabra found not only healing, but also a renewed purpose."



Beyond personal change, Garba has emerged as a community leader and advocate for peace. As the team leader of the Religious Advocacy Network, he now works with others to push for policies that embed peace education into schools. “We are advocating for peace clubs in primary and secondary schools. If children grow up learning about respect, coexistence, and freedom of belief, our communities will be stronger,” he explained.

Perhaps the most striking change is in Garba’s relationships. Once reluctant to share a meal with a Muslim neighbor, he now counts Muslims among his best friends. “We eat together, we move together,” he smiles as he recounts. “This project changed my perspective completely.”

For Garba, peace is not abstract. It is personal, and it is urgent. ***“Peace is everyone’s responsibility,” he insists. “Without peace, there is no development. It is not the job of one person; it belongs to all of us.”***

Today, Garba stands not as a victim of conflict but as a champion of resilience, dignity, and collective action. His journey shows how the Nigerian Youth CARE project is transforming lives, equipping young people not just to survive conflict, but to lead the way in building lasting peace.

“Search for Common Ground and YLN gave us more than training,” Gabra concludes. “They gave us the courage to rebuild trust, to stand together again, and to believe that peace is possible.”



From Fear to Digital Peacebuilding: Grace's Journey

Growing up in Bauchi State, Grace Yusuf Baba remembers a childhood overshadowed by religious violence. She recalls vividly how her school days were interrupted by eruptions of conflict. "We would run helter-skelter looking for shelter," she says. "Sometimes we came back to find houses burned. It was always unpleasant."

One particular Friday remains etched in her memory. Grace's mother, heavily pregnant at the time, rushed to pick her and her siblings from school when violence broke out. As they fled, they encountered armed men in the streets, shouting and brandishing weapons. The family eventually found refuge at the police barracks, where many others gathered for safety. "That moment stuck with me for a long time," Grace says quietly. "We lived with constant fear and anxiety."

“I have become receptive to people from other religions. I now see that with collaboration, we can all make our nation a better place.”

For years, these experiences shaped Grace's perception of people from other faiths. "I felt they were always against us," she admits. "I wouldn't say hatred, but there was definitely a deep sense of dislike and mistrust."

Everything began to change when Grace joined the Nigerian Youth CARE project.

As a micro influencer, she was trained and supported to use her social media platforms as tools for peacebuilding and advocacy.

"Since being engaged with Search for Common Ground, my mind has opened," Grace explains.

"I have become receptive to people from other religions. I now see that with collaboration, we can all make our nation a better place. Combating religious violence doesn't always have to start big. It can begin with the small actions we take every day."

Grace's transformation is rooted in both knowledge and agency. The program equipped her with the skills of a digital advocate for peace, giving her confidence to create online content that promotes tolerance and the freedom of religion and belief.

She discovered the power of her voice and her platforms, realizing that her words could inspire others to choose unity over division.

"The most important thing I've learned," she says, "is that my social media is a powerful tool. I can use it to build peace, not just to share opinions. Through my posts, I can reach people, change perceptions, and even prevent conflict."

Her perception of people from other faiths has shifted dramatically. Where she once saw potential enemies, she now sees partners. "I see them as partners in progress and for peacebuilding," Grace explains. "We may practice different religions but we share the same hopes for a better future. Working together makes achieving peace not just a dream, but something practicable."



This change has also reshaped her relationships. Grace has built new friendships with peers from different religions, bonds that once felt impossible. “These friends are now my partners in progress,” she says proudly.

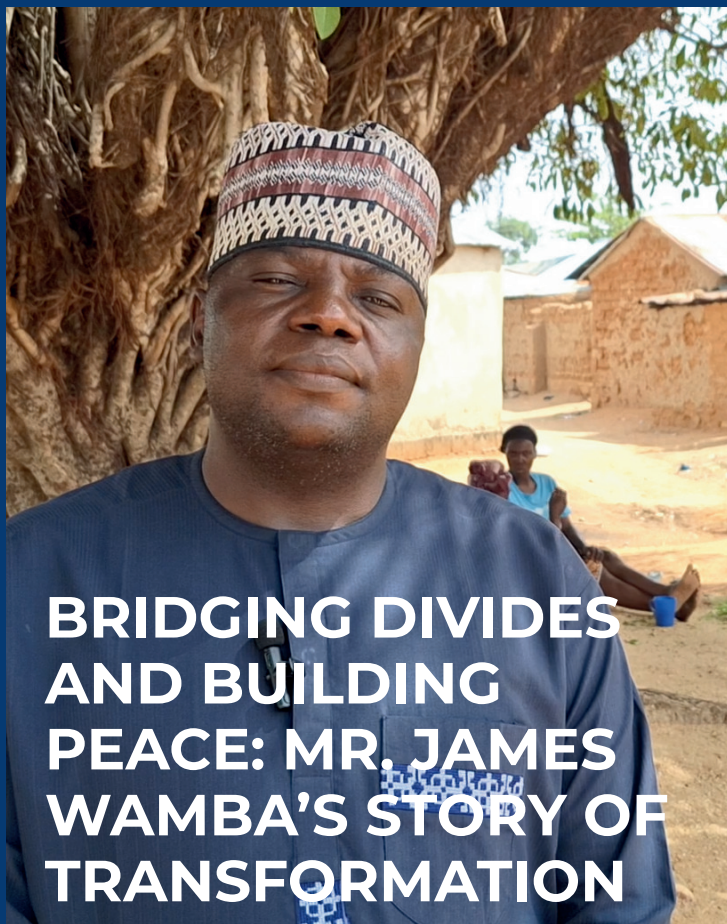
The project has not only transformed Grace personally but has elevated her public identity. “Since working as a micro influencer, I have been placed on the map as a peacebuilder,” she reflects. “People now see me as someone actively involved in conflict resolution. This program has given me opportunities I never imagined.”

Grace’s journey is a testament to resilience and the power of agency. From a childhood marked by fear and displacement, she has emerged as a confident digital peacebuilder, using her voice to counter hate and promote understanding. She represents a new generation of Nigerian youth who are rewriting the story of religious coexistence.

“If I had the chance to tell people one thing about this program,” she says firmly, “I would say: embrace the opportunity to use your platform for peace. We all have a role to play, and together, we can build the Nigeria we dream of.”

Grace’s story shows that transformation is possible - not by erasing the pain of the past, but by choosing to rise above it and create a future rooted in empathy, dignity, and peace.





BRIDGING DIVIDES AND BUILDING PEACE: MR. JAMES WAMBA'S STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

When Mr. Godiya James Wamba JP was elected as the Hamlet Head of his community, he knew the responsibility was heavy. His people had lived through years of tension between neighboring groups, the Gudum Hausawa and the Gudum Fulani. Disputes would flare, but finding peaceful resolutions often seemed far beyond their reach.

"In the past, whenever conflict broke out, resolving it was another case entirely," he recalls. "We didn't know how to mediate properly or even share information in time to prevent escalation."

Things began to change when Wamba and other community members became involved in the Nigerian Youth CARE project. Through training and dialogue sessions, he learned new ways to mediate conflicts and build stronger relationships across divides.

“For us, this project has been eye-opening,” Wamba explains. “We now know how to iron out our issues. We’ve learned how to mediate among ourselves in amicable ways and, most importantly, how to relay information early enough to prevent conflicts.”

This knowledge has proven transformative. At the grassroots level, where many lack formal skills in conflict resolution, the ability to identify and act on early warning signs has brought new hope. Wamba points to the “intelligence cycle” training, which taught his community how to share timely information and prevent violence before it escalates.

Beyond mediation, the project has also shifted patterns of youth behavior. Wamba notes that in the past, up to 70 percent of young people in his community struggled with substance abuse, a major driver of violence.

“Many conflicts started from youths intoxicated with illicit drinks,” he says. “But now, with the awareness created, many of them know where they belong

They are beginning to redirect themselves and engage in more positive activities. The nefarious acts have reduced drastically.”

Wamba has also witnessed a renewed sense of togetherness. Religious and cultural barriers that once divided people are being dismantled.

“I was born and brought up here,” he says. “During Salah, we Christians would go to Gudum Fulani, collect food, and eat. Most of my friends from childhood are Muslims. But it was the younger ones who grew up and introduced conflict. By God’s grace, through this project, we are tackling these issues and moving together again.”

Moments of celebration now reflect this shift. “You can see the joy in the community during events like today,” Wamba adds, smiling. “People gather, rejoice, and live together without religious bias. That is a sign of good living.”

As Hamlet Head, Wamba’s confidence in leading his people toward peace has grown. Instead of being overwhelmed by disputes, he now has tools to guide mediation, promote early responses, and foster mutual trust. He sees peace not as a distant dream, but as a daily practice built through collective action.

For him, the Nigerian Youth CARE project is more than an intervention; it is a turning point. “Kudos to Search for Common Ground and YLN,” Wamba says with gratitude. “This project gave us the skills to manage our issues ourselves. It reduced violence, changed our youths, and restored our unity. Peace will reign in our community.”

Through leaders like James Wamba, the Nigerian Youth CARE project is showing that sustainable peace is possible when communities are given the tools, knowledge, and trust to own their solutions.



BYRAN's Story of Peacebuilding: Bridging the Divides in Yelwa and Gudum Community (Hadin Kan Al'umman Yelwa da Gudum)

In Bauchi State, young people are proving that they are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but changemakers of today. The Bauchi Youth Religious Advocacy Network (BYRAN), supported by the Young Leaders Network (YLN) and Search for Common Ground, has been at the forefront of youth-led peacebuilding initiatives in Yelwa and Gudum communities. These efforts show how much impact is possible when youth, women, and community leaders come together with a shared vision of peace, tolerance, and respect for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB).

The initiatives combined creative and participatory approaches that brought diverse groups together. A "Sports for Peace" football match attracted 131 participants and demonstrated how sports can break barriers and inspire unity. Interfaith dialogues followed, engaging 80 participants in Gudum and 86 in Yelwa, where people of different faiths sat side by side, exchanged ideas, and built trust. Storytelling also played a powerful role, with participatory theatre performances drawing 178 people in Gudum and 150 in Yelwa.

The plays reflected community realities, explored the consequences of division, and offered hope for cooperation, sparking honest conversations about conflict drivers and solutions. These activities were complemented by eight advocacy visits that strengthened relationships with local stakeholders and traditional institutions, embedding youth voices within community leadership structures.

The results of these interventions were visible and inspiring. Two 15-member interfaith peace committees were formed in Gudum and Yelwa, co-chaired by Christian and Muslim leaders, providing a clear demonstration of interfaith cooperation in action. Four BYRAN members were also appointed into local security leadership structures.

As respected figures within their faith communities, their inclusion ensures grassroots perspectives are brought into decision-making processes. This broadens sources of early warning information, improves the community's ability to respond to conflict signals, and embeds interfaith cooperation within local security mechanisms.

The youth-led approach received strong endorsement from community leaders, while participants personally committed themselves to promoting peace in their neighborhoods. Youth and women were especially central in leading discussions, performing theatre, and shaping advocacy messages. In doing so, they confronted issues often linked to conflict such as misinformation, unemployment, and drug abuse. Their leadership not only challenged stereotypes but also strengthened inclusivity, creating safe platforms for intergenerational dialogue and collaboration.

To ensure the reach of its advocacy extended beyond direct participants, BYRAN launched a radio program, Common Ground Matters, on Albarka Radio 97.5 FM. By the end of August, 12 episodes had been produced and aired, featuring 31 guest speakers, including 22 men and 9 women. The program reached more than 2,000 listeners and covered themes such as conflict mitigation strategies, the role of leaders in advancing FoRB, and combating misinformation.

It sparked reflective conversations on trust, tolerance, and respect as cornerstones of social cohesion, embedding peace advocacy within everyday public discourse.

Through these combined efforts, BYRAN strengthened interfaith collaboration, amplified the voices of youth and women, and fostered community ownership of peace processes in Yelwa and Gudum. What began as a series of activities has now become a model for grassroots peacebuilding, with interfaith committees, youth appointments in security leadership, and radio advocacy serving as lasting legacies.

This story demonstrates that when young people are empowered to lead, they can transform divisions into dialogue, mistrust into collaboration, and conflict into common ground for peace.

FROM SKEPTICISM TO ADVOCACY: AMINU'S JOURNEY AS A DIGITAL PEACEBUILDER

When Aminu Guyaba first applied to become a social media micro-influencer under the Nigerian Youth Collective Action for Religious Engagement (Nigerian Youth CARE) project, he wasn't sure how people around him would react. In his community in Bauchi State, religion and identity are often sensitive topics, easily misunderstood and sometimes manipulated to fuel division.



Almost immediately after he began creating content promoting freedom of religion and belief, questions arose. “Some people thought I was planning to convert,” Aminu recalls. “Even my family members asked me about it. I told them: this is not about conversion. It is about ensuring everyone can practice their faith freely, without intimidation or discrimination.”

Despite the initial skepticism, Aminu pressed forward. Through training and mentorship provided by Search for Common Ground Nigeria and the Young Leaders Network (YLN), he gained confidence and new knowledge about the complexities of religion and belief in Nigeria. He learned to unpack misconceptions, address disinformation, and use his voice to advocate for coexistence.

“Before joining this project, I had very few Christian friends,” Aminu admits. “I grew up hearing that Christians don’t love us, and I know Christians were told the same about Muslims.

But working with Search for Common Ground changed my mindset. I realized those things were not true. We eat together, travel together, and work together as Muslims and Christians without conflict. That alone showed me that peaceful coexistence is possible.”

As his advocacy grew, Aminu began to notice a transformation in how people perceived him. “At first, people thought I was bringing something strange,” he says. “But later, they started calling me a peace ambassador — even in Hausa, *Jakar Zaman Lafiya*. My posts are now shared widely, and people engage with my content because they see the value of promoting peace.”

Aminu’s journey also took him beyond his own state. Through the project, he traveled to other communities, witnessing firsthand how Muslims and Christians have lived side by side for generations.

“In some places, they share meals, attend each other’s ceremonies, and even intermarry,” he recalls. “That is true peaceful coexistence, and it inspired me to share these stories on social media so others can learn from them.”

For Aminu, this exposure was transformative. He moved from a place of limited cross-religious interaction to becoming a bridge-builder. His role as a micro-influencer gave him the platform to amplify positive stories of unity at a time when narratives of division often dominate online spaces.

He also takes pride in the atmosphere of collaboration within the project itself. “The staff of Search for Common Ground and the micro-influencers are a mix of Muslims and Christians,” Aminu points out. “We worked together without any conflict or misunderstanding. That alone is proof that harmony is possible.”

Today, Aminu embodies resilience. Despite doubts from his community, he chose to stand firm in promoting peace. His story demonstrates how young people can transform skepticism into leadership, turning digital platforms into tools for unity.

“Without this project, I would not have had the opportunity to connect with Christians and Muslims across different states,” Aminu reflects. “It gave me knowledge, friendships, and the courage to speak up for peace. I am urging everyone who sees my work: emulate this example. Let us live with respect and allow everyone to practice their faith freely.”

Through Aminu’s voice, the Nigerian Youth CARE project continues to show how empowered youth can use their platforms to reshape narratives from division and mistrust to dignity, coexistence, and peace.



Building Bridges Beyond Divides: Jamiu's Journey with the Nigerian Youth CARE Project

When Jamiu Bello reflects on his community's past, painful memories come to mind: broken trust, lost property, and suspicion that clouded relationships across groups. "Whenever attacks happened, there was always that wired thinking that the attackers were from a particular group or community," he recalls. "It created mistrust and made it difficult to see each other beyond labels."

For Jamiu and many others in Bauchi State, conflict had etched deep divisions, often framed as religious or ethnic, even when the root causes lay elsewhere. This experience left him searching for answers and for a better way forward.



That opportunity came when Jamiu joined the Bauchi Youth Religious Advocacy Network (BYRAN), a youth group established under the Nigerian Youth CARE project. As Monitoring & Evaluation Officer for BYRAN, Jeremy's role placed him at the heart of community engagement, data collection, and feedback analysis.

"It was a wonderful experience," he says. "At first, I couldn't imagine myself entering communities I wasn't familiar with, let alone interacting with their leaders. But this project gave me that chance, and it changed me."

Through two years of implementation, Jamiu not only supported BYRAN's work but also underwent personal transformation. Gathering and analyzing community feedback taught him to look beneath the surface of conflicts. "Before, people would quickly assume religion or ethnicity were the causes. But with conflict analysis training, I realized it's deeper than that—there are root causes that ignite tension. That insight alone reshaped my perception."

For Jamiu, one of the most valuable lessons was learning to focus on connectors rather than dividers. "When collaborating, you look beyond divides - beyond faith, beyond background. You ask: where are we connected? And that's how you move things forward together."

This mindset shift strengthened his ability to engage stakeholders, build networks, and foster trust where mistrust once prevailed. In his words, the project became "an eye-opener" that empowered him professionally and personally. "It built my capacity in community engagement and networking. These are skills I will carry beyond this project, even into achieving my personal goals."

Jamiu's journey also highlights resilience. Despite growing up in an environment where mistrust was common, he chose to engage differently - to seek truth, bridge divides, and use evidence to challenge assumptions. His story is not one of struggle alone, but of strength born out of struggle: the strength to transform suspicion into understanding, and division into collaboration.

The impact extended beyond himself. "Feedback from communities showed us that the program brought people of different backgrounds together. It was not just about religion; it was about humanity and coexistence."



Looking ahead, Jamiu is convinced of the project's long-term value. "If there's an opportunity for continuity, I strongly recommend it. It has been impactful both professionally and personally, and it has opened the eyes of communities as well as individuals like me."

From mistrust to meaningful engagement, Jamiu's story reflects the spirit of the Nigerian Youth CARE project: equipping young people with skills, confidence, and platforms to reimagine relationships across divides. His transformation is proof that when youth are empowered to look beyond labels and lead with empathy, peace is not only possible—it becomes inevitable.

Building Bridges Through Respect – Naziru’s Journey as a Micro Influencer

For Yusuf Naziru, conflict was not an abstract word, it was a lived experience. Growing up in Borno State, he had witnessed the devastation of Boko Haram’s insurgency and the religious clashes that shook nearby communities. One moment remains vivid in his memory: being caught in the middle of a marketplace when violence erupted.

Later, he watched as tensions flared in a neighboring state during the installation of a new king. The decision to install a Muslim monarch in a predominantly Christian community ignited unrest. “As a Muslim minority there, I understood the frustration,” Naziru recalls. “If the roles were reversed, I would feel the same way. That’s why I don’t ever pray for such a thing to happen again.”



“Everywhere I go now, I introduce myself as a Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) champion,”

The ripple effects of conflict touched his family directly. Two of his brothers, traders in agricultural equipment, were forced to close their shops for weeks during unrest. Their only source of income was cut off, leaving Naziru to grapple with worry and the burden of helping his family cope. These experiences instilled in him a strong sense that division and intolerance bring nothing but loss.

Yet, Naziru's story does not end with hardship. It is also a story of resilience, transformation, and leadership.

When he joined the Nigerian Youth Collective Action for Religious Engagement (Nigerian Youth CARE) project, implemented by Search for Common Ground and Young Leaders Network-YLN, Naziru stepped into a new role: that of a micro influencer and peace advocate. Suddenly, he was no longer just a witness to conflict; he was becoming an active agent of change.

"Everywhere I go now, I introduce myself as a Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) champion," he says proudly. "Some people even call me a peace ambassador." The title carried weight, but more importantly, it gave him purpose.

Through the project, Naziru learned that peace is not built by one perspective alone. "My view alone cannot make the world go smoothly," he explains. "We must take everyone's perspective and bring collective minds together. Only then can we go far." This realization shifted his outlook, no longer seeing himself or his community as isolated, but as part of a larger human family where mutual respect is essential.

For Naziru, the most important lesson has been the value of respect. "Respect is reciprocal," he emphasizes. "If you give others respect for their faith and beliefs, they will return it to you." This simple yet profound principle now guides his work in promoting interfaith harmony.

The impact on his personal life has been significant. Once limited to familiar circles, Naziru now enjoys a wider network of friends and allies across different faiths. "I gained so many friends and opportunities to interact with people I never imagined I would," he reflects. "I now see them as brothers and sisters, no matter their religion."

Looking back, Naziru sees himself not just as a survivor of conflict but as a bridge-builder.





From Resentment to Resilience: Zainab's Journey with Nigerian Youth CARE Project

For Barrister Zainab Yusuf, growing up meant living with the shadows of a conflict she did not directly witness but deeply felt. Her family carried the scars of ethnic and religious clashes that had gripped her community for decades. Her grandparents and parents lost property during repeated outbreaks of violence. At one point, they had to abandon their home, trekking long distances in search of safety.

The pain was personal. "I lost an uncle during the 2001 conflict," Zainab recalls quietly. "And each time my grandparents returned after fleeing, they would find their home and properties burned down." These experiences, though secondhand, shaped her childhood and sowed resentment. For years, she carried a sense of betrayal toward those who had instigated the conflict.

“I have built new relationships, developed leadership skills, and grown in confidence. Most importantly, I now see everyone first as human, before religion or ethnicity”

But Zainab's story is not defined by bitterness. It is a journey of resilience and transformation.

When she joined the Nigerian Youth CARE project, Zainab stepped into a new space of learning and healing.

As a member of the Youth Religious Advocacy Network (ByRAN), she received training on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), conflict analysis, empathy, and organizational development.

The experience was eye-opening. "At first, I held on to resentment," she admits.

"But through the project, I learned to see things from other people's perspectives. I realized that those who instigated violence also had their own stories. I learned empathy."

Beyond personal transformation, the program gave Zainab practical skills.

She discovered how organizations function, how to design community initiatives, and how to build synergy with others.

These lessons strengthened her role as an Admin Officer at Ganvi Women and Youth Empowerment Initiative.

One of her deepest takeaways was the fragile but vital value of peace. "When peace has been destroyed, it can never be rebuilt the same way," she reflects. "That's why it must be protected at all costs."

With her new confidence, Zainab began applying what she learned. Once shy and reserved, she found her voice. She led a community sensitization on freedom of religion, highlighting the dangers of intolerance and the importance of coexistence.

Engaging with people of different faiths no longer felt threatening, rather, it became an opportunity for growth and understanding.

Her role as a FoRB Champion now extends to identifying misinformation, disinformation, and early warning signs of conflict. She no longer sees conflict as a simple ethnic or religious divide but understands the deeper drivers beneath the surface.

This broader perspective equips her to act proactively, using her knowledge to prevent escalation and foster dialogue.

"My life has changed in so many ways," Zainab says with a smile. "I have built new relationships, developed leadership skills, and grown in confidence. Most importantly, I now see everyone first as human, before religion or ethnicity."

If given one message to share with others about the project, Zainab is clear: "The Nigerian Youth CARE project is a wonderful program.

It equips youth with leadership, mentoring, and peacebuilding skills. I hope it is extended to other states so more young people can benefit."

Zainab's story is one of transformation. From inherited resentment to empowered leadership. It shows that while conflict leaves wounds, resilience and empathy can pave a path toward healing and unity. Her journey reflects the spirit of the Nigerian Youth CARE project: building a generation of youth who choose peace, dignity, and collective action over division.



Amplifying Youth Voices for Religious Tolerance

Young leaders were trained to craft key messages to challenge stereotypes, reduce discrimination, change negative narratives and foster mutual respect on digital spaces



How Project Youths Took Ownership of the “Na we be Peace” Campaign

“Na we be Peace” was launched by Search for Common Ground as a general campaign across social media to remind Nigerians that peace begins with us, it invited people from all walks of life to share what peace meant to them.

The campaign created an online wave of positive stories, proving that peace is not abstract but lived daily in the choices and actions of ordinary citizens.

Youth Participation

Among those who embraced the campaign, one group stood out: **the youths from the Nigerian Youth Collective Action for Religious Engagement Project**. Trained in digital peacebuilding, they did not just join the conversation they owned it.

These young peacebuilders shared their own stories on social media. They spoke about bridging divides, celebrating differences, and finding common ground in communities often divided by religion. Their posts resonated widely, sparking dialogue and inspiring peers to believe that peace is possible.

Na We Be



#Nawebepeace

Share your
Peace story >>>

With us on social media

How you or anyone you know is promoting peace communities.



WHAT PEACE



MEANS TO ME

“Peace means living in harmony, where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued. It starts with the decision to be kind, to listen, and to treat others with compassion.”



Fatima Lawan Sani



#Nawebepeace

WHAT PEACE



MEANS TO ME

“Peace begins with me, with you, with us. I choose love over hate, understanding over judgment, and peace over violence.”



Matthew Ruth



#Nawebepeace

Social media campaign posters that
the youths actively engaged with

WHAT PEACE



MEANS TO ME

“Continuous dialogue builds trust. Let's keep the conversation going for unity, understanding, and a better Plateau because NA WE BE PEACE.”



Jonnie Kreature David



#Nawebepeace

WHAT PEACE



MEANS TO ME

“Let humanity be at the forefront of all we do! It costs nothing to think of another as human first before anything else.”



Blessing Danladi Dodo



#Nawebepeace

CONFLICT IS NOT THE ANSWER. LET'S RESOLVE DIFFERENCES THROUGH DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION.



Search trains youth in conflict sensitivity and collaboration skills to resolve differences peacefully, ensuring sustainable, non-violent solutions in communities.



#YOUTHASPEACEBUILDERS

www.sfcg.org/nigeria

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER. LET'S BUILD BRIDGES NOT WALLS, FOR LASTING PEACE.



Search unites youth from diverse backgrounds, fostering cooperation and mutual respect through collaborative initiatives for lasting peace and community cohesion.



#YOUTHASPEACEBUILDERS

www.sfcg.org/nigeria

Social media campaign posters that
the youths actively engaged with

YOUR VOICE. MATTERS USE IT TO CHAMPION PEACE AND TOLERANCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.



Search empowers youth to use their voices in promoting peace, tolerance, and inclusivity through media and community-based initiatives.



#YOUTHASPEACEBUILDERS

www.sfcg.org/nigeria

DIALOGUE IS THE SEED OF PEACE. LET'S NURTURE IT FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.



Search for Common Ground trains youth in dialogue to foster understanding and peaceful conflict resolution, empowering them to build harmonious communities.



#YOUTHASPEACEBUILDERS

www.sfcg.org/nigeria

Exposure Tour

Building Bridges Across Faiths

Youth from the Nigerian Youth Collective Action for Religious Engagement Project, drawn from Bauchi and Gombe states, embarked on an exposure tour to Plateau State. In Barkin Ladi and Miango communities, they engaged directly with both Christian and Muslim residents, witnessing and experiencing peaceful coexistence firsthand.

Through dialogue and shared experiences, the youth saw how communities thrive when diversity is embraced. The visit deepened their understanding of religious tolerance and strengthened their commitment to promoting peace within their own communities.



PICTURE STORIES





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.

SPEAK UP!



If you're facing discrimination or violation of your beliefs.

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don't stay silent.

Call now
It's Confidential & Free!

We're here to listen and help.
Religion or belief matters hotline



Where your faith finds relief...

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

Visit: www.sfcg.org

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Transforming the way the world deals with conflict since 1982