INDEPENDENT FINAL EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE:

Supporting the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in North East Nigeria Project

30TH JULY 2019¹

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¹ This evaluation was completed before the end of the Project on 31 August 2019 due to time constraints.

Figure 1: Cover photo taken during Trauma Awareness and Resilience Training with beneficiary children, facilitated by Search’s Psychologist.
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Abbreviations

AOG     Armed Opposition Group
ALPs    Accelerated Learning Programmes
BASS    Business Opportunities and Administrative Support Sessions
BH      Boko Haram (referred to as AOG)
CAAG    Children Associated with Armed Groups
CGA     Common Ground Approach
CJTF    Civilian Joint Task Force
CPIMS   Child Protection Information Management System
CWD     Children with Disabilities
ER      Expected Results
FGD     Focus Group Discussions
ID      Identity
IGA     Income Generating Activities
ILO     International Labour Organisation
ISAL    Internal Savings and Lending
KII     Key Informant Interviews
LGA     Local Government Area
MEF     Micro-Enterprise and Finance Training
MMC     Maiduguri Metropolitan Council
MOU     Memorandum of Understanding
MRM     Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
NCE     No Cost Extension
OECD-DAC Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PAC     Project Advisory Committee
PSS     Psychosocial Support
PTA     Parents Teachers Association
SAME    State Agency for Mass Education
Search  Search for Common Ground
SFCA    Search for Common Ground
SO      Specific Objective
SPSS    Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SUBEB  State Universal Basic Education Board
UN      United Nations
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UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
VSAL Village Savings and Lending
1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

In April 2017, the United Nations (UN), pursuant to Secretary General and Security Council Resolution 1612 listed Boko Haram (BH) and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) as parties to conflict that recruit and use children in the perpetuation of violence in North East Nigeria. Subsequently, the UN signed an Action Plan with CJTF to prevent the use of children by CJTF and separate children from their ranks. At the time, there were approximately 5,000 children in CJTF ranks according to UNICEF estimates. A joint UN mission was then set up to verify children listed in CJTF ranks as an entry point to supporting their separation and reintegration. Against this background, Search developed a 12 month pilot project (May 2018 – April 2019), the ‘Supporting Socio-Economic Re-Integration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAG), including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in North-East Nigeria.’ Funded by the European Union and United States Department of State Funds through UNICEF, the project was implemented in Maiduguri Metropolitan Centre (MMC), Jere and Mafa Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Borno State. The project sought to address the psychosocial aspects of re-integration of CAAG as well as provide for education, livelihoods, and vocational training while creating a conducive environment for socio-economic reintegration of CAAG. Accordingly, its overall objective was to support the long-term reintegration of children associated with armed groups (CJTF) in the North East of Nigeria.

The main activities implemented during the pilot project included transformative dialogues, supporting access to education, apprenticeships and micro-enterprise trainings, business opportunities and administrative support sessions, supporting girls and boys (above 15 years) to secure self- or wage employment, a radio programme featuring drama, debate and other activities done by children, a socio-economic reintegration radio round-table discussion by experts, trauma healing sessions and small community strengthening initiatives in addition to ongoing case management, which began in earnest in April 2019.

1.2 Methodology

In May 2019, Search Nigeria commissioned an independent consultant to conduct the final evaluation of the pilot project. The evaluation was to be done within the period June to August 2019. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess project performance on the basis of OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, with a main focus on its relevance, effectiveness and impact. Its specific objectives were to:

- Evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of this intervention, based on local needs and conditions, as well as the best interest of the children;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention in teams of approach used, challenges, and which activities are the most effective or least effective and why;
- Evaluate the impact of this intervention, on children associated with armed groups and on their communities;

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2 At design, the project spanned the period May 2018 – April 2019. However, the project was later granted a no-cost extension (NCE) up to 31 August 2019.
3 Engaging adolescent children of legal age, according to ILO minimum age Convention 138.
4 This was not budgeted into the original programme document, and instead was introduced during a budget realignment as part of the NCE.
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- Evaluate how the project has coordinated with and leveraged on similar efforts by government and non-government partners, and to what impact;
- Document lessons learnt that should be factored in if this type of intervention is to be replicated in a different intervention or scaled up; and
- Suggest clear and actionable recommendations for future reintegration programming in the region.

The evaluation adopted a ‘before and after’ study design, applied a mixed methods approach and utilised participatory impact assessment techniques to mitigate the deficiencies of a pure ‘before and after’ design. Key analytical techniques used include comparison of the situation of beneficiaries before the pilot project to their situation after the project, assessment of end line performance indicator values against targets set at project design as qualitative perception of beneficiaries with regards to the factors that contributed to the changes that occurred in their lives over the project period.

Data were collected using qualitative and quantitative techniques from both secondary and primary sources. Key methods of data collection included a desk review, outcomes survey on 293 children (80 girls), 71 caregivers (36 female), 23 key informants (7 female) and eight focus group discussions. Quantitative data was collected using a SurveyCTO platform loaded on mobile devices. Quantitative analysis was done using SurveyCTO, Ms Excel and SPSS while content analysis was done for the qualitative data. Data were presented in prose, tables and charts to provide clarity and enhance visual impression.

1.3 Limitations

Limited time and resources set constraints on sample size. However, working with qualified enumerators after providing them with adequate training customised to the constraints helped to mitigate these limitations. In addition, the security situation in Borno State remains fluid and access to some areas remains risky and restricted. Owing to this, the evaluation fieldwork was done in Jere and MMC Local Government Areas (LGAs) although programme implementation was also done in Mafa LGA. Finally, the lead consultant was conversant in neither Hausa nor Kanuri, the local languages of the target communities. This challenge was mitigated through engaging the services of a translator.

1.4 Key Findings

The ‘Supporting Socio-Economic Reintegration of CAAG’ pilot project had undisputable relevance. It came at a time when the Action Plan to separate children from CJTF had just been signed between the UN and CJTF and a critical mass of former CAAG were about to be separated from CJTF. These children needed support in socio-economic reintegration to reduce their chances of re-recruitment, address the trauma they suffered during their association with armed groups and facilitate their smooth transition from military to civilian life. Also, there was need to create a conducive environment for reintegration of former CAAG in the target communities. The project design, however, had five shortcomings: too short a project duration, allocation of beneficiaries into ‘education support’ and ‘economic opportunities support’ silos without leaving room for a layered approach providing both education and economic opportunities support for children in the 14-17 years category, inadequate consideration of equity concerns and narrow focus on just children without due consideration of the need for support youth (up to 24 years) who missed out on childhood development due to the decade long insurgency.
To a large extent the pilot project was effective. By the time of its closure, the project had helped strengthen the resilience of 961 children (170 being girls), enabled access to, and retention in, formal education for 513 children (67 girls), enabled access to literacy classes for 138 adolescents, enhanced employability for 408 Children, (74 girls) and contributed to improvement in the attitude of community members in MMC, Jere and Mafa towards children separated from armed groups and their socio-economic reintegration. The project surpassed targets for 11 of its 12 indicators. Overall, project performance was satisfactory on a six point scale adapted from World Bank performance rating system. The project could have been more effective had the education intervention been more holistic, however it is recognised that this was beyond the scope of the project agreed between the implementing partner and donor. Also, standardising community based apprenticeships (vocational skills training) and increasing duration for the apprenticeships would have enhanced effects of these activities.

The project helped increase the psychosocial wellbeing of beneficiaries. Reduced social isolation, aggression and difficulty falling asleep were reported by the children. Quality of learning environments at target schools was improved through provision of furniture under a Memorandum of Understanding within which Search provided 600 desks to schools in lieu of school fees. Some of the project’s economic opportunities support beneficiaries already earn up to ₦9,000 per month and are helping buy food and non-food items for their households, while at the same time accumulating savings to re-invest in order to grow their micro-enterprises. Further, testimonies from informants show that the project has –to some extent – helped to increase community awareness of the need to separate CAAG from CJTF and to support socio-economic reintegration of former CAAG, including repentant former AOG members. Although it is too early and hence still premature to realise widespread impact due to the project, early signs of project impact already abound.

1.5 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Funds permitting, extend, expand and replicate the project;
- Re-engineer the education intervention;
- Tweak the economic opportunities support under the project;
- Provide more software in addition to hardware community support initiatives; and
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems for future similar projects.

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5 The final reach of direct beneficiaries is 921 (513 Education beneficiaries, and 408 Enterprise beneficiaries). The higher number originally reported was due to additional children attending trainings.
6 On the World Bank IEG harmonised scale, satisfactory means that the project only had minor shortcomings. This is second to the top rating, Highly Satisfactory.
7 The desks were provided in lieu of schools fees for the duration of the child’s education period.
2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Context

The armed conflict in Borno State, North-East Nigeria has lasted almost a decade and has precipitated a plethora of challenges, especially for children as among the most vulnerable in society. Traumatic experiences that children have suffered include - among others - violence, loss of parents or siblings, loss of limbs (in some cases), abduction, sexual harassment, participating in atrocities, forced marriage before reaching 18 years, child motherhood, forced recruitment into armed group, and protracted displacement. Over half of the 2.3 million people displaced people have been children, and thousands more have been kidnapped and held by armed opposition groups (AOGs). Children have also suffered the worst impacts as pre-existing structural problems of entrenched poverty, low levels of economic growth, persistently high levels of unemployment, restricted access to social protection, education and healthcare became exacerbated. On the other hand, new threats like violence-related mental ill-health, secondary trauma and failure of child protection systems also emerged.

The spate of terror, abductions, maiming and killings by AOGs required response. At a grassroots level, volunteer vigilante groups emerged to support the Nigerian government’s military response to AOGs. Major among these was the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), which gained recognition by the Borno State Government and whose members - adults and children alike - were regarded as heroes by community members. The children in CJTF had held such roles as cooking for adult CJTF fighters, intelligence gathering (spying), searching suspected suicide bombers on entry to public gatherings and - in some instances- participating in arresting, torturing and killing of AOG members. They had dropped out of school, abandoned their income generating activities and become involved in grassroots level armed response mechanisms. According to a 2017 UN report, the rights of children in both AOG and CJTF were compromised. As a result, millions of conflict affected children required urgent support to recover from the impact of Boko Haram insurgency and the subsequent armed response by the government with support from community based volunteers. The children needed support not only to recover, but to rebuild their lives and gain resilience in order to reduce the risk of future radicalization and re-recruitment into armed groups.

Concerned with the participation of children in armed conflict, the United Nations (UN), in Secretary General and Security Council Resolution 1612 listed both BH and CJTF as parties to conflict that recruit and use children in the perpetuation of violence. Subsequently, the UN signed an Action Plan with CJTF to prevent use of children by CJTF and separate children from their ranks. At the time, there were approximately 5000 children in CJTF ranks according UNICEF estimates. A joint UN mission was then set up to verify children listed in CJTF ranks as an entry point to supporting their separation and re-integration. Reintegration support was considered a necessary cog in the machinery of effectively, efficiently and sustainably addressing the effects of insurgency and breaking the cycle of violence by not only meeting the physical but also social, mental and emotional needs of children in North-East Nigeria who are growing up in intense violence, conflict, poverty, lack of services and unemployment.

2.2 About the Supporting Socio-Economic Reintegration Project

Against the above described background, Search for Common Ground (Search) developed a twelve month pilot project (May 2018 – April 2019\textsuperscript{11}) – the ‘Supporting Socio-Economic Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAG), including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in North-East Nigeria.’ Funded by the European Union through UNICEF, the project was implemented in MMC, Jere and Mafa Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Borno State in North-East Nigeria. In line with the Paris Principles, the project sought to address the psychosocial aspects of reintegration of CAAG as well as provide for education, livelihoods, and vocational skills training. Accordingly, its overall objective was ‘to support the long-term reintegration of children associated with armed groups (CJTF) in the North East of Nigeria.’ Pursuant to its overall objective the project had three specific objectives and six expected results that are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Objectives and Expected Results of the Supporting Socio-Economic Reintegration Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
<th>Expected Results (ER)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SO1: To strengthen the resilience of children associated with CJTF in North-East Nigeria</td>
<td><strong>ER 1.1:</strong> 2 300 children associated with CJTF show increased abilities to cope with trauma and engage constructively with and in their communities. <strong>ER 1.2:</strong> 400 children associated with CJTF supported to resume education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO2: To empower and support children associated with CJTF for increased employability</td>
<td><strong>ER 2.1:</strong> 300 children associated with the CJTF have increased financial literacy and enterprise understanding <strong>ER 2.2:</strong> 300 children associated with CJTF show enhanced capacities to access self-employment or wage-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO3: To create a conducive environment and community support for the social and economic re-integration and separation of children associated with CJTF</td>
<td><strong>ER 3.1:</strong> Target communities in North-East Nigeria better understand and value the socio-economic re-integration needs of children and the positive role children of children in communities as agents of peace. <strong>ER 3.2:</strong> Target communities in North-East Nigeria where community strengthening initiatives were conducted have increase positive attitude and behavior towards children dissociated from CJTF and their socio-economic re-integration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Children formerly associated with CJTF, other vulnerable children and beneficiary community members were the main groups targeted by the project. The project was based on Search’s ‘Common Ground Approach’. Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm principles were built into the project. Further, the project directly sought to uphold the Best Interests of the Child and apply UNICEF’s Equity focus in order to stimulate, support and facilitate sustainable socio-economic re-integration of CAAG using a triple foci concept (fig 1).

\textsuperscript{11} At design, the project spanned the period May 2018 – April 2019. However, the project was later granted a no-cost extension (NCE) up to 31 August 2019.
Activities done during the pilot project included transformative dialogues; supporting access to education; apprenticeships and micro-enterprise trainings; business opportunities and administrative support sessions; supporting girls and boys (above 14-15 years) to secure self- or wage employment, a radio programme featuring drama, debate and other activities done by children; a socio-economic reintegration radio round-table discussion by experts; trauma healing sessions and small community strengthening initiatives.

By the time of its closure, the project had helped strengthen the resilience of 961 children (170 girls; 791 boys), enabled access to, and retention in, formal education for 549 children (453 boys, 96 girls), enabled access to literacy classes for 138 adolescents, enhanced employability for 411 Children, (336 boys, 75 girls) and contributed to improvement in the attitude of community members in MMC, Jere and Mafa towards children separated from armed groups and their socio-economic re-integration. The project surpassed targets for seven of its 12 indicators. The project achieved satisfactory performance in ten out of twelve indicators, thus attaining a 86% achievement, overall.

The project demonstrated that going beyond stakeholder coordination to stakeholder collaboration enhances project effectiveness; that combining mass media communication and grassroots community theatre is an effective strategy for influencing transformation of community attitudes towards CAAG as well confronting sensitive issues in emotionally appealing ways without inducing violent conflict and that the use of selected tools from the ‘Common Ground Approach Toolkit’ is not only relevant but also effective in supporting long-term socio-economic re-integration of children and youth associated with armed forces and armed groups.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Final Evaluation and its Objectives

In May 2019, Search Nigeria commissioned an independent consultant to conduct a final evaluation of the ‘Supporting the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAG) including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in North-East Nigeria’ pilot project within the period June to August 2019. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess project performance on the basis of OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, with a main focus on relevance, effectiveness and impact of the project. Its specific objectives were as follows:

- Evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of this intervention, based on local needs and conditions, as well as the best interest of the children;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention in teams of approach used, challenges, and which activities are the most effective or least effective and why;
- Evaluate the impact of this intervention, on children associated with armed groups and on their communities;
- Evaluate how the project has coordinated with and leveraged on similar efforts by government and non-government partners, and to what impact;
- Document lessons learnt that should be factored in if this type of intervention is to be replicated in a different intervention or scaled up; and
- Suggest clear and actionable recommendations for future reintegration programming in the region.

The TOR did not provide evaluation questions. Evaluation questions were developed by the consultant and shared with Search for review and approval prior to data collection.
3.2 Evaluation Design

The evaluation adopted a ‘Before and After’ Evaluation. The socio-economic, psychosocial and general resilience statuses of children formerly associated with armed groups before the programme were compared to their situation after the programme. The final evaluation also shipped in aspects of participatory impact assessment to ensure that changes to mitigate deficiencies of the ‘Before and After’ design in terms of outcome and impact attribution. Key analytical techniques employed during the evaluation included:

- Comparison of the situation before to the situation after programme implementation on the basis of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators;
- Assessment of end line indicators against targets set at programme design;
- Qualitative assessment of beneficiary perceptions of factors (both project related and those not related to the project) that contributed to changes in their lives.

3.3 Evaluation Approach

A mixed methods approach was adopted. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Quantitative methods helped assess changes in numerical indicator values while qualitative methods helped to understand how and why observed changes occurred. Child-friendly data collection methods were used for collecting data from children. This was necessary since children – especially those who have survived traumatic experiences in their lives - do not open up if they feel uncomfortable with activities being done.

3.4 Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation covered the period from May 2018 to June 2019. At design the project period was May 2018 to April 2019. Later, a no cost extension (NCE) – up to the 31st of August 2019 - was granted by UNICEF. However, the external evaluation covered the period up to June 2019 because it was commissioned to start in June 2019. Although the evaluation took place before the project completion date, the majority of project activities had been completed.

Fieldwork for the evaluation study was done in Jere and MMC LGAs. Although project implementation was also done in Mafa LGA (in addition to Jere and MMC), only 22 out of a total of 921 direct beneficiaries were in Mafa LGA. Also, since project implementation in Mafa got into full swing in March 2019 because UNICEF provided Search with the verified prospective beneficiary list for Mafa much later than the lists for the other two LGAs, it was considered too early to evaluate project effectiveness and impact just three months after the start of implementation. Further, complex security clearance requirements for entry of the evaluation team into Mafa LGA implied that visiting it could have consumed a disproportionate amount of the time and resources for this evaluation.

3.5 Sampling

3.5.1 Sampling for Qualitative data collection

Purposive sampling was used to identify key informants and participants during consultative meetings and focus group discussions (FGD). Only those individuals and corporate entities that - by virtue’ of their stations
in life - stood on vantage ground to provide useful information to the evaluation served as key informants. These included, among others, representatives of Search, UNICEF, and relevant government line ministries, religious and traditional leaders. In total, 23 key informants (see Annex 4) and eight FGDs were conducted.

3.5.2 Sampling for the Outcomes Survey

The project reached 921 direct beneficiaries. These were used as a sampling frame for the evaluation. Creative Research Systems Survey Software was used to estimate an appropriate sample size for the outcomes survey. At 95% confidence level, and 5% margin of error, a sample size of 275 respondents was determined at the time of study design. In reality, the evaluation team managed to administer 293 questionnaires to 80 girls and 213 boys, thus achieving 107% of the planned sample (Table 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Evaluation Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Questionnaire</td>
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<td>Caregivers’ Questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Informants</td>
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3.6 Data Collection Methods

A review of relevant documents was carried out including the project document, narrative and statistical monitoring reports, among others. The review provided initial insights on programmes achievements and lessons learnt. It also informed the design of data collection tools. Face-to-face, semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) of relevant management and staff of Search, its partners, and key stakeholders were then done. Findings were cross-checked from one respondent to the other while strict confidentiality was ensured. Separate FGDs were held with female and male caregivers and female and male beneficiary children. Separating females from males was considered appropriate as it avoided domination of females by males during discussions and is also more culturally appropriate in a predominantly patriarchal society. Each FGD comprised 6-8 participants to ensure that every member could participate. Child-friendly participatory data collection methods such as the ‘H method’

A pre-coded outcomes survey questionnaire was administered to selected direct beneficiaries using mobile devices on a SurveyCTO platform. Items on the questionnaire directly derived from the project’s expected results statements to ensure that only necessary data was collected in line with the optimal ignorance principle.

Finally, direct observation of the activities being done by enterprise development beneficiaries was also done. An observation checklist was used. During the visit to the beneficiaries’ activity centres, informal discussions of earnings, expenses and profit or loss were also done to obtain an idea of the viability of enterprises at the time of project closure.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For simplicity and relevance to all sections of the audience, quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were analysed in thematic categories. Content analysis techniques were applied during the qualitative analysis. Data collected from various sources using various methods were triangulated during the analysis.

### 3.8 Evaluation Team

Farai Magombedze, an independent Evaluation expert (male), served as the lead consultant. He was supported by Ruth Muregi (female), who served as Social Work Specialist for the evaluation (home-based). In addition to the two consultants, an eight member field team (four female and four male) of Hausa speaking people who had at least a first degree in a Social Science Programme and fluency in English was constituted. Two of these (one female and one male) served as Field Supervisors while six served as Enumerators.

### 3.9 Difficulties and Limitations of the Study

The evaluation had a somewhat lean budget. The Terms of Reference (TOR) described it as a ‘cost-effective evaluation’. Budgetary constraints set limits to the number of days that could be spent and number of assistants who could be employed on the evaluation. Enumerator training was done on one day only as the available budget could not allow for the food, transport and subsistence costs for a two-day workshop. It is noteworthy, however, that the one-day enumerator training workshop was a success for two reasons: (i) the entry qualifications for the evaluation assistants were so high that they found it easy to sail through the training, and (ii) the trainer adjusted their training approach and techniques to the available time.

The lead Consultant was not conversant with local languages. Services of interpreters and translators were hired to offset this challenge.

Finally, the first three days of field work in Maiduguri coincided with a compulsory ‘all staff” training in the ‘Common Ground Approach.’ During those days the consultant had planned to have a series of KII with Search staff. The consultant had to ‘make do with what was available’ – for instance, a consultative meeting with staff that was planned to take an hour was reduced to 30 minutes. Also, some KIIs were then done out of normal working hours to make up for time spent on the other competing activities.
4. FINDINGS

The ‘Supporting Socio-Economic Re-Integration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAG) in North-East Nigeria’ pilot project helped increase resilience for 921 children. It provided safe spaces and processes for trauma healing and contributed to increased access to – and retention in – formal education while increasing youth literacy enrolment at the same time. It also helped increase financial literacy, entrepreneurial and vocational skills among children associated with armed groups. Beneficiaries’ capacity to initiate wage- and/ or self-employment in their communities was improved while a positive attitude towards supporting separation of children from CJTF was inculcated in community members. Although widespread impact was not possible to achieve in the one year project period, stories of change narrated by a sample of beneficiaries do show that positive change in terms of community acceptance of the need to separate children from CJTF and support their socio-economic reintegration has begun to occur. In this chapter, findings of the final project evaluation are provided. The findings are organised around the evaluation objectives provided in the TOR.

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 Consistency with the Needs of Beneficiaries and Target Communities

The project had undisputable consistency with the needs of the beneficiaries and target communities. It was designed at a time when CJTF and the United Nations had just drawn up an Action Plan to prevent use of children by CJTF and separate (the then estimated 5,000) children within CJTF ranks pursuant to UN Secretary General and Security Council Resolution 1612. A joint UN mission had been commissioned to verify children listed in CJTF ranks as an entry point to separating them. Given this context, supporting socio-economic reintegration of CAAG to cater for the needs of children upon separation to prevent them from re-joining armed groups or perpetrating anti-social behaviour in their communities was critically needed. It, for instance, provided a way of productively occupying adolescents after separation, minimising negative impacts of disengaged youth.

In joining CJTF ranks the children had left education, abandoned child play and forsaken livelihoods activities. Considering this, the project’s inclusion of ‘back to school’ and employability support interventions was relevant.

As members of armed groups, children had witnessed cruel killings and some had participated in atrocities. Testimonies given by some boys associated with CJTF during a transformative dialogue session attended by the evaluator revealed that they had personally killed some members of AOGs or witnessed killings. They did not show remorse for these killings. Others had suffered multiple forms of deprivation and exposed to physical, emotional and –in some cases – sexual abuse during the time they were associated with armed groups. These were traumatic experiences. The trauma was even worse for child survivors of AOG abduction, conscription.
and those who had joined due to radicalisation. In the circumstances, trauma healing – which this project provided for - was one among the most critical needs of the children associated with armed groups. More than three quarters of key informants interviewed praised Search for being unique in facilitating trauma healing and peace as opposed to several agencies that were competing in providing food and non-food items. They lauded it for helping transform CAAG from being traumatised agents of vengeance and violence to agents of forgiveness and peace.

Children associated with CJTF or AOGs had lost their childhood. They were in danger of becoming a lost generation. There was a need to help them regain their childhood or support their progression to the next stage of their life cycle (youth) with dignity. Supporting access to education and employability for children was clearly necessary.

The response was relevant to addressing the structural determinants for recruitment. At the time of project design there was need to have a response that would address the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors at the heart of child recruitment. A long history of deep seated poverty, low rate of economic growth, high unemployment levels, scarcity of social and economic growth opportunities and limited access to conventional ‘western’ education characterised North East Nigeria prior to the insurgency. These –or at least their derivatives- constituted the push factors for recruitment. On the other hand, the lure of financial incentive promises, peer pressure, misinformation and radicalisation constituted pull factors. The response addressed some of these root causes of the recruitment problem. It advocated for social harmony and peace, access to education, gender equality, acceptance of female and male returnees from AOGs by family and community members and acceptance of separation of children from CJTF by CJTF, family and community members through community theatre and amplified the advocacy through mass media communication (programmes on radio). At the same time, it supported age-appropriate access to- and retention in – education alongside access to wage- or self-employment for the CAAG. In addition, the response worked on creating a conducive environment for acceptance of returnees in the target communities by providing community support initiatives, in so doing dealing with differences of tribal origin, religious orientation or political affiliation. and creating a fertile ground for further peace building initiatives. The response was, thus, relevant to addressing underlying causes of recruitment. It was appropriately designed to minimise chances of future recruitment.

4.1.2 Cultural Appropriateness, Conflict Sensitivity and Conformity to Do no Harm Principles

The project was designed and implemented in a way that ensured that no harm was inflicted on any beneficiary category. While the main target beneficiaries were children separated from CJTF, the project also included other vulnerable children to avoid creating that impression that children associated with CJTF were being rewarded for their association. At design the project sought to ensure a ratio of three children associated with CJTF to one other vulnerable child among its beneficiaries. Although this ratio could not be attained due to resource constraints, it is noteworthy that throughout the implementation and monitoring of the project, CAAG and other vulnerable children were treated in a similar manner.

Further, the project tactfully included a very sensitive beneficiary category, children separated from AOGs. About 30 children associated with AOGs were included in the project with their identity, in most of the cases (save for some who chose to open up) being concealed. Field evidence from key informant interviews and

13 Although children associated with CJTF were the main focus of the pilot project 30 of the 921 beneficiaries were associated with AOGs and many others were just vulnerable children who had not associated with either CJTF or AOGs although none was clear with regards to the identity of the other in line with the ‘Do No Harm’ principles.
participant observation during a transformative dialogue session suggests that if their association with AOGs was known to all the beneficiaries associated with CJTF, they may have been at risk since currently acceptance of repentant former AOG members in the target communities is not yet universal.

The project communicated the intervention in a way that avoided harm. Since addressing needs of CAAG is by nature sensitive, the project used the moniker ‘Dignifying Our Children’ instead of using the name ‘Supporting Socio-Economic Reintegration of CAAG’ in communicating the intervention to communities. The moniker was used a label on visibility regalia and also as the central theme for Radio programmes.

The pilot project demonstrated cultural sensitivity and avoided doing harm by being community-based. Being community-based implied the need to comply with community entry protocol and respect community leadership\(^\text{14}\). Feedback from community leaders and other stakeholders shows that the protocol was properly followed and that project staff – including the community observers/case workers - respected community leadership. The project opted for community-based apprenticeship as opposed to taking children out of their communities to vocational centres where they could have been regarded strangers or exposed to physical harm during travel to and from the centres. Community-based support was also in line with global best practices concerning the need to emphasise family and community links in the process of transition to civilian life\(^\text{15}\).

The project included community support initiatives which benefited the whole community. These were chosen by a broad spectrum of community representatives in a participatory manner. Thus, the focus on CAAG was embedded in a broader focus on the community as a whole to avoid conflict.

The pilot project took into consideration the target communities’ way of life (culture). Considering that more than eighty percent of the beneficiaries are Muslim, the project actively involved religious leaders (e.g. Imams) in Transformative Dialogues that sought to promote the separation and socio-economic reintegration of CAAG. Also, beneficiaries of community-based apprenticeship were given an opportunity to choose trades to pursue from those already practiced in their communities. Since these trades already existed in - and were part of the way of life for - target communities, the project avoided introducing trades that were alien to the target communities. An unexpected outcome of this approach was that beneficiaries chose trades in line with the structural gender stereotypes, with girls choosing to undergo apprenticeship in trades that are typically women’s trades in Borno State (e.g. knitting, hairdressing, perfume making) while boys chose apprenticeship in trades that are considered typical for men. Only tailoring was a zone of confluence for both girls and boys since it is also a trade practiced by both men and women.

The project’s cultural appropriateness was further enhanced through the inclusion of Locally Rooted Cultural Activities (Community Participatory Theatre). Participatory theatre enabled culturally rooted objections to acceptance of returnees from AOGs to be thoroughly explored without the discussions turning violent despite extreme differences in beliefs and opinions of community members.

Finally, the choice of community support initiatives which the project supported was made by community members and their leaders in a participatory manner. Experience shows that when given a choice, communities choose initiatives that are in line with their way of life. As such, consultations with target communities to


identify community support initiatives constituted a way of not only ensuring conflict sensitivity but also cultural appropriateness.

### 4.1.3 Appropriateness of Design and Alignment to Paris Principles

To a large extent, the project design was appropriate. It comprised the key components of a reintegration project. In line with article 7.30 of the Paris principles, the project avoided further stigmatisation of CAAG by wider provision of benefits and support not only to this sector of children but also to other vulnerable children in the target communities. It also emphasised resilience building for the children in line with the Principles.

Again, in line with the Paris Principles, it took into consideration what CAAG required in order to re-enter civilian life in an age appropriate stage of their life cycle. CAAG below the age 14 years were allocated to the education intervention while those who were 15 years or older had the opportunity to choose between returning to school or being supported with skills to enhance their employability. Programming was done in line with International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No.138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work. The project design had the limitation of creating ‘silos’ for beneficiaries. An education beneficiary could not be an economic opportunities support beneficiary. While this was good for children 10-14 years (whose employment would be illegal), for children in the 15-17 years age category, there was latitude for a layered programming approach, providing both education and employability support. In this pilot project, the layered programming approach was not included in the original design. Although the project later managed to provide literacy support to 138 enterprise support beneficiaries through partnering with the State Agency for Mass Education (SAME), education beneficiaries in the 15 – 17 years age category did not have an opportunity to also get enterprise support. Qualitative evidence from educational support beneficiaries in the 15-17 years category interviewed shows that they would generally have preferred both educational and employability support but were not given the opportunity.

One shortcoming of the project was its focus on just children rather than children and youth. Since the conflict in North-East Nigeria has lasted for a decade, many of the youth in CJTF today joined the group when they were children. A child recruited at 14 years of age six years ago was a 19 year old youth by 2018 when the project started. Such a youth missed proper social, emotional and mental development appropriate for civilian life. If not re-integrated, these youths constitute a time-bomb for Maiduguri and North-East Nigeria in general.

The shortness of project duration was another drawback of this pilot project. It was planned to last just 12 months and later extended to 16 months. Evidence from this evaluation shows that even the sixteen months was too short. Some activities that required repetition for consolidation of effects, trauma healing sessions and transformative dialogue sessions, for instance, were just done once off. The duration of community-based apprenticeship programmes (attachment of vocational skills training beneficiaries to community-based artisans) had to be minimised as these activities had to have ‘graduation ceremonies’ and appropriate closure before project closure. The project was just too short. According to World Bank CPR guidelines, ‘Re-

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16 The basic minimum age for employment is 15, though can be 14 years for light work in emergency contexts in developing countries. See further information at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C138

17 Nor was there budget to support this.
integration requires a reasonable period, at least three to five years of committed resources. Sustainable socio-economic re-integration is a long process, not an event.

4.1.4 Extent of Sync with Search’s Common Ground Approach

The Project was largely in sync with the Common Ground Approach (CGA). It used tools from the CGA toolkit in transforming the way caregivers, community members and other stakeholders viewed children associated with CJTF and AOGs. Using the CGA toolkit, it influenced social acceptance of returnees from AOGs captivity and repentant AOG members.

The CGA is built around the premise that in order to transform the way we deal with conflict, change must take place in the perception of ‘self’, perception of ‘the other’, perception of ‘the issues’, and this must be also accompanied by transformation of the relationships (among individuals, institutions, communities, tribes etc) and the process. On the basis of this premise, the project used transformative dialogue sessions to facilitate change in self-perception among CAAG, change in perception of CAAG by their caregivers and community members (others) as well as perceptions of whether separation and socio-economic integration of children associated with CJTF was necessary (the issue). Community perception of issues around the need for separation and socio-economic reintegration of children associated with CJTF, and also the need for family and community acceptance of returnees from AOGs was influenced through use of culturally appropriate theatrical performances. Efforts to positively influence self-perception, perception of others and also perception of issues at stake were amplified through radio programmes. Transformative dialogue sessions, participatory theatre as well as radio programmes are some of the tools in the CGA toolkit. The use of these tools during this pilot project demonstrates the project’s alignment to the Common Ground Approach.

There were however, areas of divergence between this project and the CGA. For instance, application of CGA requires commitment for the long-term and taking interventions to scale. However, this project was a pilot and did not allow for ‘commitment for the long-term’ or ‘large-scale implementation’.

4.1.5 Alignment with UNICEF’S Mission in North-East Nigeria

Search’s Reintegration for CAAG pilot project was fully aligned to UNICEF’s mission in Nigeria. Reintegration of CAAG is the third among six thematic areas that UNICEF is focusing on in North-East Nigeria. Search’s project not only falls squarely into this thematic area but also incorporates aspects of two other thematic foci of UNICEF (case management as well as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)).

4.1.6. Extent of Sync with UNICEF’s Focus on Equity

UNICEF equity approach seeks to eliminate unjust and avoidable circumstances that deprive children of their rights. It requires that interventions prioritise worst-off groups with interventions that address causes of inequity. Using this definition, this section grapples with the question of whether the project was in sync with UNICEF’s equity focus.

Equity concerns are best tackled if equity considerations are made at the beneficiary selection stage and measures to mainstream equity are taken on board throughout the project. Since beneficiary selection was done

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19 Segone, M & Bamberger, M. 2010. How to design Equity Focused Evaluations. UNICEF.
by UNICEF, a substantial share of the responsibility for ensuring that equity considerations are taken on board for this pilot project rested with UNICEF.

It is noteworthy that the target group for the project (CAAG) constituted one category of children who are deprived of their rights due to avoidable circumstances. CAAG miss education, are deprived of play and removed from environments that are most conducive to their social, mental, emotional and physical development. Considering this, targeting CAAG with interventions that focus on their separation from armed groups and socio-economic reintegration was in line with ensuring equitable programming as it sought to remove barriers that unfairly held CAAG back while other children progressed. However, in a context where children separated from AOGs face more stigma and discrimination than those separated from CJTF, equitable programming would have required a greater thrust on supporting those children. It is notable that the project managed to include about 30 children associated with AOGs in line with donor requirements and specification.

The project targeted children from some of the poorest households in MMC, Jere and Mafa. Commendable attempts at reaching the poorest to lift them to a platform where their children and adolescents can access education and/or self- or wage-employment like children of the better off were made. However, qualitative evidence from key informants show that some children from well-to-do households found their way into the project. This is also corroborated by quantitative evidence: for instance, more than 30 education support beneficiaries (who were provided with back to school kits) were learning at private schools where tuition fees are in the range of N25,000 – N50,000 (as opposed to government schools where PTA and health levies constitute a meagre N1,000 combined).

In North-East Nigeria, girls are more marginalised than boys. Also, among children separated from armed groups, girls tend to face more stigma than boys. This pilot project targeted both girls and boys. Education support was provided to both girls and boys with advocacy for gender equity being done through community theatre and radio programmes. This is in line with the tenets of equitable programming. Under the enterprise development support intervention, children were allowed to choose trades in which to pursue skills development through community-based apprenticeships. This freedom of choice is a form of empowerment to girls. However, it was apparent that most of the choices made were along gender constructs typical of the target communities: girls chose trades that are traditionally regarded ‘women’s trades’ (e.g. hairdressing and making perfumes) while boys chose trades that are typically regarded as ‘men’s trades’. Workshops on gender equality to make girls and boys aware that girls can venture into trades that are regarded as ‘trades for men’ could have gone a step towards enhancing equity since some trades that are regarded as being ‘just for men’ tend to be more financially rewarding (e.g. welding, carpentry) than those for women. It is noteworthy, however, that training efforts have already begun with Search Enterprise Officers promoting greater equality during MEF and BASS sessions as well the Child Protection Manager providing Gender Equality Training to subordinates.

Apparently, the project did not have mechanisms to cater for girls with children. Research shows that the participation of girls with children in training, education or livelihoods activities is restricted if ‘baby care’ concerns are not taken care of. While some girls with children, married girls and girls who were pregnant upon separation from armed groups were included in the project, beneficiary registers showing disaggregation by these categories to cater for the scope of hindrances to their benefiting from the interventions were not developed. Their specific needs, in addition to the general needs of the target beneficiaries were not adequately catered for.
Project beneficiary statistics do not show children with disabilities (CWD). An equity focus requires that programmes identify children with disabilities among target beneficiaries and provide necessary support to minimise the disadvantages to attaining full programme benefits that may affect CWD. As an entry step, disaggregation of beneficiary statistics by disability would be necessary. This was not done in this project.

The pilot project did not reach the hardest to reach as an equity focus would have required. It was largely confined to Maiduguri\textsuperscript{20}, perhaps one of the easiest to reach, one of the most stable locations in North-East Nigeria at present. The CAAG who were – and still are - hardest to reach were not reached. Stakeholder interviews revealed that even UNICEF is facing challenges to reach the hardest to reach because of the violent conflict and the attendant inaccessibility characteristic of many LGAs of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states of North –East Nigeria. As a result, it is employing the services of third party consultants (state facilitators) in some areas. Thus, security concerns imposed a limit to the extent to which the hardest to reach could have been included in the Project.

4.2 Project Effectiveness

4.2.1 Achievement of Specific Objectives and Expected Results

According to the project document, the ultimate expected result of the project was ‘Grave violations against children are monitored and reported; and children and adolescents who have suffered from such violations, including those formerly associated with armed groups or returning from captivity, are supported to successfully reintegrate into their communities.’

This ultimate expected result comprises two parts: (i) Grave violations against children are monitored and reported; and (ii) children and adolescents who have suffered from such violations, including those formerly associated with armed groups or returning from captivity, are supported to successfully reintegrate into their communities.

The expected result, ‘Grave violations against children are monitored and reported’ – which clearly relates to Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms (MRM) for the six grave violations - was not achieved. The project design did not have any activity clusters leading to attainment of this result. Discussions with Search management and staff revealed that this was because there is a sentiment within Search that monitoring and reporting of grave violations is contra Search’s Common Ground Approach. MRM is by its very nature a form of ‘finger pointing’ and adversarial whereas common ground approaches seek to move away from adversarial approaches. Secondly, in North-East Nigeria, where the project was implemented, MRM work is sensitive. So, Search currently regards MRM as work that other organisations can do while it concentrates on core competencies.

It is noteworthy that the project logic effectively talked to the expected result, ‘Children and adolescents who have suffered from grave violations, including those formerly associated with armed groups and returning from captivity, are supported to successfully reintegrate into their communities.’ Interestingly, the three objectives of the supporting socio-economic reintegration pilot project were, to a large extent achieved. The project surpassed targets for ten of its twelve performance indicators (see Table 3 below). Two of the

\textsuperscript{20}With only 22 out of 921 beneficiaries being in Mafa LGA.
performance indicators are to be assessed four months after completion of employability support training and were not due for assessment at the time of this final evaluation.

The project had satisfactory performance in ten out of twelve indicators, thus attaining a 86% achievement, overall. This score includes two indicators for which assessment was not possible as described in the preceding paragraph.

Table 3: Performance of the Pilot Project against Set Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Actual Achieved</th>
<th>% Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 1: To strengthen the resilience of children associated with CJTF in North East Nigeria.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children associated with CJTF show increased ability to cope with trauma and engage constructively with and in their communities</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. % of children associated with CJTF show increased ability to cope with trauma and engage constructively with and in their communities</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50.2%&lt;sup&gt;21&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Number of children associated with CJTF who show increased engagement in school and after school activities.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>292&lt;sup&gt;22&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Number of Children Associated with CJTF supported to resume school education</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Number of children associated with CJTF who show 50% pass mark in school end of term assessments</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>413&lt;sup&gt;23&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5. % of children who proceed to the next level at the end of the school year</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>75%&lt;sup&gt;24&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 2: To empower and support children associated with CJTF for increased employability.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children associated with CJTF have increased financial literacy and enterprise understanding</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>119%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Number of children associated with CJTF showing enhanced capacity to access self-employment or wage employment</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>119%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. % increase in knowledge and skills among children associated with CJTF on financial literacy and enterprise understanding immediately after their training</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. % of children associated with CJTF trained who are self-employed 4 months after the training</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. % of children associated with CJTF trained who are in wage employment 4 months after the training</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 3: To create a conducive environment and community support for the social and economic reintegration and separation of children associated with CJTF.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>21</sup> Source: Outcomes survey carried out by the evaluation team.
<sup>22</sup> The project’s monthly indicator tracking sheet shows that 73% of a sample of children associated with CJTF supported showed increased engagement. 292 was obtained by calculating 73% of the total target.
<sup>23</sup> 75% of a sample of 53 children attained a pass mark of 50% or higher. 413 is 75% of 550. It was calculated by applying sample statistics to the population.
<sup>24</sup> Search Internal monitoring team collected data on this indicator from a sample of 53 children. Out of the 53 children, 45 children had a pass mark of 50% pass mark or better. Thus, 75% of the children had a pass mark of 50% or better. The output tracker showed 62% due to a mathematical error (62% was the average mark of the children in the sample not the percentage of children tested who achieved a 50% or higher mark).
<sup>25</sup> The indicator values represented by ** fall due for assessment four months after implementation. They are for measurement during an ex-post not this final evaluation. This evaluation was done in June 2019 whereas the earliest month when these indicators would fall due for assessment is August 2019.
To a large extent, the project managed to ‘strengthen the resilience of children associated with CJTF’ (Objective 1). The children’s awareness of, and ability to cope with, trauma was increased. During FGDs, both girls and boys reported increased peace of mind, reduced social isolation and frequency of experiencing nightmares. This was corroborated by data from the outcomes survey conducted during this evaluation. For instance, the proportion of children who rarely or never had difficulties falling asleep rose from 51% before the pilot project to 85% after the pilot (Fig 2). The engagement of a psychologist and a Trauma Healing Specialist training beneficiaries in recognising and processing various types of trauma, as well as providing knowledge on practical ways of dealing with trauma proved effective. Back to school support coupled with school retention support further enhanced social skills for the CAAG. Indicators on school access and retention show that this component was to a large extent–effective. It should be noted however; that beneficiaries felt that repeat/ refresher trauma healing workshops would have increased project effects for them had they been done, however there was no funding available for this to be implemented.

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% of Community members who support the social and economic reintegration and separation of children associated with CJTF in their communities

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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Number of communities in which children are included in peace building efforts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Number of communities that have taken community led/funded actions to support the socio-economic reintegration of children disassociated from CJTF</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Number of UNICEF-supported activities undertaken by communities to support children disassociated from CJTF and their socio-economic reintegration</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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26 Source: Outcomes survey conducted by evaluation team
The project also succeeded in ‘empowering and supporting children associated with CJTF for increased employability,’ (Objective 2). Financial literacy, micro-enterprise training as well as provision of micro-grants were regarded as the most effective activities by most of the beneficiaries. Community Leaders and selected line ministry representatives who attended micro-enterprise trainings testified that the trainings transformed mindsets of the children and that they, too (as adults), benefited from the training. Some key stakeholders, however, felt that disbursing funds for start-up kits to beneficiaries comes with the temptation to misuse such funds and carries a higher risk of extortion than procuring start-up equipment and materials for beneficiaries (of the beneficiaries’ choice). Although indicators for assessment of the extent to which this objective would have been achieved fall due in August 2019, preliminary assessment done during this evaluation already shows a 26.3% increase in the proportion of children who are either self- or wage employed among project beneficiaries.

Commendable achievements were also made under Objective 3 (to create a conducive environment and community support for the social and economic reintegration and separation of children associated with CJTF). Testimonies from key stakeholders and caregivers made during this evaluation show their increasing acceptance of the need to separate CAAG from armed groups and to support their socio-economic reintegration.

4.2.2 Effectiveness of Interventions

The TOR required that the evaluation team identify the most and the least effective among the eleven key project activities aligned to the three objectives of the project (Table 3).

**Table 4: Activities Aligned to Project Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Supporting Social Reintegration</td>
<td>A1.1 Transformative dialogue sessions. A1.2 Back to school educational support for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supporting Economic Reintegration</td>
<td>A2.1 Market analysis A2.2 Apprenticeships and micro-enterprise training A2.3 Business opportunities and administrative support sessions A2.4 Support for wage employment or self-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Supporting Conducive Environment for Socio-economic Reintegration</td>
<td>A3.1 Children’s radio programme A3.2 Socio-economic re-integration radio roundtable A3.3 Trauma healing sessions A3.4 Participatory community theatre A3.5 Community strengthening initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between the two activities under Objective 1 (supporting social integration), Transformative dialogue (TD) sessions proved more effective than back to school educational support. Effectiveness of transformative dialogues was underpinned by its creative approach of bringing together former CAAG, their caregivers and other family members, traditional and religious leaders and CJTF representatives to a safe place where former [Cut-off marker]
CAAG open up on their experiences and feelings. Some caregivers heard – for the first time – what their children witnessed or perpetrated during the days of their association with the armed group during TD sessions. The sessions provided opportunities for emotional and social healing. They contributed to improving attachment between children and caregivers. FGD with children revealed that transformative dialogue sessions were effective. This was also corroborated by evidence from community leaders and caregivers. However, the reach and coverage of transformative dialogues were regarded as restricted.

Back to school support achieved its set targets (as shown in 4.2.1 above) and in that regard can be regarded as effective. However, the activity included many beneficiaries who were already in school and became more of an intervention to support continued access to children already in school than a ‘back to school’ intervention. Back to school educational support also became less favourable to beneficiaries as they realised that employability track beneficiaries were being given financial support to start or boost their micro-enterprises while they did not receive any support which could equal that in terms of monetary value. Many felt like changing the intervention under which they wanted to benefit. It should also be noted that project cost per beneficiary was much higher for enterprise beneficiaries than the education beneficiaries. During FGDs, about half the education beneficiaries in the 15-17 years age category indicated that they too would have liked to benefit from micro-enterprise support.

Besides the inequality in monetary value of benefits between education support and economic support beneficiaries, the quality of education in the schools supported was an issue of concern. Teaching-learning materials were insufficient. Teachers lacked capacity to identify and support children with basic psychological first aid (PFA), or more advanced knowledge, such as that related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Items as simple as school registers and individual record books were not available at some schools. Safety concerns also existed at many of the beneficiary schools as toilets were regarded as being insufficient. Many of the beneficiary children were regarded (by some caregivers and school principals alike) as demotivated in school work and would require an intervention that could motivate them to like school more (peace clubs for instance). Caregiver support to children’s learning was regarded, by principals interviewed, as inadequate. The environments where the children were learning are simply not conducive to learning. But not only that: many of the beneficiaries’ households lacked food. The children go to school on empty stomachs. They could not concentrate even if the insurgency-related trauma healed totally. In such circumstances, the need to support household economic activities for education beneficiaries’ households was critically needed.

The activities under Objective 2 (supporting economic integration) complemented each other. Market analysis formed the bedrock for the other three activities. Evidence from FGDs and KII during this evaluation suggests that all the four activities under Objective 2 were necessary and effective. There were, however, concerns over the shortness of the duration, lack of standardisation and inadequacies in quality control for ‘community-based mentorships’ among mentors and some beneficiaries.

The five activities under Objective 3 (supporting a conducive environment for socio-economic reintegration) were effective. According to stakeholders, the activities clearly contributed to creating an environment conducive to socio-economic reintegration of CAAG. Notably, respondents applauded the use of radio programmes to amplify messages that were spread through culturally appropriate grassroots activities. However, some community members who listened to the children’s radio programme were concerned about the monotony that sometimes characterised the children’s radio programme as one child played multiple roles during the same episode. With regards to community support initiatives, some stakeholders voiced concern
over the fact that the initiatives were mainly hardware (providing tangible benefits like mats, street lighting, etc) with little to no software support e.g relevant trainings and peace building activities).

4.2.3 Factors that contributed to the Achievement of Results

Factors that contributed to the achievement of results fall into three categories: Contextual, programming and partnership related factors.

Contextual Factors Contributing to the Achievement of Results

Education policy in Borno State affected project implementation. Whereas the project was designed to provide direct educational support through payment of fees as one of its interventions, it was observed that - in terms of policy – Education in Borno State is free. No tuition fees are paid (although Parents Teachers’ Association levies amounting to about N1000 per term are required). With the help of a multi-stakeholder, interdisciplinary Project Advisory Committee (PAC) that Search established, direct school fees payment was changed to a ‘PTA levy waiver agreement’ under which Search provided furniture to beneficiary schools while the schools were required to grant a waiver of PTA levy and other required payments for direct beneficiaries until they completed their studies at the school (despite the level of education they were attending at the time of signing of the waiver agreement). The net effect of this arrangement was to increase project sustainability, enhance the quality of learning environments at beneficiary schools and broaden project impact to other learners at the schools (indirect beneficiaries).

Programming Related factors

The programming related factors that led to success have already been discussed in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 above.

Stakeholder and Partnership-related factors

In order to achieve expected results under the pilot project, Search leveraged the key competencies and core capacities of partners. This enabled it to stick to its core competencies while achieving results with and through others.

Implementation of the pilot project was enabled by provision of financial resources by UNICEF (supported by the European Union and other donors). Not only did UNICEF provide financial support but also technical support (in Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) training, for instance). UNICEF also directly participated in the compilation of the verified beneficiary list that was then handed over to Search. Partnering with MOPPAN, a local theatre company, enabled the project to successfully roll out participatory theatre as a grassroots level communication tool for increasing awareness, influencing attitudinal and behavioural change. The resultant power of emotional and intellectual appeals led to gradual acceptance of the need to accept repentant children associated with armed groups and increased awareness of why separation of children from armed groups was necessary.

Through partnering with Peace FM, the project successfully consolidated and amplified the messages of the need for separation and socio-economic reintegration of former CAAG and returnees from armed groups. From

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27 MOPPAN received technical capacity building training on Search participatory theatre methodology before starting their performances.
merely reaching MMC, Jere and Mafa LGA, use of radio programmes broadcasted the core messages of the pilot project to the whole of Borno State.

Further, achievement of results was enhanced by partnerships with education institutions which came as innovations on the project but were not part of the original project design. The project signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the target schools for ‘PTA levy waiver’ arrangements under which Search provided school furniture to schools in exchange for a waiver of PTA levy payments for specified beneficiaries until they completed their studies at the target schools. Depending on the level of their education, children stood to benefit from the arrangement for two to three years as opposed to just one term, had direct school fees payment been used as the project implementation modality. A memorandum of understanding was also signed with the State Agency for Mass Education (SAME) which enabled 138 Micro-enterprise support beneficiaries under this project who did not have any education to access basic literacy and numeracy support.

Above all, the achievement of results under this project was greatly bolstered by the project’s innovative strategy for putting key stakeholders in the cockpit of project decision making and project implementation. The project established a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to actively participate in decision making in issues related to project direction and implementation. The PAC comprised key government line Ministries CJTF, SAME, Search and UNICEF. The innovative MOU discussed in the foregoing paragraphs were outcomes of PAC brainstorming over issues arising during project implementation. Establishment of the PAC has shifted relations from stakeholder coordination to stakeholder collaboration and ensured full ownership of project by key stakeholders. As a result, high levels of cooperation by relevant government line ministries were noted during this evaluation.

4.2.4 Factors that Militated Against Achievement of Results

Like the factors that contributed to success, the factors that hindered success of the Support for Socio-Economic Reintegration of CAAG project mainly fall into three categories: contextual, programming and partnership-related factors.

Contextual Factors that Militated Against Achievement of Results

The insecurity in North-East Nigeria constituted a hindrance in project implementation. Although officially the insurgency has been successfully controlled, the reality on the ground shows that sporadic incidents of violence associated with AOGs continue to happen. As such, field travel and programme activities have had to be done with a lot security assessment as well as field level security surveillance and support in coordination with CJTF. Access to some IDP camps continues to require rigorous clearance processes for entry and this has affected programming. In fact in Borno state, only five LGAs are accessible and 16 are likely accessible making response difficult.

The duration of the pilot project straddled a time of Federal and State elections in early 2019. The election period was further extended due to a change to the polling date. Project implementation activities were briefly suspended during this period as convening meetings in the target communities during the election period would have been sensitive and also posed a security risk. Valuable programming time was thus lost as Search waited for completion of polling processes before implementation could resume.

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28 This security overview was provided by one of the key informants.
Structural poverty characteristic of target communities also adversely affected implementation of the project. As income sources for extremely poor people in the target communities are scarce, the cash support for procurement of micro-enterprise ‘start-up kits’ provided to children associated with CJTF proved too tempting to some armed group leaders. These leaders instructed each of the beneficiaries within their jurisdiction to give them N10 000 out of the initial N50 000 that Search had given them. Evidence of this practice was mainly obtained through discussion with children and also interviewing artisans in Jere LGA. It is notable that Search has been able to investigate the cases and institute corrective measures. This extortion was motivated by these leaders’ own unemployment and lack of income. It was clear, that any cash disbursement, in a community with high levels of structural poverty and unemployment is likely to stimulate extortionary behaviour. Strengthening sensitisation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms around cash disbursements is therefore critical.

The community-based nature of CJTF makes definition of what separation of children from CJTF really means and what it entails difficult. Children associated with CJTF are children and/or close relatives of adult CJTF members. The children live in households with combatants who are also their guardians. When a child is sent by their guardian with a message concerning activities of CJTF to a neighbor’s house, cooperation with the caregiver is required. In conveying the message, is the child not merely contributing to their security needs in ways consistent with their evolving capacities? Drawing the boundaries in terms of what separation from CJTF should mean remains tricky.

**Programming-related Factors that Militated against Achievement of Results**

Protracted project start-up processes reduced the quantity and quality of results achieved. Local staff recruitment covered a lot of time in the first quarter while recruitment of expatriate staff went into the second quarter of this pilot project, the duration of which was planned to be 12 months. In the absence of key staff, key activities could not be done.

By design, this pilot project was too short for a ‘Sustainable Socio-Economic Reintegration of CAAG’ program. One year was just not enough to produce widespread impact in terms of communitywide acceptance of returnees from AOG captivity and understanding and acceptance of the need to separate children from CJTF and support their socio-economic integration.

Internally generated project reports show that the project provided micro-enterprise training to 19 children below the age of 15 years, due to children initially reporting a higher age coupled with limited civil documentation, yet these could not be employed because they were underage and grants only disbursed to children above 15 years old. In Nigeria, which has ratified ILO C138 and pegged the minimum age for employment at 15 years, getting children less than 15 years old employed is illegal. Notably, a way forward on this matter was decided through a case conference with UNICEF. Future projects may need to allocate some interventions to children considering their age although at the boundary age cohort (15-17 years) a layered approach, providing both education and employability support may be required.

Lack of standardisation for community based mentorships also led to variance in quality of training received by enterprise support beneficiaries. The apprentices were attached to community based artisans for a mentorship programme that ranged from two to four months. The quality of training depended on the quality of the mentors and their capacity to structure and deliver a mentorship programme. It should be noted however, that community-based vocational training remains the most suitable for community-based programmes for reintegration of CAAG as it avoids removing CAAG from the community into which they are being reintegrated,
and increases the chances of quicker acceptability of CAAG in the community compared to training at vocational centres away from the community.

Exacerbating the challenge of lack of standardisation was the short training period. The apprentices were trained by artisans over a two to four month period. For most of the courses, the time allocated to training was insufficient.

**4.2.5 Stakeholder and Partnership Related Factors**

Beneficiary enrolment was not done in a timely manner. UNICEF somewhat delayed providing Search with the tentative list of children associated with CJTF who had been verified by the joint UN mission. As a result, beneficiary mapping by Search could not be done until the third month into the project, followed by subsequent identification of schools and so forth. This further shortened an already short project period.

Impersonation and beneficiary switching affected the receipt of benefits by intended beneficiaries. A number of members of an armed group who had participated in the listing of children who needed to be separated and supported in socio-economic reintegration took advantage of the fact that the database of verified potential beneficiaries that UNICEF gave to Search did not have passport size photos to positively identify the beneficiaries. They gave other children (not on the beneficiary list) information on names to respond to when Search came for beneficiary mapping. Search only realised much later that impersonation was taking place and mitigated the problem by printing ID cards with passport size photos for the beneficiaries. This drawback to achievement of results could have been avoided had the initial verified prospective beneficiary list from UNICEF had passport size photos for beneficiaries, while respecting necessary data protection principles and standards.

Achievement of results was also adversely affected by limitations in the project monitoring system. While it is notable that the project had a monitoring and evaluation plan, the plan did not provide definitions of indicators. As a result, interpretation of what the indicators meant varied somewhat from one person to another. For one of the indicators no target was set. Also, no baseline survey was done for the project.

In the education intervention, gaps in coordination with the Ministry of Education/ State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and school principals hindered achievement of results. Internally generated monitoring reports show that in March 2019, the Ministry of Education denied clearance for Search to conduct monitoring visits to 20 schools it had sampled. This does not reflect good relations with the Ministry as a stakeholder. Also, one school head noted that lack of communication with school principals was one major gap in the project.

Finally, the extortion described above did not happen merely because of structural poverty. It occurred at the junction of a cash-providing intervention, structural poverty and unscrupulous key stakeholders, namely the specific members of the armed group who perpetrated the extortion. The participation of these unscrupulous stakeholders negatively affected delivery of results.

**4.3 Project Impact**

By the time of the final evaluation (two months before the end of the no cost extension), it was still too early – perhaps premature - to assess impact. Nonetheless early signs of impact had begun showing although widespread impact is yet to be achieved.
4.3.1 Improved psychosocial well-being among beneficiaries

The project contributed towards improved psychosocial wellbeing for beneficiaries. Data from the outcomes survey conducted on beneficiary children during this evaluation suggests that the project has contributed to reduced isolation among beneficiaries. For instance, the proportion of children who reported that they did not have children of their age who they played with declined from 28% before the project to only 3% after the project. Similarly, the proportion of children who felt that they did not have strong relationships with any of their friends decreased from 18% before the project to 3% after the project. These proxies point towards improved peer to peer attachment as one of the differences that project helped to bring about. Survey data further suggests that the project is helping to improve attachment between the children and their caregivers. Almost all the children studied (98%) reported that they now respect/comply/cooperate with their caregivers more than they used to do before taking part in such activities as trauma healing and transformative dialogue sessions, a finding that was corroborated by qualitative evidence from FGDs with caregivers. Caregivers also reported reduced aggression and anti-social behaviour in general among the direct beneficiaries.

Asked to state the causes of changes in their psychosocial well-being, most children cited trauma healing sessions (86%), preaching by religious leaders (43%), transformative dialogue sessions (39%) and natural improvement in psychosocial well-being as time moved (32%) as the main factors that contributed to improvement in their psychosocial well-being. It is noteworthy that two of the main factors cited are project related implying that the project has made a significant contribution to the psychosocial well-being of the children. The fact that children cited other factors which are not project related shows that the improvement in psychosocial well-being of beneficiary CAAG is not fully attributable to the project but the project has made significant contribution to bringing the improvement about.

The project also rekindled hope for a future in beneficiary CAAG. Evidence from caregivers’ FGDs shows that many of the beneficiary CAAG have re-doubled their efforts on rebuilding the second phase of their lives as civilians. Sterling efforts to save and plough back profits to grow micro-enterprises were noted among micro-enterprise support beneficiaries. This was corroborated by testimonies of the children themselves that show that hope for a brighter, civil future has been rekindled by project efforts. Further, school principals reported improved academic performance among some of the education support beneficiaries.

4.3.2 Improved Income Levels

Although measurement of impact for the livelihoods support activities under this project falls due in August 2019 (as per the monitoring and evaluation plan), the evaluation looked at early signs of impact in this regard. It was clear that the project had already contributed to increased income for some beneficiaries. During key informant interviews, some beneficiaries reported earning average profits of (Nigerian Naira)₦4,000 per week. This translates to about ₦16,000 per month. Also, quantitative data (from the outcomes survey) shows that 39% of the beneficiary children earn some income from various sources (project and non-project related).
Among these, the average (mean) monthly income was ₦9,697.37. Again, among the same beneficiaries who were earning an income, 50% indicated that all the income they earned was from the Search supported income generating activities. A further thirty-four percent indicated that more than half of their earnings were from Search supported activities. Clearly, the project has already begun contributing to increased income for the beneficiaries and their households.

The extra income earned from Search supported activities was evidently contributing improved standard of living for beneficiaries and their households. Thirty percent (30%) of the children earning income reported that they were using it to buy food for their households, 23% reported buying non-food items, while 7% and 4% reported that they used the money to pay PTA levies for their young siblings and buy clothes respectively. Utilisation of income to cover these expenses reduced the likelihood of engagement in negative coping strategies by beneficiary households and also helped improve standards of living. Further, both qualitative and quantitative evidence shows that many of the micro-enterprise support beneficiaries are concentrating on accumulating savings to reinvest and grow their business units in line with the training they received under this project. It is clear that the employability support provided has already begun contributing to improved welfare for households to which the beneficiaries belong.

4.3.3 Impact on Beneficiary Community

Early pointers towards increased community cohesion were noted. Community leaders interviewed reported that participatory decision making for community support initiatives helped increase collaboration among people of various creeds and affiliations. The establishment of partnerships and small cooperatives under the micro-enterprise support intervention also helped to increase social cohesion among the youth, a phenomenon that could have been further enhanced had internal saving and lending clubs been established (ISAL).

There were also early pointers towards a solution to the ideological underpinnings of AOG insurgency (at least in part). The project has generated massive interest in- and positive attitude towards- (Western) education among girls, women, boys and men through grassroots participatory theatre and radio programmes; this in a context where the name of the AOG literally translates to ‘Western Education is Forbidden’. For instance, after Search’s radio programmes were broadcast on Peace FM, the State Agency for Mass Education (SAME) reported an increase in enrolment-related inquiries as well as actual enrolment. This increased interest in (western) education contributes to long-term prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of children and youth by this AOG.

The project has also contributed to increased acceptance of children formerly associated with armed groups. More than half of the key stakeholders in the communities realised the importance of accepting former CAAG. For instance, one key informant said, ‘It does not make sense to exercise vengeance for it begets violence. It also does not make sense to ostracise former CAAG for that turns them into heartless, ruthless thugs. In fact they may regroup and become an insurgency worse than what we are currently experiencing... ’ With sentiments as these, it is apparent that an environment conducive to widespread acceptance of socio-economic reintegration of CAAG is being created, while its full impact is yet to be realised.

4.3.4 Unexpected/ Unplanned Outcomes and Impacts

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29 50% of the 39% who reported that they are earning an income. This translates to about 20% of the total respondents.
The project has contributed to increased motivation for and uptake of adult literacy programmes. For instance, at design the project did not include literacy classes for micro-enterprise support beneficiaries but in response to demand, the project managed to contribute towards improved literacy and numeracy for 138 enterprise track beneficiaries through a memorandum of understanding that was signed with SAME. In addition, SAME reported increased enrolment related inquiries as well as an upward surge in actual recruitments after the Children’s Radio programme and the socio-economic reintegration roundtable programme were broadcast on Peace FM.

The project also contributed towards changing gender and power relations in the target communities. It helped increase awareness of the importance of educating girls as well as the involvement of women in income generating activities through promotion of a shift in gender stereotypes, from perceiving women as merely housewives, to partners and independent actors in economic activities which benefit their families and communities.

Among the 25 children who participated in the children’s radio programme, increased self-confidence was one unexpected impact of the project. Some of these children reported that they used to be back benchers, with no confidence and very low self-esteem but after taking part in drama or news reading on radio, they gained confidence and can now address audiences of whatever size.

The project had only one unexpected negative outcome. When funds for support to beneficiary children’s microenterprises were disbursed, at least four instances of extortion were experienced. Search has been able to investigate all four and take corrective measures. It is noteworthy, however, that the positive unexpected outcomes and impacts of this pilot project outweigh the negative one(s). This is makes it logical to recommend replication of the project, funds permitting.

4.4 Synergy and Leverage

4.4.1 Synergy and Leverage on similar government efforts

In provision of educational support and adult literacy interventions, the project leveraged on existing state and federal government efforts. The project supported CAAG and other OVC to access education at schools that had already been established by the government. It did not establish new schools. Government was already making efforts to ensure that children access schools by having an education system that had established institutions for learning. Search’s intervention provided ‘back to school packages’ and PTA levy waivers that enabled beneficiaries to maximise existing government efforts in providing basic and post-basic education.

Borno State has a ‘free education’ policy. The project leveraged on this policy to make a departure from its original plan of making once off direct school fees payments for beneficiaries to implementing a PTA levy waiver agreement with selected schools under which Search provided furniture to the schools and the schools granted a waiver of payment of PTA levies for a specified number of beneficiary schools until they completed their studies at those schools. Leveraging on the ‘free education policy’, the project innovatively provided sustainable flow of benefits for children as opposed to a mere once off payment of fees. Further, the procurement of furniture for schools implied that not only direct beneficiaries but other children at the target schools (indirect beneficiaries) benefited from the project support, thus achieving wider impact.

The pilot project also leveraged on Borno State’s existing efforts to promote literacy and numeracy for citizens who missed on formal education. Noting that some of the employability support beneficiaries needed basic
literacy and numeracy, Search signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Agency for Mass Education (SAME) under which 138 deserving beneficiaries of the employability support received numeracy and literacy skills.

By constituting a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) comprising heads of all relevant government line ministries, the project harnessed the collective capacities of line ministries that often function as ‘silos’. Bringing together relevant line ministries was an innovation unique to this pilot project. It was through the decision making process of the PAC that the project gained flexibility to shift from direct school fees payment to a ‘block grant arrangement’ and to develop a memorandum of understanding with SAME for provision of numeracy and literacy skills to selected beneficiaries. The PAC effectively brought together and harnessed collective decision making efforts of government entities that would otherwise operate independent of each other. The PAC members even envisage turning it into a standing committee for advising and supervising the work of other NGOs.

Clearly leveraging on existing government efforts and working in Synergy with relevant government entities improved the quality of project outputs and outcomes, enhanced project impact and increased the sustainability of outcomes.

4.4.2 Synergy and Leverage on similar NGO efforts

This evaluation did not find much synergy with efforts of other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). However, project coordination with other NGOs through the Child Protection (CP) cluster was noted. Attending CP cluster meetings enabled project management to keep up-to-date with developments in the sector and upraise other actors with regards to effects of project efforts.

There currently are limited formal referral pathways in the target communities. Most NGO efforts are concentrated in IDP camps and referral pathways are perceived to be better there. It is noteworthy, however, that the project made some referrals to Plan International, Save the Children International (SCI) and other entities, including national NGOs and CSOs.

Some gaps in coordination were observed with other actors providing support to education institutions. One school principal mentioned a case of duplication of furniture distribution. A World Bank project (SEPIP) had distributed furniture to the same school. Identification of schools to which furniture was provided was, however, not Search’s responsibility.

5 CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings of this evaluation, the following conclusions have been made:

5.1 Relevance and Appropriateness

- The project had unquestionable relevance to the needs of the target beneficiaries. Designed at a time when separation of children from CJTF had just begun in line with the requirements of UN Resolution 1612, supporting socio-economic re-integration of CAAG could not have been timelier than then. As separation of children, return of children from captivity and release of children associated with AOGs from detention and rehabilitation centres continue, there remains continued relevance for supporting socio-economic reintegration of CAAG, including returnees from captivity of AOGs.
The project was culturally appropriate. Being community based, it built existing knowledge systems and ways of life, followed culturally appropriate protocols and supported children to engage in economic activities (trades) that already constituted part of the ‘way of life’ for target communities.

The project was- to a large extent- aligned to Paris Principles and global best practices in supporting socio-economic reintegration of CAAG. It was also aligned to national and local priorities.

To a large extent the project was relevant. However, the extent to which the project reflected UNICEF’s focus on equity was limited.

5.2 Effectiveness

- Measured against targets set at project design, the pilot project had satisfactory performance for 10 out of the 12 project performance indicators. Thus, the project attained a 86% achievement, overall. This performance was judged satisfactory.
- The project helped increase access to education and enhanced employability skills for beneficiary children. It also helped create an environment conducive to acceptance of separation of CAAG from CJTF and acceptance of repentant AOG members by the community while at the same time increasing social cohesion in the target communities.
- Although project support enhanced access to education, the intervention’s narrow focus on providing a waiver of PTA levy payments and back to school support lacked the necessary livelihoods support to extremely poor households which cannot provide even food for children to eat before they go to school. It also did not take into cognisance the need to develop the capacity of teachers to handle manifestations of trauma in former CAAG returning to school and did not include peace clubs and other activities that could have increased children’s motivation for being in school. Greater outcomes would have been realised had these facets been incorporated in the project design, though it is noted there was limited funding available relative to the scope of the project.
- Enterprise development support was largely effective. However, more effectiveness could have been realised if the duration for apprenticeship training was longer, and some degree of standardisation for the community based mentorships had been ensured.
- Efforts to create an environment conducive to socio-economic reintegration of CAAG were largely successful. However, key shortcomings observed in the activities included disproportionate focus on hardware than software community support initiatives as well as monotony of some episodes of the children’s radio programme due to one child playing two or more roles during the same episode.
- To a large extent the project was effective, although more effectiveness and impact would have been realised had the project duration been longer than the 12 months it was designed to be.

5.3 Impact

- The project contributed to increased resilience and improved psychosocial well-being for beneficiaries. Reduced aggression and social isolation have been observed among beneficiaries. The project has also helped improve peer-to-peer attachments as well as CAAG’s attachment to caregivers. Hope for a future was reignited among CAAG who had lost hope.
- Increased school attendance and improved academic performance were observed among education beneficiaries. Among enterprise support beneficiaries who had never attended school, the project
helped 138 children to attain basic numeracy and literacy through an agreement that was signed with SAME.

- Some beneficiaries of the pilot project have already begun earning income from project supported activities. Testimonies of some beneficiaries showed that they are earning up to ₦16,000 per month. About two in every five beneficiaries (39%) indicated that they now earn some income, with about half (50%) of these indicating that project supported activities are their sole income source. Among the beneficiaries who indicated that they are earning an income the average (mean) monthly income was ₦9,697.37. This was impressive considering that income earning opportunities are a rarity in the target communities. Interestingly, many of the beneficiaries who are now earning an income indicated that they help buy food and non-food items in their households or pay PTA levies for their siblings while others are accumulating savings to reinvest and grow their micro-enterprises.

- The project contributed towards improving the environment for supporting socio-economic reintegration in the target communities. It helped increase awareness of the need to separate CAAG from CJTF and support their socio-economic reintegration. Although universal acceptance of repentant AOG members in the target communities remains a distant ideal, the pilot project did contribute towards increasing community acceptance of returnees of AOG captivity.

- Although the project duration was too short to lead to widespread change, and in addition perhaps somewhat premature to assess whether observed changes will be long lasting, it is pleasing to note that evidence of some changes to which the pilot project contributed were observed during this evaluation.

5.4 Synergy and Leverage

- The project utilised and complemented existing government efforts in the education sector. It supported CAAG and other vulnerable children to access education at schools already established by the government. Support was given to schools where other non-beneficiary children are attending. This enabled the project to benefit both direct beneficiaries and other pupils at the target schools through furniture provision. The project also took advantage of the government’s ‘free education policy’ to provide a ‘PTA levy waiver intervention’ which provided sustainable flow of benefits (unhindered access to education) until they completed their studies at the target schools. Also, the project harnessed existing capacities of SAME to provide literacy and numeracy support to 138 beneficiaries.

- Synergy with efforts of other non-governmental organizations was almost missing. The evaluation found no evidence of synergy with other NGOs. There were limited referral pathways in the target communities, although the project did make some referrals to other NGOs like Save the Children International, Plan International, as well as national NGOs and CSOs. The project did however coordinate with other NGOs in the Child Protection cluster through attending cluster coordination meetings.

6. LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons learnt during this pilot project are as follows:
Putting stakeholder in the project cockpit through establishing a PAC not only ensures 100% stakeholder buy in and ownership but also provides a platform for brainstorming, problem solving and innovation that enhances project impact and bolsters the implementing organisation’s image.

Disbursement of cash/cash transfers in support to micro-enterprises in ‘seas of extreme poverty’ may motivate extortion. There is need to ensure this is accompanied by in depth sensitisation sessions and clear monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

For children in the transitional phase of their life cycle (from childhood to youth), a layered programming approach, providing both education & economic employment opportunities works better that allocating children to ‘silos’ after an initial needs assessment.

6.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, conclusions and lessons learnt, the following recommendations are made:

R1: Provide More Support to Socio-Economic Reintegration of CAAG:
- R1.1 Extend current pilot project focusing on current beneficiaries for at least 12 more months to consolidate outcome & impact (provide a cost extension);
- R1.2 Expand/roll out to other LGAs of Borno State as socio-economic reintegration needs exist there also;
- R1.3 Increase duration for similar projects in the future (in the roll out phase) to 3-5 years in line with standard practice for socio-economic reintegration programmes for CAAG; and
- R1.4 Consider a departure from a narrow focus on just children and begin including youth (18-22yrs) in the interventions;

R2: Re-engineer the Education Support Intervention:
- R2.1 Include peace clubs in schools to motivate children;
- R2.2 Provide economic support to education beneficiaries’ households to reduce cases children coming to school hungry. In this regard locally appropriate income generating activities (IGAs) and Village Savings and Lending Schemes (VSALs) are possible entry points;
- R2.3 Include Psychosocial Support (PSS) & trauma awareness training for teachers to improve capacity to understand and support CAAG as they re-inter the education system;
- R2.4 Consider possibility of Accelerated Learning programmes (ALPs) considering time lost while associated with armed groups. ALPs are compressed learning programmes which enable children who have missed education over some years when they should have been in school. They enable learners to cover two or three academic years over a single calendar year, depending on their speed in grasping the content and skills taught;
- R2.5 Promote caregiver & community involvement in the learning of children to ensure that there is mutual support to the child’s education at school and at home.

R3: Tweak the Economic Support Intervention
- R3.1 Consider having longer period for community-based skills training (apprenticeships) to enhance training effects;
- R3.2 Include support of community-based artisans by lecturers at local Vocational Training Centres in the development & implementation of ‘practical skills’ focused curricula as a step towards standardisation of the courses;
R3.4 Further increase social cohesion and inculcate a culture of saving among beneficiary children by establishing ISALs/ VSALs with the children.

R4: Adjust Community Support Initiative:
   o R4.1 Provide more of software than hardware intervention - use tools from the Common Ground Approach toolkit.

R5. Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
   o 5.1 Include indicator definitions on M&E plans;
   o 5.2 Conduct baseline before implementation; and
   o 5.3 Disaggregate data by disability and other parameters to inform decision making and intervention development to cater for equity concerns.
7. APPENDICES

Annex 1: Survey Tools

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<th>Questionnaire for Parents of CAAG and other Vulnerable children who benefited.</th>
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<td>FGD for Former CAAG</td>
<td>Interview Guide for SAME &amp; Other Project Partners</td>
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Annex 2: DocumentsConsulted

[Microsoft Office Word 97 - 2003 Docu]

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30 Although some CAAG would have already participated in the FGD for other beneficiary children categories, these CAAG FGD will take children dissociated from a particular Armed Group to draw out aspects of project relevance, effectiveness and impact peculiar to them.
Annex 3: Evaluation Contract and Terms of Reference

Annex 4: List of Key Informants

Annex 5: Inception Report