Bi-monthly Output Data and Success Stories:

Can Contact reduce conflict between Farmers and Herders

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2021
Stakeholder Representation: A total of 261 farmers, 204 herders and 28 LGA stakeholders were reached in the reporting period. This cuts across Intra-dialogues, Inter-dialogues and Follow-up visits.

Religious Representation: Search reached a total of 194 Christians, 294 Muslims and 2 traditional worshipers in the reporting period. This cuts across Intra-dialogues, Inter-dialogues and Follow-up visits.

Gender Difference: within the reporting period, Search reached a total of 538 males and 166 females.
Update on Action Plans: A total of 6 new action plans were developed in the reporting period, with 30 implemented by community members of cluster 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. 10 action plans are ongoing while 5 are still pending.
Ihuman Abraham, a religious Leader (Pastor) of Oluwa Community affirms that despite his role as a Pastor, he has learnt a better way of managing conflict with herders in his community. In August 2020 when Search’s team engaged his community at the intra and inter dialogue processes, he began to practice better ways of resolving conflicts with the herders whom he and other farmers in the community had perceived as a threat to their survival. He also narrated that his interaction with the leaders of the herders during the dialogue particularly through the exercise on perspectives and perceptions led him to encourage his members to engage the leaders of the herders and parents of the youth on key issues observed as well as give them the opportunity to call their young children who are usually in charge of herding their cattle to order.

He also learnt from the interaction with the herders at the dialogue not to engage in arguments with the young herders in order to avoid incidents of attacks. Hence, in October 2020, while he was on the farm he noticed a young herder grazing around his farmland where he had cultivated beniseed. The following day, he caught the same herder with the cattle encroaching on his farm which led him to report the young herder to his father. Ihuman while narrating his story shared that he was surprised when the father of the Herder apologized to him and promised to talk to his son to avoid future occurrence. This incident had led to an improved relationship between Ihuman Abraham with the young herder and his father who contacted him after he harvested his remaining beneseed for some of the seedlings and Ihuman willingly gave some to them.
Jafaru Obosi, the Chief of Okpatta Community through the dialogue epitomizes the virtues of a community leader with keen interest in social cohesion through his efforts in convening several peace meetings between farmers and herdsmen in the community. Chief Jafaru who was a stakeholder at the inter dialogue held with the farmers and herdsmen from his community took up the action plan on ensuring that children of the herdsmen and farmers were enrolled in school seriously. As committed during the inter dialogue, the community during one of the peace meetings convened by the community leader identified the dilapidated state of the community primary school infrastructure as a factor inhibiting enrollment of school-age children by the farmers and the herdsmen.

Hence, the plan to engage philanthropists and other stakeholders in advocating for support was agreed upon. One of the stakeholders engaged was a Private Investor, the Managing Director of Olams farm, who deals in large scale rice production at Okpatta Community. The advocacy and subsequent follow up meetings has resulted in the construction of a block of 2 classrooms, an office and a borehole situated at Jira, a sub community of Okpatta which is accessible to both farmers and herdsmen.
On 5th October 2020, during the rainy season, the cattle of a young herder encroached into the land of a young farmer. This led to an attack of the young farmer which led to the death of the herder. This was immediately reported to the Police and the young farmer was arrested. For fear of the usual reprisal attacks that occur whenever incidents of such nature happen, the parents of the young farmer fled the community for fear of losing their lives. However, the events took a different dimension when the father of the deceased herder took the lead in encouraging his fellow herders to avoid reprisal actions against the farmers. He also led and initiated the need for the herders to reflect on the learnings from the dialogues and participate actively in the peace meetings between farmers and herders towards agreeing on mechanisms for resolving emerging and lingering conflicts between both parties.

The first of such meetings was held on 9th October 2020, when the herders led by the father of the deceased requested for the return of the family of the killer of their son back to the community given that they were not the ones that murdered their son. They also assured the community of their full support for peace engagements and resolutions reached in the community thus leading to other peace meetings and peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders at Oluwa Community. According to Abdulmumin Mohammed, the Wakilin Ardo of Oluwa Community, “this incident has brought about more unity between the farmers and herders of Oluwa community and we are going to maintain the peace that we are currently enjoying with the farmers”
Mr Useni Adamu (45 year old, Gwandara Muslim) is a member of the traditional council and the Chief Market Overseer of Giza community. His act of mediation and advocacy has yielded great benefits to the people of Giza. For many years, the locals in Giza were not receptive and welcoming of the herders in their community, many saw them as strangers and as such thought they had no business in settling down in Giza. This resistance lingered for many years and led to lots of conflict issues between farmers and herders in Giza, until Mr Useni decided to do something about it. Mr Useni joined Search’s dialogue platform in October 2020 and participated at the Intra and Inter dialogues where he learnt best practices in mediation and peaceful resolution of conflict, and upon obtaining this skill decided to intervene in the protracted issue of non acceptance of herders in Giza.

In November 2020, Mr Useni decided to pay an advocacy visit to the community leader of Giza, where he advocated that for peace to prevail there is a need to create settlements for herders as well in Giza because according to him “neighbours don’t set each other’s house on fire for fear theirs will also be gutted by fire”. The community leader of Giza saw the relevance in Mr Useni’s recommendation and decided to create 12 settlements for herders in Madaki and Galadima wards all in Giza Development Area. One of these settlements has the capacity of housing more than 30 persons and has available waterways and grazing routes in each settlement.

This development was resisted by other tribes such as Tiv, Mada, and Gwandara, but the community leader ensured that the settlements were created and herders settled in these settlements. The herders appreciated the gesture and this has so far brought about peace and collaboration between the two groups and has caused a drastic reduction in crop destruction as herders in their new settlements now farm which has also led to less denial of crop destruction among herders. All these wouldn’t have been made possible without the efforts of Mr Useni who although Gwandara by tribe and a farmer decided to look pass his bias to ensure peace prevails in Giza community.
The topsy turvy that comes with the festive season isn’t void of conflict issues between farmers and herders in Nasarawa state. Mr Simon Iortyange who happens to be the community leader of Ubosidoma had to test his leadership and act as a positive role model in the community when faced with a displeasing issue that could have led to conflict. In December 2020, Mr Simon found 3 young herders on his farm uprooting yams he had just planted in preparation for the rainy season.

On seeing this, he quickly reported the issue to the police in his community and the herders were apprehended. Afterwards Mr Simon thought about the best approach of resolving this issue and decided to take the case from the police station and called for a meeting with the parents of the young herders to resolve the matter. After waiting for days, the parents of the herders never showed up and Mr Simon decided not to take the issue any further, he forgave the herders and admonished them to desist from acts such as crop theft, crop destruction and drugs.

Mr Simon wanted his act of forgiveness to serve as an example especially to his Tiv tribesmen who are predominantly farmers not to take laws into their hands.
After attending the dialogues with Search for Common Ground, the Ardo of Kokona District collated the conflict triggers between the farmers and herders from the Inter dialogues as raised by farmers as complains on crop destruction which is caused by sending under age herders to grazing fields while they encroach on people’s farms and sometimes leaving the cattle unattended to while the young herders play with their friends and also hate speech meted on elders by same minors. After many complaints of these acts by farmers, the Ardo decided that one of the ways to reduce this was to embark on a sensitization visit to the herder settlements to inform parents on the need to return their children back to school though they were withdrawn from the particular school due to broken relationships and feeling of being marginalized by farmers.

The Ardo being a leader loved by his people got the acceptance of the majority of the herders he visited during the sensitization and awareness visits and as a result, he facilitated the process of readmitting 18 students back into school, creating an alternate option to the lingering conflict between farmers and herders as a result of under-aged grazing. In place of underaged grazing, it was decided by herders to send young adults to graze, and hence, encourage education and literacy within the herding communities. This act by the Ardo has led to a reduction of conflict caused by underaged grazing and promoted children’s right to education in Kokona LGA, something lacking in Ancho, Dokan-daji and Angwan-Kade communities.
Zaki Daniel Nyamve, the Community Leader of Azerapou could not hide his excitement at the new turn of events particularly the improved collaboration that now exists between farmers and herders in his community. He explained that what he currently experiences in relating with the herders was similar to what was obtainable during the time of his father. He explained that after the dialogue, he lost his father and never thought that the herders would identify with him the way they did. Immediately the incident occurred, the herders led by the Wakiln Ardo paid series of condolence visits to his family.

The male herders also voluntarily contributed money which was presented as their support for the burial while the female herders joined the female farmers in buying the uniform for the burial. He further added that the herders participated in every bit of the events including a dance performance at the burial thus improving their relationship with the community. Zaki has now learnt that unlike his perception of the herders before the dialogue, the herders are a loving group of people who are ready to collaborate with the farmers for positive changes in his community.
Musa Mustapha, is the Commander of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) at Kwara Community. After his participation at the dialogue, he became keenly interested in leading the processes that would improve communication and collaboration between farmers and herders in his community. Musa therefore became actively involved in the peace meetings convened by the District Head where the farmers and herders agreed to stop night grazing. In the month of November 2020, he received a complaint from a farmer whose guinea corn farm had been largely destroyed by cattle over the night. Musa and his team at the Vigilante unit of Kwara Community swung into action and led an investigation to ascertain the herder whose crops had encroached and destroyed the crops. The Culprit was caught and though he initially denied that he was not the one, he later agreed and pleaded to be forgiven and also paid the agreed settlement as compensation for crops destroyed.

What broke the ice for Musa was the active role of the Ardo in supporting the Vigilante to get the culprit and also support moves for the sensitisation and reconciliation of both parties on the need to forgive and let go of all grudges. The farmer and herder involved in the incident now communicate with each other with the farmer remarkably agreeing to leave the remains of the farm for the same herder after harvesting his guinea corn. The herder in turn promised to get his cattle to provide manure for improved yield of the farmers crop during the next rainy season. Musa is excited that he was able to avert the usual reprisal attacks that occur whenever herders pay settlements for crops destroyed and influenced the process which has made the farmer and herder the best of friends. Musa is also excited that the peace engagements at Kwara Community has made his job easier and created a peaceful atmosphere for the security operations in the Community.
Abbu Sule, a herder at Kwara Community could not hide his excitement over the opening of cattle grazing routes and availability of water for his cattle during the dry season. He exclaimed that the Herders have not had it as good as they currently had since the dialogues were held. He expressed his amazement at how farmers and herders now hold regular meetings with both parties freely making contributions for improving collaboration and addressing their issues. Since he moved to Kwara community over 2 years ago, he had experienced difficulties in grazing and getting water for his cattle because most of the grazing routes had been cultivated by the farmers while the river banks where herders used to get water for the cattle had also been taken over. He is now excited and grateful that after the series of deliberations at the Peace meetings, the District Head ordered the identification of all grazing routes and water sources for the herders leading to the reopening of one of the grazing routes that farmers had used for cultivating rice due to the swampy nature of the soil.

He says the directive of the District Head that the farmers should vacate the river banks for the herders to get water for their cattle during the dry season has also made provision of water for his cattle especially during the dry season much easier. He is also amazed that all affected farmers were also provided with alternative land and water sources to continue with their farming activities. Abbu says the unity that now exists between the farmers and herders at Kwara Community through the effectiveness of the dialogue has mitigated the frequent incidents of conflicts between the two groups.
Jibrin Yakubu, a herder and also the Vigilante Commander of Kalachi since after the dialogues, has picked interest in conflict resolutions from the learnings he acquired at the dialogues. He narrates how he was able to intervene in a series of issues across the Kalachi community which has contributed to mitigating a reprisal attack.

While he was grazing in the bush, he met a farmer beating a young herder because he allowed cattle into the stream meant for drinking which led to confrontations between the farmers and herders with the family of the young herder threatening to carry out a reprisal attack on the farmer involved. In his strategic role as the Vigilante Commander of Kalachi Community, Jibrin narrates that with the skills on conflict resolution that he had acquired at the dialogues, he met with the families of both the farmer and herder separately to mediate and make them see reasons to forgive each other and let go of the grudges. After the separate meetings, he brought both parties together and was surprised at the ease of mediating with both parties agreeing to forgive and let go of the grudges. Jibrin is excited that both parties are now friends and remarkably paid him a joint visit to appreciate his role in resolving the conflict. This clearly serves as evidence of how community stakeholders are utilizing the methodology of Search's dialogue in resolving conflicts in their communities.
Ardo Danladi, the Ardo of Azerapou, is excited at the improved relationship that now exists between farmers and herders at Azerapou community. After the dialogues were held, he convened several meetings with the Herders living at Azerapou and has influenced positive actions from the herders particularly the collaboration that now exists between both groups. Ardo narrates how the herders prior to the dialogues would melt their anger on the farmers especially when their cattle were impounded by the livestock guards of Benue State along the boundary areas.

He also has seen drastic changes with farmers reaching out to his group whenever their cattle were arrested to collaborate on how they can retrieve the cattle. He says that he will not relent in ensuring that the herders continue to collaborate and live peacefully with the farmers at Azerapou Community.
For many years due to the small population of Christians resident in Angwan Doka community, they were marginalized by the majority of Muslims and were not represented at community engagements. However, during Search’s Intra dialogue, emphasis was made by Search’s team on the need for an inclusive and transparent dialogue platform in Angwan Doka and community stakeholders having gone through the activity on perspective and perception saw the relevance in including Christians in activities as they are equally important to the peace process in their community.

Although the community leader of Angwan Doka did not participate at the intra and Inter-dialogues, he sent a representative who happens to be a youth and the crown prince of Angwan Doka. After participating at the dialogues, the prince alongside other dialogue participants reported to the community leader highlighting the lessons learned from the dialogues and the need for an inclusive dialogue platform involving Christians in the community.

The community leader who had earlier made a commitment to Search’s team during the entry visit that he will work with search to ensure peaceful coexistence among his community members, decided to live up to his words. As a result of the intervention of his son and recommendations by the community members who attended the dialogues, a decision was reached to allocate a piece of land for the minority Christians so they could finally have a place of worship. Prior to this intervention, christains usually walked 5 to 6 kilometres before accessing a place of worship, and this made them usually exhausted and with no sense of belonging in Angwan Doka. The community leader lived up to his word and ensured a plot of land was given to Christians in his community for a place of worship, Christians in Angwan Doka now feel recognized and engaged in community activities involving community members.
Rev Bulus, a Religious Leader from Pambaraw Community applauded Search for initiating dialogues between farmers and herders across Kokona LGA, he reported that since after the dialogues held at Pambaraw community, one of his neighbors who happens to be a Fulani man has been putting more effort in sustaining their relationship, the said herder would go to his farm each morning with a bucket full of cow dung which serves as manure and spread across his farm for crops to grow and to also deter other cattle from eating the crops, because the Fulani man told him that whenever cattle pass across his farm and the presence of the cow dung will prevent them from eating his crop, as they have a sense of smell and whenever the perceive the smell of their dung, they would not eat from their.
Zaki Abu Ali, the community Leader of Angwan Mangoro is excited at the selection of his community as well as his participation at the dialogues. He expressed his wonder at how his community got selected as he had only heard about NGOs on radio and not physically in his over 50 years of existence. He also says that leading his community before the dialogue was a nightmare as he had to daily pacify his farmers from the destruction of their crops without knowing what solutions would bring about lasting peace. As committed during the inter dialogue, Zaki Abu immediately held a meeting that led to strengthening of the joint peace committee with members comprising the farmers and herders.

He also met the District Head of his Community at Amba who was also at the dialogue and decided to build synergy with the Peace Committees of both communities working together due to the proximity. He narrates how an incident involving the killing of a cow belonging to a herder by a farmer was resolved. On receiving the report of the incident invited the farmer on whose farm the dead cow was found to meet with the joint Peace Committee where he confessed to killing the cow. He thereafter led the dialogue that reconciled both parties with the farmer agreeing to pay compensation for the dead cow. He is excited at his improved skills in resolving conflicts which have improved the relationship between the farmers and herders in his community.
Madugu Obadiah, the Pastor of Angwan Mangoro Community has described his participation at the dialogues as an opportunity to preach forgiveness to his members who had suffered largely from the destruction of their crops which serves as their source of livelihood. He is particularly impressed with the exercise on perception and perspectives which he now deploys in preaching peace to his members and resolving disputes between farmers and herders through his membership in the joint peace committee.

He shares his experience in resolving the conflict involving a farmer who rented a piece of his farmland to a herder for farming and had the same herder encroach on his second farmland where he cultivates his crops. Madugu received reports that the farmer had asked the herder to quit his land because he destroyed his crops hence called both parties to mediate and persuade the farmer on the need to forgive the herder who had apologized and offered to pay for damages but was turned down by the farmers.

After leading a series of dialogues, the farmer agreed to forgive the herder and allow him to continue to use his rented land. Madugu says he now mediates and leads dialogues between parties in conflict thus resolving several conflicts in the community. He has also continued to preach the act of forgiveness to his members who now willingly forgive and resolve emerging conflicts between the farmers and with herders amicably.
For many years in Amba community, there had been reported cases of migrants coming into the community to perpetrate heinous crimes without being apprehended or justice gotten for victims. Recently, the Middlebelt has witnessed reported cases of migrant herders fleeing the South West of Nigeria as a result of insecurity issues such as kidnapping and banditry oftentimes alleged on herders resident in the South-west.

This development in the South-west has also caused lots of conflict issues leading to loss of lives and property, leaving many herders with no option but to migrate from the South-west to other parts of the country. In January 2021, a truck onboard with many herders was intercepted by youth in the Peace committee who are also members of Search’s dialogue platform. In order not to harbor unknown strangers in Amba without security clearance, the youth from the Peace Committee reported this to the Police and together they interrogated the migrating herders and took them to the Police division first in Kokona LGA, then to Keffi and finally to the Police Headquarters in Abuja. This action by the Peace Committee members has improved surveillance in Amba and youth proactiveness in security issues has equally improved leading to relative peace now enjoyed in Amba.
Steven Bulus, the Youth Leader from Angwan Lamba reported that the community witness an improved relationship and collaboration among farmers and herders recently, he related that farmers and herders hardly eat from each other during festive seasons (Christmas and Sallah celebrations) due to the existing conflicts which has created lack of mutual trust and understanding between them, since after the dialogues convened by Search, there has been an improved understanding of conflict and ways to address conflict between farmers and herders, thus promoting mutual tolerance and understanding.

He narrated a scenario that happened last Christmas Celebration, where the herders were invited for Christmas celebration by the Community Leader of Angwan Lamba to eat and celebrate together, the herders in turn honor the invitation by coming to eat, dance and celebrate with them, this gesture meant a lot to the community and also marks the beginning of collaboration between farmers and herders in Angwan Lamba.
Pictures from Follow-up Visits
Zaki of Doka community discussing their joint efforts with the herders in action plan implementations.

A woman leader describing and discussing their actions and efforts at the implementation levels of the action plans.

District head of Doka discussing his efforts in peace building and some of the challenges hindering him from doing more.

The Representative of the Andoma of Doma Emirate council during the KII meeting at the palace.

KII with the Religious Leader (Pastor) of Idadu Community

KII with the Religious Leader (Imam) of Idadu Community
KII with the community chief of Idadu community

FGD with Oluwa Community

Search team on a visit to the Divisional Police Officer of the Nigerian Police Keana Division.

FGD with Okpatta Community

FGD with Idadu Community

FGD with community members from Jimini community
Female farmer contributing during FGD

Herder from Kwara Community

FGD with Kalachi Community

FGD with Azerapou Community

A youth leader from Ancho community discussing efforts of the youths during the implementation action plans

Community leader of Dokan-daji community during the FGD with other participants in Kokona LGA
FGD with community members from Ninkoro

Youth Leader of Pam Barau Community

Kili with community leader Ajuye

Religious Leader from Amba Community

FGD with Angwan Mangora Community

Vigilant Commander of Tatara Mada Community during the Kili
NOTABLE QUOTES

“Prior to the dialogues, issues of conflict especially on civil matters were reported to the police and other security agencies which in most cases breeds hatred, vengeance and reprisals from the conflicting parties but Search’s engagement through the dialogues equip us on how to differentiate between civil and criminal cases and where to refer each case, now most of our civil cases are resolved at the community on win-win solution which is always acceptable to all the conflicting parties.” Religious leader from Angwan Kade community

“We used to sleep with our eyes wide open due to fear of being attacked, raped or robbed by hoodlums but the situation has changed because we can now sleep peacefully with our eyes shut. this changes comes as a result of the regular dialogue meetings between farmers and herders in the community leading to more understanding, collaboration and peace” Women leader Idadu

“Prior to the dialogues, the traditional council view farmer/herder conflict issues as a big issue which was above their capacity to resolve at the community level and as such refer such cases to the police, courts or other security agencies for settlement but through the dialogues, we now have improved understanding, skills and capacity to resolve all farmer/herder conflict issues in the community while acknowledging the fact that only criminal cases are to be reported to security agencies”. Community leader of Angwan Doka.

“Search brought a lot of achievements to Garaku Community especially conflict resolution between farmers and herders, immediately after the dialogues, farmers and herders were able to build more collaboration and understanding, this was the missing link between the two parties. I have never seen such happen since i was born until the arrival of Search, no NGO has done what Search did in Garaku.” Vigilante Commander of Garaku Community