PREPARED FOR PEACE:
A CROSS-CUTTING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT FOR CONFLICT AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA
Disclaimer: This Toolkit by Search for Common Ground (Search) was commissioned by the Embassy of the United States of America in Abuja, Nigeria. The views in this Toolkit reflect the findings of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the United States Department of State, Search for Common Ground, or those who were interviewed or participated in the project’s workshops or discussions.

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Suggested Citation:

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Acknowledgements

Search is grateful to the United States Embassy in Abuja for its support for this project. The authors would particularly like to thank Dr Haruna Ayuba for his expertise in facilitating most of the workshops and focus group discussions as part of this project. The authors would also like to thank the many interviewees and participants of the focus group discussions and regional and national co-creation and validation workshops, who offered critical insights on the Nigerian context and ways to better deliver effective and impactful programming to promote peace and security.

About Search for Common Ground

Search is the world’s largest dedicated peacebuilding organisation. Search works to prevent and end violent conflict before, during, and after a crisis, striving to build sustainable peace for generations to come. Founded in 1982, Search has a 40-year track record of transforming the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches and toward cooperative solutions. Search does this through a type of peacebuilding called “conflict transformation.” It shifts everyday interactions between hostile groups of people, so they can work together to build up their community, choosing joint problem-solving over violent means. With a total of more than 900 staff worldwide, Search implements projects from more than 50 offices and in 30 countries, including in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Search’s headquarters are in Washington, D.C. and Brussels. For more information on Search, visit the website at https://www.sfcg.org.
The objective of this action-oriented, cross-sectoral Toolkit is to equip the peacebuilding community both in Nigeria, including community-based peacebuilders as well as funding agencies, diplomatic staff, and practitioners both in the country and globally with practical guidance on how to design interventions to address the issues of violent extremism, insurgency, conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism and community-based armed groups, and banditry across Nigeria's northern geopolitical zones. The Toolkit reflects a diversity of local perspectives on prevention, intervention, and reintegration needs in Nigeria.

The Toolkit undertakes a critical review of the fields of preventing violent extremism (PVE), disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and screening, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (SPRR). It also incorporates the insights of Nigerian communities, practitioners, and government representatives to identify synergies between these various conflicts and fields of practice and offer cross-cutting insights on how to improve the success and impact of programming across Northern Nigeria.

This Toolkit helps users design and implement effective interventions that fit the needs of their context and the relevant conflict they seek to address. It includes a context analysis and seven modules. Each module revolves around a cross-cutting objective and frames it in the context of Northern Nigeria while embedding a conflict transformation approach to each. The modules identify gaps and present a number of tools and strategies that can be used to address the various sources of conflict and violence in Northern Nigeria. These tools and strategies are based on a review of past and current programming as well as regional community and expert consultations in Maiduguri (North East), Lafia (North Central), and Katsina (North West). An online national workshop in January 2022 validated this Toolkit's approach and main findings.

Users may read this Toolkit from beginning to end or use the links to the right to turn to the sections that are most relevant to their work. However, it is recommended that all users read through the initial sections to understand the Toolkit's approach.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Acronyms
- Introduction
- Methodology
- Context Analysis
- Efforts to Confront Violence and Conflict
- Module 1: Conflict Transformation
- Module 2: Resilience
- Module 3: Risk Management
- Module 4: Disengagement
- Module 5: Accountability
- Module 6: Rehabilitation
- Module 7: Reintegration
- Conclusion
- Annex: Key Definitions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYMS</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AQIM</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CJTF</td>
<td>Civilian Joint Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDD</td>
<td>Centre for Democracy and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVR</td>
<td>Community Violence Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWER</td>
<td>Early Warning and Early Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCERF</td>
<td>The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>The International Organization for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISWAP</td>
<td>Islamic State – West Africa Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAS</td>
<td>Jamā'at Ahl al-Sunnah lid-Da'wah w'al-Jihād</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCBC</td>
<td>Lake Chad Basin Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNJTF</td>
<td>Multinational Joint Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVE</td>
<td>Preventing Violent Extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWAN</td>
<td>Partners West Africa Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>Search for Common Ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPRR</td>
<td>Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVE</td>
<td>Transforming Violent Extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Federal Republic of Nigeria has been beguiled by violence and conflict for decades, resulting in extensive human suffering and loss of life. Since decolonisation in the early 1960s, communal violence at the religious, political, and ethnic levels has broken out in flashpoints across the country. While most were limited in scale, Nigeria successfully ended conflicts such as the civil war (1967-1970) and the conflict in the Niger Delta. However, contemporary Nigeria is facing some of its most significant security threats, largely situated in the country's three northern geopolitical zones: North Central, North East, and North West.

These security threats include violent extremism (centring on Boko Haram, formally known as Jamāʿat Ahl al-Sunnah lid-Da'wah ẉal-jihād or JAS, and its rivals), conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism and community-based armed groups, and rural insecurity (better known locally as "banditry"). Long-running, durable, and fragmented, these sources of violence have proven to be intractable over the past decade. In addition, responses to these issues have included a number of disjointed (albeit often successful) interventions that have so far failed to address the root causes of the conflicts—resulting in a lack of coordination, shared objectives or tools, or (as of yet) durable peace.

These interventions can largely be categorised under the fields of preventing violent extremism (PVE), disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (SPRR). But what do these fields of practice share in common and what lessons learned from one field can be applied to the others?

It is against this background that Search for Common Ground (Search) sought to produce a national Toolkit in reflection of the needs cited in Search's ongoing engagements in Nigerian communities. This Toolkit aims to fill a critical gap in Nigeria and act as an engagement and networking tool for actors to mobilise around and build shared understandings and complementary approaches.

The Toolkit is aimed at achieving the following objective:

- Key stakeholders are equipped with an action-oriented, cross-sectoral toolkit that reflects a diversity of local perspectives on violence and conflict prevention needs in Nigeria.

The Toolkit offers a critical review of these three fields of practice and incorporates the insights of Nigerian communities, practitioners, and government representatives. From this foundation, the Toolkit identifies synergies amongst these various conflicts and shared
objectives from these three fields of practice to offer cross-cutting tools and guidance on how to improve the success and impact of peace-promoting programming across Northern Nigeria.

Indeed, including the three fields of practice (PVE, DDR, and SPRR) and the four sources of conflict (violent extremism, conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism, and banditry) in the Toolkit was initially perceived as a challenge in its development. However, the research and consultations revealed that this framework instead presented an opportunity to synergise interventions in Northern Nigeria as well as to translate lessons learned from one field of practice into at least one of the others. It became clear that the three fields of practice as perceived, implemented, and called for in Northern Nigeria include several blind spots or gaps that may hinder the achievement of a durable peace for the northern geopolitical zones. This is because the interviews and public consultations revealed that the emphasis on “fields of practice” such as PVE, DDR, and SPRR can confound responses and leave gaps when conflicts do not neatly fit into a specific field of practice.

Since PVE, DDR, and SPRR each have their own terminology, framework, reforms, and lessons learned, the learning curve for practitioners, researchers, and especially communities can be slow. Therefore, this Toolkit seeks to distil these fields into the core objectives they share and that were emphasised in the expert and community consultations. The seven objectives include the following:

1. Conflict Transformation
2. Resilience
3. Risk Management
4. Disengagement
5. Accountability
6. Rehabilitation
7. Reintegration

To clarify, the concept map on the next page (Figure 1) offers clarity on the cross-cutting objectives that one or more field of practice incorporates, which will be useful as a reference for the Toolkit and its modules below.

The Toolkit is organised into a number of chapters, as follows:

- **Methodology**, to elaborate on the main approaches of this Toolkit.
- **Context Analysis**, to understand the key trends of conflict in Northern Nigeria, the approaches employed to address and mitigate them, the main findings and good practices, and how women, men, youth, and
children have unique experiences in relation to the main forms of conflict and violence.

- **Efforts to Confront Violence and Conflict**, to understand the kinds of interventions that are being made and a breakdown of these fields of practice into relevant, actionable and cross-cutting objectives for local and regional stakeholders working to address violence and conflict in Northern Nigeria.

- **The Toolkit** itself, broken down into seven modules—each focusing on one of the seven specific objectives or types of intervention listed above. Each objective is defined and explained clearly, using past programs as case studies or examples. The Toolkit incorporates a conflict transformation approach for each objective and details lessons learned on what can make interventions succeed or fail. Each module includes practical guidance for intervention strategies, including specific recommendations for each of the four major sources of violence and conflict discussed in this Toolkit, when necessary.

*Figure 1. Concept mapping of the (oftentimes overlapping) objectives embedded in the fields of preventing violent extremism (PVE), disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (SPRR).*
This Toolkit is based on the critical review of existing background literature and reports as well as on broad engagement with Nigerian stakeholders in Maiduguri (North East), Lafia (North Central), and Katsina (North West). Search organised two one-day zonal co-creation workshops with government, academic, security, and civil society stakeholders in each of the three geopolitical zones. In addition, Search hosted one focus group discussion (FGD) with women civil society and government representatives and one FGD with youth leaders in each geopolitical zone in the same locations (six in total). The authors also conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with seven regional and international stakeholders. Finally, the Toolkit’s context analysis, key findings, and recommendations were validated in an online national workshop on 26 January 2022. A full breakdown of the stakeholders consulted is included in the table to the right.

Altogether, the Toolkit was informed through the perspectives of 187 national and international stakeholders (137 men and 50 women).  

Conflict sensitivity and gender analysis were guiding principles for the research, consultations, and subsequent development of the Toolkit. Discussion guides were designed with conflict sensitive language and to encourage open discussions and avoid negative discussion dynamics.

For example, co-creation workshops were divided into academics and government actors in one workshop where local and international civil society organisations (CSOs) were organised in another for each of the three zones. Workshop cohorts and focus groups were organised in this way to allow participants to be more self-reflective as well as to speak openly.

Search ensured that participants in all workshops and FGDs were clear about Search’s research aims as well as the objectives of the Toolkit. Indeed, participants expressed great interest and appreciation in contributing to this effort. Therefore, Search commits to the dissemination of this Toolkit and using it to positively influence conflict mitigation and peacebuilding processes in Nigeria.

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1 While Search strived to achieve gender parity in the participants in all of its workshops, community leaders, academics, government officials and youth activists all skewed male. To offset this, Search organized women-only FGDs with government and civil society representatives to provide settings where women could guide and dominate discussions more freely.
After decades of intractable violence, centring on violent extremism (including Boko Haram and its rivals), conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism and community-based armed groups, and rural insecurity (better known locally as “banditry”), Northern Nigeria is at a watershed moment. With significant shifts taking place across all of these sources of violence and conflict, stakeholders have a critical opportunity to affect the trajectory of these conflicts, bringing them towards resolution and bending the arc of Nigeria’s history towards justice and peace. This chapter focuses on the history and contemporary dynamics of each of these four conflicts, highlighting the critical stages they are in, synergies across them, and opportunities to address them.

While this chapter does capture the main dynamics as of early 2022, this Toolkit is designed to be applicable and adaptable in the changing context of violence and conflict in Northern Nigeria.

1. Violent extremism

The issue of violent extremism, once centred on the notorious Boko Haram terrorist group, has been Nigeria’s most significant security issue for over a decade. However, while Boko Haram is degrading under pressure from a regional coalition and its violent extremist rivals. Its main rival – the so-called Islamic State – West African Province (ISWAP) – resurred to fill the void as Boko Haram loses some of its territory and strength. Together, these violent extremist groups have led to the deaths of over 40,000 people and the displacement of over three million people, mostly in Nigeria. This section will review each of these groups and how the context is shifting to perhaps a new level of violence.

1.1. Boko Haram (JAS)

Boko Haram, formally known as Jamāʿat Ahl al-Sunnah lid-Da’wah w’al-Jihād (JAS, meaning People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad), originally took shape in the early 2000s in Maiduguri as a mass religious movement to promote the implementation of Islamic law in Nigeria. At times, elements of the movement referred to themselves as the “Nigerian Taliban.” While one element of the so-called Nigerian Taliban attacked local authorities in 2003, Boko Haram largely maintained a focus on preaching until the group decisively turned toward violence in 2009.

That year, local resistance to a new law requiring the use of helmets on motorcycles caused a spark that led to violence and radicalisation, helping to transform the group into what became known (almost pejoratively) as “Boko Haram.” Just over a month after anti-robbery police stopped members of the group during a funeral procession over their lack of helmets, a member’s home was raided—uncovering bomb-making materials—followed by an attack on a police station in Bauchi State. Within days, a wave of violence swept across Northern Nigeria that resulted in the deaths of over 1000 people mostly members of Boko Haram itself, including leaders such as Muhammad Auwal and Muhammad Yusuf, its main leader, who was allegedly killed by police.

Following Yusuf’s death in police custody, Abubakar Shekau assumed the leadership of the group, eventually giving it the JAS branding. Over the next few years, Shekau made several entreaties to al-Qaeda, seeking training, financing, guidance on jihad, and affiliation with the terrorist group. Al-Qaeda's initial support may have played a major role in Boko Haram's first attack on the Bauchi Federal Prison on 7 September 2010, which freed 721 prisoners, including approximately 150 members of Boko Haram.

However, Shekau’s fanaticism, particularly against other Muslims, seemed to be too extreme for al-Qaeda, which appeared to rebuff Northeast Nigeria’s Boko Haram. Instead, al-Qaeda-affiliated media officially announced the launch of its affiliate in North West Nigeria under the name Jamāʿat Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan (Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Lands, but more popularly known as Ansaru) on 2 June 2012. The split, prodded by al-Qaeda, was formed by a number of former Boko Haram personnel. Indeed, the mythology of Ansarū’s founding is built on Shekau's protest of Shekau, which appeared to rebuff al-Qaeda’s rival in Incarnate Violence and Jihad as Recipes for Schism, Abdulbasit Kassim, in the lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), “Pillar Paper for Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Lake Chad Basin Region” (African Union Commission, August 2018), pp 4-5.

By the end of that year, Ansaru announced that it had pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda’s affiliate umbrella group in North and West Africa—Jamāʿat Nasr al Islam wal Muslimin (JIM). Al-Qaeda’s reticence to align itself with Boko Haram likely played a part in Shekau’s decision to pledge allegiance to al-Qaeda’s rival—the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) following the latter’s declaration of a “caliphate” in Mosul, Iraq in 2014. Shekau pledged allegiance on 7 March 2015, becoming the

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4 Ibid., pp 18.
“governor” of the renamed Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP).

However, like ISIL, Boko Haram’s peak had already been reached in 2014 when both terrorist groups’ respective areas of control were at their largest and when their violence was most deadly. In that year alone, Boko Haram killed an estimated 4,500 people in armed attacks, ambushes, executions, and suicide bombings (often by young women and girls) compared to less than 1000 in 2020. Boko Haram also gained international notoriety in 2014 when it perpetrated the mass kidnapping of over 270 young schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria and inspired the #BringBackOurGirls campaign that echoed around the world.

That year was also Boko Haram’s peak in terms of the lethality of its indiscriminate suicide bombing attacks. The use of female suicide bombers continued to increase and peaked in 2015, since declining by 96 per cent as of 2019. Therefore, Shekau’s pledge of allegiance to ISIL might also be seen through the lens of his attempt to maintain the height of Boko Haram’s power.

However, national and international military pressure quickly began to degrade ISWAP, including the liberation of its self-declared capital in Gwoza in March 2015 (the same month of Shekau’s pledge of allegiance to ISIL). The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a combined force of military and paramilitary units from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, restructured and recommitted to the fight against ISWAP that year, successfully retaking much of its territory around the Lake Chad border region.

1.2. Divisions within ISWAP and split with Boko Haram (JAS)

Shekau’s brutality and ideological divisions with ISIL, coupled with his deep mistrust of his lieutenants, caused significant internal strife. A key doctrinal difference that deepened the misery of the Nigerian people was Shekau’s belief that anyone beyond the boundaries of his control was an infidel and subject to execution or subjugation (including through sexual slavery via forced marriage). ISIL, by comparison, had a more lenient viewpoint. This extreme ideology not only justified mass atrocities such as those committed in newly seized areas such as the

12 Ibid.
13 See Kassim, “Boko Haram’s Internal Civil War.”
town of Bama, but also applied to those within areas under his control: leaving was punishable by death. Not only were communities fearful of wholesale slaughter if Shekau’s forces attacked, but those within his areas of control were fearful of the consequences of defecting or fleeing.

Indeed, others within ISWAP blamed Shekau and his fanaticism for the group’s drastic decline. Abu Fatima, a former member of Ansaru and critic of Shekau, lamented that he was “tired of being chased by the infidels. It is because of all these issues that the infidels are chasing us. We have deviated from Allah’s path.” He warned his fellow extremists:

We are seeing that if these issues are not resolved, there is no way we will become victorious. Have we become rebels? How come they will fight against the infidels and not achieve victory? Brothers, if we are not animals, we need to sit and think. Why is it that we are being chased? The reason why these things are happening is because of the misconduct of Mallam Abubakar Shekau.14

Divisions reached a breaking point less than 18 months following Shekau’s pledge of allegiance to ISIL and Boko Haram’s rebranding from JAS to ISWAP. In a 3 August 2016 article published in ISIL’s online al-Naba newspaper, Abu Mus‘ab al-Barnawi (the eldest surviving son of the late Muhammad Yusuf) was declared as the new governor of ISWAP, ousting Shekau. Shekau immediately began a public campaign to protest the decision and call for his supporters to remain loyal to him, retaking the JAS name.15 Simultaneously, ISWAP’s new leadership, including a top cleric, Mamman Nur, made a largely successful effort to keep most of the fighters under the ISWAP umbrella and denounced Shekau.

ISWAP largely retained control of the islands of Lake Chad, areas west of Maiduguri and those along the Niger border in the Diffa region, whereas JAS loyalists (Boko Haram), led by Shekau, became more concentrated further south in parts of Borno State around Gwoza and the Cameroon-Nigeria border.16 ISWAP retained approximately 3,500-5,000 members compared to JAS with roughly 1,500-2,000, according to a Western security official’s early 2019 estimate.17 While August 2016 may be the date the JAS/ISWAP split occurred, many analysts would argue that it had been developing since 2015 through the pressure of the multinational military offensive against them and that the August 2021 announcement was simply recognising a fait accompli—which might explain the geographical distribution.18

However, the ouster of Shekau, rather than resolving internal rivalries, only fuelled them. Shekau became highly distrustful and actively sought to eliminate those he perceived as disloyal. A young 23-year-old Nigerian woman who disengaged but retained a certain fondness for Boko Haram, told researchers from Equal Access International that Shekau believed that all those like minds [with Mamman Nur] will eventually leave him. So he started killing. Commanders like [names redacted],

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14 Ibid., pp 29.
15 Ibid., pp 19-20.
Shekau killed them saying they are aligned to Mamman Nur and accused them of stealing arms and weaponry. It was during this period that Shekau also sentenced people according to accusations that they are aligned. He can level accusations, sentence them to death, and kill them.19

Despite his instability, many stayed loyal to Shekau for ideological reasons—embracing his extreme belief that anyone outside of his so-called “caliphate’s” boundaries were legitimate targets. “Shekau believes that killing is part of the religion but Mamman Nur believes there is no killing in the religion,” said the same 23-year-old woman, twisting Nur’s less extreme beliefs into pacifism. “We believe in Shekau’s line, that Islam requires you to kill. If someone does not believe in your belief, you kill him. Mamman Nur does not believe in that so he is a non-believer.”20

ISWAP fared no better in terms of internal divisions and suspicion. Despite the fact that most of the fighters that stayed under the ISWAP umbrella were linked to Mamman Nur’s network, ISWAP executed Nur in August 2018. Nur was accused of entering into secret negotiations with the Nigerian government after suspect financial transactions were found on his phone.21 Leadership changes continued, including Abu Mus`ab al-Barnawi’s dismissal as governor of ISWAP and replacement with Abu Abdallah al-Barnawi (no relation) in March 2019 for a short time before being reportedly reinstated as “caretaker” in May 2021.22

Shortly thereafter, ISWAP launched an offensive against the remnants of Boko Haram, overrunning Shekau’s JAS stronghold in Sambisa Forest, where the former ISWAP governor allegedly blew himself up rather than surrender to those he believed had betrayed him.23

1.3. Implications of ISWAP’s consolidation of power

Shekau’s demise and ISWAP’s systematic pressure on JAS has significantly changed the violent extremism landscape in Nigeria. Many top JAS leaders and fighters were told to either join or face execution and ISWAP called on those outside of its areas to migrate to the so-called caliphate under its control.

Instead, thousands of men, women, and children associated with JAS have surrendered to Nigerian forces or fled violent extremist strongholds. In August 2021, the Nigerian army spokesperson claimed that over 1,000 members had surrendered to troops.24 In highly staged ceremonies, surrendering fighters and commanders were recorded being given food and clothing by Nigerian troops while they held signs that read “Nigerians please forgive us”; “peace is the only way”; and “surrender and

23 Anyadike, “Nigeria’s Secret Programme to Lure Top Boko Haram Defectors.”
In March 2022, Major General Christopher Musa claimed that 7,000 “combatants, non-combatants, foot soldiers, alongside their families” had surrendered across Borno State. While many of these defectors are likely surrendering as a means of self-preservation due to the infighting, Boko Haram supporters have often been routed from their areas of control and are unable to defend against a much stronger ISWAP. Others are said to surrender because of ISWAP’s policies against looting, cattle rustling, and different ideology. Indeed, ISWAP’s increased consolidation of power presents a dangerous new phase in the conflict. If factional infighting subsides, a less burdened ISWAP can turn its attention to government forces in the region as well as strengthen its makeshift state-building approach. Compared to Shekau’s indiscriminate killing and brutal leadership, ISWAP’s softer approach is to win over hearts and minds through establishing order and collecting taxes. ISWAP is then using its financial and human resources to dig wells as well as provide greater security, establish rudimentary healthcare services, and impose “price caps on basic food items and trader-friendly policies to encourage the flow of goods” in the areas under its control. These developments present a danger, as this same dynamic of creating illusions of safety and stability as well as driving out brutal and belligerent groups (JAS in this case) has been a successful strategy that brought Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to power in Northern Mali and ISIL to power in Syria. In the former example, AQIM ended the extensive use of rape by Tuareg rebels and imposed shari’a courts while in the latter example ISIL displaced the corrupt and dysfunctional Free Syrian Army factions and engaged in an extensive state-building project. Should ISWAP’s experiment prove successful (even in the short term), Nigeria will face a stronger, more united enemy force that may once again attract public appeal—a dynamic not seen in the country for years. Finally, the potential resurgence of Ansaru may expand the threat of violent extremism into the North West, driving conflict, especially if it focuses its attention on fighting banditry groups.

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28 Anyadike, “Reporter’s Diary: Boko Haram and the Battle of Ideas.”
Therefore, the next year will prove to be a critical moment to determine the trajectory of Nigeria’s fight against violent extremism, hinging on what it will do to those men, women, and children who have been associated with it.

2. Conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities

Long-predating the conflict against Boko Haram and its rival groups, Nigeria’s longest running source of conflict has been a prolific series of local clashes amongst farming and pastoralist communities. These outbreaks of violence are often referred to as farmer-herder or farmer-pastoralist conflicts. However, this fails to capture the reality that conflicts occur between farmers as well as between pastoralists themselves—not simply between farmers and herders. Conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities in Nigeria are mostly concentrated in the North West and the eastern parts of the North Central geopolitical zones, although clashes have been observed throughout the country.

As pointed out in Search’s public consultations, conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities can often “snowball into ethnoreligious conflicts.” Therefore, it is important to understand the ethnic dynamics of pastoralists in Nigeria. The Fulbe, also called “Peul” further west but more commonly known as Fulani, are a primarily Muslim people scattered throughout many parts of West Africa, from the Atlantic coast in Senegal to Lake Chad. They are mainly concentrated in Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. While the most prominent pastoralist ethnic group in Nigeria, the Fulani may also be divided into those who farm (Fulbe Remaibe), those who raise cattle (Fulbe Duroobe), and those who live in towns and do not rear cattle (Fulbe Wuro). Conflicts can occur between and within any of these groups as well. Even those who raise cattle may either migrate or settle in specific areas. Fulani coexist with dozens of other ethnic groups including Hausa (predominantly Muslims as well) as well as Tiv, Jukun and Kuteb—just to name a few.

While often small-scale disputes that turn violent, conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities have grown increasingly severe in the recent decades. Previously, these conflicts could be resolved at the local level through dialogue and mediation in community, religious, and traditional fora, they have grown increasingly more violent. Driving this escalating violence are a number of factors, including diminishing water resources (exacerbated by a shortening of the rainy season), and increased competition over arable land and is suitable for pasture.

These dynamics, coupled with a number of macro-economic, governance, and security issues, as well as increasing social and political divisions, have made these clashes more

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30 For an in-depth exploration of Nigeria’s Fulbe people and conflict dynamics in the country, see Nagarajan, “No Tribe in Crime.”
common and violent. For a more detailed analysis, see Search for Common Ground’s report, *Pastoralism and Conflict in the Sudano-Sahel: A Review of the Literature*.

Due to the very local and disjointed nature of conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, this source of violence is grouped together due to the main contention at the centre of them, namely resource competition, land tenure, and weakening social cohesion—rather than as a typology of an ethnic or religious conflict as they are sometimes (erroneously) framed.

Participants in Search’s public consultations under this project recounted many of the effects of these conflicts on their communities. One young participant in the FGD in Lafia (North Central) recalled how the issue in his area began about ten years ago. There, pastoralists would move into the area during the dry months of December and January to graze their animals, moving out as the rains began and farmers would start planting their crops. However, due to unspecified reasons, the pastoralists became more permanently settled in his area, staying even after the growing season started, meaning that cattle would be more likely to damage farmers’ crops. A participant in the workshop in

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Katsina (North West) noted that conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities have “stages and layers” and noted that the character of the conflict “has to do with issues of possession of deposition, and the other component is that the North West is an agrarian community, so if people can’t access their land, what is the possibility that farmers might fold their hands and watch others take their land?”

While farmers might see some of this land as theirs, some land tenure policies which have granted traditional grazing lands to farmers have been seen by pastoralists of encroachment or denial of access on “their” lands as well and a threat to their livelihood. In a recent op-ed, Fulani herdsman Dr Ahmadu Shehu wrote that owning livestock for pastoralists is a necessary cultural tool and having or lacking livestock places an individual on certain social status. The wellbeing of the livestock entails personal joy which supersedes any other considerations. When pastoralists lose their herds they have not just lost some material wealth, but also their self-esteem, social status and a lot more of cultural values in the society. Therefore, it won’t be a case of alternative wealth, because there are [sic] actually no alternative to one’s self. Livestock is not only an economic asset but also an ancestral, traditional and cultural heritage.34

Such strong emotions amongst farming and pastoralist communities require that the underlying competition and grievances are addressed collaboratively and non-violently. If not, they have and can become central in creating tensions that result in violence between farmers competing for water and arable land, between pastoralists competing for grazing areas and places to water their cattle, and between farming and pastoralist communities that struggle to access the resources their ways of life require.

3. Vigilantism and community-based armed groups

The issue of vigilantism is an old dynamic in Nigeria’s social and political landscape. However, the growth of conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities followed by the rise of Boko Haram and other violent extremist groups has pressured communities across Northern Nigeria to create their own vigilante and community-based armed groups to fill the gaps in security. For example, the Benue state government set up joint committees of both farmers and pastoralists to mediate conflicts and facilitate solutions, such as opening up paths for cattle to migrate and compensations for crop damage or injury to livestock.35 Fulani communities in Plateau, Taraba and Adamawa states have also set up registered vigilante groups to fight banditry.36 Following Boko Haram’s initial gains in 2013, Nigeria created an umbrella group of vigilante and community-based armed groups under the name of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Today, the CJTF has become one of the largest pro-government militia groups in the world with tens of thousands of members at various levels of engagement across Northern Nigeria.37

Vigilante and community-based armed groups include members from nearly every ethnic,

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religious, and social group in Northern Nigeria, but are sometimes formed along these lines and based on local needs or the boundaries of trust—meaning that such groups may not always be diverse or integrated. This would include Hausa communities as a response to electoral violence,38 farmers and/or communities seeking to defend themselves against pastoralist violence and banditry, or Fulani farmers and pastoralists hoping to ward off cattle rustling. Women and children are often active in these groups as well.39

The Nigerian government, as well as many state governments and communities, see many of these groups as legitimate. One study on public perceptions on the Mission Village Vigilante Group in Karu state (North Central) found that most respondents accepted and supported efforts by the vigilante group because they largely felt that “crime and insecurity were on the increase,” and local police and security services were “distant from the community and ineffective in preventing crimes.”40 As described by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), Nigeria’s CJTF has helped to make the country’s

military response to Boko Haram and ISWAP more targeted and efficient as sources of local knowledge, intelligence, and auxiliary forces. Indeed, the LCBC argues that the CJTF was instrumental in helping the Nigerian military drive Boko Haram from Maiduguri. However, vigilante and community-based armed groups are also seen by many outside observers and Nigerians as having worsened the violence and escalating conflicts. This includes increasing the interpersonal dimension of conflict, increasing feelings of suspicion and revenge and leading to situations where neighbours are fighting against each other. The presence of these groups also inspires broad reprisal attacks, with Boko Haram, ISWAP, and bandits broadly targeting military-age men (and younger) on suspicion that they are part of the CJTF or vigilante groups or will grow up to join them. Furthermore, vigilante groups have taken the role to mediate conflicts that were once assumed by community and traditional leaders. For example, one young Tiv farmer in Benue state involved in such a group told Mercy Corps that he and the group “tried to bring peace between farmers and pastoralists. If cattle ate crops, farmers would go to talk with the owner of the cattle before but now they reported to the committee. If a youth killed a cow, the owner would also report. So, it was the committee that was taking action, not the people involved directly talking with each other” (emphasis added). While this might be necessary in particularly tense or dangerous situations, vigilante groups are also contributing to the securitisation of interpersonal disputes. The CJTF and vigilante groups have also been implicated in a number of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, rape, and abuse of women and children—including extortion and forcing transactional sex on those they have detained lawfully. Many participants in the co-creation workshops and FGDs in North West acknowledged that the vigilante groups commit “excesses,” including attacking innocent people on unsubstantiated reports. In a dynamic that can drive inter-ethnic violence, vigilante groups comprised mainly of Hausa members are sometimes reported to mete out “harsh sanctions to real or perceived perpetrators of robberies and raids” and target town-dwelling Fulani, who they accuse of being affiliated with Fulani pastoralists who have committed raids. This has resulted in some Fulani settlements being burnt down, driving innocent people into displacement.

Perhaps most notoriously, following Boko Haram’s March 2014 prison break in Giwa that freed many prisoners, the CJTF was accused by Amnesty International of extrajudicially killing more than 600 people, mostly unarmed escapees. These and other accusations have prompted the United Nations (UN) Security Council in Resolution 2349 (or UNSCR 2349) to urge for Nigeria to “develop and implement appropriate plans for the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, and where appropriate prosecution of the [CJTF] and other community-based security groups.”

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43 See, for example, Nagarajan, “Analysis of Violence and Insecurity in Zamfara,” pp 2; Anyadike, “Nigeria’s Secret Programme to Lure Top Boko Haram Defectors.”
Indeed, there is a growing concern in Nigeria that the CJTF and vigilante groups are a “ticking time bomb.” One interviewee from the North East voiced his own concern, calling the CJTF an attempt at “addressing a long-term problem with short-term solutions.” He continued, saying that “allowing a group to legitimately carry arms without a legal structure and institution to check excesses is yielding power without boundaries. The CJTF built a parallel structure [to] the Nigerian Army, [but] when the insurgency comes to an end, how do you disassemble and disarm?” He is not alone. In a survey of 215 community leaders in and around the Maiduguri in Borno State, 66 per cent of them reported concerns about what former CJTF members would do in the future.\(^49\) One FGD participant, the state president of a national women’s organisation, even worried that since vigilantes are not being taken care of, some might become bandits.

These concerns have inspired a number of interventions to provide alternatives to prevent youth from joining these groups, regulate them, incorporate them into the Nigerian security structure, and encourage patriotism and discipline amongst their members.\(^50\) Some Nigerian states have banned them, like Zamfara state, before switching course and actively supporting their formation with motorcycles and stipends when security threats got out of hand.

The prevalence of vigilante and community-based armed groups and their integral part in the conflicts in Northern Nigeria requires that all programming to promote peace and security take these groups, as well as their members and supporters, into account. As Dr Lauren Van Metre writes, “Understanding the conditions under which a [community-based armed group] may transition from a more positive community role to a more predatory one, or vice versa, is critical for community security and development, as well as for local political stability.”\(^51\) For a review of communities’ experiences with vigilante and other community-based armed groups, see the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research’s “Volunteer Security Outfits in North East Nigeria” report. In addition, to see this issue in context, see the RESOLVE Network’s research series, Community-Based Armed Groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.


4. Banditry

The rise of the issue of banditry in North West Nigeria is fast displacing violent extremism as the most deadly contemporary threat. Having originated in form in Nigeria’s Zamfara state, banditry has spread to five other nearby states including Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, and Sokoto in the North West as well as Niger state in North Central Nigeria.\(^2\) It is commonly accepted that banditry grew out of the decades of conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities. In one interview, Shehu Rekep, a prominent bandit leader, complained about this history of violence and how pastoralists were left behind, saying that “Hausa, Yoruba, and the Fulani violence and how pastoralists...” He continued, saying:

> Our pastoralists should be employed, just like their children. Our children should also be enrolled in schools so that we become knowledgeable as well. [...] We are also deprived of keeping cattle because of lack of grazing areas. They have taken over the grazing areas; even the grazing routes are no longer there. Soldiers would take over our cattle, vigilante would confiscate, and gunmen would rustle. We have been rendered poor.

Some of the people you see here have spent up to 10 years away from their homes. They have been in the forests with guns. You said you had made peace with them but left them in the bush with guns. What do you expect from them?\(^3\)

While these concerns can never justify their criminality and violence, this narrative is a common explanation of the grievances that have driven banditry in Northern Nigeria.

With estimates ranging up to 30,000 bandits separated into scores of groups, these violent gangs are responsible for a wave of robbery, cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, and murder.\(^4\) Largely disjointed, banditry is a particularly difficult security threat in Nigeria because it operates largely as a massive criminal effort that resembles warlords or modern insurgencies.

A commission of inquiry in Zamfara state, led by the former Inspector General of Police and which concluded in October 2019, found that over 6000 people were murdered and nearly 4000 kidnapped in the period between 1 June 2011 and 29 May 2019.\(^5\) Since then, the issue only seems to have grown even worse, with large numbers of refugees fleeing the violence.

Even though at least ten military operations have been launched against banditry, the issue has only grown worse.\(^6\) Indeed, bandit groups will launch reprisal attacks when pressured. Vigilante groups can also launch reprisal attacks against both settled and pastoralist Fulani communities in response to banditry (which are frequently targeted by bandits themselves), exacerbating tensions and further driving conflict.\(^7\)

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\(^{2}\) ICG, “Violence in Nigeria’s North West,” pp i.


Although Fulani do appear to make up the majority of bandits in the groups active in the North West, bandits of Hausa and other ethnicity are engaged in these activities. However, the Global Terrorism Index categorised banditry (as well as apparently all conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities) as violence from “Fulani extremists,” although this is neither accurate (as banditry is not exclusive to Fulani) nor does it properly attribute the perpetrators of violence (as not all conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities are instigated by either bandits or Fulani pastoralists). That is, labelling all violence perpetrated in conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities as attributable to “Fulani extremists,” the Index helps to perpetrate an ongoing narrative that is marginalising Nigeria’s Fulani community and exacerbating tensions. To its credit, the 2022 edition of the Index has dropped the term.

For more information on the history and evolution of the issue of banditry, see the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)’s recent report, * Northwest Nigeria’s Bandit Problem: Explaining the Conflict Drivers*, as well as the recent Trust TV documentary that CDD supported, *Nigeria’s Banditry: The Inside Story*. 

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4.1. Linkages between banditry and violent extremism

The four sources of conflict discussed in this context analysis are interrelated, with common drivers as well as responses. For more on these commonalities, see CDD’s recent report, *Multiple Nodes, Common Causes: National Stocktake of Contemporary Insecurity and State Responses in Nigeria*. As shown above, these sources of conflict can exacerbate or drive one another, leading to more violence and conflict. They may also contribute to important shifts in conflict dynamics as well.

For banditry and violent extremism, this can be complicated and ambiguous. On one hand, violent extremist groups appear eager to exploit the insecurity as an opportunity to expand into Nigeria’s North West. According to local sources that spoke to the International Crisis Group in 2020, Ansaru is trying to build inroads with bandit and small extremist groups in the North West by offering them al-Qaeda-supplied weapons at below-market prices. On the other hand, Ansaru may also be trying to gain local support by targeting bandit groups in an effort

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58 Higazi, “Herders and Farmers in Nigeria.”  
to portray themselves as “protectors” or acting in behalf of local communities.\(^6\)

However, with the recent official proscription of bandit groups as terrorist organisations, pursuant to sections 1 and 2 of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011, along with mass military operations against them, the conflict against banditry in Nigeria’s North West is entering a dangerous new stage. In the January 2022 publication of Nigeria’s Official Gazette dated November 29, 2021, volume 108, which announced that the “activities of Yan Bindiga Group, Yan Ta’adda Group and other similar groups in Nigeria are declared to be terrorism,” the government has made a decision which threatens to exacerbate the conflict.\(^6\) Not only is the proscription potentially too broad, but it may also impose limits on the options it has available to address banditry. For example, due to UNSCR 1373 (2001)'s requirement that Member States bring terrorists to justice, past amnesty efforts may be beyond reach and efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate former bandits may face legal obstacles. In addition, communities that are extorted into paying bandits for protection through money, supplies, or people (such as young men as fighters, young women as brides or for transactional sex, or others as informants) may be investigated for material support for terrorism under the Terrorism Act.

The designation may also incite bandits to escalate their violence, change tactics, or build (further) linkages with violent extremist groups. While it is too early to determine how the government’s designation will affect bandit groups’ tactics, practitioners in Northern Nigeria must evaluate how this proscription will affect their programming and approaches.

\(^6\) Idris4Peace, @Edrees4P, April 7, 2022, https://twitter.com/Edrees4P/status/1512011857799831558.
The depth and spread of violence across Northern Nigeria has stretched national security forces thin and failed to contain violence or resolve these long-running conflicts. Government and civil society officials are acknowledging that military operations and security measures must be reinforced or displaced by more non-violent and non-coercive alternatives. This chapter focuses on the main fields of practice suggested as alternatives, offers past and ongoing examples of these interventions, highlights the synergies across the fields of practice, and lists the main findings and good practices from the review of literature and programming.

1. **Fields of practice to confront conflict and violence in Northern Nigeria**

The UN Security Council, international organisations, and participants in the project’s workshops, interviews, and FGDs have recommended a number of approaches to confront conflict and violence in Northern Nigeria. These predominantly include **preventing violent extremism (PVE)**, **disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)**, and **screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (SPRR)**. The following section will briefly introduce each of these fields of practice, their evolution, and their applicability to Northern Nigeria.

1.1. **Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)**

Perhaps the most frequently cited approach to address conflict (and of course, violent extremism in particular) in Northern Nigeria was PVE. Since its inception and evolution over the past decade or more, the field of PVE has grown out of the understanding that, despite the need for counter-terrorism and conventional military responses to the threat of violent extremism, such approaches are unable to prevent individuals and groups from embracing violence or (when employed alone) fully end the threat of violent extremism. Indeed, counter-terrorism and conventional military responses are largely recognised as having the unintended consequence of exacerbating the grievances that drive violent extremism and increasing its threat. PVE shifts that focus and concentrates on addressing those grievances. As defined in one

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publication from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), PVE is an approach that “identifies and addresses context-specific drivers, vulnerabilities and risk factors for radicalisation, as well as individual incentives for joining violent extremist groups. [...] PVE moves away from a securitised approach and exclusively engages with individuals not yet implicated in or affiliated with violent extremism.”

Complimentarily, PVE also works on strengthening individual and community responses to violent extremism, building capacity and strengthening frameworks where possible. As described by the Swiss government, PVE “[deprives] violent extremism of its breeding ground by enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to resist it.”

However, many initial PVE interventions failed to make inroads with the very individuals and communities that were critical to their success. For example, the Prevent framework in the United Kingdom initially focused too much on referring individuals and was seen as a domestic spy programme – a toxic perception that Prevent has been unable to fully shake despite a number of reforms. Instead, PVE efforts should encourage dialogue between government, academia and civil society from securitised approaches to prevention and interruption while inverting the frame to see violent extremism as “a social issue with security implications (as opposed to a security issue with social implications).”

On the other hand, the focus on “root causes” has led many practitioners and organisations to approach PVE as simply rebranded development programming. In this way, efforts to address unemployment, poverty, education, and deficits in the rule of law are labelled as PVE interventions—as if countries like Nigeria can simply “develop” their way out of the problem of violent extremism. Indeed, when the former UN Secretary General presented the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to the General Assembly in January 2016, it included more than 70 policy and programming recommendations, often along development lines.

Despite these shortcomings, PVE is a well-established field of practice that can play a critical role in addressing the issue of violent extremism in Nigeria. Indeed, the Nigerian government adopted its Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Strategy in August 2017. This Toolkit will present a number of examples of PVE programming as well as some of the good practices on implementing PVE programming, particularly in Nigeria.

1.2. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

Unlike PVE, where the focus is on preventing radicalisation or providing alternatives to violent mobilisation, other fields must step in to address those who have already been enlisted or otherwise engaged in violent and/or extremist groups. In this case, participants in the project were most likely to advocate for the DDR as an approach to addressing all of the four sources of conflict detailed above (i.e. violent extremism,
conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism and community-based armed groups, and banditry).

The field of DDR is “the process of demilitarising official and unofficial armed groups by controlling and reducing the possession of arms, by disbanding non-state armed groups and rightsizing state security services and by assisting former combatants to reintegrate into civilian life.” The field of DDR is well-established since its inception in the late 1980s and is supported by a large body of literature and implementation experiences. Indeed, practitioners can be guided by a wealth of material, including the UN’s integrated DDR standards (IDDRS).

1.2.1. Acknowledgement of shortcomings and growth of the field

Nigeria’s experience with DDR goes back more than a decade, with the locally developed Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP), established to bring stability to the Niger Delta region. The programme was set up in June 2009 by former President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua after a wave of attacks on the country’s oil infrastructure by local armed groups who felt left behind by the industry as well as victims of the massive environmental damage it caused.

Like many of the DDR programmes of its time, PAP was a programme that was the result of agreements with the main armed groups and included a structured programme to disarm the groups and cease violent activity in return for amnesty, counselling, training, and (ongoing) monthly stipends. These stipends have since become a source of controversy, with payments having continued far longer than originally envisioned with other provisions of the programme failing to materialise.

However, only a month after the creation of PAP the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) presented their “New Horizon” document, to detail the increasingly complex environments in which peacekeeping (and, by extension, DDR programming) is required and the need for new, innovative approaches. These issues included conflict environments where “peace agreements are lacking or non-inclusive; undisciplined armed elements abound and allegiances constantly shift” as well as conflicts that are protracted or perpetrated by gangs, 

Community Violence Reduction

Where the conditions for DDR are not met, and especially when violence is driven by gangs, militias, or other undisciplined armed groups UN peace missions and other practitioners have developed a Community Violence Reduction (CVR) approach, which refers to programmes “aiming at preventing and reducing violence at the community level in ongoing armed conflict or in post-conflict environments.” Beginning in Haiti in 2006, following the destructive earthquake and the resulting insecurity, CVR programmes have the following three overarching objectives: “to help create the necessary conditions for successful DDR; to support DDR initiatives; and, in some cases, to replace traditional DDR programmes.” Like PVE, CVR works directly with communities to develop grassroots solutions to violence, including targeted interventions for youth vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups and ex-combatants – often through offering economic incentives, vocational and civic training, and improving relations between communities and the security services. For detailed guidance and standards on CVR, see the UN’s Integrated DDR Standards 2.30 on Community Violence Reduction


2 Ibid.

militias, or other undisciplined armed groups. In these kinds of settings, UN peace missions and other practitioners have developed a Community Violence Reduction (CVR) approach. See the textbox on the previous page for a brief overview of this approach. In the decade since the document, conflicts are increasingly perpetrated by violent extremist organisations, further complicating the applicability and feasibility of DDR programming in contemporary contexts.

1.2.2. **Second and Third Generation DDR**

However, DDR has continued to evolve since its inception in response to the changing nature of conflicts (as all fields of practice should). Practitioners and researchers have distinguished these evolutions into three “generations.” Figure 2, inspired by and adapted from the IOM and other sources, outlines the main differences between the first, second, and third generations of DDR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Generation DDR</th>
<th>Disarm and disengage combatants from organised armed groups. Focus is on the individuals involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Clear peace agreement and legal framework for DDR</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Defined military or paramilitary structures. DDR may be for the group as a whole or for individuals.</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second-Generation DDR</th>
<th>Shifts focus to include the broader community, building its resilience and inclusion in the reintegration process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Peace process may be incomplete, in progress, or even non-existent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Military or paramilitary structures are irregular. May be more like gangs or loosely formed armed groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ May include tools from other fields such as CVR.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third-Generation DDR</th>
<th>Shifts to broad engagement of communities as well as a more peacebuilding and conflict-management approach for better reintegration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Absence of a peace process, or it is incomplete, in process, or contested</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Multiple armed groups in decentralised formations. May more closely resemble gangs, insurgents, or violent extremist groups.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Conflict may be ongoing and armed groups may still be actively fighting, whereas DDR programming focuses on preventing engagement or providing off-ramps for combatants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ May include tools from other fields such as PVE.</td>
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threat of foreign terrorist fighters. In UNSCR 2178, operating under its binding Chapter VII authority under the UN Charter, the Security Council called upon Member States to develop and implement “prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returning foreign terrorist fighters.”70 In 2017, the Security Council expanded the applicability of ‘prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration’ to include contexts outside of the foreign terrorist fighter context and added (again under its Chapter VII authority) the requirement to include “evidence-based” screening procedures to assess and investigate individuals whom they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists, including suspected foreign terrorist fighters, and distinguish them from other individuals, including their accompanying family members who may not have been engaged in foreign terrorist fighter-related offenses.71

In its direct applicability to Nigeria, the LCBC embedded an SPRR approach in its Regional Security Strategy, defining screening as the “initial process of determining the main profile of a person, currently in the custody of authorities or under the responsibility of authorities, in order to recommend particular treatment.”72 However, SPRR is much more than screening, and introduces accountability measures as a central objective. But while it may seem that SPRR processes intend to prosecute all who (as decided in UNSCR 2178) participate in “the financing, planning, preparation or perpetration of terrorist acts or in supporting terrorist acts,” the use of screening measures opens the door to accountability by other means.73 As one international expert told the authors, SPRR is, in some ways, a recognition that most states’ criminal justice systems do not have the capacity to prosecute all violent extremists, their supporters, and their associated family members. Therefore, under SPRR, those not deemed to be worthy of prosecution may be sent through other pathways to ensure accountability, receive rehabilitation, or be reintegrated into home communities.

2. Main findings and good practices

3.1. Main findings

The extensive review of literature on the sources of conflict in Nigeria and the efforts used to address them, including the fields of PVE, DDR, and SPRR, has revealed a number of key conclusions that will guide the approach and recommendations of the Toolkit:

The issue of violent extremism is entering a new, dangerous phase in Nigeria. From the demise of Boko Haram and ISWAP’s consolidation of power in the North East to Ansaru’s resurgence and growing linkages between banditry and violent extremism in the North West, Nigeria faces a critical moment. Long on the back foot, violent extremism is likely to resurge across Northern Nigeria as ISWAP succeeds where Boko Haram never could and launches a heart and minds campaign and a statebuilding project to attract broader support. In addition, groups liked to al-Qaeda and Boko Haram in the North West may seek to capitalise on the region’s insecurity to grow in strength.

The four sources of conflict discussed in this Toolkit (violent extremism, conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism and community-based armed groups, and banditry) are feeding back into one another and deepening violence and conflict. For example, violent extremist groups

have driven conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities by forcing pastoralists to take new migration routes or raiding pastoralists’ cattle. In other cases they may sell weapons or offer to take one party’s side in a conflict. In addition, vigilantism against pastoralists is often blamed for driving the issue of banditry in the North West, which in turn has exacerbated conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities and encouraged violent extremist groups to exploit the violence.

The increase of vigilantism and the use of community-based armed groups is contributing to further conflict, a securitisation of many low-level conflicts, and presents a potential spoiler in post-conflict peace. The UN Security Council, human rights groups, and many participants in the project expressed concern regarding allegations the vigilante and other community-based armed groups have committed crimes and violated human rights. Their presence, regardless of these allegations, has encouraged violent extremist and bandit groups to be more indiscriminate in their violence against communities as they accuse men and boys of being vigilantes. Furthermore, local issues that were once resolved through collaborative methods that embraced restitution and reconciliation are now being referred to vigilantes who may or may not employ more coercive methods. Finally, unless vigilante and other community-based armed groups are included in effective DDR processes, they may hinder peace efforts due to feelings of marginalisation.

The Nigerian government’s recent decision to proscribe bandit groups in the North West as terrorist organisations is likely to hinder efforts to bring peace and limit the options available to disarm, demobilise, rehabilitate, and reintegrate bandits. While the designation of bandits as terrorists increases the sanctions that the criminal justice sector can bring on bandits and those who support them, interviewees have warned that this decision is likely to encourage a harder approach to dealing with banditry and make previous measures such as amnesty and peace agreements to be out of reach. Finally, the impact of communities is yet unknown, as there are concerns that communities that are extorted by bandits into paying for “protection” through money, supplies, or people (such as young men as fighters, young women as brides or for transactional sex, or others as informants) may be liable for investigation for material support for terrorism under the Terrorism Act.

The past emphasis on amnesty programmes by Nigeria’s federal and state governments has led to a lack of accountability in the eyes...
of the Nigerian community. Community consultations revealed concerns that conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities are dealt with extrajudicial measures or otherwise outside the justice system. Furthermore, crimes by vigilantes, bandits, and sometimes violent extremists go unpunished as government leaders opt for deferred prosecution or amnesty programmes over prosecution. This has led some to claim that these violent actors operate with impunity.

Government and civil society efforts to address these sources of conflict are often disjointed even standalone initiatives. Broad community consultations undertaken by Search have revealed concerns that there is a lack of synergy amongst partners working on these issues. Sometimes these are signified by a lack of a common framework or go-it-alone strategies by certain government institutions, state governments, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and even UN agencies. However, some interlocutors have expressed hope that this is changing. As one practitioner in the North West told Search, "[I]n the past, the government offered its interventions alone, but now the government invites CSOs and traditional leaders."

Communities feel like they are often cut out of the reintegration process. Despite the commitment to partner with communities and civil society in Nigeria’s National P/CVE Strategy, Operation Safe Corridor and other initiatives are seen as opaque. Many have expressed trust in the rehabilitation and deradicalisation efforts the government is undertaking, but since many communities do not trust these processes or do not feel neither a sense of justice nor are they prepared or sensitised to receive returnees, then reintegration efforts are less likely to be successful.

There is a general lack of prevention measures to address banditry and reduce the appeal for young men (in particular) to engage in banditry or join bandit groups. Past efforts that focused on resolution mechanisms were largely ineffective and not coupled with prevention efforts. Insights from PVE and Community Violence Reduction can have lessons learned that are transferable to the issue of banditry.

Programming to address the so-called “root causes” of these sources of conflict are often treating the single issues or the symptoms of conflict and do not apply a transformative approach. This is often due to misconceptions of the drivers of violence, assumptions about the role of ideology in radicalisation, and an overemphasis on gaps in employment and education for vulnerable individuals. In this way, some efforts work to ‘outbid’ armed and extremist groups with alternative options rather than transforming individuals’ approaches and building true resilience.

Advancements in DDR programming through the field’s second and third “generations” may not have been fully translated into the Nigerian context. This is partly due to the weight of Nigeria’s own recent experience with the locally developed Post-Amnesty Programme but also affected by the growth of the SPRR field with its own considerations. Therefore, new DDR efforts may require capacity building, research, and a reframing of DDR goals and objectives.

The emphasis on “fields of practice” may confound responses and leave gaps when conflicts do not neatly fit into a specific field of practice. Since each PVE, DDR, and SPRR has its own terminology, framework, reforms, and lessons learned, the learning curve for practitioners, researchers, and especially communities can be slow. Therefore, this Toolkit has sought to distil these fields into the core, shared objectives.

3.2. Good practices

While it is impossible to outline all of the lessons learned and good practices regarding efforts to build peace and security through PVE, DDR, and SPRR, the extensive literature review has
gathered the following good practices that are relevant to Northern Nigeria. Where relevant, these good practices may be found in the respective modules of this Toolkit. However, it is important to include the following cross-cutting good practices from the literature review and Search’s broad public consultations.

**Communities and an All-of-Society Approach**

**PVE requires the involvement of the whole society,** including former members of violent extremist groups and victims. Since violent extremism threatens the whole community, we must work on all levels of society to prevent it. As recognised in Nigeria’s National Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Strategy, “Government alone cannot address the threat of violent extremism.”

“The design and implementation of any rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration efforts must be inclusive.”

Avoid setting top-down objectives and expectations for programming without consulting the communities or individuals who will be affected by these activities and policies. Instead, listen to communities’ and individuals' needs through true engagement. In many instances, this can be done by building an “inception phase” in a project where practitioners may organise broad public consultations, sensitise the community, and conduct appropriate research.

Sources of conflict in Northern Nigeria, like elsewhere, are shaped by local, community-driven drivers even if they have international dynamics as well and, therefore, practitioners should emphasise grassroots efforts to address them rather than international interventions instead.

Not only should communities be involved in the design of interventions, communities should own some of the designed structures after the interventions are complete. This will increase communities’ ownership and will make it easier for them to be active in the programme.

**Civil society should be incorporated in peace negotiations** rather than leaving these discussions to just those who are fighting. Indeed, it has been well demonstrated that peace agreements are 64 per cent less likely to fail when civil society representatives participate.

**Youth**

Youth must be actively engaged in all levels of PVE as critical, trusted partners and leaders. Enabling youth to be leaders in PVE at the grassroots, programmatic, and policy levels can increase the effectiveness and success of programs and policies. Youth bring unique perspectives that can also uncover the nature
Gender and Women

Maintain a gender-sensitive lens throughout all programming. This should include how men, women, and children are affected differently by sources of conflict and how they might be targeted by groups differently or similarly. Solid gender analysis should help to map the different pathways men, women, and children become associated or disassociated (engaged or disengaged) with armed or extremist groups. Finally, gender-sensitive programming should work to address stereotypes or perceptions on these individuals and their unique needs.\(^{80}\)

3. Synergising the fields of PVE, DDR, and SPRR in Nigeria

Throughout Search’s community consultations and the authors’ interviews with international experts, interlocutors frequently mentioned the fields of PVE, DDR, and SPRR. Practitioners also referenced a number of other fields and related how different organisations or institutions promoted their own approaches by other names to address similar issues. The authors’ extensive literature review delved into all of these fields in an effort to identify synergies, lessons learned, and the state of play for each field.

However, it became clear from this exhaustive exercise that the emphasis on “fields of practice” may confound responses and leave gaps when conflicts do not neatly fit into a specific field of practice. Indeed, a number of researchers on these issues in Nigeria have flagged this issue. To focus on the topic of banditry, some have noted that many of the standard counterterrorism and PVE approaches are “unlikely to have much effect against bandits,” since approaches designed for violent extremist groups, like strategic communications and deradicalisation “would need to be significantly retooled for a context in which most [bandits] are not motivated by religious ideas.”\(^{81}\) The same is true in other directions. Furthermore, since PVE, DDR, and SPRR each have their own terminology, framework, reforms, and lessons learned, the learning curve for practitioners, researchers, and especially communities can be slow. This is, in part, why a young civil society member in the North West told Search that “We have to use different strategies for different context in addressing each issue of violence. Each context should be studied and a peculiar solution should be developed for that.” To overcome these

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\(^{80}\) For example, see Gendre et al., *New Contexts of Ongoing Conflict and Violent Extremism*, pp xi.  
\(^{81}\) Barnett, Rufa’i, and Abdulaziz, “Northwestern Nigeria.”
issues and increase its practicality, this Toolkit seeks to distil these fields into the following core objectives they share and which were emphasised in the expert and community consultations:

4.1. Conflict transformation

Each of the three fields seek ways to transform the approaches that individuals who are vulnerable to engaging or who have already engaged in violent extremism or armed groups use to deal with issues or conflicts they face. This Toolkit will explore ways that conflict transformation may be used in all of these settings. Conflict transformation may be described in the following definition:

**Conflict transformation** is “a comprehensive approach that addresses personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict, using the potential for conflict as a catalyst for positive change in all of these areas.”

4.2. Resilience

A central objective of each of the three fields of practice is to help groups and individuals resist the incentives to support or use violence to address grievances and conflict they may face. This is often described as resilience.

**Resilience** is where individuals or communities have the positive capacities of “knowledge, skills and abilities to protect against factors that might lead to radicalisation and recruitment.”

4.3. Risk management

Importantly, due to limited resources as well as in the interests of protecting human rights and preventing marginalisation, it is important in all three fields to distinguish between those who are in the greatest need of certain interventions. While this takes different forms in each field, it is necessary to evaluate the risk an individual might face regarding radicalisation, recruitment, or re-engagement. This can help enable individualised approaches that do the most good to the greatest number of people.

4.4. Disengagement

Once a group or individual has engaged in violence or an armed group, it is important that interventions are put in place to encourage and support groups and individuals to “disengage” from these groups and from the use of violence.

**Disengagement** is “the process of shifting one’s behaviour to abstain from violent activities and withdraw from a violent [and/or] extremist group.”

Since PVE is targeted to those who have not yet engaged in violence or joined violent extremist groups, disengagement is more of a feature of DDR and SPRR interventions.

4.5. Accountability

When individuals commit violence or other crimes, victims’ rights to life and freedom from violence are violated. Justice must be satisfied for peace to be durable. This can, and often should, result in civil or criminal sanctions for criminal activity as well as support for victims. Despite the importance of justice and accountability, DDR programmes often do not include these mechanisms and are criticised by victims and communities accordingly. Therefore, SPRR approaches are sometimes used to remedy this gap. However, when government policies result in amnesty or alternative measures, accountability may be satisfied in a

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number of different ways through a variety of non-coercive and transformational approaches.

4.6. Rehabilitation

Supporting and participating in violence is a transformative choice. It often leads to damaged social connections, feelings of guilt, trauma, and can even rewire the brain to react to situations more aggressively. Those who have supported or participated in violence may need to receive professional rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation is “a set of measures aimed to support the transition from being associated with Boko Haram [or other violent extremist or armed groups] to a citizen of the community, abandoning the use of violent means to achieve change, generating income to cater for families’ needs and avoiding recidivism [...] and includes deradicalisation, psychosocial support, and mental health counselling.”

4.7. Reintegration

Violent extremist worldviews often make it more difficult for former extremists or those who have been forced to live in areas under their control to participate in their home communities. This can also be true for those who have lived with bandits or other armed groups in isolated camps. For others who have been detained in prisons, camps, or other institutionalised or controlled settings, community life may also be difficult. Therefore, it is important in many fields to reintegrate these individuals back into their home communities.

Reintegration is the process “where practitioners help the transition of the completely rehabilitated individual back to society. Practitioners also work at the same time on society to ensure there is a positive response to the rehabilitated, and to mitigate social stigma. The ultimate goal of reintegration is to foster the social inclusion of the individual and prevent recidivism.” However, in the Nigeria context, “reintegration refers not only to ex-combatants but to the different categories of persons associated with Boko Haram [or other violent extremist or armed groups].”

Challenges to reintegration may be external, resulting from the communities themselves where former extremists, ex-bandits, or returnees may not be trusted or face outright aggression. Therefore, successful reintegration is often seen as the penultimate objective of these fields of practice.

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The seven objectives outlined above and how they relate to the fields of PVE, DDR, and SPRR are complicated and multi-faceted. Figure 3 elaborates the connections each field has to the objectives.

This concept mapping process demonstrates that while most objectives are included in the three fields of practice, some fields may not traditionally incorporate these objectives. As such, practitioners and communities that look to these approaches as potential remedies to the sources of violence and conflict they face may end up missing some of the “pieces of the puzzle” that can help to secure durable peace.

Therefore, the Toolkit below offers a number of important considerations when working to achieve these seven objectives, as well as cross-cutting tools and guidance on how to improve the success and impact of peace-promoting programming across Northern Nigeria.
This module covers how to:

1. Ensure that interventions are addressing the roots of conflict, rather than simply the symptoms of conflict, by embedding a conflict transformation approach;
2. Identify the core dynamics of a conflict that must be transformed.

Years of violence and conflict have hardened Nigerians in the Northern Geopolitical Zones against armed and violent extremist groups, making efforts to build peace less likely. Participants in Search’s North West co-creation workshops were visibly resentful towards the bandits terrorising their communities due to prolonged periods of insecurity in the zone. They mostly recommended armed strategies to neutralise bandits and kidnappers and were at times opposed to dialogue and reintegration. Similarly, when the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) convened a dialogue in July 2016 in Maiduguri with stakeholders such as government representatives, traditional and religious leaders, women’s and youth groups, CDD reported that “some members of the public who have been affected by the violence in the Northeast have become radicalised against Boko Haram in its entirety.”

“Transforming a conflict requires transcending the goals of conflicting parties, defining other goals, disembedding the conflict from its original situation and embedding it in a more promising place.”
- Johan Galtung

This module introduces the concept of conflict transformation and how it can help to overcome the dynamics and emotions described above, especially when opposing sides cannot see goals besides overcoming the other through force. “Transforming a conflict,” Johan Galtung writes, “requires transcending the goals of conflicting parties, defining other goals, disembedding the conflict from its original situation and embedding it in a more promising place.”

Conflict transformation forms the central, cross-cutting approach to this Toolkit, which is why it is its first module. Many of the tools and insights in this Toolkit are influenced by this approach, and later chapters will add specific recommendations on incorporating conflict transformation in the other objectives focused on in the Toolkit.

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1. The objective of conflict transformation

While there are many definitions of conflict transformation, this Toolkit utilises the one from the Center for Intercultural Dialogue, which describes conflict transformation as “a comprehensive approach that addresses personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict, using the potential for conflict as a catalyst for positive change in all of these areas.”\(^{10}\) Conflict transformation aims to achieve positive peace (and not just the mere absence of violence) by empowering individuals and communities to become involved in nonviolent change themselves and transforming the ways they perceive themselves, those they may be in conflict with (the ‘other’), and the conflict itself, such as in the ways described below:

**The self,** from a ‘victim’ or someone without the power to effect change (or at least predominately through violence) to **someone who is empowered** and can effect positive change non-violently;

**The other,** from an ‘enemy’ to a **potential partner** in positive change;

**The conflict** and how it is understood, from **a source of suffering and division** to an **opportunity** to enact positive change.

As conflict transformation takes hold, it may have profound effects on the culture of a particular context. To offer one example, Paula Gaviria Betancur, the Presidential Adviser for Human Rights of Colombia, reported how careful consideration of the victims of violence there has brought a deep, cultural change. “For us, it was very important to change the idea of the victim in the social imaginary as someone from whom everything has been taken away. Victims are autonomous people that can fight for their rights, they are a key collective actor.”\(^{91}\) Through the peace process in Colombia, victims have not only had their rights to reparations and justice reinforced, but they were also granted (for a short time) reserved seats in the House of Representatives to ensure that victims’ voices would be represented in the post-conflict law-making process.

To be successful, John Paul Lederach writes, the key to conflict transformation is “the capacity to envision conflict as having the potential for

\(^{10}\) Shailor, “Conflict Transformation.”

constructive change.”

For many who might see efforts to make peace as capitulation to and compromise with ‘the enemy’, conflict transformation may be difficult to conceptualise or gain community support. Indeed, as one civil society participant in Search’s co-creation workshop in the North Central zone described, “we often mistake compromise for fear.” To help, Lederach offers a number of helpful ways to conceive of the differences between conflict resolution and conflict transformation, which have been adapted and reformulated in Figure 4.

But how does conflict transformation relate to issues of violent extremism? Search pioneered the Transforming Violent Extremism (TVE) approach to articulate how, building upon decades of experience in conflict transformation and responses to the issue of violent extremism.

TVE requires recognising that the reasons and motivators leading an individual or group to be drawn to violent extremist movements can be literally transformed into a different type of agency or engagement. This was expertly described by the late Jesse Morton, a formerly prolific al-Qaeda recruiter who became the executive director of an American PVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The key question:</th>
<th>Conflict Resolution’s Approach</th>
<th>Conflict Transformation’s Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do we end the conflict?</td>
<td>How do we end the conflict and build the needed processes and relationships to prevent future conflicts on these issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main purpose:</td>
<td>To achieve an agreement or solution to the current crisis</td>
<td>To promote constructive change, leading to a positive peace and not just the absence of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives for violent actors:</td>
<td>To encourage violent actors to stop using violence</td>
<td>To help violent actors to not want to use violence anymore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of the conflict:</td>
<td>Must de-escalate tensions and the conflict</td>
<td>Recognises that tensions may need to both ebb and flow, such as de-escalating tensions and conflict to pursue constructive change but recognising that tensions may escalate as the parties discuss sensitive issues to pursue it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe:</td>
<td>The focus is on short-term solutions</td>
<td>The focus shifts to mid- and long-term solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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organisation following his prison sentence. He argued the importance of focusing on the core issues and that “you can't feed into an ‘us versus them’ divide by taking sides in conflict, that you have to ... attack a problem at a higher order of consciousness than that which creates it.”

Morton argued that a holistic approach to preventing radicalisation and recruitment requires that, instead of trying to argue with a violent extremist ideology, you have to realise that extremists belong to groups, and they join groups [or movements] because everybody has a need for group belonging. If you don't create a group [or movement] that they can belong to as an alternative to those that are advocating for violent extremism, then you can't fulfil those needs.

Therefore, TVE aims to rechannel those needs and approaches by incorporating a peacebuilding and conflict transformation approach. TVE recognises the transformative potential in addressing the root causes of violent extremism in ways that do not aggravate tensions and marginalise affected individuals and communities even further. Moreover, by building on the same values, it is possible to have a gender-transformative approach as well in our efforts to promote gender equality and gender sensitivity (see the textbox for insights how).

“You can't feed into an ‘us versus them’ divide by taking sides in conflict, that you have to ... attack a problem at a higher order of consciousness than that which creates it.”

- Jesse Morton

Similarly, upon assessing conflict drivers in Northern Nigeria, Equal Access International suggested a departure from approaches that only emphasise ‘de-radicalisation’ and ‘countering’ violent extremism to approaches that ‘re-frame radicalisation’ to take into account human potential, unique leadership abilities, the potential predisposition of some ‘radicals’ towards self-efficacy, agency, and empowerment, and the need to create alternative pathways in closed societies for frustrated

What is a gender-transformative approach and how is it relevant to conflict?

Elaine Mercer defined gender-transformative approaches as programming that aims to “transform the power structures that underlie unequal gender relations and norms.” The following description of approaches are directly relevant to the fields of practice focused on in this Toolkit:

“Empowering marginalised women and girls to come into the public domain, share their perspectives, take on leadership roles, set political agendas and form movements is central to this approach. Working with men and boys as allies and champions of change is also vital in order to challenge and transform dominant social, economic and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality.”

How are gender-transformative approaches similar to conflict transformation? Both share the need to focus on empowerment and agency while transforming the dominant approaches on dealing with their respective issues.

How can gender-transformative approaches be incorporated into your efforts?


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95 Ibid.
individuals to engage in positive social change.96

The underpinnings and label of “transforming violent extremism” (though with different meanings) are increasingly being recognised and adopted, such as by Equal Access International, RTI International, the Berghoff Foundation, and IAHV Peacebuilding. Indeed, Dr Maje Peterx of Carefronting – Nigeria described to the authors how his organisation developed its own TVE approach in parallel to Search. “Transforming violent extremism,” he said, “integrates different activities that address the vulnerabilities of a population that makes them prone to radicalisation.” As such, Dr Peterx explained that the approach “should cover psychosocial support, trauma consciousness and resilience building, forgiveness and reconciliation, social cohesion and restorative justice.” These issues will be covered in detail later in the modules on accountability, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

2. Intervention strategies

Conflict transformation and its application to the issue of violent extremism (TVE), when applied to the four sources of conflict in Northern Nigeria, may employ a number of strategies. The following examples are a non-exhaustive list of core dynamics that can be transformed.

- **Empower victims of violence and conflict.** The injuries that victims, their families, and communities suffer from violence and conflict can be deep and cause physical, emotional, psychological, and relational damage. Often, the focus may be on restoring the status before conflict and violence, but conflict transformation encourages us to go further and make things better than before. If successful, conflict transformation processes can help victims become leaders for positive change. In one of Search’s co-creation workshops in the North Central zone, one civil society practitioner shared how their programming worked to do so with victims of violence amongst the farming and pastoralist communities: “We offered psychosocial support to survivors of violent conflict in Plateau State. We were able to pull out survivors, especially bringing farmers and [pastoralists] together to be able to speak about what is happening in their communities and share the pains they have.” The participant reported how they were able to build “circles of trust” and even trained people in the communities as trainers themselves. See the textbox on this page for an example of Search’s work in Plateau State on empowered young women in conflict transformation.


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**Naija Girls and empowering young women to champion peacebuilding efforts**

In one example of engaging young women in PVE, Search for Common Ground identified and trained a small number of girls in Jos, Nigeria to be local peacebuilders as part of the Naija Girls project. Despite the sectarian violence between Christians and Muslims that was dividing the community and leading to horrific attacks, Search brought together Christian and Muslim girls and trained them in conflict transformation so that they could share these approaches in their families and communities.

To watch a brief video on the Naija Girls project, go to https://youtu.be/-IOHG37pe3w.

**What might be some of the risks in engaging women and girls in PVE programming?**
What are the different levels of participation youth might have in programming and how do they affect effectiveness?

Youth participation is not simply a factor of whether youth are participating or not. In fact, youth participation may be so limited that it can be frustrating for youth, rather than empowering. (W)e should consider youth participation, leadership, and ownership at any level (grassroots or even policy levels, for example) as being on a spectrum: from the bottom, where youths' voices are used or co-opted by stakeholders or institutions to send their own messages, possibly even altering the youth's original intentions, to the top, where young people lead projects with buy-in and support from other stakeholders.

In the *Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit* from YouthPower Learning and Making Cents International, the authors describe these various degrees as “steps” on a ladder. A summary of those steps are, from bottom to top:

- **Youth are manipulated and not informed** — Stakeholders and institutions use youth' voices or actions to send their own messages, possibly even altering the youth's original intentions.
- **Youth are “decoration”** — Youth are invited to attend events or participate in activities without understanding their purpose or being able to contribute to the central purpose.
- **Youth are “tokens”** — In these cases, youth engagement is intended but poorly thought out. For example, youth may be invited to participate as observers or one or two youth may be invited to a committee. In the end, these young people may not be able to participate fully, and the intention may have only been to “appear” as if youth are participating.
- **Youth are consulted and informed** — Youth provide input and perspectives that impact the design and implementation of activities, but other stakeholders still design and do the overall management.
- **Youth-initiated and youth-directed** — Youth design and implement their own activities (whether or not they target other youth), but may seek input or support from outside stakeholders and institutions.
- **Youth-initiated and shared decisions with other stakeholders** — Youth design and implement their own projects and include other stakeholders, with whom they share in the decision-making. Here, the inclusion of other stakeholders on an equal footing with youth empowers the youth even more than programs entirely initiated and directed by youth.

Youth are assigned but informed — Young people are given roles or responsibilities and understand the purpose of the activities.
Youth are consulted and informed — Youth provide input and perspectives that impact the design and implementation of activities, but other stakeholders still design and do the overall management.

Empower individuals and communities to be involved in the conflict transformation process. “What is overlooked,” noted another participant in one of Search’s North Central co-creation workshops, “is that peacebuilding is not only a government or security job but also the job of the community.” We should be careful to not overlook marginalised groups such as ethnic and religious minorities or the roles that women and youth can play. However, we must be careful to not confuse participation with empowerment by understanding that participation is a spectrum (see the textbox on the previous page for a discussion on how this can be understood in terms of youth). For a detailed example, see the textbox on the following page to learn how an ActionAid Nigeria project’s Community Action Response Teams (CARTs) empowered individuals and communities to serve in effective conflict resolution response mechanisms.

Transform how partners and the community (including victims, academics, and authorities) view the “enemy.” Due to their experiences, media reports, or popular narratives in their community (which may or may not be promoted by political or other leaders), communities may have formed problematic perceptions on those that they may be in conflict with in ways that can undermine conflict transformation processes. For example, a civil society participant in one of Search’s co-creation workshops in the North West zone reminded all that we “need to understand that not all Fulanis are criminals or bandits. [Banditry is] not associated with any tribe or religion.” Similar shifts in perceptions are needed in regard to defectors or returnees from areas controlled by violent extremism groups. One participant recounted how perceptions such as these can undermine conflict transformation processes: “I thought about the impact of cattle rustling in farmer-herder crisis. Sometimes cattle rustlers fire-up the conflict, in moving their herds on farmlands and feed on harvested crops. Therefore, the community and the farmers react as if it was the community herders that did that, and thus the herders there lose trust.” In this way, the participant noted how communities can play into the activities of the insurgents. Therefore, effective conflict transformation efforts should help reframe these perceptions from ‘enemies’ to potential partners by finding avenues for cooperation and mutual benefit.

“What is overlooked ... is that peacebuilding is not only a government or security job but also the job of the community.”
- Participant, North Central Workshop
**ActionAid Nigeria’s System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism**

In 2019 and with funding from GCERF, ActionAid Nigeria implemented the “System and Structure Strengthening Approach against Radicalisation to Violent Extremism” (SARVE) Programme in Kogi State, which adopted a whole-of-community approach to conflict transformation. Through the programme, young women and men mobilised to not only build resilience against violent extremism in their communities, but to transform how youth could be actively and positively engaged in policy change. Their coalition, the Youth Development Commission, advocated on aspects of law relevant to them. The main goal of the Commission was to ensure that youth voices were heard and policy changes could contribute to generate more socio-economic opportunities for youth, reduce anti-social behaviour and empower young men and young women while simultaneously tackling some of the drivers of violent extremism such as lack of opportunity, community agency and sense of purpose.

The SARVE Programme had a positive impact on both the youth and their communities. Community members reported feeling involved in decision-making processes. They established the Community Action Response Team, a body in charge of monitoring PVE efforts and a mechanism for effective conflict resolution responses. The most successful result of the Community Action Response Team was the signing of a peace agreement between herders and pastoralists in the localities of intervention. Another example of effective change has been the development and implementation of the Kogi State Plan on Peace and Security of Women and Children.

The SARVE programme highlights how building agency can trigger transformative actions and discussions with local and governmental authorities. The programme contributed to conflict transformation by transforming the agency of youth from frustration to positive, collaborative engagement and by helping communities to embed policies that address drivers of violent extremism into the local governance system.

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Transform the dominant measures and interventions to address conflict to favour non-violent over violent approaches. As evidenced in many of Search’s community engagements, trust in non-violent approaches is damaged—in some areas more than others. Therefore, conflict transformation processes have a responsibility to show that non-violent approach can not only be successful, but that they have the potential to have a more lasting impact than violent approaches such as military offensives and increased policing. Participants in co-creation workshops shared a number of examples and most were committed to promoting these non-violent approaches to dealing with violence and conflict. For example, some noted how there are often community dialogues between the communities and the bandits, and that those who have enjoy “relative peace” now. Others have noted how this has been helpful in reintegrating former fighters and supporters of violent extremist groups as well as returnees from areas under their control. Finally, traditional methods for addressing conflict should be restored when they have been displaced by interventions from security forces or vigilante or other community-based armed groups.

3. Good practices on conflict transformation

Rather than seeking to implement so-called “deradicalisation” approaches, reframe the understanding of radicalisation to acknowledge the needs of “some ‘radicals’ towards self-efficacy, agency, and empowerment,” and the resulting need for effective policies and programmes to “create alternative pathways in closed societies for frustrated individuals to engage in positive social change.”

Consider communities’ own beliefs about which segments of society they perceive as legitimate and trustworthy. In some areas of Nigeria, longstanding feelings of neglect have degraded trust. In other areas, communities may mistrust traditional leaders, the media, religious leaders, and even civil society due to local issues and grievances. Therefore, it may be helpful to conduct a social network analysis.

99 Search for Common Ground used this approach in its research in Kenya and Tanzania on the issue of radicalization. Meet Me at the Maskani: Mapping of Influencers, Networks, and Communication Channels in Kenya and Tanzania is available at https://www.dmeforpeace.org/resource/meet-maskani-mapping-influencers-networks-communication-channels-kenya-tanzania/. For more information on social network analysis, see http://www.orgnet.com/sna.html
is important to transform those relationships that have degraded.

**Encourage neutrality in the design and delivery of interventions.** It is important to be conscious of perceptions that communities may have towards political, traditional, religious, media, and civil society institutions that seek to design or deliver interventions in their area. Due to tensions, past experiences, and the perceived religious, political, and ethnic affiliation of a particular actor, communities may mistrust intentions or see some interventions as favouring or disfavouring particular groups.\(^{100}\)

**Development or livelihood interventions can be reframed to build social cohesion and restore linkages.** For example, farmers and pastoralists can rebuild “complementary livelihood modalities” by restoring traditional practices such as allowing pastoralists’ animals to graze on farmland after harvest, bringing natural fertiliser to increase soil quality.\(^{101}\) These practices can reinforce social ties and increase interconnectedness, reducing competition and transforming relationships.

Work together to “restore traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to serve as preventive measures against future violent extremism and for reconciling societal objection to the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram [or other violent] extremists.”\(^{102}\) These can displace interventions from security forces or vigilante and other community-based armed groups and encourage collaborative and alternative dispute resolution while discouraging the use of violence or coercion.

### 4. Guiding tools on conflict transformation and TVE


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100 The authors are grateful to an anonymous participant from a North Central co-creation workshop for this good practice.


This module covers how to:

1. Conceptualise and understand resilience at both the individual and community levels;
2. Design effective programming that builds individual resilience and/or mechanisms to help communities prevent, identify, reject, and intervene against conflict.

“Building resilience” is perhaps the most oft-cited objective of efforts to respond to violence and conflict in Northern Nigeria. Resilience-building interventions have traditionally focused on improving economic opportunities, expanding access to education, and promoting tolerance between ethnic or religious groups because these are seen to be sources of vulnerability or drivers of conflict or violent extremism.

However, many of those who spoke to Search related how these efforts may not go far enough to make significant impacts on conflict dynamics. For example, one woman from a government ministry noted how these effects can be disjointed, saying, “There are those who know that the interventions are for their economic development, but they didn’t understand that it is for preventing violence. We haven’t gone through to sensitise them that the support is to overtake the probability of insecurities.” In this way, our efforts—even when they bring real benefits to our beneficiaries—may be limited to the extent that they can affect conflict dynamics.

Furthermore, others complained that even when tensions rise, civil society and government institutions (including the security forces) are slow to respond, with one participant in the North Central zone lamenting that there is a “lack of pro-active action on early warning signs” and alleging that sometimes nothing is done out of political interests. Perceptions such as these have driven many communities facing conflict to create their own vigilante groups: If the government or other security forces cannot protect them, they would do so themselves. This module evaluates the concept of individual and community resilience through the lens of conflict transformation, offering examples from Northern Nigeria, and offering a number of strategies to build resilience in impactful ways.

1. The objective of building resilience

Often described as raising a sort of internal protection or “shield” or strong bonds within a community, resilience can be defined as the condition where individuals or communities have the positive capacities of “knowledge, skills and abilities to protect against factors that might lead

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to radicalisation and recruitment [and violence].”

These ‘factors’ can be considered those issues or dynamics that can create vulnerability, which is defined below:

**Vulnerability** is a “condition produced by personal risk and protective factors which might make an individual more susceptible to [drivers of violent extremism] and ultimately, to radicalisation leading to violent extremism” or recruitment into violent groups.¹⁰⁵

Yet it is important for practitioners to understand that **individual resilience** and **community resilience** can mean very different things. The following subsections will explore these differences in detail.¹⁰⁶

### 1.1. Individual resilience

For its programming in Nigeria, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) defines resilience at the community level as social cohesion and community agency whereas at the individual level resilience is understood as the equal access to opportunities and a sense of purpose.¹⁰⁷

However, we must consider what connections factors such as these have to local drivers of violence and conflict in order to ensure that our efforts are not just improving individuals and communities in an objective sense (good though that is) but building real **resilience to conflict** itself. Therefore, we should understand individual resilience as a **person’s capacity to reject the idea of violence or violent extremism**—even when it may be tempting. That way, when individuals have grievances and feel the need to “do something” about them, they should have the *knowledge, skills and abilities* to reject the idea that violence and violent extremism are legitimate responses and pursue other strategies instead. This meaning also resonates with the broader definition of individual resilience used in the humanitarian sector, which often defines resilience as the ability to withstand external crises.¹⁰⁸ To have a fuller understanding of individual resilience, many

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¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ The following discussion is drawn and adapted from Van Leuven, Countering Violent Extremism, pp 45-46.


recommend consulting the Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework. See the textbox on the following page to better understand the various aspects should be incorporated when building individual resilience.

1.2. Community resilience

On the other hand, community resilience can be understood as a community’s ‘knowledge, skills and abilities’ to prevent, identify, reject, and intervene against the use of violence—whether by internal or external actors. For example, a resilient community has opportunities for members to discuss pressing issues and find collaborative (non-violent) solutions. They would also be able to correctly identify and address the factors that may create vulnerability to violent extremism and conflict amongst community members and address them.

Even though they may be different, individual resilience and community resilience are linked because if most or all individuals are more resilient and better equipped to resist radicalisation and conflict, the overall community will also be more resilient and safer. Vice-versa, the existence of community-level approaches and mechanisms to address grievances (community resilience), might be able to reduce the impact and importance of personal risk factors.

The Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites

Search for Common Ground also works in countries across the Middle East and Africa to promote interreligious dialogue and the protection of religious sites when they become the targets of extremist violence, including participating in the creation of the Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites. The Universal Code offers practical guidelines for safeguarding holy sites and for promoting peace and reconciliation between people of different ethnic and religious communities in order to better protect them through cooperation between leaders of diverse religions and relevant state authorities. Interreligious understanding and respect can help insulate communities from the risks of radicalisation and violent extremism. Search, the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, One World in Dialogue, and Religions for Peace were the partner organisations involved in leading this process. For a video on Search’s project in Nigeria to convene local religious leaders to protect places of worship to mitigate conflict, see https://youtu.be/0v7dswpGYo.


This concept of resilience emphasises that successful PVE (as well as DDR and SPRR) programming and policy at the community level requires broad, local engagement with a variety of actors to build skills and techniques to understand the local drivers and to prevent and counter them—rather than simply instilling virtues of peace or tolerance. To illustrate community mechanisms that demonstrate resilience, Mercy Corps showcased a number of functional conflict resolution mechanisms in its research on conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities. If cattle inadvertently damaged farmers’ crops, the pastoralist would meet with the farmer and apologise, either receiving forgiveness or paying compensation for the damage. If herding routes are blocked, the parties could negotiate access to pass. This could happen on the personal level or with the interventions of others. In the latter cases, community leaders or local committees that include youth from both farmer and
The Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework

Participation and leadership, unfortunately, are not simply a matter of creating an opportunity. The level of participation often depends on a number of factors that help create the conditions needed for meaningful engagement. By adapting the Positive Youth Development framework, we can set out and try to identify the barriers to youth engagement and leadership as well as measure the current levels and forms of youth engagement. This framework is different from other approaches to youth by rejecting stereotypes that underestimate the capabilities of youth and emphasise trying to correct what is “wrong” with them or their behaviour. Instead, this framework emphasises building the following four factors that contribute to healthy and meaningful youth development and engagement:

**Assets:** These include the personal assets youth possess (such as communication skills, education, self-control, critical thinking) but also the ability to establish trust with vulnerable and/or already radicalised peers. Assets also include the financial and physical resources they have that can facilitate their engagement with them. This may include things like technology, enough free time, transportation, and so forth. This also intersects with the issue of disability. Disabled youth may also be further marginalised from participation in preventing violent extremism and other relevant efforts. Therefore, it is important to be conscious of these factors and consider how to make the extra efforts needed to include and empower them.¹

**Agency:** Do youth have (and perceive they have) the ability to leverage their assets and aspirations to seize control over their own lives and pursue their goals? When engaging with other stakeholders and institutions, are youth given the agency to shape the decision-making process to achieve their own goals?

**Contributions:** These include specific opportunities for engagement. It is helpful to divide these contributions into distinct activities. For example, do youth help design activities? Do they lead or contribute to research? Do they implement activities? Do they monitor and evaluate activities?

**Enabling Environment:** As defined in one toolkit, an enabling environment encourages and recognises youth, while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive. The term ‘environment’ should be interpreted broadly and includes: social (e.g., relationships with peers and other stakeholders), normative (e.g., attitudes, norms and beliefs), structural (e.g., laws, policies, programs services, and systems) and physical (e.g., safe, supportive spaces).²

Asking the following questions may be helpful in understanding this factor: Do youth have safe spaces where they can share their thoughts and frustrations? Do government or security institutions look at youth mobilisation with distrust? Do national laws enable for youth to create formal youth-led organisations? Do communities or leaders see youth as potential partners for change?

A thoughtful reflection on these factors can help us identify potential barriers to youth participation in our context.

¹For more detailed suggestions regarding including disabled youth, see Lakshitha Saji Prelis et al., “Mapping Youth Leaders for Peacebuilding,” Search for Common Ground, 2014.

pastoralist communities investigate the incident and decide ways to resolve the issue. While these methods were not always successful, they could mitigate conflicts that could rise to the level of violence (as they sometimes do elsewhere). As the author of the report stated, “Yet, where it does work, fair processes of adjudication and sense of justice reduce incentives to use violence to address conflict.”

2. Intervention strategies

Traditionally, resilience-building interventions have focused on improving economic opportunities, expanding access to education, and promoting tolerance between ethnic or religious groups. However, a conflict transformation approach encourages us to go further, aligning our programming with the main dynamics of the conflict and finding ways to turn these interventions into opportunities to transform them, such as through the following strategies.

> Encourage the evidence-based identification of the sources of conflict and drivers of violent extremism. Using this Toolkit’s understanding of community resilience, it is important that communities are given the baseline knowledge, tools, and opportunities to identify these dynamics within their community accurately—based on evidence and not suspicions. In the above example from Doka in Kaduna State (see the textbox to the right), their peace process began with formal position papers that allowed the various stakeholders to explain their grievances and concerns so these could be discussed and verified. In North Central, a civil society leader noted how during times of insecurity, traditional rulers (such as those in Kiana) arranged leadership meetings to discuss causes and solutions. Her organisation supported the process with baseline data drawn from surveys they conducted with each side of the conflict. These examples were successful because they included the various sides in the conflict to ensure a more objective approach. As one youth activist in the North East told Search, “We have to use different strategies for different contexts in addressing each issue of violence. Each context should be studied, and a peculiar solution should be developed for that.” Another added, “We want to see everyone’s input and ideas in solving this collective issue of banditry.”

> Enable communities to pre-emptively identify and respond to issues before they rise to the level of violence. Further to the above, a common intervention is the use of early

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110 Ibid.
warning and early response (EWER) systems. These aim to prevent tensions or flashpoints of conflict spill over into violence. In Search’s community consultations, many offered examples of these projects including some (in the interests of full disclosure) that were implemented by Search (see the textbox to the right). In one North Central example, religious leaders, women, youth and community leaders were alerted early to issues surrounding farms and pastoralist herders so they would find a resolution quickly. In the North East, military and other security stakeholders were incorporated in ways that helped to build trust with the communities. However, many of these initiatives have faced a number of issues or failed in some aspects. Sometimes, technical tools such as broadcasting SMS messages or creating maps were unwieldy for community members, even if they appeared “flashy” to donors and international stakeholders. However, flexible projects were able to drop these components to focus on real community engagement.

Move beyond building personal ‘economic empowerment,’ vocational skills, or educational opportunities for the knowledge, focused on the analysis of early warning signals but placed an emphasis on response through direct and collaborative responses. These platforms could also escalate issues up to the LGA- and State-levels when needed—which cascaded key decisions and responses back down to the community. These platforms supported trust-building, collective action, and mutual accountability for lasting change and improved confidence. As one community member said,

With the [platform], we have achieved a lot and we believe in ourselves – that we can take action without waiting for the government, in terms of security and community development.

The platforms enjoyed a number of successes. This included improved community relationships with security forces to reduce abuses/violations, improved community advocacy and collaboration with the government, resolution of diverse ethnic, religious, farmer/herder, and domestic disputes, as well as interventions to prevent and respond to election violence during the 2019 Presidential Elections. Finally, the platforms supported responses to violent extremism, such as reintegration of ex-combatants.

A significant percentage (40-50 per cent) of the platforms have continued functioning on their own and/or have been incorporated into other Search interventions. An evaluation of the project can be found here.

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For example, the mid-term evaluation of the Training of Leaders on Religious and National Coexistence (TOLERANCE) found that the project was overall successful in building inter-religious trust and reducing tensions. And while the trainings on early warning and early response were helpful, the technical aspects of the system itself were in disarray and ineffective. See Donald Muncy, Rehab David, and Bala Saleh, “Training of Leaders on Religious and National Co-Existence (TOLERANCE) Project” (United States Agency for International Development (USAID), August 2015), https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KMKD.pdf.
skills and abilities to find alternatives to violence and enact positive change. As noted above, the PYD framework inspires us to think more critically about what it means to build resilience. Furthermore, a conflict transformation approach challenges us to better frame our interventions to also transform agency, relationships, and conflicts. Economic empowerment opportunities can be targeted to rebuild relationships between groups that may be in conflict. For example, cattle fattening operations, mobile veterinary services, or immunisation services amongst settled and farming communities can rebuild relationships with pastoralists through mutual commerce and offering such services. Similarly, pastoralists can be given opportunities that provide an added value to their goods, such as vocational skills to make butter and yogurt, since selling milk has been a common subsistence measure for pastoralists beyond selling cattle at market (though valuable, these sales can be irregular). In addition, reviving the practice of allowing cattle to graze on harvested farmland can increase the rangeland available to pastoralists and reduce land conflicts, all while providing modest economic incentives to farmers as well as fertiliser in the form of animal waste. The possibilities are endless but require thoughtful review of economic and educational needs. To this end, Nigeria’s National P/CVE Strategy encourages CSOs and donor agencies to “invest in projects that address young people’s specific needs and empower them to strengthen their resilience against violent extremism.”

Build effective partnerships with security forces to promote better relationships and give space for peaceful solutions to local issues. Police and other security forces have an important role in shaping positive community relations—for better or worse. Therefore, work with security forces to enhance inclusion and social cohesion. Projects should carefully consider the strategy for involving formal and informal security forces and in what manner.

Educate individuals and the community on conflict transformation to build a culture of building peace. In times of conflict, peacebuilding and conflict transformation can feel counter-intuitive. As such, there is a real need to build capacities. This is true for both youth and adults. As participants in one of Search’s community consultations in the North West advised, we should include leaders

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The Neem Foundation builds both individual and community resilience in the North East

The Radicalisation Monitoring and Response System (RMRS) project is a great example of a project that builds resilience at both the individual and community levels. At the community level, the RMRS project focused on enabling the community to understand and act upon signs and pathways of radicalisation, while also enhancing reconciliation and peaceful dialogue. The project was implemented by the Neem Foundation in three North East states (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) in 2019. Originally designed as an early warning and early response (EWER) intervention targeted at communities that were particularly vulnerable to Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency, the project included peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, proposing a comprehensive approach to violence prevention and community resilience building, through several components.

Firstly, the RMRS project conducted an analysis of radicalisation within the local grassroots context to develop an index of radicalisation. Community stakeholders, including local government and security institutions, built their capacities to understand, identify and respond to signs of radicalisation. They became able to report those situations and undertake non-punitive community-led mechanisms and actions, as means of stemming the threat of radicalisation. The early warning mechanisms were a direct PVE intervention aimed at stopping the radicalisation process into violent extremism before it occurred. The EWER operated both as a technological platform where stakeholders were in place and activated to discuss and take non-punitive actions to address signs of radicalisation in their community.

Secondly, the project focused on strengthening cooperation and engagement between communities and locally based state security institutions such as the police to broaden the scope of understanding amongst government agencies, security institutions and policymakers on radicalisation. This effort showed great results and stakeholders reported several examples within the community in which potential scenarios for radicalisation were addressed and promptly handled by the committees—in collaboration with authorities and stakeholders. Under this component, the project produced recommendations on PVE actions to take.

Finally, at the individual level, the RMRS project expanded peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts through several initiatives that build connections, capacities, and opportunities. For example, Peace Rallies gathered around 40 different CSOs and non-profit organisations in Borno State that were each supporting different aspects of socio-economic empowerment of the communities, galvanising local civil society support to peacebuilding efforts and getting critical stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to peace. Peace Clubs engaged children to create their own personalised visions of peace for Borno and engaged in a value-based peacebuilding curriculum and practiced positive values and civic duties through extracurricular activities centred on peacebuilding themes. Peace through Sport targeted youth and teenagers by offering sporting activities with rules specially designed to encourage peaceful competition and discourage discord and rivalry. Finally, Cooking for Peace engaged women whose livelihoods have been affected by the insurgency to discuss challenges and build joint solutions for peace, while also generating resources for their own small business and preparing special traditional meals as a celebration of culture and heritance.

The approach that the project embodied contributed to building knowledge, capacities, skills and abilities to protect against factors that might lead to radicalisation and recruitment and succeeded in helping communities understand and respond to radicalisation.

The authors are grateful to staff from the Neem Foundation, who provided the information above.
because they were said to not understand the peacebuilding process. Participants explained that some of them are retired military, so they need peacebuilding trainings along with local vigilantes. Participants also encouraged practitioners to include appropriate PVE-relevant educational opportunities in curricula, right from the secondary level so that it will be part of their academic trainings. In Jos, the NGO Building Relationships in City Center (BRiCC) is helping to equip communities with the skills to run intervention programmes to build a stronger community and help groups in conflict restore their broken relationships from intracommunal conflict. Since its inception, over 6,000 women and 2,000 youth have graduated from their peace education programmes.114

3. Good practices on building resilience

Make special considerations in PVE interventions for gender-specific drivers of radicalisation for both men and women. Interventions should also make careful considerations for women-specific issues that they might face in the programmes so as not to be left out or for barriers to be created that prohibit their involvement.115 For example, activities that are scheduled over several days in a distant location can be prohibitive to women with childcare duties or young women whose families may not feel comfortable with them traveling unsafe roads or staying in hotels alone in another location.

PVE and reintegration efforts will not be as effective if they do not meet the needs of young men and women—which go beyond occupations and an income. Violent extremism already appeals to some young men and women because it may meet (or appear to) individual needs. Therefore, PVE efforts will not be effective if they do not address the same needs or do so better or more compellingly.116 Young people are particularly targeted by violent extremist groups that try to answer their needs. Therefore, when implementing asset-based interventions, embed a Positive Youth Development approach to engaging young men and women to strengthen feelings of identity and social belonging.117

Youth and youth leaders need to be given respect, dignity and agency in order for them to be partners and leaders in PVE. Some of the critical factors needed to enable the full participation and even leadership of youth in PVE is to treat them equally. “Youth require” Nagarajan et al. write, “a sense of purpose, opportunities for self-actualisation and personal growth, demonstrations of respect from their families and communities, and inclusion in the decision-making processes that affect the fate of those families and communities.”118

PVE programming that focuses on building youth leadership and thereby resilience needs to be more than just trainings on advocacy, but real opportunities to apply those skills and make a difference. This will also require constant support and an environment that is willing to listen to youth and implement meaningful change. Otherwise, these efforts may lead to disappointment, feelings of

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118 Ibid., pp 27. See also Van Leuven, Countering Violent Extremism, pp 111.
marginalisation, and even greater vulnerability to radicalisation.119

4. Guiding tools on resilience and vulnerability


 MODULE 3: RISK MANAGEMENT

This module covers how to:

1. Enhance community understandings of risk assessment and risk management;
2. Incorporate better risk management processes in all programming.

With tens of thousands of bandits, vigilantes, CJTF members, and violent extremists, the sheer scale of need in Northern Nigeria for PVE, DDR, and SPRR programmes requires that practitioners and programmes are targeted to the areas in the greatest need. True, this makes for more efficient use of limited resources, but the main issue is more key: Prevention interventions may present some risks of stigmatisation on beneficiaries and DDR and SPRR interventions may entail some imposed restrictions and can result in stigma or even potential criminal liability. Therefore, the protection of human rights requires us to consider these effects as well as the proportionality of arrest and prosecution of those affiliated or otherwise associated with violent extremist or bandit groups.

The targeting, form, and nature of the interventions that comprise the other six modules of this Toolkit are guided by the use of a number of risk management tools. For example, the screening process under Operation Safe Corridor determines which persons are released to the community, sent to internally displaced person (IDP) camps, or flagged for further investigation where they can be sent to DDR and rehabilitation facilities or for potential prosecution.

However, in Search’s community consultations participants complained that the screening process was opaque and that communities did not understand the criteria that distinguished between high- and low-risk individuals. Furthermore, participants in the North West co-creation workshops and FGDs complained that there was no screening process during the amnesty programmes. Indeed, one youth activist questioned the wisdom of allowing bandit leaders to obtain amnesty even without being seen. “Usually, during the negotiations,” he said, “the leaders of the bandits don’t come out. They send representatives.” In such cases, it is difficult for negotiators to conduct any kind of screening or risk management process to determine the sincerity of the bandits’ intentions to disengage. Finally, communities that try to conduct their own screening processes (often through vigilante and other community-based armed groups) do so without objective criteria that often scrutinise young men, outsiders, ethnic minorities, and pastoralists without just cause.

Therefore, building on the importance of mainstreaming risk management in the three fields of practice, this module reviews the different approaches to risk management across these fields of practice. This module will explore
opportunities to ensure that prevention efforts are directed to those most vulnerable to radicalisation, that people who are demobilised do not pose risks to the community, do not face risks themselves, and that decisions to prosecute are well-guided. Finally, it recommends ways to enhance communities' understandings and improve their perceptions of risk management processes.

1. The objective of risk management

In the context of violence and conflict in Northern Nigeria, with its various sources of violence and conflict, it is important to understand what is meant by risk management. First and foremost, it involves the inclusion of a Do No Harm approach in all interventions addressing these issues, which is defined below:

A Do No Harm approach is the practice of understanding how [PVE and other] efforts interact with local dynamics and relationships to allow practitioners to mitigate or avoid negative, unintended consequences that may result from these efforts and to focus on positively influencing these dynamics and relationships.\(^{120}\)

This is closely related to conflict sensitivity, which is defined as

the ability to understand the context, the interactions between a programme’s activities and the context, and to act on this understanding to honour the institutional commitment and responsibility not to harm those the programme is trying to assist and implementing effective interventions for change.\(^{121}\)

These approaches are embedded throughout this Toolkit, and additional good practices on Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity considerations are included at the end of this module.

The second main category of risk management is risk assessments, which can be a broad category that involves tools and processes that can be used for determining a person’s “danger to themselves and others” and, in the context of this Toolkit, their vulnerability to supporting or participating in violent activity. These can be done in community settings, in the context of investigations, or in custodial setting (such as camps and prisons). The IOM’s definition in relation to its work on DDR and rehabilitation work in Nigeria is as follows:

Risk assessment is an “evaluation of the extent to which individuals represent a danger to themselves and others. In custodial settings, this assessment is a step in the intake process to inform decisions on security classification and separation from other detainees. Risk assessments may consider, among other factors, the severity of the crime, whether a detainee surrendered or was captured, criminal history, ideological commitment to violent extremism, and drug and alcohol use. Risk assessments are reapplied during detention and towards the end of custody as an input for release and parole planning.”\(^{122}\)

Specific to SPRR interventions, including Operation Safe Corridor, initial risk assessments are conducted as screening processes. The IOM defines screening as

a process of examining, investigating and establishing the nature of the relationship of an individual to a sanctioned violent extremist group. It is a methodical examination of individual backgrounds and characteristics to inform subsequent actions with respect to the treatment and handling of the individual. Screening has legal, operational and risk dimensions. Screening is the first step for determining the legal

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\(^{120}\) Van Leuven, Countering Violent Extremism.

\(^{121}\) Gendre et al., New Contexts of Ongoing Conflict and Violent Extremism, pp 23.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., pp 34.
The main distinction of screening is that it is more likely to include a legal dimension in that some subjects of the screening process may be flagged for prosecution. As a number of international experts told the authors, who spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to avoid attributing their views to their organisations, SPRR is already a compromise from the UN Security Council’s requirement on Member States to bring all terrorists to justice particularly through prosecution, knowing that the capacity of Member States is limited. Therefore, the screening component of SPRR is designed to ensure that criminal justice and preventative responses are targeted to those who most merit it and divert innocent those with less liability to other processes. However, screening and prosecution, especially those with the most criminal liability, is critical to the process of resolving conflict and violence. Indeed, since there are major grievances in Northern Nigerian communities, they must be reassured that perpetrators have been held accountable. The LCBC gives the following helpful distinction between risk assessments and screening processes:

**Risk assessments** collect information on past crimes in order to assess the likelihood that someone will (re)offend in the future. In contrast, criminal investigations examine a person’s past activity to ascertain whether they should stand trial and face prosecution. [...] A criminal investigation is undertaken to assess whether a person has committed crimes that disqualify him/her from amnesty. Those persons that are disqualified go to court. The remainder are then screened to establish their eligibility for rehabilitation and reintegration. [...] In rehabilitation centres, individuals who are highly radicalised or prone to violence present a danger to other programme participants and staff. A screening tool could therefore be used to filter these people out, or to ensure that they receive additional monitoring and support (emphasis added).124

Operation Safe Corridor’s screening of captured or defecting ex-combatants and civilians fleeing from areas controlled by Boko Haram or ISWAP has offered the main framework for risk management in Nigeria. Nevertheless, while Nigeria has developed a number of standard operating procedures, the criteria for screening have been opaque to communities and civil society, who might sometimes perceive screening decisions as arbitrary. For example, the military often arrests people in areas liberated from Boko Haram without having the capacity to conduct proper investigations, and justify their detention on the difficulty to verify information. Organisations such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the

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123 Gendre et al., *New Contexts of Ongoing Conflict and Violent Extremism*, pp 34.
Prepared for Peace Toolkit

International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law have been training Nigerian security forces and justice actors on the collection and preservation of battlefield evidence, but gaps remain.\(^{125}\) Mass trials of suspected violent extremists have been conducted since 2017, but because of the large caseload, processes have been slow and inconsistent.

In Nigeria, the lack of peace agreements with bandit and violent extremist groups has resulted in unclear criteria for eligibility for rehabilitation, placing an added purpose to risk management for post-release.\(^{126}\) Researchers have expressed some positive dynamics such as reductions in risk through ongoing assessments in prison settings.\(^{127}\) International partners, such as the IOM, are working to track all those who have entered the system and build a database to follow their reintegration processes but those efforts are still limited and lack a real impact.

The field of programming related to “risk management” and “risk assessment” provides a prominent framework to address the vulnerability that individuals might have to radicalisation (under PVE) or re-engage in violent extremism (in the context of SPRR and DDR efforts). See the textbox on the following page for an example in Nigeria of a programme that utilised a number of different assessments to guide its programming.

However, it is important to note that care should be taken when attempting to assess these factors in women and children that are related to violent actors such as members of Boko Haram or ISWAP. This is helpful in avoiding “guilt by association” as well as considering dynamics related to coercion. Figure 5 above from the UN University, though developed for consideration on children’s cases, provides a helpful framework to consider when evaluating coercion and agency.

As illustrated by the figure above, there must be an individualised assessment and screening to appropriately assess each case and determine each person’s affiliation. Risk assessments should also have nuance on issue of whether a particular individual is a perpetrator and/or a victim—understanding that an individual may be both—all while taking into account age and gender considerations. The UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (UNCTED)'

\(^{125}\) For example, see \url{https://www.theiij.org/battlefield-evidence-workstream/}.


Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN) uses multiple assessments to guide its activities

The Engaging Children to Counter Violent Extremism (ECCVE) II Project, implemented by the Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative – also known as Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN) – in 2019, focused on the specific risks of children and youth in two communities of Adamawa State. The ECCVE II Project is a good example of an initiative that uses multiple assessment methods to better target programming and determine the kinds of activities that are merited. In Kikan and Dong, the research assessment of the communities’ needs revealed that there were between 200 and 300 out-of-school children in each of those communities, which were strongly affected by violent extremism as well as violent clashes amongst farming and pastoralist communities. The Numan LGA (where Kikan was located) had particularly been a target, resulting in the destruction of schools and community centres. PWAN saw the inability of children to access education, made them become potential recruits to violent extremist groups. The assessment also revealed that children in those areas had become susceptible to radicalisation, as the mental effects of the violent attacks manifested in a normalisation of violence, with children making toy guns and machetes out of wood and mimicking scenes of war and conflict.

To prevent violent extremism among children in the Adamawa state, PWAN established two Informal Learning Centres to offer education opportunities to children aged 4-12. The project enrolled 180 children into the Informal Learning Centres, reducing the number of out-of-school children in the two communities. This significantly improved the quality of life and learning of children, who started being exposed to activities such as art, numeracy, literacy education, civic education and recreational activities. This involved the use of digital technology as a mode of delivery even at the basic education level, achieved through collaboration with the Mavis Talking Books and Mavis Education Model.

To deepen their understanding of the specific risks faced by children and youth and expand on post-traumatic symptoms of conflict that had affected youth and families, PWAN conducted a comprehensive psychosocial assessment with 117 children, using face-to-face interviews and socio-demographic questionnaires.

For adults, PWAN utilised a number of physical and psychosocial assessment tools to assess the psychological wellbeing and symptoms of trauma on the parents and teachers themselves. The prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among children was 25 per cent. The impact of trauma was higher in older children who had better understandings of the armed attacks they experienced. One out of five parents and one in three teachers also showed signs of anxiety and depression. To respond to these mental health needs, PWAN integrated school-based mental health programs into the learning centre’s curriculum, ‘Healing Classroom,’ which provides strategies for engaging with traumatised children. It included art and play therapy (which helps with the expression of children’s hidden worries), teaching students how to develop and improve their social skills in relating with peers and teachers. Through ECCVE II, 44 out-of-school students received scholarships to attend secondary education.

Finally, the project had a component on skill acquisitions and vocational training (such as tailoring, poultry farming, and petty trading) for young women caregivers and influencers in both communities. Furthermore, these adult beneficiaries were supported with the means to detect signs of radicalisation in children at the early stages through capacity-building sessions.

1 See PWAN’s community assessments and recommendations in “Psycho-Social Assessment: Engaging Children to Counter Violent Extremism” at https://www.partnersnigeria.org/psycho-social-assessment-engaging-children-to-counter-violent-extremism/
Madrid Guiding Principles and its Addendum provide practical and policy guidance in this regard, noting that children should be treated “first and foremost as victims.”

Despite this lack of common risk assessments in Nigeria’s North West, some sort of risk management is being conducted at the level of the communities. Women attending Search’s FGDs in the zone reported, “There are a lot of village heads who (now) often screen new people who come into their communities. They make sure they understand who they are before letting them into their communities”. Those practices seem consolidated and based on past local traditions. As another female participant explained, “We have a process for when a visitor comes into a community, before they are taken to [their destination], they are taken to the community leader.” Vigilante and community-based armed groups also create makeshift checkpoints, though these can be sources of tension and abuse, as highlighted above.

Overall, risk assessment presents several limits. One consists in being a kind of “one-way approach” based on collecting information on past crimes only. Another risk is the lack of communication on the results of the risk assessment among the different stakeholders.

involved in the process and the inability to consider a broader spectrum of risks, respectively in the different areas of practice. Participants of Search’s co-creation workshops mentioned especially that what communities of reintegration strongly miss is “understanding of the context of categorisation of repentant Boko Haram from low risk, medium risk and high risk, before screening, rehabilitation and reintegration.”

Risk assessment should play an important role also in establishing criteria to determine who are in the communities the most-at risk of extremism, so that limited resources can be channelled towards the most in need. Nevertheless, risk assessment is still not mainstreamed across the different areas of practice (see the textbox on the next page for a short brief on the IOM’s experience on risk management in Nigeria).

Finally, from a different perspective, risk management may help identify risks that former combatants/insurgents and associate themselves face in the course of the demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration processes. They may be exposed to physical risks, such as the risk of re-mobilisation and recruitment into armed groups. They may lack community acceptance, because of stigma and distrust from communities. They may suffer a
broader socio-economic exclusion; and they may be at risk of unfair trials or to go to prison without a trial. In the worse instances, this can result in violence and forced exile. Understanding these risks helps practitioners and policymakers to define policies and programmes that account for the rights of former combatants and their associates.

2. Intervention strategies

While risk management is a highly issue-specific and contextualised kind of intervention, the following intervention strategies can be helpful starting places for this kind of work in Nigeria.

➢ Train and empower local communities and civil society organisations to conduct risk assessments. Families, local networks and communities should be engaged and/or consulted in the process of assessing risks and needs of extremist offenders, especially those who are reintegrated in the community. Risk assessments must utilise contextualised and locally researched tools that capture the salient drivers of extremism in each given local context of origin—as well as mapping sources of resilience, coping skills, and civic opportunities. With proper training, communities can take the lead in these processes rather than delegating it to the authorities or vigilante and other community-based armed groups.

➢ Conduct needs assessments and research prior to the design and implementation of programming. Due to constant shifts in conflict dynamics, lessons learned from programming, and the implementation of other projects, needs assessments and research can manage risks to implementation and help interventions avoid duplication and pitfalls discovered in past or parallel activities.

➢ Build communities’ awareness of the national risk assessment and screening processes. These interventions can build public confidence in the processes and reassure communities regarding those who are reintegrated in their community, thereby reducing tensions and serving as an avenue for trust building.

3. Good practices on risk management

Consider the responsibility owed to the communities and individuals affected by violence and make it a central ethical question to constantly consider when implementing programming.\(^\text{129}\) By shifting the perspective from donor interests, project targets, or even the Sustainable Development

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\(^{129}\) Olojo and Donnelly, “Three Ways to Make Communities Count in Combatting Violent Extremism in Africa.”
Goals (even if all are aligned), practitioners are made aware of the need to constantly seek community input and meaningful partnership. Otherwise, “externally imposed policies and programs have the potential to do harm to individuals in the communities where they are implemented.”

Efforts to protect communities should seek to understand what self-protection measures they are already using and build upon those which are most successful and mitigate those measures that increase division, suspicion, violence, and infringement on human rights. This can be through community-based forums and consultations with local political, civil society, business, and traditional leaders. However, these forums should be inclusive of the voices of women and youth who often have to take different strategies to be safe. In addition, these forums should include religious and ethnic minorities and may need to be held in smaller groups when these discussions may be sensitive or open up internal divisions or suspicions. Finally, these discussions should not be focused solely on risks to life, but also issues like sexual and gender-based violence, kidnapping, and forced conscription into armed groups.

Thoughtfully consider shifts in livelihood patterns and ensure that development or livelihood interventions are relevant and how these shifts might impact social cohesion and peace. For example, since security issues are increasingly forcing young pastoralist men to care for cattle alone, without the support of their community groups, interventions can be better targeted to meet their needs. These dynamics will also require new livelihood strategies for women and girls.

Consider the broader political and social contexts as part of risk assessments. This is important, as radicalisation does not occur in a vacuum and is highly dependent upon the broader context. Increases or shifts in conflicts can ease or exacerbate risks of radicalisation.

Balance the assessment of risks for radicalisation with an evaluation of protective or resilience factors—whether individually or collectively. This is because risks only tell ‘half the story’ and may be overcome or negated by protective factors.

Maintain regular risk assessments post-release to monitor the rehabilitation and reintegration processes. As part of this, maintain contact not only with reintegrated persons but their support networks and interlocutors in the community as well.

4. Guiding tools on risk management


P/CVE Assessment in Conflict Environments: Key Considerations by Colin P. Clarke, published by the RESOLVE Network (2020).

**MODULE 4: DISENGAGEMENT**

**This module covers how to:**

1. **Identify the linkages between agency, safety, and trust in the disengagement process;**
2. **Design disengagement strategies that are effective for men, women, and their families.**

In times of conflict, it can be difficult to conceive of what a post-conflict future might look like. Central to that vision is what would come of those currently engaged in violence. However, as peacebuilders we must work to encourage those currently supporting and involved in conflict to abandon violence—despite its difficulty. As one woman leader noted in one of Search's FGDs, "It's difficult to bring in people who have stayed in the bush and killed people." A female government official agreed, but replied, "It is important. I think there is a need to start somewhere. We can't let it continue, and to stop it you have to bring in the armed groups as part of the process—a process where they will be rehabilitated."

However, others may not see hope in this approach. A government participant in one of Search's co-creation workshops in the North West declared that this would only be possible when the bandits are near defeat: "A successful reintegration," they said, "is after the actors are being killed and fought, the remaining ones should be called to embrace peace." Another agreed, saying that the government "should demonstrate its capacity to control and show deterrence to the actors."

These tensions are commonplace and signify the ongoing debate over what to do with those currently fighting in Northern Nigeria. This module will explore the topic of disengaging these fighters and their supporters, what works, and how to reach them.

### 1. The objective of disengagement

At first issue is that the terminology in terms of disengagement more generally is differentiated and may include a number of different components. This includes the difference between disengagement and demobilisation, depending on whether one is speaking of violent extremist groups or not:

**Disengagement** is "the process of shifting one's behaviour to abstain from violent activities and withdraw from a violent [and/or] extremist group."\(^{136}\)

**Demobilisation** refers to "the change in status from a military to civilian character where a person has been part of an armed group (i.e., militarised). This concept does

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not apply to a person who has been associated to a listed terrorist group.”

Therefore, *demobilisation* is best applied to those leaving vigilante or other community-based armed groups (including the CJTF), whereas *disengagement* would be best used to describe the process for those leaving violent extremist and banditry groups. However, this Toolkit will use disengagement in its most general sense—understanding the differing motivations and dynamics (and not to mention risks) involved in leaving various groups. Another term relevant to this topic is that of disarmament:

**Disarmament** refers to activities that remove weapons or arms from members of violent groups—often in exchange for compensation or access to DDR programming. Disarmament “plays an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the acquisition of arms and ammunition by armed groups. It is undertaken voluntarily by the armed group and members of the group. In the Lake Chad region, individual ‘disarmament’ occurs when the military or the MNJTF [Multinational Joint Task Force] capture or accept surrendered persons.”

Disarmament is largely applied to those leaving banditry, violent extremist, or unauthorised vigilante groups and normally takes place at the point of disengagement or, as described in the LCBC’s definition above, upon capture or surrender of violent extremists. Disarmament, when it is not an outright requirement to enter a disengagement programme, can sometimes be important in establishing trust that the individual is truly leaving violence behind for good. As one young man told Search in its FGD with youth activists in Maiduguri (North East),

The problem we have with the repentant Boko Haram is that when coming out from the bush to surrender, they don’t come out with their weapon used in fighting the government for so many years. The community people sometimes wonder how communication is been made by this repentant extremist to surrender […] which gives the community members reasons to worry and refuse to accept them back to the community.

Finally, it is important to make a clear distinction between disengagement and deradicalisation. Although often conflated with disengagement, **deradicalisation is the process of “countering and undermining the ideology related to violent extremism and suggesting an alternative ideology” by degrees**. Due to its unique and complex nature, deradicalisation will not be discussed in depth in this Toolkit, which favours a shift of focus to successful reintegration. See the Reintegration module below for tools and approaches on how successful reintegration interventions can help to organically encourage deradicalisation.

Due to their different approaches, disengagement and demobilisation efforts are implemented by different approaches for different actors. The disengagement and disarmament of **violent extremists** are conducted under Nigeria’s Operation Safe Corridor programme. **Bandits** are disengaged and disarmed through amnesty programmes or initiatives—like violent extremists—upon their

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138 Ibid., pp 6.
capture or surrender to security forces. Members of vigilante or other community-based armed groups are demobilised as part of peace agreements between communities and bandits, between farmers and/or pastoralist communities, or through government or international programmes—though disarmament as part of those disengagement processes is inconsistent. In one example where disarmament was included in the call to disengage, the Zamfara, Niger, and Sokoto state governments announced in 2019 that they had persuaded some bandit or pastoralist-allied groups to disengage, agreeing to release their captured fighters in exchange for approximately 500 people they were holding captive in the bush. In addition, the governors pledged to disarm and disband vigilante groups and other armed groups that were willing to disarm.¹⁴⁰

But what might motivate those associated with armed or violent extremist groups to take the potentially dangerous move to defect or disengage? As a young man in one of Search’s FGDs with youth activists noted, “In addressing these issues, it has always been the suggestions of the government. So, I think in negotiation processes, the opinion of the bandits is needed. Let’s understand what they need to stop what they are doing.” A Nigeria-based researcher explained to The New Humanitarian that some violent extremist defectors “have lost faith in their leaders, accusing them of corruption; some have even forgotten why they were fighting; others just want their children to go to school.”¹⁴¹

“In addressing these issues, it has always been the suggestions of the government. So, I think in negotiation processes, the opinion of the bandits is needed. Let’s understand what they need to stop what they are doing.”
- Youth Activist (North West)

But disengagement is not only a question of what violent actors may want, but also what they may fear. For example, with ISWAP’s increasing consolidation of power over JAS (“Boko Haram”), thousands of its members and supporters are fleeing its territory to surrender to government forces. Indeed, in their systematic review of recent research on disengagement and deradicalisation, John F. Morrison and his co-authors reviewed many of the main theories on the drivers that lead violent extremists to disengage. While most were generally inconclusive or highly dependent upon the individual—varying across situations and contexts—a significant conclusion was on the role of security. That is, if violent extremists felt that their safety and security were at risk if they disengaged they would understandably be deterred from disengaging—or be coerced into re-engaging.¹⁴² There are numerous examples of bandits accepting an amnesty agreement, but are later arrested or killed by vigilantes or the security services, oftentimes in another state that was not part of the agreement or where the amnesty is not recognised.¹⁴³ In other examples, bandits have allegedly sought violent retribution on communities who have harboured defectors.¹⁴⁴ In another example, poor discipline and suspicion led to two former violent extremists released from the Operation Safe Corridor

¹⁴¹ Anyadike, “Nigeria’s Secret Programme to Lure Top Boko Haram Defectors.”
¹⁴³ Barnett, “The Bandit Warlords of Nigeria.” Recently this was reported in Tsafe, see Yusuf Anka, @ankabay, January 10, 2022, https://twitter.com/ankabay/status/1487544960987582464.
¹⁴⁴ Such as what is alleged to have occurred in Ilela of the Safana LGA. See Idris4Peace, @Edrees4P, January 29, 2022, https://twitter.com/ankabay/status/1488260920698715161.
programme being killed by security forces.\textsuperscript{145} Boko Haram and ISWAP are also known to hunt down and kill defectors as well.

This may play a part in why examples of disengaged persons can be a powerful tool in encouraging others to disengage as well (or, conversely, from joining in the first place). In this way, disengagement can be “contagious” as violent extremists considering disengagement can be assured through trusted “formers” that there is a way out and that it is safe.\textsuperscript{146} Indeed, research has shown that the presence of disengagement programmes can help facilitate the “transition from conflict to peace when the political momentum is no longer with the terrorists and/or conflicts are winding down.”\textsuperscript{147}

With state dominance of these disengagement and disarmament processes, what roles do civil society and communities have? As this module details, communities and civil society groups can have a significant role in encouraging and sustaining these processes.

Indeed, since violent extremist and other armed groups are often fighting against the Nigerian government, state disengagement programmes are often mistrusted. For example, Aneliese Bernard, a former U.S. civil service officer who worked in stabilisation in neighbouring Niger, recounted to the authors how defecting Boko Haram associates flooded into Niger from Nigeria because, as she described, they were “terrified of Operation Safe Corridor.” She noted how local officials were helpful in providing assurances to these defectors, describing how a local Nigerien mayor had a network with local Fulani pastoralists (not associated with Boko Haram) who approached him and told him about defectors hiding in the bush. This traditional leader hid defectors in his home as well as those of other trusted persons until he could negotiate with the government for a pathway to housing them in a makeshift facility for defectors. As this former stabilisation officer described, people were already defecting and so they had to, in effect, “chase the horse” already—building out a disengagement and reintegration process to avoid leading people into “freefall.”

Although Operation Safe Corridor is now well-established, the need for civilian and civil society support for the process is still critical. Indeed, as Bernard told the authors, communities were “already messaging to Boko Haram that there is an outlet ready for them.”

2. Intervention strategies

In Nigeria, disengagement programmes have traditionally focused on economic incentives, provisions of amnesty, or broad development commitments (the last of which have often failed to materialise). Indeed, these economic or material incentives do not appear to be decisive on their own.\textsuperscript{148} However, a conflict transformation approach encourages us to deemphasise these kinds of incentives and focus more on more practical and sustainable individual needs. The list of intervention strategies is intended to prompt peacebuilders and other practitioners to consider some of these needs in their efforts to support disengagement.

- **Clear safe pathways for violent actors and their supporters to disengage.** Preparatory work on disengagement is key to its success. As noted in the Niger example above, disengagement is often already happening before governments and civil society become

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\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., pp 57.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., pp 3.
involved. However, disengagement may be haphazard for individuals or families and may not be protected through organised channels. Therefore, practitioners can ensure that local authorities, communities, and security forces are aware of these efforts and their legal framework—building them or expanding them if necessary. Indeed, part of the fear that Nigerian members of Boko Haram and ISWAP had regarding Operation Safe Corridor in its early days was based on a lack of knowledge (and trust) in what the programme entailed.

- **Establish and highlight positive opportunities of disengagement.** Research has pointed out that what distinguishes those who have merely “physically disengaged” (that is, simply left a group) from those who have “psychologically disengaged” from violence as well as their social connections with violent actors is opportunity. It may not be enough to simply disagree with the violent group’s tactics or ideology for individuals to disengage, but a desire to pursue the new opportunities that can be provided by “a new life with family, a new career, or a new sense of self-worth” (see the textbox on the next page for an example of disengagement programming that incorporated the previously discussed PYD framework).[^149] In this way, practitioners can help disengaging individuals envision a post-conflict (and post-incarceration, if relevant) life and their eventual transition back to mainstream society through healed or new social networks in the community.[^150]

- **Ensure that messages reach the right people.** The above intervention strategies are useless if these opportunities and assurances are unknown to those who must disengage from violent activity. Therefore, practitioners can disseminate this information through trusted channels to encourage disengagement. As in the example above, this can be through radio transmissions that are able to reach isolated violent actors and their supporters in the bush or through television broadcasts or social media. These messages can also be personally delivered through safe and proper channels. For example, disengaged members can reach out to their former allies and encourage them to disengage. Practitioners can be innovative. Bernard described one intervention that disseminated messages that encouraged disengagement in kiosks or other businesses known to be frequented by violent extremists through Bluetooth broadcasting. Along with other songs or broadcasts that were normally downloaded at these locations, these violent extremists would unwittingly carry these messages back to their camps or towns under their control to be further disseminated there.

### 3. Good practices on disengagement

**Make trust central to all disengagement efforts.**[^151] This should include those administering the programmes, those disseminating messages or calls to disengage, the communities they would eventually be reintegrated into, and especially the security forces that they might need to surrender to.

**Deradicalisation or disengagement programmes that “target beliefs and ideology” should be part of a wider intervention to address the full range of a person’s needs.**[^152] As detailed above, violent actors should be able to see opportunities to build a new life or even address the conflict at hand in more effective and non-violent means in order to disengage. Indeed, for bandits left isolated in the bush, pathways that can help them return to society and their families can be compelling.

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[^149]: Morrison et al., “A Systematic Review of Post-2017 Research on Disengagement and Deradicalisation (Executive Summary).”
[^151]: Morrison et al., “A Systematic Review of Post-2017 Research on Disengagement and Deradicalisation (Executive Summary).”
[^152]: Matfess, Blair, and Hazlett, “Beset on All Sides,” pp 255.
Encouraging violent extremists to defect through radio programming

Although Equal Access International (EAI)’s programming in Nigeria is best known for its innovative Hausa-language radio programming to prevent violent extremism, its Voices for Peace (V4P) strived to encourage those associated with Boko Haram or ISWAP to leave the groups. Funded by USAID, the V4P initiative was implemented by EAI across five of Nigeria’s neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, and Niger). Following dozens of interviews with former violent extremists in Nigeria and Chad, the V4P programme was conducted in 2018 with the main objectives of reducing vulnerability to extremism and building resilience. In this framework, the programme also had the added component of encouraging defection and disengagement of Boko Haram and ISWAP combatants and others associated with the groups, particularly through radio programming.

EAI conducted comprehensive research in the Lake Chad region on the role of the external environment in shaping the former violent extremists’ individuals psychology and behaviours by using the Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework (see the textbox on page 46 above). EAI found that important assets such as agency, commitment, leadership and self-efficacy were critical in their radicalisation, disengagement, and reintegration processes. Building on those findings, V4P sought opportunities to “reorient the impulses, assets and attitudes and behaviours of those on the margins of society from vulnerability, disempowerment, and radicalisation towards non-violent civic empowerment.” The radio productions created alternative narratives about the drivers of conflict and radicalisation, building new ones for inclusive peace and social change. The radio programming has been effective in inspiring some Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters to defect. As one young defector told EAI, the V4P programme’s radio messages had an impact on his decision. Now in custody in Chad, the young man reported that the broadcasts you made on the radio led us to make this decision today. You explained to us that what we were doing was contrary to religion and was destroying our country rather than helping it; that the (violence advocated by Boko Haram) is not the way to Paradise. We realised that we were in the wrong and it is at that moment that we discussed (leaving) among my men. I called them and told them that it is not the right way and that we will do well to return home rather than be the enemy of our own country.

The programme showed that to be effective efforts to prevent violent extremism should recognise, enhance and channel potential assets of all marginalised and at-risk groups, including radicalised youth and current or former combatants. It confirmed that the process of disengagement and deradicalisation may be supported if alternative pathways and narratives were available to those most at risk, since Boko Haram as well as other violent extremist organisations exploit community divisions and social grievances to recruit.

In Northern Nigeria, EAI has incorporated these lessons learned into its regional messaging hub under the Farar Tattabara (“White Dove”) project to produce and disseminate innovative radio, TV and social media programming aimed at strengthening positive local narratives. Farar Tattabara was funded by the U.S. Department of State through the Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) and extended through the Global Engagement Center (GEC). The results of the project’s assessment found that many listeners reported a number of positive results, including preventing others from joining armed groups and or defecting from them as results of the message conveyed on the various programmes. Such examples show that innovative radio, TV and social media programming may play an important role in strengthening positive local narratives and contribute to disengagement processes.

Simultaneously, as women often leave extremist or armed groups due to issues of limited mobility, agency, or other oppressive gender norms, PVE and disengagement interventions can tap into women’s needs for agency by designing programs that empower them to contribute in meaningful ways.\textsuperscript{153}

Carefully consider how spouses and children of men and women who disengage are included in disengagement programming. Operation Safe Corridor separates families through the screening process and placement in different facilities. This can have a strong deterrent effect for some who are considering disengagement.

Make concrete efforts to ensure the protection of disengaged combatants and their families. This should include coordination with security forces and local authorities as well as the community at large. Consideration for how the violent groups they left might react should also be a central consideration.

Strongly discourage disengaged persons from being recruited into government-approved militias and intelligence services.\textsuperscript{154} Trading violent activity from within a violent extremist or other criminal group for another (even sanctioned) armed group undermines the disengagement and eventual rehabilitation and reintegration processes and should be avoided.

4. Guiding tools on disengagement and deradicalisation

- The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs by John Horgan and Mary Altier (2012).

\textsuperscript{153} Nagarajan et al., “We Were Changing the World,” pp 28.

This module covers how to:

1. Conceptualise accountability through the lens of conflict transformation to include other strategies beyond prosecution;
2. Design community-level strategies for building accountability in ways that do not exacerbate tensions or risk peace processes.

Over a decade of violence and conflict has made Nigerians in the country’s north suffer greatly. In Search’s public consultations across Northern Nigeria, participants complained of gross impunity for violent actors and across the various sources of conflict included in this Toolkit. In the North West, government and civil society members complained that state institutions were unable to prosecute bandits and other criminals, and that conflict amongst farming and pastoralist communities faced a slow justice system, resulting in injustice and a lack of fair hearings.

In North Central, participants lamented that the inability to prosecute perpetrators will lead to greater impunity and an increase in criminality and violent extremism. Others complained that the use of immunity by or for some government officials “makes them abuse the process” and called for the revocation of immunity. They, like those in the North West, called for perpetrators of violence to face prosecution and rehabilitation before they could be reintegrated in the community. Furthermore, civil society members in the North Central zone cautioned that the victim of today becomes a perpetrator of violence and revenge tomorrow, saying that “reintegration itself is a driver of conflict on its own because the victims of the activities of banditry and attacks by [pastoralists] are not compensated or addressed.” Furthermore, the existence of Operation Safe Corridor adds to some community members’ concerns that violent extremist defectors are escaping justice.

In the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)’s 2018 survey on the prospects for reconciliation and reintegration, a majority (56 per cent) indicated they “believe there are ways for perpetrators of violence to make amends to their victims,” while a considerable minority (37 per cent) reported that nothing can be done to achieve reconciliation. More broadly, nearly the same breakdowns of survey respondents believed whether or not most people in their communities will be able to forgive perpetrators (with 57 per cent saying the majority are likely to forgive compared to 38 per cent saying they are likely to not) – and 23 per cent claiming outright
that there can be no forgiveness for perpetrators from Boko Haram/ISWAP.\textsuperscript{156}

Participants in Search's co-creation workshops and FGDs also noted that members of vigilante and other community-based armed groups can act with impunity. Indeed, in a survey with 215 community leaders in and around the Maiduguri, a significant proportion of them (40 per cent) reported that the CJTF has harmed their communities.\textsuperscript{157} They and the community members also surveyed reported that the CJTF did nothing to make amends for harms they are alleged to have caused.

However, contrary to many expectations, many others do not want former violent extremists or bandits to be punished. For example, in community surveys in and around Maiduguri, only about a quarter of respondents wanted former affiliates of Boko Haram or ISWAP to be punished, with the most commonly cited form of punishment being prosecution.\textsuperscript{158} Compared to the previous CDD survey, it is clear that there may be significant differences in public attitudes that can be affected by a number of factors including geography and the community's experience with violence or respondents' ethnicity, religion, and other factors. This module will consider these, at times, divergent expectations and how to build sustainable peace through innovative and non-coercive ways to support accountability.

1. The objective of accountability

As evidenced by the sentiments shared above, accountability may look different to different people. In its most general sense, as described by Sutapa Balaji et al.,

Accountability involves listening, learning, taking responsibility, and changing. It involves conscientiously creating opportunities in our families and communities for direct communication, understanding and repairing of harm, readjustment of power toward empowerment and equal sharing of power, and rebuilding of relationships and communities toward safety, respect, and happiness.\textsuperscript{159}

But with accountability seen as so important, why is achieving it in the context of Northern Nigeria seen as so difficult? Indeed, many outside observers and local and national authorities have called for amnesty instead. They claim that amnesty is necessary to stop the conflict and further violence, and that prosecutions could be destabilising, incite unrest or reprisal attacks, and discourage disengagement and peacemaking.\textsuperscript{160}

On the other hand, advocates of Operation Safe Corridor and amnesty agreements with bandits and other armed groups argue that the existence of these programmes and assurances that participants in these initiatives will receive amnesty or (in the very least) reduced sentences sends important signals for those still fighting. Administrators of the government's Operation Safe Corridor programme will also point to the “truth-telling, reparations, or accountability mechanisms” provisions in the violent extremist defector's agreements and the government's standard operating procedures that state that they can revoke protections against prosecution.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Major-General Bamidele Shafa, who coordinated Operation Safe Corridor, told reporters that those who graduate from the programme make a commitment before release. “The commitment is that [if] they commit any [new] offence, they stand to forfeit all privileges that they have acquired [through the programme] and will be liable of offence against the state.” However, international experts cautioned in interviews that Nigeria’s government would not call Operation Safe Corridor a deferred prosecution programme, though that would certainly be more accurate than calling it an “amnesty programme” as it is often described.

SPRR programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor are, as one international expert told the authors, a compromise to the traditional system of accountability by recognising that prosecuting everyone is already not possible. Indeed, most survey respondents in a 2018 study in Yobe and Borno States acknowledged both the possibility of and need for reconciliation and forgiveness, but cited several barriers including:

- a) the impossibility of prosecuting every perpetrator,
- b) familial and social bonds between victims and perpetrators,
- c) the element of coercion active in many crimes,
- d) the often-blurry line between victims and perpetrators,
- e) the desire to avoid reliving traumatic events, and
- f) the danger of driving repentant fighters back into the bush.

If defectors return to violent activity, Major-General Bamidele Shafa, who coordinated Operation Safe Corridor, told reporters that those who graduate from the programme make a commitment before release. “The commitment is that [if] they commit any [new] offence, they stand to forfeit all privileges that they have acquired [through the programme] and will be liable of offence against the state.” Indeed, Nigeria has struggled to process the cases of thousands of suspected violent extremists. In February 2018, in a rare move, the Federal High Court at the Wawa Cantonment of the Nigerian Army in Kainji, Niger State processed over 600 cases in five days—convicting 170 suspects while releasing 475 for whom the prosecution had assembled no evidence at all, despite the fact that many had been held for years. Given the circumstances of many of these suspects’ arrests, gathering evidence and gaining successful and fair convictions for crimes can be very difficult—meaning that without measures such as Operation Safe Corridor, a great number of captured violent extremists may be simply released or judged not guilty. For those in this group who were convicted, the speed at which these cases were processed raised a number of human rights concerns, with some Nigerian lawyers vowing to appeal their convictions.

1.1. Alternative accountability measures

Certainly, traditional justice measures such as prosecution and imprisonment should continue to be a central component in achieving accountability, especially for violent actors.
However, given the – at times insurmountable – obstacles to successfully prosecute violent extremists, bandits, and other violent combatants, how can communities and civil society support the pursuit of accountability?

The answer may lie in broadening our notions of accountability to include alternative methods such as restorative justice, which civil society participants in one of Search’s co-creation workshops in North Central described as “an approach to justice that seeks to repair harm by providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate about and address their needs in the aftermath of a crime.”

Indeed, UNODC and other institutions are increasingly encouraging the thoughtful use of alternatives to imprisonment as an accountability measure, which it says “reflects a fundamental change in the approach to crime, offenders and their place in society, changing the focus of penitentiary measures from punishment and isolation, to restorative justice and reintegration when accompanied by adequate support for offenders.”

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<th>Criminal Justice</th>
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<td>Breaches of the law</td>
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<td>What is the nature of the harm caused? (i.e. physical, emotional, rights, property, economic)</td>
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<td>What needs to be done to repair the harm that has been done and prevent it from happening again?</td>
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<th>The process:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability means punishment</td>
<td>Accountability means taking responsibility for the harm that is done and repairing it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims are marginalised, the process is between the State and the offender</td>
<td>Victims are central to the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The community is excluded from the process and the judicial system takes control of the process</td>
<td>The process is between those who were affected by the harm (including the victim and community) and those who caused the harm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


accountability process.

To go further and apply a conflict transformation approach to accountability, we might also consider transformative justice, which can also include the additional layer of transforming the conditions that create and perpetuate violence. By way of definition:

**Transformative Justice** is a process where all individuals affected by an injustice are given the opportunity to address and repair the harm. Those affected consider and recount how an act has affected them and what can be done to repair the harm. The perpetrator is then held accountable to the individual by way of restitution.165

Central to both restorative justice and transformative justice is the notion of ‘repairing the harm’ caused by violence (see the textbox to the right for a deeper discussion of the transformative justice). In seeking alternatives to imprisonment and other coercive accountability measures (especially when these are made available by challenges in the justice system or provisions of amnesty), many point to the offering of reparations for the victims. Though it is often simply conflated with monetary accountability when amnesty or community release are the predominate approaches. Rather than allowing these concerns to encourage vigilantism and retribution, transformative justice can help communities satisfy their needs to achieve accountability (even at a symbolic level) in parallel with government-led approaches instead. Indeed, similar to conflict transformation, transformative justice shares a focus on empowerment and agency while transforming the dominant approaches on dealing with their respective issues.


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compensation, **reparations** can be defined as **initiatives that seek to repair the material and moral damages caused by violence and human rights abuses. Reparations may be individual or collective, real or symbolic, and offered by the offenders and/or through political structures.**

**But what are collective reparations and what do they look like?** Collective reparations are useful when communities have experienced mass violence or other forms of human rights violations and can sometimes be more economic in cost and transformative in impact—hence their importance for transformative justice. Collective reparations may include development projects or other forms of financial compensation, but can also include symbolic efforts such as satisfaction, rehabilitation, guarantees of non-repetition, “public acknowledgment of the truth and acceptance of responsibility, and activities to remember [or memorialise] the victims and educate society on the truth.”166 See the textbox on the following page for an example of a project that provided reparations in the form of improved efforts to prevent repetition of violence by seeking ways to transform the community and social conditions that perpetuated violence from security forces in the past.

1.2. **Special considerations for children**

The next section will explore intervention strategies on achieving accountability in Northern Nigeria—but first a note on the special considerations regarding accountability for children.

In line with international norms, including the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** and its **Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict**, children suspected of involvement in armed, criminal or violent extremist groups should be **treated first and foremost as victims** and interventions should be made with **the best interests of the child as the primary consideration**.167 This should include any interventions, regardless of whether they are undertaken by those in the criminal justice sector or in civil society. As with all persons suspected of criminal acts, children have the right to the presumption of innocence, and should undergo individual assessments and screening to guide these interventions (see the textbox above for practical resources on criminal justice considerations for children, particularly in the context of violent extremism). In the most cases, children should only be detained as “a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time,” with priority given to alternatives to detention.168

Recalling that children involved in armed groups should be treated first and foremost as victims, in those instances where accountability measures may be considered, restorative and

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168 Ibid., pp 6.
Building more responsive security forces in Nigeria

Security forces, including vigilante and community-based security groups, have been accused of excessive violence and crimes in Borno State (as discussed above). Indeed, the state experienced the 2017 mistaken bombing of an IDP camp in Rann, which killed at least 76 people, including six members of the Nigerian Red Cross. Clearly, the community needed reassurances that security groups and services were there to protect them, not only for communities to feel safe but to prevent “excesses” by security groups (as community members described them to Search) becoming drivers of further radicalisation. From 2019, International Alert implemented the Zaman Lafiya Hakim Mu (Peace is our Obligation) Project with the objective to engage security forces and civilians to restore trust and collaboration. Supported by the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) of the United Kingdom’s Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the project involved communities and institutions in Dikwa, Bama, Gwoza and Ngala as well as a number of IDP camps. The initiative targeted Nigerian community members, local governments and several security actors such as the police, military, and various vigilante and community-based security groups such as the CJTF in Borno State. Justice must be satisfied for peace to be durable. While this can include civil or criminal sanctions, justice may also be satisfied through support for victims and non-repetition. The overall goal of Zaman Lafiya Hakim Mu was to improve the effectiveness of security responses to enhance accountability and ensure non-repetition of violence and crimes by Nigeria’s patchwork of security groups. By strengthening and building more inclusive community-based security service stakeholders, the project hoped to improve coordination and build more inclusive and accountable decision-making to enhance resilience, stabilisation, and social cohesion.

An important component of the project was to amplify women’s voices. International Alert leveraged the traditional leadership structure, providing training to community leaders and security sector stakeholders (with a special focus on women) on skills such as facilitating dialogue, conflict resolution and mediation. Community-based security groups, including the police and the CJTF, engaged in identifying mechanisms to provide coordinated responses. For example, women-only security forums were formed with community members and female members of the CJTF to better consider women’s needs and concerns, which were then fed back into broader fora, such as the Monthly Community Security Partnership (CSP) meetings. Their responsiveness to women’s recommendations was an important success of the project, with the CSP implementing 83.3 per cent (10 out of 12) of their recommendations. One of the project’s beneficiaries, a female CJTF member who engaged in the women’s only fora, reported on the impacts of this approach. “For some of the issues reported to me, I report it in the meeting and collectively we proffer solutions to it. It has built trust … because some of the community members that even have conflict within them were selected in the [women security forum] meeting and it has built the bridges for us.”

This has also been true for relationships between security groups and the community. Another participant recounted how her trust in the police has improved to the point that she is no longer afraid to approach them. “I felt I might get arrested or they might not believe me,” she reported. “Because of the trust and good relationship that Alert built between us and police we now report any issue, and it is being treated with confidentiality.”


transitional justice approaches should be prioritised. See Cradled by Conflict: Implications for Programming for a discussion on how these approaches can stay somewhat the push for criminal accountability on children. Find additional resources in the Guiding Tools section below, including Children and Transitional Justice: Truth-Telling, Accountability and Reconciliation.

2. Intervention strategies

While accountability in the context of Northern Nigeria has focused on criminal accountability measures, a focus on restorative or transformational alternatives can augment traditional approaches such as prosecution and imprisonment and prevent retribution and vigilantism. While these should not replace traditional accountability measures such as prosecution and imprisonment, alternative measures may be helpful in building accountability when traditional measures are out of reach and support conflict transformation efforts. This is particularly relevant for communities and CSOs which are not sanctioned to impose criminal accountability measures. The following list of intervention strategies represents a starting point for practitioners to carefully consider and, if relevant, adapt to their local context and needs.

- **Provide opportunities for former combatants and those who have provided criminal support for armed, bandit, and violent extremist groups to contribute to efforts to end violence and conflict in non-violent ways.** Earlier sections of this Toolkit have highlighted how armed and violent extremist groups have been able to appeal to individuals’ desires to find resolution to the conflicts they face and direct it in negative and violent ways. Therefore, disengaged and “repentant” former combatants and others can have their approaches redirected to assist in transforming and ending conflict rather than perpetrating it. ‘Formers,’ as they are sometimes called, can be powerful allies. For example, former bandits have played important roles in negotiating agreements with bandits to make peace or release kidnapped persons. Defectors from Boko Haram and ISWAP can even encourage others to surrender and defect. Finally, another important factor to consider is that formers’ involvement in peacebuilding and disengagement efforts is also believed to help them with their own reintegration process.

- **Design economic empowerment or livelihood interventions in ways that they can support reparations and reconciliation.** As these measures are often included as part of disengaged persons’ rehabilitation and reintegration processes, there is an opportunity for these measures to be shaped into avenues to build accountability through individual or collective reparations. These can be through community service projects as well as directed livelihood projects. An international practitioner recounted to the authors how in Niger young defectors from Boko Haram were enlisted to remove dead brush along the river where militants were able to hide and attack the town. By eliminating that hazard and building defensive embankments so the riverbanks could not be scaled, these youth signalled to the town that by doing this dangerous and difficult work they were able to provide some kind of service to the community. In another example, formers can be given skills and paid to repair or rebuild community infrastructure, the homes of victims, or schools. Former bandits can be employed in reforestation and efforts to rehabilitate grazing areas. Indeed, the peacekeeping force in neighbouring Mali gave short-term employment to over 4,000 men and women in a reforestation project under its DDR and CVR component that included both ex-combatants and community members. Beyond the economic support through the short-term employment, the project helped to build a sense of belonging and connection with the local community (see the textbox on the next page for an example of a similar UN Development
Encourage truth-telling by perpetrators of violence. Truth-telling can be a critical component to building accountability and reconciliation. It may also have important ramifications for victims and their families. For example, disengaged bandits and violent extremists can let families know about the fate of those they or their groups kidnapped and who did not return, including detailing the location of their final remains. Disengaged persons may also make private or public (depending on several risk and other contextual factors) proclamations of their guilt and recount the crimes committed. Debriefings with Nigeria’s security services, including the military and police, can also be helpful in understanding the groups’ inner workings and incriminate those still fighting to support future prosecutions.

Provide safe pathways for mediation and reconciliation. Communities and civil society may also be appropriate partners in establishing safe spaces where reconciliation or mediation between perpetrators and victims can occur. Islamic forms of reconciliation (sometimes referred to as sulhu) are already a dominant

The Sahel Youth Ecobrigade Greening for Peace Project

This UNDP supported project is being implemented in the border communities of Ilela and Jibia in Sokoto and Katsina States. Under the project, youth participate in ecological projects like planting trees to improve climate resiliency and improving conservation. However, in addition to the youth empowerment dimension to the project, the initiative includes a component to counter the trafficking of weapons across the border. As the Vice-Chairman of Ilela LGA, Ibrahim Magaji said in a UNDP article on the project, “The youth will learn about local environmental issues and how tree planting help to mitigate issues, such as climate change and insecurity across our border areas. When they come to care for the trees, they will also see what is going on in the border areas and report any illegal activities to the security officials and the responsible agencies” (emphasis added). In this regard, the project offers an important example of the need for careful consideration and Do No Harm approach in implementing these kinds of efforts. Given the presence of bandit and violent extremist activity in the region, what risks might these youth face if they are enlisted as informants? And what might be the risk of broadcasting that component in public settings?

Practitioners must carefully consider the potential risks to beneficiaries in programming, especially those that include formers and have the objective of building accountability. These risks may come from security forces or local vigilante groups as well as those who have been made victims in the violence.

Consider: How might including disengaged bandits in this project add, diminish, or change the risks involved?


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form of informal (and sometimes formalised) conflict resolution in Northern Nigeria. Respected traditional, community, or religious leaders can oversee these proceedings as well. In some instances, it may be important to receive assurances from the relevant judicial and security agencies that the proceedings are “legally inviolable, and shall bring no retribution upon the community or individual.”

3. Good practices on achieving accountability

“Comprehensive and tailored strategies for PRR should not focus solely on prosecution and punishment, but take a broader approach, including rehabilitation and reintegration.” Similarly, efforts to ensure accountability must also consider alternative accountability mechanisms when formal justice measures are insufficient.

However, ensure that all alternative efforts to build accountability are voluntary, based on principles of fairness and proportionality, and are framed through a lens of reconciliation rather than retribution. As communities and civil society are not empowered to impose criminal accountability measures or coerce participation, any efforts designed for this purpose must gain participation willingly.

Recognise that accountability may also help to address perpetrators’ own feelings of remorse for the harms they have committed. As such, providing opportunities for former combatants to show remorse, make amends, and provide reparations can support rehabilitation, reconciliation, and reintegration for both former combatants and the community.

In instances where truth-telling is made a requirement of local or traditional community reconciliation or accountability processes, ensure criminal justice actors will not use these statements to bring criminal charges and that communities or individuals will not be likely to use them as a basis for retribution.

Provide fair processes of adjudication and a sense of justice in order to reduce the incentives to use violence to address conflict. These are often already found in a number of communities to address conflicts, such as those that arise amongst farmers and pastoralists.

Avoid feelings of injustice by delivering services to victims and non-combatants that are comparable to those delivered to ex-combatants through DDR programmes. This can help to ensure that communities and victims do not become antagonistic against DDR programming. In addition, DDR programmes that offer more services to fighters than others who were engaged with armed groups in other roles (sometimes determined by whether disengaged persons turn in weapons or not) can sometimes incentivise involvement in violence as well as leave others behind, especially women and children.

Where it is decided that community-based armed groups are in the best interests of the community and are sanctioned by the Nigerian government, women should be incorporated into the CJTF and other community-based armed groups and children under the age of 18 should never be involved, even in support

171 Ibid., pp 22.
functions. Furthermore, evidence has shown that women in national police forces “have significantly lower rates of complaints lodged against them regarding misconduct, improper use of force, inappropriate use of weapons, and corruption” and “exhibit better skills at defusing tense situations.”\footnote{Dr Dyan Mazurana and Dallin Van Leuven, “Protection of Civilians from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV): Insights for African Union Peace Missions” (World Peace Foundation, June 2016), pp 7, \url{https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2017/07/Protection-from-SGBV-Mazuranaf.pdf}; Tracy Fitzsimmons, “The Post-Conflict Postscript: Gender and Policing in Peace Operations,” in \textit{Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping}, ed. Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts, and Jane Parpart Research Professor (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); and Radhika Coomaraswamy, \textit{Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Future: A Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325} (UN Women, 2015), \url{https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/globalstudywps_en_web.pdf}.} However, simply including women should not be seen as a panacea, as women within these groups will invariably face their own issues.\footnote{Eunhye Roh, “Where Is Agenda for Women in Peacekeeping Conversation?,” \textit{The Korea Times}, November 11, 2021, \url{https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2022/03/197_318572.html}.} They also may not have a positive effect on the manner in which these groups operate if they are not incorporated into leadership and have the power to enact improvements. Indeed, all vigilante and other community-based armed groups should be trained in human rights, alternative dispute resolution, how to properly refer cases to formal security services, and the improper use of force.

Finally, practitioners and policymakers must always centre the need to transition from vigilante and other community-based armed groups to formal policing and security structures as a core consideration in any interventions that involve these groups. In this way, practitioners and policymakers should embed accountability, disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration policies into policies and practices that involve them, ensuring a roadmap for their eventual reintegration.

\section*{4. Guiding tools on accountability}


For a helpful seminar by The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) with Dr Maji Peterx and Major-General Bamidele Shafa, the former coordinator of Operation Safe Corridor, which includes a detailed conversation on restorative justice, visit \url{https://www.icsve.org/boko-haram-rehabilitation-and-reintegration-in-nigeria/}.
**This module covers how to:**

1. **Tailor rehabilitation efforts to the specific needs of the beneficiaries and to the local contexts where they reintegrate;**
2. **Design survivor-centred and gender-sensitive rehabilitation strategies, which also focus on safety and human rights considerations.**

Different programmes have sought to address the broad needs to rehabilitate former combatants in Northern Nigeria. These programmes have been extremely diverse, offering activities such as ideological and/or religious re-education with vocational training, psychosocial support, and trauma counselling, developing critical thinking skills, and even offering livelihood support.

Nevertheless, individual rehabilitation in the context of the Northern Nigeria conflict has neglected rehabilitation's linkages with community-based reintegration, resulting in a lack of sustainability and understanding from communities. As a participant from one of Search's co-creation workshops in the North East explained, “The ideas of rehabilitation should not be discussed now. People should be discussing or acting on community healing before bringing the idea of reintegration.” Seen as a *prerequisite* for reintegration, those that spoke to Search as part of its public consultations emphasised the need for rehabilitation to focus not only on former combatants, but communities and especially victims as well. As one participant in one of the North Central workshops noted, “There is a need for holistic healing for victims of violent extremism.”

This module looks at the main objectives of rehabilitation from a perspective of rights, security, participation and holistic assistance. It proposes strategies to include the recognition of former combatants/extremism as main agents in the process of healing and to take into account their diversity of needs and backgrounds. It also considers how rehabilitation programming should incorporate the families of former combatants, returnees, victims, and the communities in which former combatants and their families will be reintegrated.

### 1. The objective of rehabilitation

Generally defined as a set of interventions aimed at facilitating the transition from violence to civil life, rehabilitation requires a transformational approach that intervenes at multiple levels, directly acting upon the life of the individual, but also at the family-, community- and society-levels. Rehabilitation is pivotal to the success of any efforts to integrate a former combatant (whether in any bandit, vigilante, violent extremist, or community-based armed group) to the society. This module broadens that...
understanding to include families of these combatants (where relevant) or returnees from areas under the control of bandit or violent extremist groups, who may face stigma and mistrust for their perceived associations with violent groups. This Toolkit defines **rehabilitation** as

> “a set of measures aimed to support the transition from being associated with Boko Haram [or other violent extremist or armed groups] to a citizen of the community, abandoning the use of violent means to achieve change, generating income to cater for families’ needs and avoiding recidivism [...] and includes deradicalisation, psychosocial support, and mental health counselling.”

In the framework of conflict in Northern Nigeria, the rehabilitation of former combatants/insurgents and their families has been pursued by the Nigerian government mostly through Operation Safe Corridor. However, these activities are mostly limited to “low risk” or “repentant” Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters, their families, and returnees from areas under their control. Despite Nigeria’s recent proscription of bandit groups as terrorists, it is not expected that bandits will either be incorporated into these programmes or have a separate rehabilitation and reintegration programmes developed for them. However, one security official that spoke to the authors noted when asked that this might change. “I expect everything [is] on the table,” he said, noting that there would soon be elections in Nigeria.

Operation Safe Corridor provides disengaged participants with rehabilitation opportunities, such as religious re-education, psychological support, and vocational training over a minimum of 16 weeks. Men, who are eligible for the program, are transferred to a military-run facility in Mallam Sidi, Gombe State. There is also a rehabilitation centre (sometimes referred to as a transit centre) in Bulunkutu, Maiduguri for low-risk women, children and elderly formerly associated with Boko Haram, who stay anywhere from eight to 12 weeks. Deradicalisation is a central component in all of these programmes.

However, pathways to access rehabilitation have not been consistent; information about the quality of those efforts is lacking; and thousands of people – many of whom (mainly returnees) have a doubtful affiliation with Boko Haram or ISWAP – remain in detention settings. This is largely due to the difficulties in the screening process. Furthermore, those deemed by the security services to not be eligible for Operation Safe Corridor and released to the community or directed to IDP camps have no sure pathway to receive needed rehabilitation before reintegration. Indeed, many returnees face stigma and may not be as trusted if they have not passed through Operation Safe Corridor. Some international organisations, such as IOM, have tried to keep track of those who passed through the programme and returned to their community, but such initiative requires more consistency and support. International actors seeking to support rehabilitation process have been mostly offering a combination of livelihood opportunities, psychosocial support and trauma counselling and education, yet they have been effective for a small number of beneficiaries and there is need for consistent mechanisms to evaluate needs, results and establish diversified attention according to the specific needs and the diversity of returnees and victims in the conflict.

From all the above, it seems evident that rehabilitation should be based on a strong assessment of individual needs, opportunities, and risks in the community of reintegration and offer customised and tailored responses to identified challenges. A lack of material and

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179 Ibid., pp 4.
180 Ibid., pp 19.
resources to conduct comprehensive strategies in many cases has been an obstacle to effective rehabilitation, but many local and international organisations have stepped in to provide pathways for rehabilitation for those who are not included in the government system (see the textbox on the following page for an example of a Nigerian organisation providing expertise and solutions). Moreover, more than meeting stopgaps within the community, these partnerships with CSOs have allowed the government to scale up its own work to some extent.

1.1. Special considerations for the rehabilitation of children

The rehabilitation and reintegration of children recruited into armed groups or otherwise associated with violent groups requires a number of special considerations. As highlighted in the previous module, children must be considered first and foremost as victims. Imagining the wide array of traumatic experiences they have been exposed to—from training in armed combat, to witnessing or being force to perform executions, being pressured to undertake suicide bombings, sexual violence, or witnessing any other kind of physical or sexual violence—children should receive enhanced mental health and psychosocial support counselling as well as other gender- and age-appropriate services.  

Stereotypes on children (especially girls) and their roles may overlook the fact that they have been trained or participated in violent activity—meaning that they do not receive access to the necessary rehabilitation processes. Finally, since children are likely to be kept with their families and not placed separately in facilities, practitioners must consider whether family or other close social contacts may be continuing to undermine rehabilitation efforts, either through resistance or by continuing to harm the children.

1.2. Special considerations for the rehabilitation of women

The rehabilitation of women formerly associated with armed and violent extremist groups is not happening systematically in Northern Nigeria. In its research on court proceedings against women accused of supporting ISIL, UNCTED found that women were given more lenient sentences and that, as a result, “Women are less likely to receive rehabilitation and reintegration support, compared to men. This puts women at risk of relapse into radicalisation, and can undermine the reintegration efforts undertaken by Member States.” And again, since women and girls face stereotypes about not taking part in violence makes them less likely to receive the relevant rehabilitation activities for this kind of trauma—if they have access to any rehabilitation at all. As one female participants of Search's FGD with women activists in the North West stated, “Women face the same problems with their husbands, so the rehabilitation and trainings should not only be for the actors [i.e. fighters] but for their families as well.”

2. Intervention strategies

As mentioned above, rehabilitation efforts have focused on a number of traditional interventions such as ideological and/or religious re-education with vocational training, psychosocial support, and trauma counselling, developing critical thinking skills, and even offering livelihood support. However, a conflict transformational approach encourages us to also seek ways to rehabilitate a person’s approach to conflict from violent to collaborative and non-violent approaches, to rehabilitate their relationships with their family and/or their community, and to rehabilitate their sense of agency and purpose.

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Healing and reconciliation for former violent extremists and communities

Supporting and participating in violence is a transformative choice. It often leads to damaged social connections, feelings of guilt, trauma, and can even rewire the brain to react to situations more aggressively. Those who have supported or participated in violence may need to receive professional rehabilitation. However, even their victims may need professional rehabilitation, including the communities they targeted or the captives they took—especially when they have been held captive for long periods of time.

From 2017-18, the Nigerian NGO Carefronting – Nigeria implemented the “Healing, Reconciliation and Counter Radicalisation in Selected Communities in the North East” Project, with the aim to contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of former violent extremists, those associated with them, and their former captives.

The initiative, funded by the Embassy of the United States of America, adopted a community-based approach to support the reintegration of former captive and violent extremist fighters and transform feelings of loss, humiliation, and resentment that might exist in the communities where they are returned. Trauma resilience trainings were conducted to help individuals overcome traumatic stress and avoid negative impacts in their families and communities. Training manuals on Trauma Consciousness and Resilience were drafted for this intervention, including a Basic Version to help with forgiveness and reconciliation and an Advanced Version to be able to support others overcome their trauma and build this capacity in others.

Speaking to the authors, Dr Maji Peterx explained how Carefronting - Nigeria realised that “there was a dearth of competence, especially regarding trauma [in Northern Nigeria]. Any CVE work that does not address the pain in the heart of the people [who have been victimised by violent extremists] will fail. But also, any CVE work that glorifies the perpetrators and ask the people to forgive them will not work [either].”

The logic of intervention was transformative in that it integrated different activities addressing both the vulnerabilities of the community that makes them prone to radicalisation through counter narratives and positive entrepreneurship and the need to build resilience to trauma through psychosocial support, trauma consciousness, forgiveness and reconciliation, social cohesion and restorative justice.

The model proved successful, and it has been expanded and further supported. For example, in Michika, Adamawa State, communities were able to give cascade trainings in schools with the result of dissipating tensions. In Mubi, in Adamawa State, the impact of reconciliation overtook religious differences, so that Muslims and Christians came together and started supporting each other to restart business and commerce and to provide assistance to people in need. International partners recognised their success, stepping in to provide additional resources to scale up the project.

The added value of this effort has been that it created a coalition of CSOs who started working together, homogenising different perspectives and collaborating instead of competing. Stakeholders realised they had to build a platform to share good practices and carry each other up, to really find ways to overcome grudges and break the cycle of vengeance to build effective reconciliation and rehabilitation processes.

Source: Interview with Dr Maji Peterx, 14 January 2022.

Dr Maji Peterx gives a detailed overview of restorative justice, rehabilitation, and reintegration in a seminar by The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVIE), which you can view at https://www.icsve.org/boko-haram-rehabilitation-and-reintegration-in-nigeria/.
The following list of intervention strategies are intended to help practitioners consider approaches to increase the relevance and effectiveness of their rehabilitation activities.

- **Design and implement comprehensive and tailored rehabilitation programmes that merge individual rehabilitation with community-based reintegration.** Rehabilitation efforts should include strategies that prepare an individual to return to civilian life both at a personal level (i.e. including individual counselling and psychosocial support, health and physical rehabilitation assistance, skills development and vocational training, business development etc.) and at community level (i.e. including strengthening of family and community link, constructive dialogue, conflict resolution and reconciliation. See the textbox to the right for a helpful framework to consider.

- **Map rehabilitation needs in community settings and deliver as needed.** As a precursor to reintegration, rehabilitation must also be delivered for these people at the community level so they may undergo a process of healing and prepare to reconcile. Psychosocial support activities should be extended to the community, since former members of armed or violent extremist groups may have slipped through the screening process or not received appropriate or longer-term rehabilitative care. As part of the

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**Community Strategies to Address Community Trauma**

In communities that experience cumulative and systematic instances of violence, community trauma is common. But how can practitioners address trauma at this level? In their toolkit, the Prevention Institute has developed the following framework:

The framework above highlights the importance of working on both the individual and community levels. Indeed, it includes a number of elements included in this and other modules and demonstrates the importance of multiple approaches.

*How can this framework be adapted for communities in Northern Nigeria?*

*From the framework, what relevant elements do you see that are most absent in your community?*

mapping, include those who have been victims and survivors of atrocities sometimes committed by the same who are being reintegrated.

Provide mental health and psychosocial support services to facilitate healing from trauma associated with witnessing or perpetrating violence. Good programming aimed at rehabilitation gives former combatants/insurgents the means and tools for new beginnings. As highlighted in this module, women and children may be overlooked as persons having received training in or participated in violence and, as a result, may not receive rehabilitation services that seek to remedy those harms and traumas. While socio-economic empowerment, education opportunities and life skills activities are very important to provide practical means for livelihood and personal progression, former combatants/insurgents strongly need to improve their emotional wellbeing and develop coping skills to overcome trauma and manage the negative impacts of their experiences.

Provide specific therapy for survivors of gender-based violence. Sexual and gender-based violence and has long-lasting effects that should be addressed from a holistic and survivor-centred perspective in order to rehabilitate survivors, facilitate healing and solve interpersonal conflict dynamics. However, these cases may be overlooking in the context of rehabilitation in Northern Nigeria. Case management opportunities should be provided to SGBV survivors to access specialised medical care, mental health and psychosocial support and legal assistance as a minimum package of services. SGBV survivors should have options to access justice, should be offered peer to peer support to overcome issues such as having children born from sexual violence, and minimise risks of SGBV when returning to communities.

3. Good practices on rehabilitation

Ensure the active engagement and commitment of persons in the rehabilitation process. This is true for victims, returnees, and former members of armed or violent extremist groups. As Dennis Walkenhorst et al. wrote in the context of the rehabilitation of former violent extremists, “The radicalised or terrorist offenders themselves are always the most decisive actors in the rehabilitation process. Without their active engagement and commitment, rehabilitation efforts are futile.”

DDR programming should aim to empower disengaged persons and provide them with stability as well as leave no recourse for violence. This should be more than vocational trainings or paid stipends for former fighters or supporters of armed or extremist groups. As the former Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta and Coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme, Professor Charles Dokubo, told a meeting of ex-“agitators” that for the programme to be successful it must “empower our people, stabilise their lifestyles” and “should not only be about paying stipends to ex-agitators, but the programme must also help address the overall quality of life of the people of the Niger Delta through training and capacity building.”

Reconsider a one-size-fits-all approach to DDR. While traditional DDR approaches have embraced principles of equality for good


reasons, the fact that men, women, boys, and girls all have different experiences and roles on the individual level means that rehabilitation and reintegration processes must be tailored in order to be successful. Indeed, past efforts to encourage equality in disarmament has meant that those who did not carry or use weapons in armed groups were sometimes excluded from DDR processes.

Rather than seeking to implement so-called “deradicalisation” approaches, reframe the understanding of radicalisation to acknowledge the needs of “some ‘radicals’ towards self-efficacy, agency, and empowerment,” and the resulting need for effective policies and programmes to “create alternative pathways in closed societies for frustrated individuals to engage in positive social change.”

4. Guiding tools on rehabilitation

**RAN Rehabilitation Manual** by Dennis Walkenhorst, Till Baaken, Maximilian Ruf, Michèle Leaman, Julia Handle and Judy Korn of the Violence Prevention Network, published by the Radicalisation Awareness Network.

**Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders** by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).

**Pathways to Rehabilitation of Violent Extremist Offenders (VEOs)** by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).


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This module covers how to:

1. Ensure that all relevant dimensions of successful reintegration programmes are taken into account;
2. Design effective strategies to build trust, security, and reconciliation in the community.

As peacebuilders, our focus must be an end result that ends violence and builds the appropriate mechanisms in communities to prevent and transform future conflicts. These futures must include societies that have come back together and healed. Because conflict separates us—both in terms of our relationships with one another as well as physically as violence drives displacement—a key component in peacebuilding processes is reintegration.

However, throughout Search’s broad public consultations communities highlighted the many obstacles to reintegration in Northern Nigeria. For example, female government representatives in a FGD for women leaders in the North West zone noted how even after bandits had received amnesty from the state government, they never returned to the community. Indeed, a civil society representative agreed with her, even noting that this even extended to their families, noting, “The parents of the bandits as well don’t stay in their communities because of stigma as a result of their children’s actions.”

Indeed, civil society representatives in Search’s co-creation workshop in the North Central zone explained how local beliefs about “bad blood” resulted even in children born from rape being stigmatised. These beliefs lead some members of the community to believe that those kidnapped by Boko Haram and their children would attract their former captors to return to the community to “reclaim them” through violent attacks on the community. In general, there is fear that men, women, youth and children held captive by bandit and violent extremist groups may become violent with their families and relatives because of the extent of violence they experienced.

Moreover, communities often fear what former combatants might do in their communities and whether they will commit violence or terrorist attacks. This fear and the desire of some victims or their families to commit acts of retribution may even put former combatants and their families at risk. As one youth activist in a FGD in

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the North East recounted, when five people were reintegrated in his community in Gwoza, “within one week, four were poisoned and killed while one of them had to run for his life to a different community.” He continued, warning, “[E]ven if some community members decided to accept the repentant extremist, issues of stigmatisation and discrimination against them are going to take place. They are not welcome at any gathering because people are scared of them.”

In another example, a youth activist recounted when a few repentant fighters were returned back to the community, which was attacked by Boko Haram that same day. “The community members were sceptical to accept our advocacy and intervention due to what happened to them in the past,” he told Search. “Finally, the community leaders agreed [to accept them, but] gave a condition that if any attack happens in the future, we would be held responsible.”

Communities may also despise the attention and benefits they receive as part of DDR processes—especially while victims and the displaced still suffer—and reject reintegration efforts out of principle. “It is virtually impossible to reintegrate people to the community when others are in the [IDP] camps,” warned one civil society member in the North East. As explained by one youth activist in one of Search’s FGDs in the North East, “the government and the organisations are too concerned with the repentant Boko Haram [rather] than the local community members (victims). The repentant are well fed and given capital support to start up a business whereas the victims are not supported or considered. At the end, this will create a very serious conflict within the society.”

“[E]ven if some community members decided to accept the repentant extremist, issues of stigmatisation and discrimination against them are going to take place. They are not welcome at any gathering because people are scared of them.”

- Youth Activist (North East)

For these and other reasons, it is questionable whether many communities will be willing to accept former combatants and their families without effective and impactful interventions. Importantly, through Search’s public consultations, communities complained that they were not included or sufficiently prepared for the process. As one civil society representative in North Central told Search, “[T]here is no road map that makes people aware of reintegration, whether in the North East or North Central, or the step-by-step approaches.” This lack of preparation and participation in the reintegration process remains a major threat to the prospect of reintegration.

Furthermore, a lack of attention to accountability (see the respective module above), healing, and rehabilitation for victims is also seen as a major obstacle. While a broad survey of Nigerians in and around Maiduguri by the UN University largely found relatively broad support for reintegration, it also found that “knowing about sexual violence in one’s community, having a family member who was abducted, or personally having been beaten, tortured, or shot is related to lower levels of acceptance of former Boko Haram members.”

Indeed, participants in Search’s co-creation workshops cautioned that these were often preconditions for community acceptance of former combatants and their families. “The community needs to heal first,” in the words of one, “before people are brought back to the community.” One young activist in a FGD in the North East outright explained that “The idea of reintegration should not be discussed now. People should be discussing or

acting on community healing before bringing the idea of reintegration."

But how long until this needed reintegration can happen? In the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)’s 2016 dialogue with government and civil society stakeholders in the North East, the participants unanimously objected to reintegrating Boko Haram fighters “in the near term,” calling for a ten-year moratorium on the reintegration of defectors into local communities, citing “the need to allow time for the local populace to heal after the seven-year insurgency.”

Obviously, this is not feasible and indeed returns have already begun. Even considering the nearly six years that have passed since that dialogue, successful reintegration of large numbers of men, women, and children will not be possible without strong interventions by both the government and civil society. This is likely true for each cohort of people in need of reintegration in the North. This module reviews the concepts of reinsertion and reintegration and provides a number of strategies to make reintegration the final goal of our efforts to bring peace and an end to conflict in Northern Nigeria.

1. The objective of reintegration

As highlighted above, reintegrating former combatants and their families, who joined or supported violent or extremist groups, is definitely one of the most debated and challenging types of interventions in the context of conflicts in Northern Nigeria. Reintegration is generally defined as a societal process aiming at the economic, political and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil life. However, it is important to distinguish between reinsertion and reintegration, which are defined below:

Reinsertion is “the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet..."
Reintegration is the process “where practitioners help the transition of the completely rehabilitated individual back to society. Practitioners also work at the same time on society to ensure there is a positive response to the rehabilitated, and to mitigate social stigma. The ultimate goal of reintegration is to foster the social inclusion of the individual and prevent recidivism.”

However, in the Nigeria context, “reintegration refers not only to ex-combatants but to the different categories of persons associated with Boko Haram [or other violent extremist or armed groups].”

While the focus of this module is on former combatants and their families, it is also important to note that reintegration is also a needed process for returnees from prisons, camps or areas liberated or under the control of violent or extremist groups (or simply returnees). For the purposes of this Toolkit, returnees refers to Nigerians who may have supported or are thought to have supported violent or extremist groups such as Boko Haram and were either captured and placed in prisons camps or left territories under the groups’ control and return to community life. Returnees may be subject to the same stigma and constraints that former combatants and their families face, but due to the outcome of screening processes are not registered in Operation Safe Corridor or other formal reintegration processes. In these situations, civil society may take the lead in lieu of formal processes. Even when implemented by Nigeria’s federal (or, at times, state) governments in the framework of the DDR and SPRR, such as Operation Safe Corridor, effective reintegration proves to be very difficult and remains one of the most challenging objectives. In effect, Nigeria is faced with the enormous task of reintegrating a number of different types of combatants in its three Northern Geopolitical Zones: 1) violent extremists from Ansaru, Boko Haram, and ISWAP; 2) bandits; 3) the families of the former bandits and violent extremists 4) members of vigilante and community-based armed groups, including the CJTF; and 5) returnees. In addition, Nigeria must also reintegrate as well as reconcile and reintegrate farmer and pastoralist communities who must return to shared stewardship over the land both need in order to feed the country.

Simply encouraging the acceptance of former combatants and their families may create backlash in the community. For example, in Search’s FGD with youth activists in the North East, participants highlighted one example where an international organisation conducted training sessions with local organisations on preparing activities to advocate for community support of former Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters and their families. However, when these local organisations went to the communities in Gwoza, community leaders reportedly labelled them as promoters of violence because of the trauma and fear instilled on them by the insurgency.

1.1. Changing community attitudes towards reintegration

However, there are signs that Nigerian communities are willing to support reintegration processes, especially when a number of other conditions are met.

In a CDD survey discussed in the Accountability module above, respondents in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States reported positive attitudes toward reconciliation (at 64 per cent, 62 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively), which were largely

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reflected in how they believed their communities might act in forgiving former violent extremists with Boko Haram and ISWAP.\textsuperscript{195}

But what are the factors that can improve communities' willingness to reconcile and support the reintegration of former combatants, their families, and returnees? In its research in and around Maiduguri, the UN University's Centre for Policy Research joined the growing acknowledgement that that the reintegration of affiliates of Boko Haram and ISWAP is already happening. In their surveys and interviews, many people reported knowing of former Boko Haram affiliates “who have returned and are 'good' community members; fewer have heard of those who have ‘been a problem’” (at 39 compared to 14 per cent), with positive examples outweighing negative examples.\textsuperscript{196} Indeed, the research team found that experiences with positive reintegration were correlated with respondents’ improved support for reintegration. However, it is not known whether these experiences actually involved former affiliates or if they were simply suspected of being so—another reason why it is important to consider returnees in this module.

Other factors that improve communities’ willingness to support reintegration include whether the individuals in question have passed through a formal rehabilitation programme, such as Operation Safe Corridor. This was observed even if participants are not very familiar with the programme. For them, the government’s release of individuals from rehabilitation programmes was seen as a sign of approval.\textsuperscript{197} This may also be true if returnees and others complete rehabilitation programmes provided by civil society, but this will be highly dependent upon the community's trust in the local organisation and its collaboration with local authorities.

Finally, community support and acceptance for the reintegration process is also affected by efforts to build accountability. As highlighted in the Accountability module above, this may be achieved in a number of non-coercive and even symbolic ways, such as truth-telling, reparations, oath taking, and community service.

1.2. Changing attitudes towards reintegration from former combatants, their families, and returnees

The other side of the coin for reintegration are the attitudes and interests of those who need to be reintegrated, including all of the groups listed above. They face a variety of challenges to successful reintegration. This includes their stigmatisation from the community regarding their past (or perceived past) affiliations as well as communities’ unwillingness to forgive perpetrators or supporters of violence. This can bleed into other barriers, including a lack of livelihood or economic opportunities or a lack of positive social connections—all of which are needs for successful reintegration.

In her research, “We Were Changing the World: Radicalization and Empowerment among Young People Associated with Armed Opposition Groups in Northeast Nigeria,” Chitra Nagarajan applies the Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework in its analysis of 22 interviews with men and women who were formerly associated with Boko Haram and ISWAP. While a very insightful resource that is useful for understanding the recruitment pathways into the groups, the research also highlighted a number of important barriers these individuals were facing in their own reintegration processes including many who may have disengaged from

\textsuperscript{195} Hassain and Tyvoll, “After Boko Haram,” pp 16


\textsuperscript{197} CDD, “Stakeholders’ Dialogue on Government Approaches to Managing Defecting Violent Extremists.”
the groups but were still very much ideologically aligned with them still. These barriers included the following:

- **Critical significance**: Having left groups where they felt powerful and part of something larger than themselves, many of the interviewees felt disillusioned or marginalised after leaving as they no longer has a source of critical significance. Importantly, this was different for those few interviewees who felt that they were able to contribute to social change, such as ending the conflict.

- **Grievance**: For many of the interviewees, they struggled to determine what engaged citizenship could be, especially since they had engaged in Boko Haram or ISWAP because they adopted the groups’ characterisations of Nigerian society as immoral, corrupt, and not representing or benefiting their in-group. They also could not give any examples of individuals or groups that were engaging in positive societal transformation that could serve as role models or positively address some of the grievances they had against society.

- **Identity threat**: Many of the interviewees were unable to replace the solid path that they felt Boko Haram or ISWAP provided for them in their lives. This resulted in feelings of confusion and self-doubt surrounding their personal identity. Alternatives were not being offered.

- **Social belonging**: Finally, many of the interviewees did not have people who they feel love and support them. This resulted in feelings of stigma and marginalisation in their families and communities. The above factors remain important avenues to consider when implementing efforts to support reintegration. As evidenced above, reintegration is not simply the physical return of persons to their community.

1.3. Safety and security for reintegrated persons

The final important consideration, often overlooked, in reintegration is that of safeguarding the safety and security of reintegrated persons (including returnees). As highlighted in the examples above, reintegrated persons may face a number of threats to their lives, such as poisonings, violent attacks, and re-arrests by security forces. This has been documented coming from community members, vigilantes and members of community-based armed groups, police and military officials, and even bandits and violent extremists themselves who wish to discourage defections and punish those who collaborate with the Nigerian government. Violence prevention and violence intervention activities are needed in order to prevent retaliation or revenge attacks against persons or families formerly affiliated with violent or extremist groups (or perceived to have been) and secure durable peace through effective reintegration.

1.4. Gender considerations related to reintegration

Women, men, boys and girls face different challenges when it comes to reintegration. While men are predominately seen as fighters or perpetrators of violence, it can sometimes be the women and girls that face stronger stigmatisation that can last for a longer period of time. In one of the North Central co-creation workshops, civil society participants highlighted how it is more difficult for men to be reintegrated during times of violence because they are usually seen as the perpetrators and key actors in the violence. Other participants detailed the impacts that culture, religion, and gender norms have on shaping different reintegration dynamics. For example, men were said to be easily married after their involvement in insurgency if they are able to regain a stable socio-economic status, while for women it was generally seen to be difficult to marry and

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resume a normal life as they may have been married to a fighter. As a participant in one of Search’s North Central co-creation workshops explained, “The community will talk more about a woman than a man. There is a sort of bias in the pronouncement against women.” Depending on the kind of conflict, such as those where perpetrators are identified along ethnic lines, participants said that sometimes the reintegration of women was usually “seamless” simply because they are “not usually visible.”

Reintegration may also be more difficult for women and girls who suffered sexual violence and have been returned to their communities with children who were born as a result of sexual violence in captivity. Those women and their children suffer stronger discrimination and rejection by family and community members because of social and cultural norms and the fear of the consequences of presumed radicalisation. Practitioners must be ever-conscious of the influence on gender on the needs and dynamics of reintegration.

2. Intervention strategies

Capturing the different dimensions required for effective reintegration is not an easy task. Nevertheless, programming aimed at promoting effective reintegration should consider – in addition to concrete opportunities for rehabilitation and sufficient livelihoods – ways to integrate conflict transformation approaches in order to transform damaged relationships and prevent violence or recidivism.

> Put in place the necessary preparatory structure, including building trust in the community and fostering reconciliation (for former fighters and host community)

Reintegration of former combatants should start as soon as possible in order to have the maximum effect. With this in mind, it is important to prepare the process, anticipating what both the former fighter and the receiving community will need to be able to resume coexistence in peaceful ways, abandon fears and overcome stigmatisation. Considerations should be given to a range of different activities and conditions, including taking care of improving human security, expanding options for reconciliation, enhancing local government’s accountability and fostering citizens’ engagement in services. For example, in Search’s co-creation workshops, participants have highlighted that more than generating economic empowerment, reintegration should focus on building trust and confidence and making real and concrete the process of former combatants to appear as changed persons. Setting the ground for the community to accept back former combatants and starting the processes of social cohesion will also allow practitioners to turn
income-generating opportunities into avenues for violence prevention, community self-reliance, and peacebuilding.

- **Protect reintegrated persons and returnees from reprisal and revenge attacks through violence prevention and violence intervention programming.** The threats to reintegrated persons and returnees are real and must be addressed in order to ensure a durable peace and successful reintegration. This includes communicating to security forces and community groups the legal safeguards promised to reintegrated persons due to their passage through the screening and rehabilitation processes so reintegrated persons and returnees are not harassed or scrutinised inappropriately. It can also include public guarantees of their safety by respected local traditional and religious leaders as well as training in violence intervention efforts to stop tension and violence from growing. See the textbox to the right for more information on violence intervention programming.

- **Provide livelihood opportunities in line with market needs.** Beyond vocational training, reintegration efforts should seek to provide real opportunities for reintegrated persons and returnees with viable livelihood opportunities in order to avoid situations where vocational skills and market needs are mismatched. This may require a strong diversification of the kinds of vocational training offered to provide participants with several options and avoid saturating local markets and, as a result, leaving individuals without viable livelihoods. See the textbox on the following page for an example of a project that combined rehabilitation with a variety of livelihood opportunities to support reintegration.

- **Create opportunities for reintegrated persons to be engaged in positive social transformation in order to build a sense of personal significance.** These opportunities can include humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts, good citizenship, charity work, and even participation in efforts to end or transform conflict. Research suggests that former combatants’ involvement in disengagement and deradicalisation work can be very helpful in their own reintegration processes. Furthermore, alternative measures to build perceptions of accountability, such as truth-telling, reparations, repentance, and apologies, are also helpful in supporting their personal transformation process as well as the attitudes of the community.

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**What is violence intervention programming and how is it relevant to reintegration?**

The NGO Cure Violence has pioneered a public health approach to addressing violence. While it has been used predominately in gang-related violence settings, its model has been adapted to contexts that face sectarian conflict and violence extremism as well. Indeed, Cure Violence has already trained practitioners in Nigeria on this model.

In a helpful brief on its approach, good practices on trainings, and standards of practice, Cure Violence details how important it is to intervene to stop violence by focusing on visits to homes and hospitals where recent victims are found following an initial act of violence. There, trained professionals intervene to de-escalate tension, discourage victims and their allies from retaliating with violence, and conflict mediation. Cure Violence’s approach has been proven to succeed in a number of contexts.

Given the retaliatory nature of conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, vigilantism, and even banditry, how can violence intervention help to mitigate violence in Northern Nigeria, including supporting reintegration processes?

Look at the Standards of Practice on page 5 of the brief. How are these values relatable to peacebuilders?


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199 Morrison et al., “A Systematic Review of Post-2017 Research on Disengagement and Deradicalisation (Executive Summary).”
Supporting the Reintegration of Children in North East Nigeria

Between 2019 and 2021, Search for Common Ground, with support from UNICEF, implemented a programme that merged the individual dimension of reintegration—as tailored assistance focused on mental health and psychosocial support, livelihood support, and education for children associated with the CJTF—with a community-based approach aimed at creating a conducive environment for those children to be able to regain a normal life. The “Supporting the Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups including the Joint CJTF in Northeast Nigeria” project built on the results of a previous programme implemented in three LGAs, the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), Jere and Mafa, that had achieved a good level of involvement of selected communities, CJTF and relevant government ministries for the effective reintegration of conflict-affected children. The latest phase of the project expanded into two more LGAs, including Dikwa and Gwoza.

Under the outcome of strengthening the wellbeing and resilience of children formerly associated with armed groups, the project engaged around 1,300 children. They were provided with psychosocial and socio-economic support and managed to reintegrate in their communities, finding effective solutions for their livelihoods and in some cases of older children becoming able to provide for their families. Main activities implemented under this component included transformative dialogues, access to education, apprenticeships and micro-enterprise trainings as well as business opportunities and administrative support sessions. Life skills opportunities were supported with concrete initiatives aimed at securing self- or wage-employment. Children formerly associated with armed groups and youth at risk of recruitment also engaged in tailored dialogue opportunities, such as radio programmes featuring drama, debates, and roundtable discussions, in addition to trauma-healing sessions and case management. As contained in the final evaluation of the project, beneficiaries interviewed about the outcome of Search’s work noted that the “children in targeted communities are now less likely to volunteer in armed groups.”

The high level of satisfaction from both children and their caregivers has confirmed the impact of the programme. For example, an overwhelming 96.2 per cent of beneficiary children interviewed in the final evaluation stated that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the support they received. Among the reasons that facilitated the children’s reintegration at the individual level was that the approach of targeting both formerly-associated children as well as children at risk of recruitment reduced the risk of stigmatisation in the communities. The impact of the community-based approach laid the groundwork for improvements in the knowledge, practices, awareness, and discourse around reintegration from community leaders, male and female caregivers, religious authorities, and civil society. Finally, and interestingly, the engagement with the CJTF and the initiatives to build awareness on child protection and mitigate the risks of further recruitment of children achieved the objective to preventing recruitment in the targeted communities. Community members interviewed during the final evaluation stated that there were very limited reports of new cases of recruitment, whether by the CJTF and other groups such as Boko Haram.
3. Good practices on reintegration

Shift the emphasis from deradicalisation to reintegration. While much has been written regarding the importance of deradicalisation for a successful reintegration process, this Toolkit argues the opposite: that a successful reintegration process is more important to the deradicalisation process than vice versa. As women leaders in the North West told Search, bandits who received amnesty but never reintegrated into the communities and stayed in the bush instead ended up returning to their “former activities” after spending the money they received as part of the amnesty process. Indeed, research in this space in Nigeria found that reintegration helps to reduce the risk of recidivism, and that “the success of deradicalisation should be judged in terms of whether it is successful in generating support for reintegration” and aligning former combatants’ narratives with those in the community. Others have argued that this is because reintegration provides former combatants with the means for a new beginning and by establishing (or re-establishing) social networks away from extremism and by locking them into commitments and obligations towards family, community, and the state.

Embed a Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework in reintegration efforts. By doing so, practitioners can be more conscious in order to build both the agency and assets (as in both their financial and physical resources as well their personal assets, which can include aspects such as their communication skills, education, self-control, and critical thinking) of those in need of reintegration. Beyond that, the PYD Framework makes us conscious of the need to provide opportunities for positive contributions and engagement as well as to shape the environment in ways to make it more enabling for their reintegration. Finally, a PYD Framework provides “approaches to transforming radicalisation, and creates

humanising off ramps for radicalised youth to reintegrate into society.”

Prioritise the real and perceived safety of those who return to the community. Individuals who are undergoing the reintegration process may fear for their physical safety and security upon return to their community—often for legitimate reasons. Take these concerns seriously and work to resolve them. More often present at the first stages of the reintegration process, these concerns can be the most important barrier to reintegration and may even drive some to re-engage with their former groups. Programmes addressing individuals as well as communities should include safety guarantees and protective measures to ensure that insecurity does not act as a deterrent for positive personal change.

Include efforts to build accountability and rehabilitation in parallel to the reintegration process. As highlighted in the module on accountability above, building accountability in non-coercive and reconciliatory ways can build trust and improve community support for

201 Ibid., pp 5.
205 See also Clubb and Tapley, “Conceptualising De-Radicalisation and Former Combatant Re-Integration in Nigeria,” pp 11-12.
reintegration. This can include asking forgiveness, open displays of contrition, and local oath-taking customs to not re-engage in violence.

**Build local ownership of reintegration processes over time before passing the responsibility for DDR and reintegration programmes to local partners.** This is made only more difficult when conflict is ongoing.206 A successful reintegration is the one where host communities are not only supported but also become agents for change. Participants in all of Search's public consultations across Northern Nigeria stressed this need and that all relevant stakeholders should be involved in reintegration efforts. Begin early by negotiating leadership among those able to lead the process, facilitating good relationships between the people who are reintegrated and the local institutions.

Since government-implemented reintegration programmes do not have the capacity to work with all returnees, nor at times the trust of those in need of reintegration, **build confidence in and capacity of community-based reintegration programmes.**207 As a participant in one of the workshops in the North Central zone said, “For successful reintegration, there

should be less political involvement. The local leadership should be the ones in charge. Women, youth, local and religious leaders should facilitate the process."

Sensitise communities to the “mutual benefit of reintegrating rehabilitated violent extremists” in order to increase the success of reintegration processes. Help communities see the reintegration process as a critical component of the conflict transformation process and may be necessary for peace to prevail.

Deliver assistance and rehabilitation programmes in the target communities for victims of violence in parallel and comparable to assistance and rehabilitation programmes available for those being reintegrated in the community. Often referred to as “dual targeting” assistance programmes, these parallel programmes distribute comparable resources between those to be reintegrated as well as the community and are shown to have higher success rates.

Be willing to admit when reintegration is not feasible. Even despite employing all of the good practices above, it may not be feasible to reintegrate certain individuals or families in specific communities. In such cases, as a last resort, it may be important to work with those individuals or families to find safe alternatives. These alternatives should be determined on a voluntary basis and be guided by the best interests of those involved.

4. Guiding tools on reintegration


Promoting Social Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders (VEOs) by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

Gaps and Needs for the Successful Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Groups or Armed Forces by the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers (October 2020).

For detailed guidance and standards on reintegration support for youth and children, see the UN’s Integrated DDR Standards 5.20 on Youth and DDR and 5.30 on Children and DDR.

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Thanks to the contributions of literally hundreds of researchers, practitioners, experts, and community members across Northern Nigeria, this ground-breaking Toolkit provides a number of action-oriented, cross-sectoral strategies to address Northern Nigeria’s most pressing security threats: violent extremism, banditry, conflicts amongst farming and pastoralist communities, and vigilantism.

By breaking down the fields of PVE, DDR, and SPRR into their component objectives and applying a conflict transformation lens, this Toolkit aims to reframe approaches based on these fields of practice to encourage innovative new strategies to address these issues. Finally, the Toolkit provides dozens of cutting-edge resources to support practitioners in their work.

However, this Toolkit is really only an inflection point. Given the major shifts in the conflict dynamics in Northern Nigeria and the potential for many more, this Toolkit invites researchers and practitioners to continue to adapt and evolve their approaches accordingly. That is why it is designed to provide foundational guidance on conflict transformation, resilience-building, risk management, disengagement, accountability, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

You are invited to share this Toolkit with your colleagues and return to its resources, intervention strategies, and good practices periodically. Carefully consider how its approaches and values can be adopted or adapted to your work.

Recent developments, including horrific attacks and mass defections, as well as Search’s broad public consultations as part of this project have compelled a sense of urgency to addressing insecurity and providing a more effective and sustainable path forward. It is Search’s aim that this Toolkit can play but a small part in ensuring that Northern Nigeria is prepared for peace.
Civil society is the broad term for organisations and institutions that act in the interests of citizens—including informal collectives, labour unions, activists, charities, religious institutions, and more. Civil society does not, however, include governance institutions or military groups, nor would it include traditional governance structures such as tribes or clans.

Community stabilisation is a process that “includes creating the conditions for communities to coexist peacefully, resolving tensions through non-violent means, restoring trust in local leadership and regaining the agency within crisis-affected groups to drive recovery processes over time.”

Community Violence Reduction (CVR) refers to programmes “aiming at preventing and reducing violence at the community level in ongoing armed conflict or in post-conflict environments.”

Conflic sensitivity is “the ability to understand the context, the interactions between a programme’s activities and the context, and to act on this understanding to honour the institutional commitment and responsibility not to harm those the programme is trying to assist and implementing effective interventions for change.”

Conflict transformation is “a comprehensive approach that addresses personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict, using the potential for conflict as a catalyst for positive change in all of these areas.”

Demobilisation refers to “the change in status from a military to civilian character where a person has been part of an armed group (i.e., militarised). This concept does not apply to a person who has been associated to a listed terrorist group.”

Deradicalisation is the process of “countering and undermining the ideology related to violent extremism and suggesting an alternative ideology” by degrees.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) refers to “the process of demilitarising official and unofficial armed groups by controlling and reducing the possession of arms, by disbanding non-state armed groups and rightsizing state security services and by assisting former combatants to reintegrate into civilian life.”

Disengagement is “the process of shifting one’s behaviour to abstain from violent activities and withdraw from a violent [and/or] extremist group.”

Disarmament refers to activities that remove weapons or arms from members of violent groups—often in exchange for compensation or access to DDR programming. Disarmament “plays an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the acquisition of arms and ammunition by armed groups. It is undertaken voluntarily by the armed group and members of the group.”

ANNEX: KEY DEFINITIONS

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214 Shailor, “Conflict Transformation.”
217 Ball and van de Goor, “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration,” cited in Ajibola, “Nigeria’s Amnesty Program.”
Lake Chad region, individual ‘disarmament’ occurs when the military or the MNJTF [Multinational Joint Task Force] capture or accept surrendered persons.\(^{219}\)

**A Do No Harm approach** is the practice of understanding how preventing violent extremism efforts interact with local dynamics and relationships to allow practitioners to mitigate or avoid negative, unintended consequences that may result from these efforts and to focus on positively influencing these dynamics and relationships.\(^{220}\)

**Drivers of violent extremism** are causes or reasons why groups or individuals might be attracted to supporting or engaging in violent extremism.\(^{221}\)

**Group dynamics and relationships** are factors that shape the issues, environment, and community in ways that make individuals or communities more vulnerable to violent extremism.\(^{222}\)

**Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)** is an approach that “identifies and addresses context-specific drivers, vulnerabilities and risk factors for radicalisation, as well as individual incentives for joining violent extremist groups. […] PVE moves away from a securitised approach and exclusively engages with individuals not yet implicated in or affiliated with violent extremism.”\(^{223}\)

**Pull factors** are forces that can be attractive to potential recruits and specifically draw them into radical organisations, such as a sense of kinship, heroism, adventure, economic gain or self-realisation.\(^{224}\)

**Push factors** are any condition or grievance that creates a sense of frustration, marginalisation, and disempowerment which encourage people to seek out remedies including, but not limited to, joining extremist groups.\(^{225}\)

**Recruitment** is the process “where an individual shifts from ‘grievance/mobilisation to partaking or supporting in a violent act.’”\(^{226}\)

**Rehabilitation** is “a set of measures aimed to support the transition from being associated with Boko Haram [or other violent extremist or armed groups] to a citizen of the community, abandoning the use of violent means to achieve change, generating income to cater for families’ needs and avoiding recidivism […] and includes deradicalisation, psychosocial support, and mental health counselling.”\(^{227}\)

**Reinsertion** is “the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.”\(^{228}\)

**Reintegration** is the process “where practitioners help the transition of the completely rehabilitated...”
Individual back to society. Practitioners also work at the same time on society to ensure there is a positive response to the rehabilitated, and to mitigate social stigma. The ultimate goal of reintegration is to foster the social inclusion of the individual and prevent recidivism. However, in the Nigeria context, “reintegration refers not only to ex-combatants but to the different categories of persons associated with Boko Haram [or other violent extremist or armed groups].”

Reparations are initiatives that seek to repair the material and moral damages caused by violence and human rights abuses. Reparations may be individual or collective, real or symbolic, and offered by the offenders and/or through political structures.

Resilience is where individuals or communities have the positive capacities of “knowledge, skills and abilities to protect against factors that might lead to radicalisation and recruitment.”

Returnees from prisons, camps or areas liberated or under the control of violent or extremist groups (or simply returnees) refers to Nigerians who may have supported or are thought to have supported violent or extremist groups such as Boko Haram and were either captured and placed in prisons camps or left territories under the groups’ control and return to community life.

Risk assessment is an “evaluation of the extent to which individuals represent a danger to themselves and others. In custodial settings, this assessment is a step in the intake process to inform decisions on security classification and separation from other detainees. Risk assessments may consider, among other factors, the severity of the crime, whether a detainee surrendered or was captured, criminal history, ideological commitment to violent extremism, and drug and alcohol use. Risk assessments are reapplied during detention and towards the end of custody as an input for release and parole planning.”

Screening “is a process of examining, investigating and establishing the nature of the relationship of an individual to a sanctioned violent extremist group. It is a methodical examination of individual backgrounds and characteristics to inform subsequent actions with respect to the treatment and handling of the individual. Screening has legal, operational and risk dimensions. Screening is the first step for determining the legal status of an individual based on culpability and security risks of an individual.”

Transforming Violent Extremism (TVE) is an approach pioneered by Search for Common Ground that requires recognising that while violent extremism might exist, the reasons and motivators leading to an individual or group being drawn to violent extremist movements can be literally transformed into a different type of agency or engagement. TVE incorporates peacebuilding and conflict transformation approaches to recognising the transformative potential in addressing the root causes of violent extremism in ways that do not aggravate tensions and marginalise affected individuals and communities even further.

Violent extremism refers to “the beliefs and actions of persons who support, promote or use ideologically motivated violence to achieve social-economic, political, ethnic and religious objectives.”

Violent radicalisation is the process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly

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231 Ibid., in Van Leuven, Countering Violent Extremism.
232 Gendre et al., New Contexts of Ongoing Conflict and Violent Extremism, pp 34.
233 Ibid.
violent and extreme political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies.\footnote{Van Leuven, Countering Violent Extremism.}

**Violent self-radicalisation** is when someone comes to adopt increasingly violent and extreme political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies without necessarily being approached by a member of any violent extremist group, although they may have been influenced by that group’s ideology.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Vulnerability** is a “condition produced by personal risk and protective factors which might make an individual more susceptible to [drivers of violent extremism] and ultimately, to radicalisation leading to violent extremism” or recruitment into violent groups.\footnote{Hedayah, “Introduction to Countering Violent Extremism” (unpublished).}