

Evaluation summary

Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme: Output 1 – Internal evaluation

July 2016

Evaluation theme

1. Security and justice
2. Governance and state-citizen relations

Introduction

This internal midterm evaluation summary assesses our work to support and facilitate Community Peace Partnerships (CPPs) to reduce violent conflict in Nigeria as a consortium member of the British Council's Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP). The programme was funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and ran from 2011 to 2017, with this evaluation conducted in May 2016.

The findings of the research provide deeper understanding of the actual and perceived dynamics of the operation of the CPPs, and fed into a review of the platforms to help improve engagement around peace and security under NSRP Output 1 and help strengthen linkages with the other outputs.

Background to the project

NSRP aimed to support the strengthening of conflict management institutions to reduce violent conflict through four inter-related areas of work – each taking place at Federal, State and Local Government Area (LGA) levels: security and governance, economic and natural resources, women and girls, and research, advocacy and media. The CPPs operated under NSRP's Output 1 (Security and Governance), Component 3 and their main objective was to support target communities to address their security concerns and local level conflicts, improve relations with security providers, and link with State Conflict Management Alliances (SCMA).

Therefore, the specific objectives of component 1.3 were:

1. To assess existing conflict management structures and facilitate the emergence of CPP platforms.
2. To strengthen civil society and security agencies capacity to participate in CPPs.

3. To support networking and exchanges between CPPs in the LGAs where they operate and create opportunities for exchange and coordination between CPPs and SCMAs.
4. To guide CPPs in the definition of their activities and support the delivery of their action plans.

By design, component 1.3 has this basic theory of change (TOC):

'If NSRP can strengthen the capacity of local-level peace initiatives, working with institutions and non-state actors that act to prevent and address conflict in each target LGA by making them better co-ordinated and more inclusive, then this will enable improved early warning and more conflicts to be addressed and resolved non-violently.'

Methodology

Following a desk based document review, the research was undertaken between May 7th–27th, 2016 and consisted of key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions with NSRP staff and project stakeholders in four locations: Abuja, Jos (including Bokkos LGA), Kaduna (and Zaria), Kano, and Port Harcourt. Seven focus group discussions were backed by 22 KIIs in the states, carried out by the lead researcher and Output one regional staff, following research questions agreed with NSRP staff.

There were several limitations with the applied methodology in terms of funding and capacity available, as well as on-going security concerns limiting the scope of the operational research. These developments, along with the continually high insecurity in the country, forced a reduction in the number of days – and therefore interviews - in two locations. The researcher was not able to interview any beneficiary communities nor independent security agency staff throughout the targeted sites. It was therefore not possible to verify or triangulate any of the information obtained from direct stakeholders involved directly in the programme.

Summary of findings

- Case studies provided strong examples of conflicts resolved and violence prevented. With some additional verification, this could form evidence of impact. Current documentation has been inconsistent, so a stronger and more consistent documentation and M&E effort will be required to document the strong work being carried out.
- Awareness of the importance of reporting and evidence collection was increasing, particularly with the convenors and regional staff. The research confirmed an extraordinary number of activities at the local level, of crime, violence and kidnappings prevented due to early warning, but that capturing this in written report form remained a challenge and that the achievements are thus at risk of being 'lost'.
- The question of content versus structure came up repeatedly, i.e., whether the intent was to set up CPP structures and focus on their functioning, or whether the ultimate intent was to support conflict resolution and prevention through strengthening existing structures. The original concept was to work based on, and strengthen, existing conflict resolution structures. This involves some trade-offs around inclusion

and engagement of powerful stakeholders. Overall, the strategy of engaging conflict resolution actors and leaders seems to have paid off and enabled the CPPs to be successful and inclusive at the local level.

- Concerns about sustainability, funding, travel, and activity financing were echoed throughout the research by members of the CPPs, convenors and staff in all states visited. At the same time, CPPs and convenors faced requests or recommendations to scale up interventions to areas not currently served. 'Copy CPPs' have spontaneously been formed in neighbouring areas to replicate the services being provided by the CPPs, however, without the guidance and support (including financial) of the NSRP. Convenors are working to put together a "handbook" on CPP objectives, skills and methods to support the 'copy CPPs' since there is no budget to put these through a similar training process to the original ones. However, there is a risk that unguided CPPs could evolve in unforeseen and potentially negative or dangerous ways.

Recommendations

- It is essential for good monitoring and evaluation skills to be cascaded down to the CPP secretaries who write the reports. Closer mentoring support from the convenors and / or regional staff will be essential to build this up, as will technical inputs such as computer hardware or access to computers where there currently is none (some CPPs submit handwritten reports). Oral recording of incidents for central transcription could also be explored, or non-written methods for measuring change in attitudes.
- One objective of the operational research was to identify potential case studies. With some verification of these case studies by external stakeholders and ultimate beneficiaries not directly part of the NSRP structure, these could provide evidence of the CPP's impact.
- Fund CPP LGA leads to travel to neighbouring high-conflict LGAs to talk about the structure, objectives and mechanisms, possibly disbursing the handbook that is being prepared. Consider ways of limiting potential reputational risks to the existing CPPs if the 'copy CPPs' run into problems or 'go off-script' without NSRP mentoring.
- With 1.5 years left for NSRP to achieve sustainable impact, all activities now should be tailored towards sustainability after the project funding ends. This will require a discussion with each of the CPPs and convenors about what works best in this specific CPP and context, what is identified by the stakeholders as the best way forward considering the local strengths and weaknesses. The spending plans of remaining funds should be designed with a view to putting in place knowledge resources and mechanisms that enable continued conflict resolution and peacebuilding activity after NSRP ends.