



EVALUATION SUMMARY

Final evaluation of the Social cohesion programme in Northeast Nigeria

March 2019

EVALUATION THEME

1. Social cohesion
2. Gender

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA

- (1) To determine the extent to which Alert's social cohesion programme in Borno is having an impact as framed in the programme theory of change.
- (2) To assess the conflict sensitivity of Alert's social cohesion programme impacts in Borno State.
- (3) To determine the extent to which Alert's social cohesion programme in Borno State is having an impact on gender dynamics, specifically the role of women in society, beyond the reduction of SGBV-related stigma.
- (4) To determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the small-scale initiative (SSI) on economic empowerment on beneficiaries.
- (5) To assess whether trained influential leaders have sufficient capacity and motivation to sustain the gains of the intervention after the lifespan of the project.
- (6) To provide and share actionable lessons learned and recommendations for the design and implementation of future projects.

International Alert has chosen to focus the **evaluation criteria** on Impact, Effectiveness, and Sustainability, following the OECD DAC guidelines and quality standards for evaluating peacebuilding interventions in settings of fragility. Apart from these 3 evaluation criteria, **partnership and coordination** with project partners and external actors working on the same areas have also been looked at.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

In 2015, International Alert and UNICEF published *Bad Blood*¹, a research study in Borno State, Northeast Nigeria, to understand families', communities', and authorities' perceptions of women, girls and children associated with JAS, as well as the impact of those perceptions on their safety, rehabilitation and reintegration as they returned from captivity. Based on recommendations from the *Bad Blood* research, International Alert launched the 'Social Cohesion Programme in Northeast Nigeria' to promote the reintegration of women, girls and children associated with JAS and to address the stigma and the negative perceptions that they face.

The programme has been implemented by International Alert in coordination with three local partners: Herwa Community Development Initiative (HERWA), the Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and Health Care Development Focus Initiative (HECADF). In

¹ Kimairis Toogood - International Alert and UNICEF (2016): *Bad Blood*. Available at: <http://www.international-alert.org/publications/bad-blood>

coordination with their partners, Alert has organised a series of activities at various levels to reduce stigma against women and children associated with Boko Haram and open a space for their reintegration into society. At the individual level, they have worked with women and girls, survivors of violence, to develop networks where they feel empowered to express themselves on the challenges they face and access peer social support. They have also piloted a small-scale initiative (SSI) on economic empowerment. At the family level, they have facilitated reconciliation between survivors and family members. At the community level, they have organised dialogues for community members to better understand the experience of the survivors and the necessity of their reintegration to rebuild the social fabric within their own community. They have also implemented radio programming to reach a broader audience with the same messages.

The programme was expected to have the following impact, outcome and outputs:

Impact: Community engagement in peacebuilding initiatives with individuals associated with JAS supports social cohesion and contributes to post conflict stabilisation.

Outcome: Reintegration of conflict affected people in their communities of origin across Borno State supports reconciliation and healing and it is conflict sensitive.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation, including desk review, field work, analysis and reporting, was carried out from January to March 2019. To monitor and ensure impartiality of the process, the evaluation was led by an external evaluator. Data collection was carried out in collaboration with a team of four researchers (two men and two women) from the University of Maiduguri, as well as Alert staff and partners. The researchers and Alert staff also supported the initial analysis process. The evaluation used a mix of qualitative methods, including: document review, 9 focus group discussions (2 of which were with non-participants to the programme), 9 key informants interviews (Alert and partners staff, community leaders, service providers, representative of State), 2 case studies.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Impact

Women and girls associated with JAS (commonly known as Boko Haram) have increased their self-confidence and self-esteem, are able to sleep better, feel calmer, and talk about their experience, all positive steps for trauma healing. They have also built a support network with women and girls who have through similar traumatic experiences, and with other women from the community, which is helping them in overcoming their isolation and facing daily challenges together. Moreover, the participation on the SSI have helped women to have a source of income, which was generally lost due to the displacement, contributing to improving the interactions with family and community members.

There has been a clear reduction in the stigma and marginalisation of women and girls associated with JAS and their children. Most of their families have accepted them back and there has been a decrease in the insults received.

Beyond the acceptance of women and girls associated with JAS, there have been just a few anecdotal changes in gender dynamics observed by the evaluation. Although changing gender dynamics was not an objective or an expected outcome of the programme, a deeper analysis of gendered power dynamics could have been conducted and the intervention adapted accordingly.

Effectiveness

The programme has generally achieved its outcome and outputs, and has met the targets or even exceeded them for several outputs. However, reconciliation is an ongoing process with a long-

term timeframe that should be considered in future programming. One of the biggest challenges affecting the effectiveness are the ongoing violence, and the context of widespread poverty.

Sustainability

There are three major strategic factors that help ensuring the sustainability of the changes achieved by the programme: the capacity building done with community leaders, particularly with traditional and religious leaders, the support network that has been created amongst women and girls in the community, and the use of religion's teachings to reach out to people.

Partnership and coordination

Finally, the relationship with programme partners have been quite challenging and, although steps have been taken in the good direction, the collaboration and coordination with other actors have not had a big impact in programme implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Conduct a deeper analysis of gendered power dynamics in this context, and establish larger objectives in this regard, going beyond the acceptance of women and girls associated with JAS and their children.
- 2) Carry out a transparent and competitive selection process to identify potential partners who have a similar vision and enough capacity and experience, and involve them in the different stages of programme implementation. Encourage cross-collaboration between partners.
- 3) Keep the number of participants manageable, prioritising a longer and more in-depth intervention with each one of them. Organise participants in smaller groups, maintaining the same groups over the course of the programme. Continue to take into account the dynamic of competition between women associated with JAS and non-survivors as a conflict sensitivity concern, and inclusivity as criteria for selection.
- 4) Provide training and accompaniment to partners' staff and community facilitators, so that they are better equipped to lead the support sessions for women and girls and for family members. Develop a context-specific training manual for community-based counselling with a clear focus on gender.
- 5) Improve collaboration with other actors working in the area. Explore the options of partnering with a humanitarian organisation working in the area for joint programming, and with an organisation specialised and focused on children to improve the reintegration of children born of sexual violence by JAS.
- 6) Develop a context-specific training programme on small-scale entrepreneurship for Small-Scale initiatives (SSI) participants, improve the initial kit that participants receive, and prioritise quality over reaching out to more beneficiaries.
- 7) Introduce some changes in the format of the current radio programmes, included a call-free line. Organise periodically collective listening sessions with the beneficiaries.