LESSONS LEARNED

State-Citizens Platforms

Supporting Inclusivity, Coordination and Accountability of Security Response in Nigeria

Introduction and Background

The objectives of Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) focused on preventing violent conflict, promoting appropriate responses to violent conflict, and supporting reconciliation processes in the aftermath of conflict. Under its security and governance output, NSRP sought to increase the inclusivity, coordination and accountability of formal and informal institutions which are intended to anticipate and address violent conflict and reduce the impact of violence on the most vulnerable – these include security agencies, state institutions and civil society actors and organisations.

The platforms established under the security and governance component of the programme aimed to create space for civil society, government and security agencies to work together to identify and address threats to peace in a timely manner. This was intended to strengthen accountability of government and security service providers to citizens, creating a standing forum for citizens to review their actions and policies.

Collaboration between civil society, state and security actors on conflict analysis, prevention and response was intended to build trust, increase citizen reporting of threats to peace, and improve institutional responses.

Operating at local, state and federal levels, NSRP aimed to strengthen local conflict and peacebuilding responses, reducing violence for the most vulnerable while supporting policy change at federal level. This document argues that while local-level outcomes were achieved, at federal level the programme fell short of its desired impact.

Review of NSRP Intervention and Actions

Conflict and Violence in Nigeria

With an estimated 3,000 conflict-related deaths per year between 2006 and 2011, Nigeria has long been regarded as the most violent country in Africa among those which are not at war. Approximately half of these deaths have occurred in states and Local Government Authority areas (LGAs) selected as NSRP target areas for conflict reduction initiatives.

Nigeria's national conflict management architecture relies on a set of poorly coordinated, uninclusive and unaccountable agencies lacking in strategic direction. These failings have undermined early warning and response, led to inadequate or heavy-handed security responses, and consistently failed to identify and address the underlying causes of violence across the country.

Nigeria's security forces human rights performance is poor, undermining the relationship with the civilian population. Oversight of security institutions is weak and security agencies remain largely unaccountable to civilian ministries and the general population.

The programme delivered peacebuilding interventions at the federal level, and focused its conflict prevention and response activities in four zones encompassing eight states. These were: the North East (Borno and Yobe States); the Niger Delta region (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States); the Middle Belt (Kaduna and Plateau States) and the North West (Kano State).

Key Objectives of Security and Governance Platforms

Three type of platforms were established by NSRP to build civil society participation in decision making over peace and security. The Nigeria Peace and Stability Forum (NPSF), the State Conflict Management Alliances (SCMAs) and the Community Peace Partnerships (CPPs).

The **National Peace and Security Forum (NPSF)** focussed on federal-level decision making, supporting the development of a human security approach to security management at policy level. This has contributed to greater awareness of senior security force officials of the priorities of the civilian population, has played a pivotal role in drafting policy papers on security governance, and seeing them through parliamentary debates. The NPSF has benefitted from the inputs of the CSO Consultative Forum, established to mobilise organisations working on peace and security at grassroots level. The NPSF has has contributed to the development of the national security policy, and has engaged institutions working on issues related to peace and security policy, peacebuilding and mediation at federal level[1]. National institututions working on peace and security have joined the NPSF and contributed to steering the security policy towards a human security approach, encompassing issues such as economic grievances, gender and social exclusion into the national security strategy.

NSRP has achieved mixed outcomes at this level, unsurprising given the highly political environment and the transition following the 2015 presidential elections. Nonetheless, the NPSF has helped to create space for civil society to influence the National Security Strategy (NSS) and has been requested, alongside NSRP, to support the development of a number of security policies, including the National Peace Policy and the National Counterterrorism Strategy. None of these policies have yet gone through parliamentary debates or resulted in new legislation however, as intended by the programme.

State Conflict Management Alliances (SCMAs) focussed on state-level mechanisms for coordination, ensuring broader participation in existing forums and strengthened accountability of security services providers. NSRP has created eight SCMAs to establish formal relationships with state security governance structures, including State Security Councils[2] (SSCs), state legislatures and state governors. The SCMAs provided an intermediate platform on peace and security matters for CSOs, state authorities and security agencies. NSRP has ensured active participation of *women, peace and security networks*, the Observatory on Violence Against Women and Girls, disabled rights and youth led organisations in SCMAs. NSRP deployed technical expertise to provide information, analysis, research inputs as need arose. In a number of states where they have been established, SCMAs have become a key partner of State Security Councils and have contributed to early warning and response at state level, responding to requests from platforms at LGA level - Community Peace Partnerships, described below.

NSRP has supported SCMAs with gender and conflict, human rights and conflict mitigation training aimed at developing security forces' ability to deal with conflict more effectively. NSRP has supported SCMA organisational development through training and coaching. The capacity of civil society working in peacebuilding and mediation has resulted in a more skilled and

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[1] These include the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the Defence Headquarters, the National Human Rights Commission (NRHC), Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) and the National Orientation Agency (NOA).

[2] State Security Councils (SSCs) are the main security co-ordination mechanism at state-level. SSCs are mandated to advice governors, who are chief security officers in the states and are made up of top-officers of military, police, and other security agencies as well as some key traditional rulers and government officials. However, there is no civil society representation on SSCs.

vibrant civil society, better able to hold state governments to account in matters related to peace and security.

Community Peace Partnerships (CPPs) operated at community level, supporting and improving existing conflict mitigation and early warning and linking these with state level agencies. NSRP mapped the capacity of peace actors, and worked to build their capacity to analyse and mediate conflict through a series of training and coaching initiatives. The CPPs mirror the multi-stakeholder approach of SCMAs and have been at the centre of NSRPs Early Warning and Early Action (EWER) strategy.

CPPs have been highly inclusive, ensuring representation from marginalised groups. They typically include district police officers, the military, LGA members, the Emir, traditional and/or religious leaders as well as representatives of youth groups, peace clubs, mediators and others trained under NSRP.

With NGO partners NSRP undertook a mapping and assessments of peace initiatives and actors at local levels and helped deliver peacebuilding programming in LGAs in Kano, Kaduna, Plateau and Rivers States. The CPPs met regularly to identify and address emerging conflict and violence threats, and feed in expertise and analysis into SCMA conflict management processes. NSRP provided support for these activities through the provision of technical expertise and financial resources.

Although NSRP worked in only three LGAs per state these were among the most conflict-prone areas. The patterns of conflict and violence identified by CPPs in these areas have usefully highlighted key emerging trends at state level.

NSRP provided funds to address critical needs arising from violence at local levels. It also supported activities to address basic humanitarian needs for displaced people, in coordination with community leaders from the affected areas.

Measuring security and governance platforms' performance – piloting the ICA tool:
Following the mid term evaluation recommendations to strengthen data collection and monitoring, NSRP developed and applied the Inclusivity, Coordination and Accountability tool (ICA) to measure the programme's impact on security and governance processes. The tool aimed to assess the performance of the platforms on inclusion, accountability and coordination using a numerical scoring complemented by a narrative description. Unfortunately, the tool was not applied consistently across SCMAs, with limited training for staff and partners, and without a coherent approach to measure processes among participants, or practices among civilian and security agencies.The ICA matrix is included in annex A.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The local context and intensity of violence have a crucial impact on platforms' performance and their ability to deliver peacebuilding outcomes: NSRP targeted eight of the most conflict affected states across four diverse geopolitical regions in Nigeria. Despite regular context and conflict analyses and the programme's adaptation efforts, the levels of performance and participation of platform activities varied greatly.

Capacities and incentives for action varied greatly across NPSF, SCMAs and CPPs, creating challenges and opportunities in different ways:

CPPs achieved the greatest impact in terms of conflict prevention, reduction and response, The further the platform from actual conflict, the weaker its positive impact. SCMAs had a much more limited impact on conflict resolution than CPPs, and the NPSF has virtually had

no impact on conflict resolution at local level, except in a few notable cases. NSRP experience indicates that local level conflict management initiatives have greater opportunity to bring about practice change than state and federal interventions. CPPs were at the core of NSRP's EWER approach, but in fact they delivered early direct action on conflict reduction and resolution, more often and with better results than they highlighted early warning.

> **LESSON #1:** In the results framework, more ambitious conflict reduction milestones and indicators could have been set for CPPs, and more modest targets for SCMAs. NPSF should not have been assigned any conflict targets as this platform was too removed from any specific conflict (except in FCT) for any realistic conflict reduction to be achieved.

This lesson seems also to hold at the local level (LGA), where physical distance between the platform and the conflict and high levels of insecurity, especially during the election period, had a negative impact on the results achieved by the programme. the physical inability to reach target communities regularly, had a negative effect on governance more broadly and jeopardised the presidential elections results in the area.

In Bayelsa State, the platforms in communities which were only accessible by boat could only meet infrequently due to costs in terms of money and time. In addition, activities planned by NSRP in the area of prevention of electoral violence could not be delivered in riverine communities in Southern Ijaw due to recurring security incidents. As a result of lack of access for NSRP personnel, and the consequent organisation of fewer platform meetings, platform performance was not satisfactory and NSRP was unable to ensure violence-free elections in the area. Incidents registered in this are during the election period, marred the outcome of the elections, and INEC was forced to declare the elections in this area as inconclusive after the first run.

> **LESSON #2:** NSRP carried out conflict analyses and capacity assessments of participants, and set baseline and target performance indicators. However, targets in operationally challenging environments were not adequately informed by logistics and security issues. Access was taken into account in the programme phasing (e.g. when launching operations in the North East), but the programme did not quantify the operational challenges and likely reduced impact. Applying a conflict sensitivity lens to NSRP would have mitigated some of the risks of programme underperformance.

At the same time, the sheer number and intensity of conflicts in Port Harcourt undermined the platform's ability to perform. The high number of conflicts presented at SCMA meetings made it impossible for the platform to prioritise issues through debate, resulting in the SCMA being unable to agree action points and determine the required support.

> **LESSON #3:** NSRP should have intervened to support the SCMA convenor to set up sub-groups to address specific issues or to establish additional CPPs across highly conflict-prone neighbourhoods. This would have allowed enough time to determine priorities and actions, and enabled the SCMA to operate at strategic level.

Some platforms were too close to the ruling party for them to deliver inclusivity at the political level. This impacted the work of the platform and limited options for sustainability which, for SCMAs, depend primarily on embedding it within the state government. The Delta State SCMA was so close to the State government that it was physically located in the state house building. While this could be seen as an advantage from a sustainability point of view, it was also a concern, as the platform was perceived as partial by many participants.
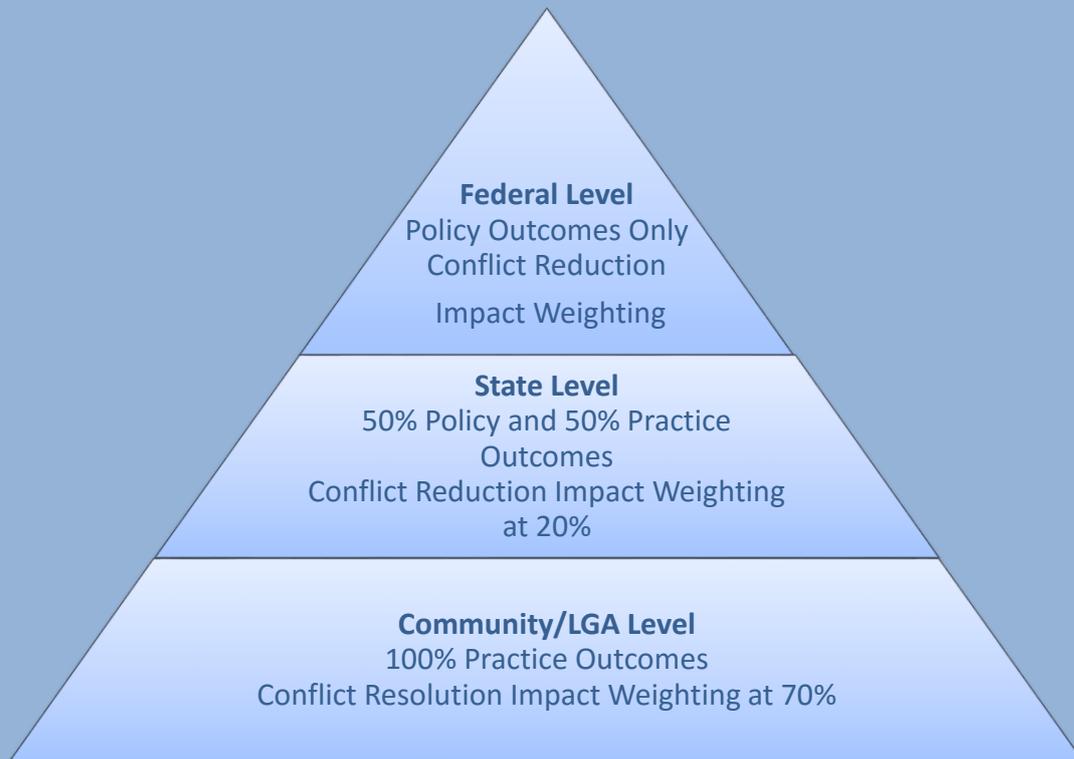
> **LESSON #4:** NSRP should have considered freezing operations in areas where platforms were too politicised for the programme to deliver intended outcomes with adequate standards of inclusivity and impartiality. The relative rigidity of the results framework, with associated deliverables and spending plans, makes it virtually impossible for implementing agencies to make the most conflict-sensitive decisions, particularly when there are significant costs involved which the agency is left bearing.

When violence Is high (i.e. Borno State), impact of peacebuilding interventions may be low, but public perception of impact is high: The risk factors associated with working in FCAS have been widely documented. There is a trade-off between the need to work where conflict is more intense to prepare for stabilisation and post-conflict recovery, and the fact that operations in these more violent contexts are more costly and achieve lower impacts. High levels of conflict-related violence, however, can support positive perceptions of peacebuilding impact, as was the case for NSRP in Maiduguri, Borno state. For a long time, NSRP was the only programme delivering peacebuilding in this highly volatile environment, running dialogue groups, and engaging civil society on conflict analysis before any other humanitarian or conflict reduction agency. As a result, the perceived peacebuilding impact of NSRP in Borno in 2016, was much greater than the reality. The Borno SCMA was perceived as effective as the SCMAs in Jos and Kano, which had been operating for a much longer period of time and had achieved much greater real impact. The three SCMAs in Maiduguri, Kano and Plateau were the best performing platforms in 2016, all scoring above 3 out of 4 points in terms of perceived effectiveness in maintaining peace and managing conflict, according to the NIEP perception survey carried out in March 2017.

> **LESSON #5:** Operating in Borno and the northeast more broadly has been challenging for NSRP, as insecurity hampered access for staff, and the quality of management, monitoring and evaluation. Further analysis should have been commissioned to understand the discrepancies between actual and perceived conflict reduction outcomes. If assessed more consistently, this could strengthen the incentive to work in more violent contexts, build understanding of value for money and need to invest in peacebuilding in FCAS.

LESSON #6: A more state/LGA based programme structure may deliver better quality of implementation and impact, but could also increase costs. Arguably, NSRP could have had more success if it had operated with greater resources in fewer states.

Optimal effect for NSRP would have put impact weighting at a 70% at local level, 20% at state and 10% at Federal level. At the Federal and state level, more time should have been spent on advocacy to strengthen policy shifts; at the community/LGA level, the key focus should have been long-term small grants for peacebuilding work.

Federal Level
Policy Outcomes Only
Conflict Reduction

Impact Weighting

State Level
50% Policy and 50% Practice
Outcomes
Conflict Reduction Impact Weighting
at 20%

Community/LGA Level
100% Practice Outcomes
Conflict Resolution Impact Weighting at 70%

The performance of platforms depend to a large extent on the quality and capacity of members. If members do not respect each other or their individual performance is poor, it becomes extremely challenging for platforms to achieve their objectives.

LESSON #7: The capacity of CSO members is crucial to platforms' ability to deliver results. Recognising that not all CSO capacity is equal, NSRP should have adapted its delivery, providing more assistance to CSOs with good outreach and innovative programming but weak financial or monitoring capacity. In the absence of this, underperformance at operational level had a negative effect on innovation and quality of the programme.

The performance of platforms was also affected negatively by staff turnover among member agencies. NSRP produced state engagement strategies at inception to monitor staff turnover among platforms' members and convening agencies. However, it did not update the engagement strategies often enough to reflect these changes and adjust platforms' composition as a result. In some cases, changes of representatives attending platform meetings induced a level of paralysis, and affected their ability to operate. Staff turnover among platforms convening agencies also had an extremely negative impact on the platform ability to perform, as trust and acceptable levels of communicatios had to be reassessed and strengthened regularly.

There is a trade-off between building capacity, supporting ownership and achieving programme outcomes: NSRP was designed as a CSO capacity building programme, and its operational model focussed on delivery of activities through grants to CSOs and NGOs. However, poor CSO capacity at a technical and financial/managerial levels meant that NSRP had to invest time and resources to bring organisations to an acceptable level of competency. This also involved disbursing funds through small tranches, with short term contracts delivered and reported against in six monthly periods. This approach undermined the impact for some initiatives. In a sector where change occurs over years if not decades, operational and financial policies were much too short term. The short grants timeframe, which was meant to prevent misappropriation of financial resources, resulted in excessive and burdensome reporting requirements, and negative impacts on the quality of outcomes.

> **LESSON #8:** The programme should have adopted a CSO consortium model similar to the DFID's SAVI programme. This would have helped create an environment where sub-grantees CSOs can learn from each other and work together to implement the programme.

Phased approaches work, but need enough time to achieve impact. NSRP adopted a phased approach to setting up platforms and operations. It rolled out platforms earlier in states that were considered as 'easy gains' with more history of collaboration on peace and security. As a result, those platforms that built on existing mechanisms and had more time to operate, achieved better outcomes than those that had less experience in peace and security and where NSRP engaged later. As a result, the platforms have operated at different levels throughout the programme cycle, so comparing performances to adjust inputs has been virtually impossible.

> **LESSON #9:** When programmes adopt a phased approach to maximise impact in the short term and replicate learnings, implementing agencies need to ensure that enough time is allowed for the the programme to be able to address the challenges of the weaker platforms. Platforms' performance comparison is only possible where similar level of inputs are provided, but this was obviously not possible to do given operational and security challeges registered by the programme. as a result NSRP struggled to identify key comparative learnings from across all programme implementation areas.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to provide a series of clear and concise lessons emerging from the delivery of NSRP's security and governance output, which could be reviewed and taken into account for the design of follow on peacebuilding programmes in Nigeria and beyond. As such, while each lesson is inevitably context-specific, a number of broader learnings have emerged. These are:

1) **Peacebuilding programmes need to have clear impact indicators adapted to the degree of desired change to be provoked at any specific level of intervention** (local, decentralised or national level). NSRP has undeniably over-achieved its conflict reduction targets at local/community level, but has underachieved targets set at decentralised (state) and federal levels. Evidence from programme data suggest that target individuals and institutions change faster where they can see an imminent peacebuilding advantage, which is likely to change the conflict they experience from violent to non-violent. The further programme stakeholders are from the conflict, the lower is their impact on violence reduction;

2) **Local-level conflict analysis should guide performance indicators setting and monitoring, and assessed escalation or de-escalation of violence should prompt**

local-level programming review, including review of target indicators. In extreme circumstances, programmes should be able to freeze activities in locations where the desired change is deemed unachievable and begin operations in locations where opportunities for positive change have emerged. This is not new, as it simply involves practicing do no harm and conflict sensitivity; however, the rigidity of programmes' result frameworks and budgets constitutes a barrier for implementing agencies and their clients or donors, to display a truly adaptive approach. This may undermine impact in the area of stabilisation and peacebuilding in FCAS.

3) **Local perceptions of de-escalation of violence are as significant as actual violence reduction outcomes**, particularly in highly volatile and unaccessible environments. NSRP's experience in Borno points to a significant perception change in terms of intensity of conflict, following the organisation of safe spaces for citizens, state and military agencies to come together and discuss conflict issues openly. NSRP has simply created a space for stakeholders to communicate with each other, and generate a more nuanced analysis of conflict and patterns of violence in a specific context. Due to lack of access and security risks, no other peacebuilding initiatives were organised until the final year of implementation. However, data suggests that perceptions of reduction of violence among platforms' participants were comparable to those registered across more stable/less violent states. This learning suggests that delivering peacebuilding in areas affected by extreme violence, has the potential to provoke substantial perception change, which is the first step towards practice change. In the case of Borno, as communication between citizens and security forces was re-established, trust in security forces increased, and this proved to be a stepping stone for the Nigerian government to launch a successful offensive against JAS.

As a highly experimental and innovative peacebuilding programme, NSRP has provided clear lessons and highlighted a number of dilemmas which are inherent to delivering violence reduction outcomes in FCAS. NSRP's peacebuilding impact has been more nuanced as it sought to provoke perception, practice and policy change simultaneoulsly and within a relatively short timeframe: this paper described the challenges associated with delivering peacebuilding at pace, and the possible negative consequences in terms of conflict sensitivity.