

HOW-TO GUIDE

Setting Up and Running Peace Clubs



The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme's Focus on Women and Girls

Nigeria is a deeply patriarchal society in which women and girls typically struggle to access social, economic and cultural power that is equal to their male counterparts. This entrenched inequality, combined with a culture of silence around sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and inadequate SGBV prevention and response mechanisms, means that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is endemic across Nigeria.

Conflict and insecurity has left women and girls increasingly vulnerable to violence, and exacerbated the harmful norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality. In spite of the disproportionate impact of conflict and violence on women and girls, there is typically little to no female representation in formal conflict management and peacebuilding processes.

The DFID-funded Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) delivered interventions aimed at preventing violent conflict, promoting appropriate responses to violent conflict, and supporting reconciliation processes in the aftermath of conflict. In relation to women and girls, it sought to increase the participation of, and reduce the impact of violence on, women and girls.

Peace Clubs: Rationale and Purpose

The peace club intervention was a key activity within NSRP's women and girls work stream. It aimed to improve the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls by creating a safe space for women, girls, men and boys, in which participants could develop life skills, discuss relevant topics and learn how they individually could prevent and respond to violence. Peace clubs also aimed to break the culture of silence, build a constituency of support for non-violent conflict resolution and countering VAWG, through training participants to become 'peer leaders' in their community, and creating a critical mass of support amongst the wider community.

Setting Up the Peace Clubs

NSRP established a total of 40 peace clubs across Borno, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Rivers states. The below steps draw on the experiences of NSRP during the setup process.

- 1) Mapping of potential strategic partners working on safe spaces across Nigeria by NSRP, drawing lessons from safe space initiatives internationally. This culminated in a peace club design meeting, bringing together DFID and other relevant stakeholders to develop a strategy for running the clubs.
- 2) A series of baseline studies were commissioned in target states to better understand the nature and drivers of conflict and forms/prevalence of VAWG, as a means of informing the focus of club activities and intended impact.
- 3) Development of the peace club manual: A desk-based review was commissioned to review existing curricula relating to peace clubs and safe spaces. This was then used to develop the manual, the text and illustrations for which were subject to extensive quality assurance and community consultation in order to produce a document that was relevant and culturally appropriate to each focus state.
- 4) Identification and selection of CSOs to convene the peace clubs: An Expression of Interest was issued and a CSO shortlist identified. NSRP's technical and grants team then

conducted site visits to assess the capacity and credibility of applicants, after which a Call for Proposals was issued and final CSO selections were made.

5) Community engagement and outreach: CSOs used existing relationships with communities to raise the profile and gain buy-in for the clubs.

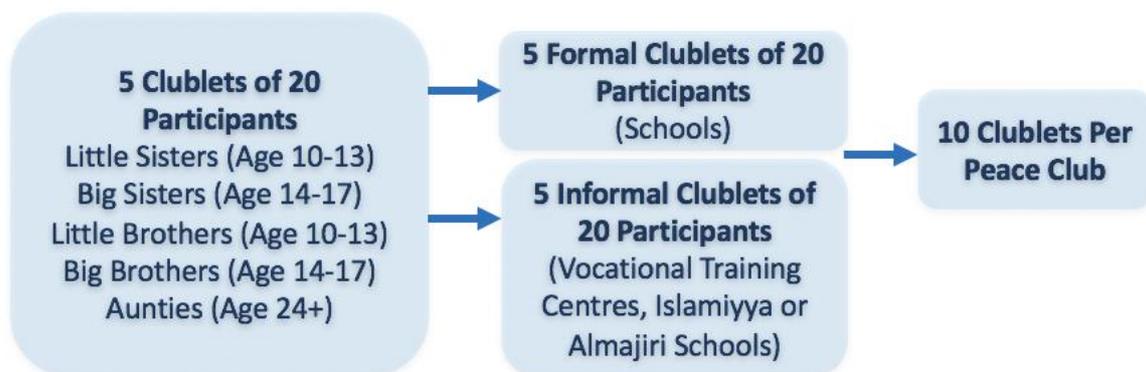
6) Identification and recruitment of club facilitators: Communities were responsible for selecting facilitators, of which there were two per clublet, male for boys' clubs and female for the girls'. Criteria for community facilitators included: trusted in the community; higher secondary school education to read and translate the manual; no record of child abuse.

7) Registration of club participants: CSOs registered attendees for each clublet (see club structure in diagram below). Aunties clubs were established to allow older women to accompany and act as chaperones to younger children to club sites.

8) Setting of club sites and meeting times: Communities identified spaces in which the clubs could operate. Formal club spaces were typically in schools or other public buildings; informal spaces included vocational schools for people living with disabilities, and known gathering areas such as those used by street hawkers. Communities also determined when clubs would meet, to avoid clashing with commitments such as farming or festivals.

9) Training of CSOs and facilitators: NSRP delivered training to CSOs on a range of topics, including gender and conflict sensitive programming; activity planning and financial management; and M&E and reporting. Selected CSO representatives also received training on the peace club manual, which they then delivered to selected community facilitators.

Within each club there were 10 clublets, each with a primary and backup facilitator, using the below structure:



Peace Club Activities and Reporting

The peace club activities can broadly be divided into three categories: inward facing, or activities conducted within club meetings and only involving participants; outward facing, where participants engaged with their wider communities; and reporting on cases of VAWG.

Inward facing activities used the peace club manual as a guiding curriculum throughout implementation. The manual was made up of 21 modules, each consisting of games, lessons, and topics for discussion. Modules covered topics such as VAWG, conflict prevention, advocacy, women's participation in peacebuilding, trauma healing, and mediation. The manual was designed to be adapted according to the age, capacity, gender, cultural profile and physical ability of participants. Participants also received training from convening CSOs, including on income generating activities and entrepreneurship.

Outward facing activities were intended to raise awareness and generate discussion around the topics covered by the peace clubs. They include advocacy visits to traditional leaders and local government officials; educational and awareness-raising activities, such as radio programmes and school debates around VAWG and peacebuilding; and community service activities, such as cleaning of public areas. The clubs also started income generating ventures, such as establishing a popcorn stand in Rivers state.

In reporting on cases of VAWG, the clubs supported and fed into a number of NSRP and non-NSRP mechanisms. Peace club attendees were encouraged to report cases of VAWG, which would then feed into the NSRP Observatories, a virtual safe space for recording and referring cases of VAWG. A number of clubs also established relationships with local police stations, to whom they would refer cases. One Rivers peace club established a Community Mediation Centre, through which participants would help to mediate domestic disputes (typically 1-2 per week), and refer more complex cases to the local police.

Advocacy Activities in Delta State

In 2016, peace clubs in Delta state (530 participants across 6 clubs) organised 12 school debating competitions across 9 schools (3 per focus LGA). Male and female students engaged in debates around topics such as: 'Men are more efficient in community leadership and management than women'; and 'Inclusive community governance prevents violence and ensures societal development'. Both the winning and runner-up teams came from all-girls schools, highlighting the extent to which female students were meaningfully involved in the competition process.

Supporting Safe Space Programming with the Peace Club Manual

Developing the peace club manual into a curriculum that was culturally sensitive across Nigeria was a significant undertaking, involving multiple stages of consultation with communities, CSOs, and other stakeholders working on safe space initiatives. Not only did it form the backbone of peace club activities for NSRP, but it has also been requested by multiple Nigerian CSOs, International NGOs, and an academic institution as far away as Lahore, all of whom plan to use the manual to inform their own safe space programming.

Club Reporting to Central Programme Team

The CSOs running the peace clubs reported on their activities and results via a number of different mechanisms, submitted on a quarterly basis.

Attendance Records: These disaggregated meeting attendances by gender and clublet.

Logbooks: These were completed by facilitators at each meeting, and captured feedback from individual participants on their application of club learning. Examples included participants mediating in family disputes; standing up for themselves or others in a public setting; and reporting cases of VAWG to the police.

Narrative Reports: These were completed by convening CSOs, with facilitator support. They primarily focused on outward facing activities, including detailing any challenges encountered or successes achieved.

Cohort Studies: These tracked 20 participants per club over three years of implementation. Cohort participants answered the same set of questions each year, relating to their perceptions (for example, on the nature and prevalence of VAWG in their community); behaviours (such as where they went to seek medical help); and actions (including how they would intervene if they saw a fight occurring). They were intended to track the development of these individuals as a representative cross section of broader participants.

Success: Leaving No One Behind in Kaduna

Inclusivity and targeting marginalised groups was central to the peace club model. Working with CSOs who worked with such groups was critical as a means of gaining buy-in for the club initiative. In Kaduna state, the Women with Disability Self-Reliance Centre convened 3 clubs, which worked with over 200 disabled girls and boys and 38 disabled women. Participants conducted advocacy and sensitisation activities with a number of relevant local stakeholders, to gather support for an inclusive development agenda that recognised the needs and rights of people living with disabilities. Targeted stakeholders included the Ministry of Women Affairs and Rehabilitation Centre; the traditional leader (Zazzau) of Tundun Wada LGA; the state Ministry of Education and Education Secretary; and various formal and religious schools.

Of the 38 peace club aunties living with disabilities, who were members of WWDSRC clubs, 2 went on to pursue electoral positions in Kaduna state: the Vice President for the Blind Welfare Association, and the Financial Secretary of the Joint National Association of People with Disabilities. The Vice President had previously dropped out of school, but re-enrolled as a communication student at Kaduna Polytechnic during her time with the peace club. She was also one of the people with disabilities who was represented during the drafting of the Kaduna State Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Challenge: Running the Peace Clubs in Unstable or Conflict-Affected Contexts

The risk of Boko Haram has resulted in increasing conflict and fragility across the north east of Nigeria. With women and girls routinely attacked and killed in public spaces, regular kidnappings, and the targeting of girls attending school, it was critical to establish clubs that upheld Do No Harm principles and did not put participants at risk.

The Borno peace clubs adopted a hybrid model, designed to be more flexible to changing security situation. The clubs were not held in two set locations (formal and informal), but rather used spaced identified as safe by participants (coordinated by facilitators) in advance of each club session. The clubs were initially held on a monthly basis, recognising the higher risks associated with meeting and the need to establish a process for identifying the safe spaces at short notice. Finally, the hybrid clubs did not follow the clublet model, but rather were integrated with regards to age (but not gender), as there was greater variance in attendance and a need to travel to and from meetings in groups. A total of 30 hybrid-model clubs were formed in Borno state, targeting approximately 540 adults (380 women, 160 men).

The clubs were encouraged to focus on community members who had been particularly affected by the conflict. They specifically targeted women and child brides who had been widowed, along with other marginalised women and girls such as street hawkers and commercial sex workers, with one CSO working exclusively with 200 widows and Internally Displaced Persons (120 females, 80 males). Other CSOs provided monthly food distribution to vulnerable club members in internally displaced persons camps, in light of the increasing food insecurity affecting communities across the north east. CSOs also provided skills training to older female participants, recognising the changing gender roles brought about by the conflict.

Success: Promoting Women's Rights and Resolving Conflict in Rivers and Delta States

In 2015, club members worked with the Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) to establish a Community Mediation Centre in Bokana, Degema LGA. The Centre typically deals with 1 to 2 cases a week, and is run by club facilitators and older peace club members who have been trained by CEHRD as mediators. 26 participants were trained as mediators from 2015 to 2016. Cases are restricted to domestic disputes, in order to safeguard club participants, however the Centre has established a relationship with local police stations so that more serious or complex cases can be referred effectively. Cases from the mediation centre also contributed to cases referred to the NSRP observatories; from 2015 to 2016, a total of 191 cases were reported to the Rivers Observatory.

The Delta peace clubs also played an active role in promoting women's involvement in local government. With club support, 4 women were successfully elected to the previously male-dominated Community Development Committee in Agbarha-Otor community. The clubs also worked with local authorities to secure an allocation of 2-3 female seats in the Agbassa CDC.

Challenge: Fostering, But Not Overly Relying On, a Spirit of Volunteerism

The centrality of the club facilitators to the overall success of the clubs cannot be overestimated. They were the mouthpiece for translating the club curriculum into something directly relevant to participants and their communities. They were also expected to build open and trusting relationships through which participants would feel comfortable discussing highly sensitive topics and their own related experiences, and to maintain club momentum.

Facilitators worked on an essentially voluntary basis, receiving a weekly stipend of NGN1000. As buy-in for the clubs grew and attendance swelled, the responsibilities of facilitators increased as they had more participants to oversee, and activities to report on. While NSRP successfully retained the majority of its facilitators, the clubs would benefit from having a strategy for retaining facilitators over the longer term, either through reducing responsibilities or increasing remuneration.

Lessons Learnt

Getting peace clubs up and running is a timely process. The need to adhere to agreed implementation timelines is critical from a project and financial management perspective. It is therefore important to set realistic timeframes that take into account the significant amount of groundwork required to conduct research and mapping, gain community buy-in, identify and train partners and CSOs, and develop a club manual. These stages should be counted as integral to the startup process and assessed as such, rather than assessment starting only at the point where peace clubs being meeting.

It is important to bridge the gap between quantitative monitoring of attendance, and personal anecdotes of positive change from participants. The participant feedback captured in the logbooks provided an insight into the views and behaviours of individual members, which could be used by CSOs and facilitators to guide club activities. The logbook model could be developed further by creating a framework of analysis into which individual responses could be fed, in order to track trends in participant development across different clubs.

Peace clubs offer an opportunity to complement life skills development with practical income generation training. Peace clubs were an effective forum in which participants gained confidence, self-awareness and rights awareness. Many clubs worked with gang or cult members who had previously been involved in violent activities. In order to address the economic roots of conflict and gender inequality, clubs could work with businesses and training institutions to provide practical training opportunities to club members. This would capitalise on participants' increased confidence, and guard against members resorting or returning to lives of violence.

Summary: Key Ingredients for Successful and Sustainable Peace Clubs

- Initial groundwork – research, training, manual development, gaining community buy-in – is critical to the successful running of the clubs.
- Peace clubs are intended to be truly grass-roots organisations; a commitment to including marginalised or hard to reach community members is critical to achieving the clubs' objective.
- Clubs should be actively linked into and supporting existing formal and informal mechanisms for addressing violence and violent conflict.
- A nuanced approach to monitoring and evaluation is important for capturing the many individual cases of behavioural and attitudinal change that occur amongst club participants.