



ENGAGING COMMUNITIES FOR PEACE IN NIGERIA

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT #6

OCTOBER 1, 2016 – DECEMBER 31, 2016

Submission Date: 31 January 2017

Agreement Number: AID-620-A-15-00002

Activity Start Date and End Date: June 08, 2015 – June 30, 2017

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ACRONYMS

CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
ECPN	Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria
EWER	Early Warning & Early Response
FY	Fiscal Year
IBN	Interest Based Negotiation
LGA	Local Government Area
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
QIP	Quick Impact Project
CPF	Conflict Prevention Forum
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW/SUMMARY

Program Name	Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria
Activity Start Date and End Date	June 8, 2015 – June 7, 2017
Name of Prime Implementing Partner	Mercy Corps
Contract Number	AID-620-A-15-00002
Name of Sub-awardees	Pastoral Resolve
Geographic Coverage	Benue, Nasarawa
Reporting Period	October 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016

1.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/INTRODUCTION

Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN) is a two-year, USAID-funded program that aims to reduce violence in the Middle Belt states by peacefully preventing and resolving farmer-pastoralist conflicts. The three objectives of the program are:

1. Strengthen the capacity of farmer and pastoralist leaders to resolve disputes in an inclusive, sustainable manner;
2. Leverage social and economic opportunities to build trust across lines of division; and
3. Foster engagement among farmer-pastoralist communities, local authorities and neighboring communities to prevent conflict.

The program is built on this core theory of change: **If farmer and pastoralist communities improve their skills in peacefully managing disputes, collaborate across conflict lines to address underlying tensions, and work with surrounding communities and government authorities to prevent conflict, then communities will increase their trust, economic interdependence, and capacity to monitor and prevent conflict, leading to reduced inter-communal violence.**

ECPN leverages best practices from Mercy Corps, USAID, and elsewhere for people-to-people initiatives to shape the design of the interventions. These include promoting the sustainability of negotiated agreements by practically addressing economic and environmental drivers of resource-based conflicts; connecting community-level engagement with higher-

level initiatives; and including a broad range of stakeholders in the development of dispute resolution agreements.

The ECPN program is focused on reducing violence in 20 farmer and pastoralist communities (or 10 conflict sites) across the targeted states of Benue and Nasarawa through an integrated economic development and conflict management approach. The program is implemented in partnership with Pastoral Resolve (PARE), which has over 10 years of experience operating in the Middle Belt at the intersection of livelihood enhancement, gender equity, governance, health, and development with diverse and often marginalized communities.

1.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS TO DATE

In this reporting period, progress against indicators has been made and is shown in the table below.

ECPN Project Indicators	Project Baseline		FY 2017 Q1 Reporting Period (Oct 2016 – Dec 2016)			Annual Target	Year to Date Actual	% of Annual Target	Project Target	LoP Actual	% of LoP Target
	Date	Value	Target	Actual	% of Target						
Goal: Reduced violence between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria's Middle Belt states in target sites											
% change in number of conflicts reported from activity interventions supported by USG funds.	Dec-2015	21	N/A	0	-27.4%	N/A	-27.4%	N/A	15%	-27.4%	NA
Outcome 1 Capacity of communities to resolve disputes increased.											
1.1. # of disputes resolved by trained participants	Dec-2015	N/A	40	31	78%	40	117	293%	100	117	117%
1.2 Number of local women participating in a substantive role or position in a peacebuilding process supported with USG assistance	Dec-2015	N/A	20	9	45%	66	73	110%	120	73	61%
Outcome2 Trust between communities across lines of division increased.											
2.1 % of participants who report social cohesion across conflict group lines	Dec-2015	68%	N/A	0	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	78%	N/A	N/A
2.2 Number of new groups or initiatives created through USG funding, dedicated to resolving the conflict or the drivers of the conflict	Dec-2015	N/A	10	0	0%	10	0	0%	20	0	0%
Outcome 3 Joint community and government conflict management plans developed.											

ECPN Project Indicators	Project		FY 2017 Q1 Reporting			Annual	Year to	% of	Project	LoP	% of LoP
3.1: % of beneficiaries in targeted sites who feel government is competently addressing concerns.	Dec-2015	33%	N/A	0	0%	N/A	N/A	N/a	43%	NA	N/A
3.2 Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation	Dec-2015	N/A	100	51	51%	650	666	110%	4,000	717	18%

2. ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

2.1 PROGRESS NARRATIVE/KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Mercy Corps is on track to meet its overall program targets. Activities implemented are presented below:

2.1.1 Interest Based Negotiation for Local Government Officials



Interest Based Negotiation (IBN) & Mediation training for local government administrators in Lafia, Nasarawa State.
Photo Credit: Mercy Corps, October 2016

Mercy Corps identified the lack of capacity building of local government officials in inclusive and sustainable conflict management as a gap during the Conflict Actor Mapping exercise conducted in ECPN target sites. This gap could potentially lead to issues around the sustainability of the project's peacebuilding interventions. In view of this, ECPN organized a two-day joint Interest-Based Negotiation training for 37 local government administrators and senior officials from Benue and Nasarawa states in Lafia, Nasarawa state.

The outcome of the training led to beneficial linkages between IBN-trained government officials and community leaders with a view to increasing support to local leaders for effective dispute resolution. This effort led the trained government officials to establish a network of IBN-trained government officials to bridge the gap between government authorities and local communities. The local leaders are now linked up and are communicating with the trained government officials for support in resolving protracted disputes, thereby preventing the escalation of conflicts and managing conflicts in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

The impact of this initiative is illustrated by the following example: In 2015, Mercy Corps was working with the Nassarawa State government and Gwandara and Eggon community leaders from Daddere to facilitate the return of displaced members of the Eggon ethnic group back to their community. Part of Mercy Corps' work included working with the IBN-trained state and local government officials to mediate between the leaders of the two conflicting ethnic groups by sharing information, concerns and opinion from one group to the other. Later on, Mercy Corps, through the influence of the state and local government authorities, began working with the newly established community peace committee in Daddere to push for return of the Eggon ethnic group

back to Daddere. Thanks to the conflict mitigation efforts of the community peace committee established by Mercy Corps in Daddere, the Eggon ethnic group members were able to return to Daddere. The ceremony marking the return was held on November 16, 2016. At the ceremony, a member of the community peace committee, Bala Abubakar Daddere, stated that the community must *“not forget to thank Mercy Corps for their efforts in making what is happening today possible. They have been working behind the scenes with our leaders and the peace committee to make this happen.”*

2.1.2 Dispute Tracking & Mentoring for IBN Trained Community Leaders



Dispute Tracking & Mentoring with IBN-trained community leaders in Nassarawa and Benue states.
Photo Credit: Mercy Corps, October 2016

The aim of the dispute tracking and mentoring workshops, held from October 20 to November 3, 2016 by Mercy Corps and PARE was to mentor IBN-trained leaders on how to use reports to document disputes that they helped to resolve. During these workshops, IBN-trained leaders not only learned how to effectively document disputes, but also deepened their understanding of the IBN methodology and the use of the approach to effectively resolve disputes in the community. The ECPN team began by asking the IBN-trained community leaders about the disputes they have resolved, including the issues, the parties involved and the type of conflict (either intra/inter farmer; or intra/inter pastoralist). Then, the narratives about the conflict are entered into the Dispute Stories template and key information about local peace agreements collected from local leaders is entered into the Dispute Database. A total of 66 leaders (42 male and 22 female) participated in the mentoring workshops held in Nasarawa and Benue state.

In both states, the ECPN targeted sites were clustered according to the proximity of the communities to one another. This was done to increase the number of participants and also to provide a platform for the representatives of the concerned communities to share experiences, lessons learned, challenges, and ideas on how to improve the use of the IBN approach. Six IBN-trained local community leaders were mentored in each community. The disputes collected were either intra communal (between farmers and/or between pastoralists) or inter communal disputes (between pastoralists and farmers). During the mentoring workshops, participants' level of expertise on IBN was measured via specific questions pertaining to the lessons. When gaps were identified, they were addressed by revisiting the key principles of IBN and other learning needs.

2.1.3 Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement



Advocacy visits to local government officials in Nassarawa and Benue states. Photo Credit. Mercy Corps, October 2016

Mercy Corps, with support from PARE, conducted advocacy visits to Doma, Obi, Nasarawa and Lafia East local government secretariats in Nassarawa State; and Guma, Logo and Makurdi North local government secretariats in Benue State. The objective of these visits was to ensure the sustainability of ECPN, after the end of the program, by encouraging active participation and technical support (in the form of community needs assessments and evaluations of social services, identification of quick impact projects, and donation of building materials) by the local governments in of Nasarawa and Benue states. Mercy Corps and PARE held several meetings with local government administrators, senior local government officials and security agencies in the target LGAs.

The outcome of these visits was the active participation of local government officials in ECPN activities and the commitment to provide technical support, including by conducting assessments of identified quick impact projects and by donating construction materials, as stated above.

The role of traditional community leaders in the resolution of conflicts was emphasized during the meetings with the local government authorities. Traditional community leaders are closer to the people and were often the ones being targeted in these conflicts. In view of this, the LGA authorities promised to provide support by involving IBN-trained local government officials in future conflict prevention and mitigation. According to the Caretaker Committee Chairman of Lafia East LGA, *“We need to really work with the traditional leaders because they are the custodians of the people and are very instrumental in maintaining peace in the society. Through frequent interactions with community leaders, we can achieve what we plan to.”*

2.1.4 Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Assessment of Joint Natural Resource Management Projects



Environmental monitoring and impact assessment of Joint Natural Resource Management Projects in Nassarawa and Benue states. Photo Credit: PARE, November 2016

The development of an environmental monitoring and mitigation plan prior to constructing boreholes is a USAID requirement for the joint natural resource management initiatives in the nine ECPN sites selected by communities. The purpose of the environmental impact assessment was to measure the effects on the environment of the proposed joint natural resource management initiatives (i.e. construction of boreholes). If the likely effects on the environment are unacceptable, relevant mitigation measures are to be undertaken to reduce or avoid those effects. This is achieved through the design of an environmental mitigation and monitoring plan.

During the assessment, data on the environmental impact of the proposed water project was collected from local authorities, and desk-based research and fieldwork was conducted in the respective communities. The assessment report showed a detailed analysis of the environmental impact of the proposed projects, the expected quality of the products after construction, as well as risk mitigation and monitoring plan. The plan is particularly important in minimizing and mitigating potential negative effects. Hence, Mercy Corps worked closely with the local communities to change sites that were found unsuitable by Mercy Corps' international consultant engineer. The methodology used to complete the Initial Environment Examination (IEE) included field visits and data collection through different sources (e.g. local community leaders, fieldwork, etc.) followed by analysis of the collected information. Based on the data analysis, mitigation measures and recommendations were presented. In order to complete the data collection required for the project, the consultant engineer used several sources, which include general information gathered through meetings with key informants such as local community leaders and other relevant stakeholders in the communities.

In addition to meetings with relevant stakeholders and local community leaders, further data was collected through observatory field visits to consolidate the understanding of the environmental setting. The nine locations of the proposed boreholes, along with the surrounding areas, were visited and investigated. Social impacts were assessed through public discussion and one-on-one interactions during the conducted site visits.

The construction and infrastructure installation for the project mainly consists of nine boreholes spread around nine sites within the northeastern Nasarawa and Benue states. For each borehole, there will be drilling of a well, pump installation and construction of steel towers with 4 PVC tanks mounted on top.

Overall, the information gathered during the assessment revealed that the positive impact of the project on the communities assessed outweigh the negative effects. The negative effects mainly revolve around operating heavy-duty trucks and drilling activities, which are minimal and temporary due to the size of the projects. As for the positive effects, the population in the communities will have access to clean water as the borehole sites have been certified to be of high quality and free from pollutants.

There have been challenges however, in getting further approval from USAID for a small community water scheme, which would provide water in the interim while the assessments are conducted. This is important because the assessments can take a significant amount of time to conduct. For instance, after the environmental impact assessment of the proposed water project sites, water quality assessments need to be conducted. Though these measures are meant to ensure high quality water is provided, it also has the down side of slowing implementation and the communities have begun to doubt whether ECPN is really going to provide the water it promised.

2.1.5 Needs Assessment & Evaluation of Social Services for Quick Impact Projects



Community needs assessment and evaluation of social services in Nassarawa and Benue states. Photo Credit: PARE, December 2016

From December 5 - 15, 2016, PARE and Mercy Corps, in collaboration with local community leaders, conducted needs assessments and evaluations of social services in nine ECPN sites. The leaders, who were identified and trained using Mercy Corps participatory mapping tools and who already have the communities' trust, conducted the needs assessments. During these assessments, communities were able to take the lead in analyzing the linkages between lack of social services and conflict, and identify opportunities and gaps in services that they can collaboratively address together with conflicting groups. Once the information was gathered, PARE and the ECPN team facilitated discussions between conflicting communities to identify shared social service needs and opportunities that will inform the design of the quick impact projects.

The quick impact projects are local initiatives jointly identified by farmer and pastoralist communities with the aim of promoting cooperative use of shared resources, strengthening relationships, building community cohesion, reducing tension over the lack of social services, building trust across lines of division, and facilitating peaceful interactions between farmer and pastoralist communities. During the exercise, the community leaders led in the analysis of the links between shared social services and conflicts and jointly identified shared social services, such as health centers, markets, schools, etc., that needed to be rehabilitated which they can collaboratively address.

To ensure the sustainability of the quick impact projects, concerted efforts were made to ensure the involvement of local and state governments. For instance, officials from the Ministry of Community and Rural Development at the state level as well as officials from the Departments of Social Services at the local government level participated in the needs feasibility study and evaluation of social services conducted in ECPN communities in Nassarawa and Benue states. The communities identified the following quick impact projects:

- Reconstruction of market stalls in Daddere, Nassarawa State
- Renovation of a public primary school in Rukubi, Nassarawa State
- Reconstruction of market stalls in Assakio, Nassarawa State
- Rehabilitation of an existing borehole in Ashige, Nassarawa State
- Reconstruction of market stalls, Gidan Buba, Nassarawa State
- Renovation of Primary Health Care center in Anyii, Benue State
- Reconstruction of market stalls in Mbaku, Benue State
- Renovation of Primary Health Care center built by the community in Torkula, Benue State
- Renovation of primary school in Zongo/Daudu, Benue State

Most of the quick impact projects identified by the communities was infrastructure that was destroyed during the violent conflicts in the communities over the past three to four years.



Identified market stalls for rehabilitation in Rukubi and identified primary school for renovation in Daddere.

2.1.6 Program Review and Strategy Planning Meeting with Partners

On September 21 – 22, 2016, Mercy Corps and PARE conducted a review of activities that were implemented in FY16 and mapped out a plan for program implementation for FY17. Highlights of the issues discussed include:

- Increasing the involvement of state and local government authorities in the implementation of ECPN activities;
- Using feedback gathered from communities, such as concerns or suggestions on how best to implement the project;
- Decisions were made regarding how various stakeholders in the project will be informed of their role and responsibilities;
- Challenges were acknowledged and ways of addressing them were on various aspects of the project.

The strategy-planning meeting also provided a platform for the program team to collaboratively discuss the FY17 budget and work plans. The meeting also reaffirmed the significance of working more closely with peacebuilding actors and the need to embrace initiatives that will ensure continued support of pastoralist and farmer communities and increase the participation of women in order to sustain the peacebuilding effort. Overall, information shared will ensure adequate coordination amongst the program team, delivery of quality program activities and timely program implementation.

2.1.7 Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Training



Early Warning & Early Response workshop in Nasarawa state. Photo Credit: Mercy Corps, November 2016

In order to expedite conflict incident reporting and ensure farmers and pastoralists communities know who to call during emergencies, Mercy Corps is piloting an early warning and early response (EWER) system in Nassarawa State. The system will be used at the community level as a platform for identifying brewing communal and natural resources-related crises between farmers and pastoralists in order to inform early intervention. The security agencies are expected to form the bedrock of the response system by receiving and responding quickly to information on brewing communal conflict that has the potential for escalating into violence.

As part of setting up the EWER system, Mercy Corps conducted a two-day training in Lafia for 35 stakeholders, including security agencies, community leaders, media personnel, as well as senior state and local government officials from Nasarawa State. The objective of the training was to build the capacity of the participants in EWER, thereby connecting local community leaders with government authorities and security agencies, each of whom will be held accountable to perform their roles to speed up conflict incident reporting. The community leaders, who are a part of the community peace committee, are expected to pick up early signs of conflict that has potential for escalating into violence at the community level and try to mediate the dispute. If they cannot resolve the conflict, they are expected to refer the conflict to the state and local government officials who are expected to report it to the relevant security agencies, who are then expected to respond quickly.

To achieve the successful establishment of the EWER, Mercy Corps facilitated a meeting with communities expected to host conflict prevention forums during the EWER training. The design of the system will be unveiled during the conflict prevention forums in February 2017 in order to enable community members and public officials to collectively monitor tensions and effectively respond to trigger events.

During the EWER training for local community leaders, local government officials and security agencies, the security agencies actively participated in the process of designing the EWER, to ensure it was linked to the existing 'police emergency response' system for identifying early signs of community conflicts. The security agencies provided valuable input into the EWER's design and have confirmed their commitment to participate in the implementation of the system once it is set up.

Mercy Corps is currently working with PARE to develop a strategy for creating an early warning and early response office in Lafia, Nasarawa State with a dedicated telephone line in order to receive information from EWER committees on any emerging or ongoing conflict and report it to appropriate authorities. This will enable communities, public officials and security agencies to jointly monitor tensions and effectively respond to trigger events. As described above, the process of picking up early signs of conflict begins at the community level, which is linked up to the state and local government authorities' level, which in turn is linked to the security agencies - especially the police. The EWER office in Lafia is expected to track the flow of information concerning the early signs of conflict from the community level to the security 'response' level and document the process and the information contained therein.

2.1.8 Capacity Building for Partners

In view of the priority given to the capacity building of partners, Mercy Corps conducted a two-day refresher training entitled "Monitoring and Evaluation for Results" for its partner, PARE. This is part of Mercy Corps' effort to improve program monitoring, the quality of data collection and reporting. The training focused on improving the participants' knowledge of result-based monitoring and evaluation with a particular focus on USAID's and Mercy Corps' policies and regulations.

During the training, the participants undertook practical sessions on quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, as well as monitoring and tracking outcomes of key performance indicators. Participants also received a refresher training on the Dispute Tracking templates, used to capture results of resolved disputes, and the Violent Incident database, used for tracking incidences of violence. At the end of the refresher training, an evaluation of the participants' level of understanding was measured through open-ended questions and a written questionnaire. The results from these evaluations show an increase in knowledge and understanding by PARE staff in result-based monitoring and evaluation, as well as reporting.

Overall, it is expected that the knowledge and skills acquired during the training and subsequent mentoring will improve the quality of data collection, reporting and overall program delivery in FY17.

2.1.9 Radio & Television Programs

Documentation and dissemination of lessons-learned and best practices are key parts of ECPN strategy for better information sharing with government, policy makers and other civil society groups on lessons learned and best practices. In order to effectively reach relevant stakeholders and publicize information about the ECPN program, PARE – with support from Mercy Corps – began the process of documenting peacebuilding activities, best practices and lessons learned from the ECPN program. They shared information through radio and television program and launched an ECPN newsletter, which is aimed at documenting ECPN activities, lessons-learned and best practices, especially with regards to the joint implementation of activities by conflicting communities. Subsequently, PARE will lead the process of facilitating policy dialogues as a platform for sharing information between government and community members about government policies and decisions that are accurate, reliable and unbiased.

The objective of these activities is to give communities a voice as well as provide a platform for conflicting community members to share their stories of resilience and efforts at peaceful coexistence, and to raise awareness of the negative economic and human effects of farmer/pastoralist conflicts in Nassarawa and Benue states, and the Middle Belt in general. The radio and TV broadcast programs will also be used as platforms for sharing lessons learned and best practices on collaborative joint natural resource management initiatives and cooperation between farmer and pastoralist communities.

The first ECPN-sponsored radio and television programs aired in December 2016 and were hosted by Mercy Corps and PARE, and included a member of Nassarawa State House of Assembly and representatives from farmer and pastoralist communities. The discussions highlighted the efforts of communities and governments in promoting the sustainable resolution of farmer/pastoralist conflicts through a proactive approach that addresses the economic and environmental drivers of resource-based conflicts.

The programs also highlighted the funding provided by USAID, the peacebuilding initiatives that Mercy Corps and PARE are implementing, and the ECPN program's efforts to involve a broad range of stakeholders in the development of conflict prevention plans and dispute resolution agreements. The broadcasts also highlighted ECPN's work to connect community-level engagements with higher-level initiatives, including government authorities and security agencies,

in order to promote the change necessary for sustainable peace in Benue and Nassarawa states. The programs have already received positive feedback. For instance, during the call-in segment of the radio program, one caller commended the idea behind the program, while another caller described how the program has changed some of the negative perceptions about ‘the murderous Fulanis’ by showing that the Fulanis are also ‘*victims of the conflicts*’.

In addition, Mercy Corps is collaborating with BBC Media Action on a documentary, which is also aimed at giving communities a voice, addressing negative stereotypes, and showing how conflicting communities can jointly implement projects to build trust, strengthen relationships, promote cooperation and the collaborative sharing of resources.

2.2 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

As discussed above, activities implemented over the course of the period were:

- Interest-Based Negotiation training for local government officials
- Dispute Tracking & Mentoring for IBN-trained community leaders
- M&E capacity building for PARE
- Strategy planning meeting with PARE
- Advocacy and stakeholder engagement
- Needs assessments and identification of quick impact projects
- Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) design and training
- Radio and TV programs

2.3 IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

During the period under review, the challenges faced during program implementation included: continued tension between conflicting communities, accessibility to the communities, low participation of pastoralist women, unpredictable movements of pastoralists, proximity of ECPN ‘Treatment sites’ to ‘Control sites’ under the RCT, language barriers and getting approval from USAID.

Continued Tension Among Conflicting Groups

The tension between the Eggon, Alago and Fulani ethnic groups continued following the inability of the Eggons to return to Assakio after the violent conflict that led to the displacement of the Eggons from Assakio. This posed a challenge for the timely implementation of conflict prevention initiatives such as Joint Natural Resource Management and Quick Impact projects, which are designed to address the drivers of conflict, promote community cohesion and facilitate mutual cooperation between the conflicting groups. However, through separate meetings with the leaders of the conflicting groups in Ashangwa and Assakio, the rehabilitation of a market stall was identified as an initiative that will foster peaceful interaction. The team is working closely with the leaders to facilitate the return of the Eggons to Assakio and also support the communities to jointly implement peace agreements and other conflict prevention initiatives.

Participation of Pastoralist Women

Across target sites, the participation of women pastoralist is very low as compared to women farmers. Close consultation with the leaders of the pastoralist communities on ways to encourage the participation of women revealed that entrenched cultural and religious beliefs are partly responsible for the resistance of pastoralist women to participate actively in ECPN activities, particularly when it involves sitting together with men in the public sphere. To overcome this challenge, ECPN has creatively promoted the participation of pastoralist women in ECPN activities by holding separate meetings with the women, and creating an enabling environment for them to make inputs into the program, particularly in the development and implementation of joint community conflict prevention plans. The ECPN team will continue to work closely with the community leaders to increase the participation of women in the program without undermining the benefit of promoting interaction between the conflicting communities.

Accessibility to the Community

Most of the communities are considered to be hard-to-reach because the roads linking the communities are bad and are sometimes inaccessible by car. The communities that are inaccessible by car are accessed by motorcycle in order to ease the stress of walking a long distance to the community. Movement of a large number of people is difficult due to the limited number of commercial vehicles or motorcycles. Hence, due to transportation challenges, the implementation of ECPN activities that required the participation of community members was mostly delayed. To overcome this, the time of activities were scheduled in consultation with the community leaders.

Language Barrier

Language barriers became obvious while carrying out community-based activities that involved direct interaction with local community members. To ease communication and promote inclusion, interaction with local community members was done in different languages through interpreters (based on location and need), which included the Hausa, Fulfulde, Eggon, and Tiv languages.

Pastoralist Migration Pattern

The unpredictable movements of pastoralists continue to pose a challenge for program implementation considering that equal participation of farmer and pastoralists is required and important. For example, only few pastoralists participated in the quick impact needs assessment conducted in Gidan Buba and Daddere, because the pastoralists had migrated to other communities for grazing their cattle. In order to overcome this challenge, the communities were given more time to consult with other community members that were unavailable in order to ensure equal representation and involvement of the different interest groups in decision making.

Getting Approval from USAID to Start Joint Natural Resources Management Projects

With regards to the construction of boreholes as joint natural resources management that will address drivers of conflict around access to and use of water between farmers and pastoralists, Mercy Corps needed approval at every stage of the process to construct the boreholes. As per USAID regulation, Environmental Monitoring and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) was developed by Mercy Corps after conducting an environmental impact assessment for all the ECPN sites identified for the construction of the boreholes. The environmental assessment includes field visits and data collection from different sources such as community leaders, local government

authorities and desk research. This was followed by analysis of the collected data leading to mitigation measures being developed which formed the EMM.

After the EMMP, further approval was needed to develop a water quality assurance plan (WQA). This is another requirement for USAD-funded programs that involve the construction of boreholes. As mentioned above, while these measures are meant to ensure high quality water is provided, it also has the down side of delaying implementation so that the communities have begun to doubt whether Mercy Corps was really going to provide the water it promised. From the communities' perspective, these measures are 'delay tactics' used by USAID to deny them of the water. To overcome these challenges, Mercy Corps and PARE held several meetings with various community stakeholders and government officials with the view of managing expectations by explaining how the process works and that these measures are taken to ensure high quality water is provided.

2.4 INDICATORS FROM M&E PLAN AND TARGETS

As a learning organization, Mercy Corps has invested significant resources in developing indicators and data collection tools to measure program impact, paying particular attention to the challenges of collecting data in conflict-affected environments and evaluating peacebuilding programs. As outlined in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, both output and outcome indicators were used to measure specific results, disaggregated by a range of demographics including age and sex.

In the last quarter, ECPN-trained community leaders resolved 31 communal disputes that could have escalated to violence. In addition, 51 community members participated in conflict prevention events and other activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. Regarding ECPN's goal indicator, the trained community observers as well as the ECPN partner, collected data on incidents that happened across ECPN sites. This data showed that the number of conflict incidents has reduced by 27.4% as a result of ECPN interventions.

2.5 GENDER EQUALITY AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Mercy Corps recognizes that land and resource-based conflict affects women, men, girls, and boys differently. As women make-up approximately 70% of the rural workforce, violent incidents that destroy property and damage land and crops adversely affect women and their livelihood options. Additionally, women are five times less likely than men to own land, therefore their economic options become even more limited if they lose husbands and sons in the violence. Cultural norms and household responsibilities further limit their mobility and participation in local decision-making structures. Even after a conflict incident subsides, women face unique challenges due to the breakdown of family and communal structures, thereby increasing the risk of gender-based violence.

To ensure that Mercy Corps maximizes women's substantial potential to prevent conflict, ECPN works diligently with PARE and our communities to ensure that women's voices are incorporated in negotiation approaches and when designing economic activities. ECPN will carefully select leaders for negotiation training and implement forums that bring women together separately from

men, giving them the opportunity to express themselves, develop confidence, and identify conflict management strategies.

The ECPN program promotes women's participation by being sensitive to the cultural norms of the area. In communities where women's inclusion is limited, we engage first with male gatekeepers to secure their trust before reaching out to the women. This approach resulted in meaningful participation among women, contradicting local conventional wisdom that women would not be able to participate in ECPN activities due to religious and cultural restrictions.

ECPN has been able to disaggregate all project data by sex and ensured data collected during mapping exercises evaluated the disparate impact of the program on both men and women and assessed the distinct role each plays in resolving and preventing community conflicts.

During the first round of baseline survey data collection, Mercy Corps staff ensured that both female and male enumerators comprised the data collection team. This allowed Mercy Corps to access women respondents who could feel at ease with a woman enumerator. The target for the respondent pool is roughly 50% men, 50% women, so that women and men will be equally represented in expressing their opinions related to key program outcomes. Furthermore, women were highly active in program implementation and, as such, the population of respondents was roughly equal between men and women. This was done during the implementation of program activities from the first quarter of the ECPN program. This approach enables women to have an equal chance of getting selected to participate in a particular activity. The activities include conflict actor mapping, IBN training, community-led resource mapping, needs assessment, project identification, EWER and radio and TV program

2.6 SUSTAINABILITY MECHANISMS

As implementation of ECPN activities has already commenced, this section outlines the approach the ECPN team took to put sustainability mechanisms in place.

First, the ECPN program's step-by-step approach will reduce violence between farmers and pastoralists through integrated economic development and dispute resolution. By linking the negotiated agreements made by these leaders to joint natural resource management projects that address underlying drivers of conflict and sources of tension, ECPN is already incentivizing interaction between conflicting communities through joint natural resource management initiatives and quick impact projects that shows the benefit of cooperation between the two conflicting groups. To ensure ownership and sustainability of these projects, Mercy Corps constructively engaged governments and other stakeholders at the state and local levels by involving them in the planning and eventual implementation of the projects.

Secondly, the program will support key farmer and pastoralist leaders in building their capacity to resolve disputes peacefully and encourage traditional leaders to foster agreements as they once did, as a means to begin non-violent responses to resolve the polarization between communities.

Thirdly, in line with the USAID Nigeria Mission's policy of investing in projects that will be heavily supported by the Nigerian government, Mercy Corps has developed strong beneficial

linkages with local and state government as well as security agencies. For instance, Mercy Corps has established good working relationships with ministries, agencies and departments which led to the support for joint natural resource management initiatives, and conflict prevention forums and Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system, both at the state and local level.

Finally, Mercy Corps engaged surrounding “zones of influence,” expanding some of its interventions to neighboring communities and local government officials by facilitating conflict prevention forums focused on conflict mitigation and prevention. This approach drew on the successes of previous networks of negotiators and community socio-economic projects. This expansion to surrounding zones will help solidify the gains experienced in target communities.

2.7 ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

As a precursor to the implementation of the joint natural resource management initiatives in ECPN sites, and as part of USAID compliance, an Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) was developed following the completion of environmental assessments for all the sites. Mercy Corps is also in the process of completing the water quality assurance plan as a precursor to the construction of boreholes in ECPN sites.

2.8 YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Mercy Corps recognizes that youth are a key group of actors, essential to the resolution of conflict in the Middle Belt. By using a randomized selection process to select respondents for the baseline survey, the ECPN program ensured that youth are proportionately represented in the potential participant pool. The actor mapping activity conducted under Activity 1.1 also allowed Mercy Corps and partners to learn more about the roles that youth played in fostering or preventing conflict.

Furthermore, youth were prioritized under the ECPN program and played key roles in activities aimed at increasing cooperation across conflict lines, such as conflict actor mapping, interest based negotiation trainings, community-led resources and conflict mapping, conflict prevention forums, etc.

2.9 POLICY AND GOVERNANCE SUPPORT

As noted in the progress narrative, Mercy Corps has made introductions where needed and, in many cases, has already established beneficial connections and firm links to local and state government actors. As part of this initiative, Mercy Corps has conducted high-level advocacy visits and held meetings with key officials from the state executives, ministries, security agencies and local government administrators in Nasarawa and Benue States. Mercy Corps has visited both the Executive Governor of Benue State and the Deputy Governor of Nasarawa State to push for policies around how government intervenes in farmer/pastoralist conflicts in the two states. For instance, one of the outcomes of the visits was the directive given by the Executive Governor of Benue state to all the government ministries and other institutions to support and ensure active participation in all

ECPN activities. This is a big achievement for ECPN because Mercy Corps could not work in Benue state before this time due to a misunderstanding with one of Benue state government officials.

2.10 LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The capacity building of local partners is prioritized in order to enhance program performance. PARE continued to receive technical support and mentoring in financial management and reporting, program management and monitoring and evaluation. Mercy Corps worked closely with PARE to review the ECPN program's performance in FY16 and also strategize how to improve program performance. PARE also developed their FY17 work plans and budget with the support of Mercy Corps in order to ensuring adequate coordination and timely implementation of activities.

The participation of the partner staff in Result-Based Monitoring & Evaluation on November 17-18, 2016 is expected to improve the capacity of the ECPN team in program monitoring, data collection, data validation, and analysis as well as evidence based reporting.

2.11 CONFLICT MITIGATION

As conflict mitigation is the purpose of the ECPN program, information related to this crosscutting issue is included in the above activity narrative section.

2.12 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IMPACTS

As Mercy Corps is committed to using technology when and where it helps to advance program objectives, we adopted an electronic data collection system for the baseline survey. All enumerators were trained using tablets and in uploading their data to a central server at the end of each day. Data was then collated in a central location and analyzed. In addition to improving the quality of data and reducing time to complete the baseline by removing the data entry stage, this has also had a positive environmental impact by avoiding the need to print thousands of pages of surveys in hard copy.

2.13 STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

During the period under review, the Program Manager and PARE continued to build beneficial partnerships and work closely with key and relevant stakeholders, which included local community leaders, traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, and community-based organizations. These are documented in the Conflict Actor Mapping Report and other reports.

2.14 MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

No changes occurred during this reporting period.

2.15 LESSONS LEARNED

In recognition of the unpredictable movement of pastoralists, ECPN has established a robust connection with community leaders and provided a mechanism for sharing migratory information that can impact the ECPN program. This has supported the ECPN team to make informed decisions with regards to planning program implementation particularly in ensuring the inclusion of the interest groups.

While engaging stakeholders, especially government officials in Benue and Nasarawa state, it became apparent that the government has a significant role to play in the projects sustainability and as such, the involvement of government institutions in ECPN activities should be ensured. Also, there is a need to manage the expectations of community beneficiaries, and government officials, and also build their capacity to address knowledge gaps in conflict management in order to strengthen their support for the program. For example, the administrators of LGAs of the target sites voluntarily designated senior staff in charge of rural and community development to participate in ECPN activities such as the community-led needs assessment, identification of quick impact projects, and feasibility study of the identified projects. Further, the local government authorities agreed to host the upcoming conflict prevention forum in the LGA secretariats.

The network of government officials trained in IBN meet once a month to discuss ways to support peacebuilding efforts in the communities and have made valuable recommendations to ECPN team on ways to ensure adequate coordination and gain the support of key government officials for the program. One of these recommendations was to engage the Lafia local government council in facilitating the implementation of joint natural resources management projects and also in holding separate conflict prevention forum for Assakio due to the protracted nature of the conflict in the community.

Furthermore, constant interaction with the communities and the program implementation approach which ensures neutrality, inclusion and trust building between conflicting groups, has increased the communities' confidence in Mercy Corps and PARE. This is reflected in the high level of cooperation and increased interest in ECPN program observed in the communities.

After community leaders are trained in IBN, they are required to use their skills to effectively resolve disputes using the IBN approach. However, stories of disputes collected from the leaders have revealed the need for continuous mentoring of the leaders so they can most effectively carry out this task. Hence, the dispute tracking and mentoring workshops organized for the leaders have provided a platform for identifying skills and knowledge gaps, as well as cross-learning and networking. Also, clustering the participants together to discuss the disputes they resolved helped to avoid collection of similar stories from two different individuals that resolved the same dispu

3. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT QUARTER INCLUDING UPCOMING EVENTS

S/No	Activities	Time Period	Responsible Person(s)	Objectives	Expected Outcome	Output/Deliverables
1.	<i>Documentation and Dissemination of Lessons-learned through TV & radio broadcast, newsletter publication, and case studies</i>	January 2017 and to continue to May 2017	Implemented by PARE, with support from Mercy Corps	To work with PARE and document and disseminate lessons-learned through TV & radio broadcast, newsletter publication, and policy dialogues on joint community strategic actions for addressing drivers of conflict between farmer and pastoralist communities.	TV & radio broadcast, newsletter publication and policy dialogues on joint strategic actions for addressing drivers of conflict between farmer and pastoralist communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of TV/radio programs • Copies of newsletters • Report of policy dialogues • Photographs • Videos
2.	<i>2nd Community Conflict Prevention Forums</i>	January 16 – 23, 2017	Led by PARE, supported by Mercy Corps	To facilitate forums that bring together farmer and pastoralist community members, and government authorities to create strategic plans for addressing underlying tensions and preventing future conflict from arising.	Strategic plans for addressing underlying tensions and prevent future conflict from arising developed by community leaders from farmers and pastoralists communities, government official/security agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Prevention plans • Report of conflict prevention forums • Participants attendance list • Photographs/videos
3.	<i>Mentoring and Workshops for Trained Negotiators</i>	January 24 – February 8, continue in March and throughout the lifespan of the program	Implemented by PARE, with support from Mercy Corps	To revisit key principles of the skills from IBN training and facilitate a space for participants to share experiences and challenges	Key principles of skills from IBN training revisited. Participants share challenges and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified training Handbook • Signed Participants Attendance sheets • Completed Dispute Story template • Photographs/videos
4.	<i>Observational Monitoring</i>	January 2017	Coordinated by PARE	To collect data on differences among the randomized groups of participant, semi-participant, non-participant in project intervention sites, and non-participants from non intervention sites	10 data collected on differences among randomized groups of participants from intervention and non-intervention sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation Template • Activity Report
5.	<i>Orientation & Unveiling of Community-driven EWER Pilot</i>	February 6 – 7, 2017	Led by Mercy Corps, supported by PARE	To Pilot an EWER system in Nasarawa state by connecting local community leaders with government officials and security forces in order to speed up conflict incident reporting and ensure communities know whom to call in the case of emergency.	Local community leaders in Nasarawa state trained and linked with government officials and security agencies to speed up conflict incident reporting incidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EWER strategy plan • Report of coordination meeting • Attendance list • Photographs/video

6.	<i>IBN Training for Traditional Rulers</i>	February 14 – 16, 2017	Implemented by Mercy Corps, with support from PARE	Build the skills of local government officials & journalists necessary in resolving and reporting conflict.	34 local government officials and journalists are trained in Interest-Based negotiations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 traditional rulers local trained • Signed participants attendance sheet • Activity report • Photographs
7.	<i>Implementation & commissioning of Quick Impact projects and JNRM initiatives</i>	February 7, implementation activities continue through the lifespan of ECPN program	(Quick Impact projects) Implemented by PARE, (Joint Natural Resources Management projects) implemented by Mercy Corps	To address immediate concerns related to drivers of conflict or common service needs of farmer/pastoralists communities such as improved school facilities, or construction of toilet facilities, or provision of water at low cost.	Small projects that address drivers of conflict facilitated by PARE and Mercy Corps in which farmer and pastoralist communities jointly implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • BoQs/RFPs • Activity Report • Photographs/video
8.	<i>Observational Monitoring</i>	February 2017	Coordinated by PARE	To collect data on differences among the randomized groups of participant, semi-participant, non-participant in project intervention sites, and non-participants from non intervention sites	10 data collected on differences among randomized groups of participants from intervention and non-intervention sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation Template • Activity Report
9.	<i>Project Management Committee Training</i>	March 14 – 15, 2017	Training by WaterAid, monitoring by Mercy Corps & PARE	To equip the committee with project management skills that will promote local ownership and sustainability of projects. To ensure that community members have a structure in place for self-management of the joint initiatives.	Project management committee members comprising farmers and pastoralists are committed and equipped to lead the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected local community leaders and government officials • Training handbook • Activity report • Photographs
10.	<i>3rd Community Conflict Prevention Forums</i>	March 28 – 31, 2017	Led by PARE, supported by Mercy Corps	To facilitate forums that brings together farmer and pastoralist community members, and government authorities to create strategic plans for addressing underlying tensions and prevent future conflict from arising.	Strategic plans for addressing underlying tensions and prevent future conflict from arising developed by community leaders from farmers and pastoralists communities, government official/security agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Prevention plans • Report of conflict prevention forums • Participants attendance list • Photographs/videos
11.	<i>Observational Monitoring</i>	March 2017	Coordinated by PARE	To collect data on differences among the randomized groups of participant, semi-participant, non-participant in project intervention sites, and non-participants from non intervention sites	10 data collected on differences among randomized groups of participants from intervention and non-intervention sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation Template • Activity Report

