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NIGERIA NORTHEAST CONNECTION

Final Performance Report

February 06, 2023

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ACRONYMS LIST

APC	All Progressive Congress
BAY	Borno, Adamawa, Yobe
BMMC	Biu and Maiduguri Metropolitan Council
CAP	Community Advocacy Platform
CART	Community Action and Response Teams
CATAI	Centre for Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative
CBPP	Community-Based Peace Platforms
CBOs	Community-based organization
CCDRN	Centre for Community Development and Research Network
CCRD	Centre for Conflict Reconciliation and Documentation
CDC	Nigeria Civil Defense Corps
CEER	Centre for Existential Emergency Relief
CESDI	Community Engagement and Social Development Initiative
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contracting Officer Representative
CPP	Community Peace Platform
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate social responsibilities
CVE	Counter Violent Extremism
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DTO	Designated Terrorist Organizations
GUC	Grants Under Contract
HeRoN Health	Resilience of Northeast Nigeria
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ITF	and Industrial Training Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province
LGA	Local Government Area
LOPA	Local Peace Alliance
MCN	Muslim Council of Nigeria
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
NE Connection	Nigeria Northeast Connection
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NLCB	Nigeria Lake Chad Basin project
OAG	Organized Armed Group
ORB	Opinion Research Business International
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
P/CVE	Preventive and Counter Violent Extremism
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PWAN	Partners West Africa Nigeria
PWD	Persons with Disability
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SWF	Safer World Foundation
TOC	Theory of Change
TPAC	Traditional Peace and Arbitration Committee
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VEO	Violent Extremism Organization
WART	Ward Action and Response Teams
WHO	World Health Organization
WPP	Women's Platforms for Peace

Key Outcomes and Results

- ❖ The Final Political Economic Analysis research uncovered Creative-established local peace committee – the Traditional Peace Arbitration Committee (TPAC) – continues to play a significant role as a key mediator in managing conflicts between herders and farmers in Larmude.
- ❖ Creative successfully intervened to end the prevailing grievances and conflict between Dangote Sugar Refinery (DSR) and local communities in Adamawa state. As a result of this initiative, the Chief Executive Officer of Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, paid a special visit to the region and has committed \$10 million to host communities to improve DSR’s corporate social responsibility through various projects (development of infrastructure, creation of farmers’ investment bank, support to schools and more scholarship opportunities)
- ❖ Throughout the life of the program, Creative facilitated 1,117 events, training, and activities aimed to support peace and reconciliation among key actors in the BAY states.
- ❖ USAID financial assistance reached 55 CSOs, which assistance helped local stakeholders conduct strategic advocacy across program communities. As further detailed in this report, Creative trained 21 nascent organizations and enabled them to implement capstone projects responding to the needs of their communities.
- ❖ With help from local partners, Creative built and strengthened 242 groups using the USG funding dedicated to resolving conflict and its drivers in Northeast Nigeria. Some of these groups have received equipment to sustain results in their communities.
- ❖ USAID funding helped Creative provide technical assistance to 88 trauma healing programs targeting vulnerable social groups such as women, IDPS, and ex-insurgents. Creative also trained community members to continue to provide such support after the NE Connection ends.
- ❖ With help from local partners and funding from USAID, Creative supported 88 trauma healing activities in BAY states. One hundred eighty community members and social workers were trained in Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) and therapeutic counseling to serve as community caregivers (CCG). In partnership with the local governments, community caregivers have set up 12 listening centers across the three states, aired radio programs, widely distributed trauma skits on social media, and developed and produced 180 PFA guides, 180 copies, and distributed them to the CCGs.
- ❖ To amplify women’s contributions to peacebuilding initiatives and processes, Creative supported, trained, and provided engagement opportunities for 3044 local women to participate in substantive roles in the peacebuilding processes across the BAY states. The program perceived this as a great milestone in giving women more space in a male-dominated society, where the cultural, legal, and social norms are restrictively structured to disadvantage women and young girls. In some cases, women-led groups had taken the lead without the involvement of their male counterparts.
- ❖ Eighteen community youth-based groups registered with the Adamawa Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and linked with Government-Based Organizations such as NIRSAL Micro Finance Bank and Industrial Training Fund (ITF).
- ❖ Throughout the two years of the program, Creative, grantees, and women-based groups have organized 180 initiatives where women were either the focus or leading these interventions in communities where social and cultural norms and rules are strict about women's engagement.
- ❖ With financial assistance from the USG, community members across the BAY 16 community actions staved off violent extremist infiltration – seven in Borno, five in Adamawa, and four in Yobe (4) - using knowledge, tactics, and skills they acquired throughout the program. Sixteen cases of the ones were directly reported during the final assessment fieldwork.
- ❖ Creative established the Peace Ambassadors Platform in the Wuro Barka community that engages youth in productive livelihood activities protecting young people against violent extremist groups. The

Peace Ambassadors Platform initiative allows youth to take contracts from various farming activities, and youth are paid afterward, allowing them to have some income for their families.

- ❖ Twenty-eight percent of the woman beneficiaries have taken initiatives and are playing substantive roles in their communities peacebuilding processes. Past women's engagement was limited to assisting as a silent voice rather than taking any speaking and leadership role.
- ❖ Creative established the Peace Ambassadors Platform in the Wuro Barka community that engages youth in productive livelihood activities. The Peace Ambassadors Platform initiative allows youth to take contracts from various farming activities, and youth are paid afterward, allowing them to have some income for their families.
- ❖ The Cohort for Existential Emergency Relief (CEER) established the Community-Based Peace Platform (CBPP) in Yobe to identify, verify, report, and follow up on conflict indicators and violence triggers. The platform members have also supported community development initiatives such as building a skill acquisition center in the Gwange community of Damaturu LGA, where they train young people in tailoring, welding, and barbering.
- ❖ The Centre for Community Development and Research Network (CCDRN) established the Community Advocacy Platform (CAP) in Biu LGA, Borno state, to conduct advocacy to government actors on key community issues and needs, thereby fostering community peace and stability within the LGA. The CAP successfully received support from the LGA Chairman, who contributed N10,000 towards repairing an old transformer that will help communities access stable electricity.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW/SUMMARY

Program Name:	Nigeria NE Connection: Building Community Resilience to Violent Extremism and Conflict in Northeast Nigeria (NE Connection)
Activity Start Date and End Date:	January 3, 2021 – March 2, 2023
Name of Prime Implementing Partner:	Creative Associates International, Inc.
Contract Number:	Indefinite Quantity Contract: AID-OAA-I-13-00005 Task Order: 72062021F00005
Name of Subcontractors/ Sub awardees:	Opinion Research Business (ORB) International
Major Counterpart Organization	N/A
Geographic Coverage	Northeast Nigeria: Adamawa State; Borno State; Yobe State
Reporting Period:	January 3, 2021 – March 2, 2023

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Nigeria Northeast Connection Activity (NE Connection) strengthened community resilience to violent extremist infiltration and conflict in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe (BAY) states in northeast Nigeria, as well as the developed local capacity to respond to emerging threats and vulnerabilities. By targeting communities not yet under the control of violent extremist organizations, NE Connection mitigated grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremism, built social cohesion within and across communities through productive relationships, and responded to emergent risks from extremist groups and conflict. Activities fell under two complementary

components:

- Conflict mitigation, social cohesion, and countering violent extremism (CVE) programming.
- Conflict and violent extremism research, analysis, and coordination

To achieve NE Connection's first objective of enhancing community resilience to violent extremist infiltration and conflicts, Creative facilitated partnerships between diverse local actors and helped improve inter- and intra-community networks to address unresolved grievances, governance weakness, social division, marginalization, environmental shocks while simultaneously developing local capacities to identify and respond to VEOs and conflict risks.

Under NE Connection's second objective, the activity developed local response capacity to emerging threats. Interventions identified and implemented activities at the ward level within each target local government area (LGA). Activities reinforced local ownership by empowering local actors to have greater agency in the decisions affecting their lives. NE Connection planned and coordinated through a series of stakeholders' engagements with local actors at the beginning of each activity to incorporate buy-in, political will, and sustainability approach.

The program worked in 15 LGAs throughout the BAY area. The LGAs were selected based on their accessibility, existing or previous investments, communities' willingness to engage, and those that could help better achieve the program objectives. In addition, populations in these LGAs experience ethnic intolerance, community tensions (e.g., farmer and herder tensions, water resources or land disputes), systemic discrimination, political exclusion, shrinking civic space, limited opportunities for civic participation, economic exclusion of vulnerable groups, and environmental shocks impacting communities' livelihoods. NE Connection targeted eight LGAs in Year 1 and seven LGAs in Year 2.

Throughout the program, Creative developed relationships with new communities and built linkages between civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and platforms to improve social cohesion. Northeast Connection identified and launched a CSO capacity-building program to build indigenous capacity to respond to the threat of violent extremism and conflict. Across the BAY states, Creative has partnered with local NGOs to tackle the extraneous challenges of resilience in part of Nigeria where access is limited or mostly appears as the frontier of foreign assistance. Northeast Nigerian communities remain vulnerable to violent extremist

infiltration. However, the NE Connection has successfully managed to suppress some vulnerabilities points, resolve persistent communal conflicts, prevent violent extremist groups' influence, and build awareness of the instrumentalization of social frictions, which impedes community cohesion and resilience. Creative has built the capacity of local stakeholders, both in the non-government and government sectors, to act and respond to existing and emerging threats to social cohesion. Creative recognizes that skills transfer to community members will only last for a while because of the lack of funds for these networks and newly empowered local stakeholders to counter-prevent social cohesion disruptors and rebuild citizens' trust in the local authorities.

1. OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1. Context

Security context -- NE Connection's subcontractor, Opinion Research Business (ORB), examined data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and noted a decrease in events related to armed conflicts in 2022. In 2021, ACLED identified 544 events in the BAY states, with most events occurring in Borno, then Adamawa and Yobe: marking a 31 percent decrease from 2020 in reported conflict-related events. ORB's review of the latest ACLED data showed that the BAY states experienced 617 conflict events from January 2022 to October 2022. The most common type of conflict event identified by ACLED were armed clashes involving the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Lake Chad Faction, or Boko Haram (Jamaatu Ahli is-Sunnah lid-Dawati Wal-Jihad). Consistent with ACLED's event findings, the Council on Foreign Relations' Nigeria Security tracker recorded 1,594 conflict-related deaths in 2022, fewer than the previous year in the same period, January to November, deaths in the BAY state had totaled 1,779. Out of the various conflicts reported in the media, political conflicts were the most reported, representing 54 percent of the conflicts, followed by religious conflicts (29%) and farmer and herder conflicts (14%).

Throughout the two years of the program, extremist groups have continued to launch attacks against civilians and the Nigerian armed forces, killings and kidnapping of hundreds throughout Northeast Nigeria. For example, more than ninety percent of terrorist attacks in Yobe state have targeted government officials, armed forces positions, and public infrastructure, with few attacks on civilians as leverage for ransoms. In Borno, terrorist groups targeted mostly Christian churches during services. Reports on violent extremist groups highlight Boko Haram as the main actor, followed by ISWAP. Media and locals tend to confuse violent extremist actors operating in the BAY states. Borno State had the most VEO-related reports (78%).

For the two years, gang groups, including the "Shilla" boys, known as semi-organized gangs, that alternate acts of political violence and common criminal activities have significantly increased their operations in Adamawa. In addition to kidnappings and the Shilla boys' common criminal activities, security on some highways used by NE Connection staff had remained unpredictable, particularly on the Biu-Dambo, Maiduguri-Damaturu, and Monguno-Maiduguri routes.

Amid these criminal efforts, Nigerian government forces increased their operations around northeast Nigeria throughout 2022 with repeated airstrikes against Boko Haram. Several organized armed group operatives were confirmed dead by military authorities during the airstrike. Despite continuing military operations, extremist groups operatives are still attacking garrison towns and cities, like Maiduguri, with rocket launchers. Across LGAs, respondents praised civilian-led security forces, primarily hunters and vigilante groups, for improving the security situations in their respective communities. They claim these groups collaborate well with the Nigerian police and other formal security actors.

Conflict context – Farmer-Herder conflicts continued to be the most expressed tensions in most of the BAY states' communities. Violent clashes between farmers and herders (primarily members of the Fulani ethnic group) occur regularly during the harvest season. The conflicts are primarily related to land-right disputes and are not motivated by religious, not ethnic, conflicts. However, farmers' resentment toward Fulani herders is evident across LGA and farmer-herder tensions.

Political context – Two major political events have increased community conflicts and allowed extremist groups to continue terrorizing communities in Northeast Nigeria. In April 2022, Adamawa conducted its local government elections to renew LGA representatives who have not been replaced in a long time while the Borno State government reshuffled its cabinet. In June 2022, political parties across Nigeria conducted party primaries to elect their flag bearers for the 2023 general elections. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar emerged as the flag bearer for the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP). At the same time, as a presidential candidate, Mr. Bola Ahmed Tinubu won the ticket to represent the ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC). The emergence of the two top politicians from the northeast region of Nigeria as presidential and vice-presidential candidates (Atiku Abubakar as the presidential candidate of the opposition PDP and Kashim Shettima from Borno state as the vice-presidential candidate of the ruling APC) of their various parties would make the contest more competitive in the region. Across the country, there have been debates on the need

for the presidency to move to Christian southerners. Atiku's northern candidacy and Tinubu's choice of a Muslim - Muslim ticket (southern Muslim and northern Muslim as vice) have raised debate across the country as religion and ethnicity play a key role in Nigerian politics. With Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party and Alhaji Rabiu Kwankwaso in the mix, the outcome of next year's presidential elections becomes uncertain.

The upcoming February 2023 general elections have already shaded increased instability in the country; we expect that northeast Nigeria will likely become the hotbed for communal violence and violent extremist activities. As noted above, during the gubernatorial elections and primaries, local electoral politicians have instrumentalized their support, mostly young people, to opponents from within the same party or the opposition political parties. Politicians often pay the Ecomog boys in Borno and the Shilla gang members in Adamawa and Gombe States to sabotage and attack opponents during election seasons. Creative established early warning systems have already registered numerous incidents related to the elections. During a recent campaign rally in Maiduguri, the opposition party supporters attacked the People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate and his team on their way to the Maiduguri Airport, leaving several injured.

Natural disasters (flooding) – Several states in Nigeria experienced flooding, including the BAY states. The flooding destroyed houses and farmlands and caused hundreds of deaths throughout the country. Flooding remained a persistent threat for the communities in the northeast region. The Nigeria Metrological Agency (NMA) has significantly warned people to evacuate their places. However, the Agency lacks proper equipment to predict weather patterns that will give advanced notice to communities. In the BAY states, people have been forced to relocate and take shelter in their neighboring communities due to the flooding. Creative had planned to assist these communities; however, some severe challenges had happened months before the program closed, impeding Creative ability to provide needed support to those communities

The Covid-19 pandemic – Creative received the award as it reached its global peak. As of November 2022, 3,579 cases of COVID-19 have been recorded in the BAY states since the pandemic's beginning. While 3,494 cases have recovered, there have been 85 deaths. Although Health experts detected the first case of the Omicron Variant of the COVID-19 virus in Nigeria in December 2021, no cases have been reported in the northeast region. The Nigerian government in December 2022 ordered the relaxation of COVID-19 safety measures and travel advisory, including the suspension of all pre-departure, pred-boarding, and post-arrival polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test

requirements. Also, the compulsory use of face masks in public spaces and restrictions on mass gatherings were optional.

2. TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

2.1. Program Approach

Assessment of the NE Connection Theory of Change – The NE Connection theory of change (TOC) assumes that increasing the local capacity of community members to a) suppress vulnerability points that violent extremist groups use to recruit and influence communities, b) strengthen cohesion within and across communities, and c) mitigate risks to emerging violent extremism and conflict, will increase the resilience of targeted Northeast communities against violent extremist groups infiltration and conflict. Through learning, training, and program adaptation, Creative has organized targeted capacity-building training for community members and civil society organizations. The training equipped individuals, local government agencies, and groups with adequate skills that prepare them now and after to better respond to violent extremist groups' incentives. Through a robust grant mechanism, grantees have scaled up this training to community members. At the core of community vulnerabilities to violent extremist groups or political instrumentalization was extremist groups' ability to exploit internal conflicts and spurious relationships within communities. For example, NE Connection's community vulnerabilities and violent extremist tactics field research discovered that violent extremist groups would exploit existing tensions between internally displaced people (IDP) and host communities to recruit. In some cases, violent extremist groups weaponize resentment among political parties or ethnic groups to spread misinformation and increase extremist views among parties.

The NE Connection program's TOC holds that *“IF local capacity in Northeast Nigeria is enhanced to address vulnerabilities to VEO influence, to strengthen cohesion within and across communities, and to mitigate risks to emergent violent extremism and conflict, THEN targeted Northeast communities will be more resilient to VEO infiltration and conflict.”*

In other places, it was important to rebuild citizens' trust in government institutions so that citizens are not left with the only choice to seek help from parallel structures provided by extremist groups or organized crimes. In the TOC, building social cohesion becomes a prerequisite for increasing resilience. In partnership with NE Connection grantees and local stakeholders, Creative facilitated intra and inter-community dialogues and other collaborative forums among citizens, between citizens and local government actors to improve the quality of vertical and horizontal relationships and enhance multi-stakeholder cooperation. During these dialogue series, not only did participants address grievances, but they also discussed ways violent extremist groups infiltrate their

communities.

One of the unique advantages of the NE Connection activity was the access to a body of evidence from the semi-annual communities vulnerability surveys, quarterly conflict analyses, and political economy analyses findings. Under this component of the TOC, Creative created and facilitated community-led peace platforms, provided technical assistance to early warning mechanisms, funded sociocultural activities and awareness peace campaigns, and community-led actions to identify strategies for ensuring the social inclusion of diverse groups. Creative, for example, established community peacebuilding committees (CPPs) in nearly all 90 communities to bridge the gender, cultural, tribal, and religious divides among community members. These CPPs are composed of diverse citizens of various backgrounds and social statuses, including traditional leaders from farmers and herders, religious leaders, youth and women groups, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and minority ethnic groups who received adequate training to participate and engage in open dialogues.

As we will note below in the guiding principles, NE Connection has thrived in creating opportunities for marginalized groups to safely participate in and lead community change initiatives for the simple reason that those groups were not only the target of violent extremist groups and political instrumentalization but also were the most vulnerable because they were excluded. Our research indicated that when these minorities – women, young people, IDPs, and former insurgent members—are rejected from their communities, they are likely to rejoin these violent extremist groups or organized crime groups within their communities. Empowering them, putting them at the forefront of the program intervention, and having them drive social cohesion initiatives becomes a way to build their sentiment of belonging and rebuild self-confidence.

Assessing critical assumptions of the program – At the outset of the program, Creative put forward some assumptions that conditioned the success of the NE Connection project, including:

#Assumptions 1 & 6 – The Government of Nigeria remains open to NE Connection and its partners’ program goals (1). Civil society partners, government officials, and community members, including marginalized populations, are committed to greater engagement in building community resilience to violent extremism (6). Creative, through consistent advocacy, sorted and sustained the buy-in of key government institutions and actors, civil society groups, marginalized groups, and security actors to develop and implement durable solutions that will mitigate conflicts and enhance social

cohesion across the BAY states. Creative organized activities such as advocacy visits and stakeholders' engagement to create awareness for their participation in project activities. For every activity and intervention that Creative or its partners (grantees) organized, Creative ensured that it had the buy-in of local authorities and stakeholders (traditional, religious, and community leaders) before proceeding with the full intervention.

Seeking the acceptance of local stakeholders was crucial for two reasons:

- a) *Navigating a very politically sensitive environment* – The nature of the conflicts in some of the communities where the project was active in the BAY states required that local authorities and stakeholders accept to support the project and facilitate access to communities for Creative staff and its grantees. There was an underlying fear that the lack of trust and support from key government actors may become a challenge as antagonists of changes may weaponize community members against project staff and grantees. Using the program thinking and working politically (TWP) approach, guided by data from the political economy analyses, community vulnerability surveys, and conflict analyses, the program was able to establish rules of engagement to navigate existing power dynamics within the communities.
- b) *The necessity of localization and ownership* – Building community resilience requires the buy-in of local stakeholders to reinforce the institutionalization of project interventions and ensure communities own and sustain results. The program's final assessment showed that different stakeholders have played and will continue to play significant roles in mitigating violent extremist groups' infiltration. Local stakeholders remained involved in co-creating and designing interventions they thought would better build their resilience against violent extremist threats or other related shocks.

#Assumption 2 – The operating environment remains receptive to peacebuilding and resilience activities. Community members in northeast Nigeria have continuously shown a commitment to engaging in social cohesion activities. While navigating through the complex environment of the Northeast, the program adopted a participatory approach to program design and implementation. This approach gave the communities a sense of ownership, strengthening participation and the intervention's sustainability. Creative, however, encountered some engagement hesitancy in days after floodings. Community members will be more concerned with solving daily needs rather than participating in peacebuilding and resilience activities. During social cohesion activities, communities will request that the project offers financial assistance to more immediate needs as a better way to counter the violent extremist groups' influence. It is with those small basic needs such

as food and shelter, ultimately a sense of belonging for minorities, that violent extremist groups will lure the most vulnerable, including former insurgents and IDPs.

#Assumptions 3 & 4 – The security environment is predictable enough for NE Connection and local partners to operate (3). Jihadist groups' activities in neighboring states do not significantly affect Connection programming (4). In fact, during the two years of the program implementation, conflicts in neighboring communities have triggered tension and paved the way for violence in NE Connection communities. Some have disrupted peacebuilding programs and hampered social cohesion. As noted in the context section, the environment remained unpredictable through program implementation. Recurrent confrontations between the government forces and violent jihadist groups made it difficult for the program staff, stakeholders, and beneficiaries to participate in program activities consistently. In places around Biu, Kwayar Kusar, and parts of Shani LGAs, accessing roads and entering communities were not predictable because of recurrent terrorist attacks. Creative prioritized communities and the point of entry was reliable and mostly predictable.

#Assumption 5 – Connection partners/CSOs, government officials, and community members can safely adapt programming to the restrictions and health risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of the pandemic, Creative, like other development partners, government institutions, and private businesses, resorted to operationalizing contingency business plans requiring staff to work remotely and reducing in-person activities to minimize physical interactions with beneficiaries. Creative followed government restrictions imposing lockdowns and restrictions on movements and the suspension of all in-person activities. However, as the government relaxed restrictions, communities received support in the form of personal protective equipment, handwashing facilities, cash, and other material assistance from the federal and state governments. These materials complemented efforts that communities developed to strengthen resilience. One such action was the periodic advocacy visits of NE Connection and its partner teams to community members while exercising social distancing. Creative adapted its programming following state and federal government restrictions. For instance, NE Connection and its grantees facilitated team meetings and in-house capacity-building training virtually via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet. This transition was consequently accompanied by teleworking for all team members to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus while engaging in relevant assignments to continue program implementation. While these measures succeeded, Creative notes that the pandemic has negatively impacted some program deliverables, which delays were reflected in the USAID contractor performance assessment report (CPAR).

Geographical selection – Creative implemented the NE Connection program in 15 local government areas (LGAs), 30 wards, and 90 communities across Borno (Kwaya Kusar, Hawul, Shani, Maiduguri, Jere, and Biu); Adamawa (Guyuk, Demsa, Numan, Lamurde, Mubi South, and Mubi North); and Yobe states (Potiskum, Damaturu, and Fune). Although Creative originally proposed Gujba LGA in Yobe State as one of the Year 2 LGAs because it met the selection criteria listed, the security situation in the LGA deteriorated drastically, affecting accessibility and operationalization. The program focused its interventions on target communities, wards, and LGAs based on the following criteria:

- Areas not yet under the threat of violent extremist groups are accessible, have a stable security situation, and demonstrate communities’ willingness to engage.
- Communities that do not have open conflict and have benefited from programming with pre-existing relationships and linkages to enable rapid activity start-up.
- Communities neighboring likely sources of conflict around ethnic intolerance and community tensions (e.g., farmer and herder tensions, water resources, or land disputes);
- communities with perceptions of political exclusion and shrinking civic space with limited opportunities for civic participation.
- Systemic discrimination, economic exclusion of vulnerable groups, including youth and women, and environmental shocks impact livelihoods and quality of life.

Operational principles – Creative implemented the NE Connection with two operational guiding principles: political and conflict sensitivity.

Political sensitivity – Continuous changing political dynamics in the country – either because new leaders ascended to power through elections, existing challenging relationships among community members due to social and cultural differences, or the constant influence of violent extremist groups– have impacted the NE Connection program implementation. NE Connection's political economy analysis and constant stakeholder engagement provided opportunities to understand the power plays better, adjust our approach, and enable an inclusive and sensitive environment to groups’ expectations. As the program moved into engaging community members, there was a need to trade carefully in managing these complex dynamics. As we noted in assumptions 1 and 6, Creative diligently consulted stakeholders, including religious leaders and local authorities at the state and LGA levels, to get their support. For example, Creative had to cancel *Activity 1.1.A.3.c*, which was supposed to support a consultative dialogue between host communities and stakeholders

to promote a private-public partnership with Haske Milling Company. Local authorities in Borno directed partners to stay away from engagement in any activity that targets the rehabilitation or reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members in the state. Although there was a need to assist the former insurgents, Creative chose what was best for the host community.

#Conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm - Ensuring that programming is conflict-sensitive and embraces a “do no harm” approach is a cornerstone of Creative corporate strategy; in previous conflict and political-economic analyses, Creative identified host community resentment towards IDPs and ex-insurgents to be a conflict trigger. In some cases, host communities perceived that local governments or humanitarian aid actors use community resources and international aid to service IDPs’ needs at the expense of host communities. To ensure that all citizen engagement and assistance are safe and do not exacerbate existing tensions or conflict, Creative mainstreamed a conflict sensitivity approach throughout the activities where assistance is provided to IDPs, such as in Yola North and Mubi North (*Activity 1.1.C.2 and Activity 2.1.B.1*).

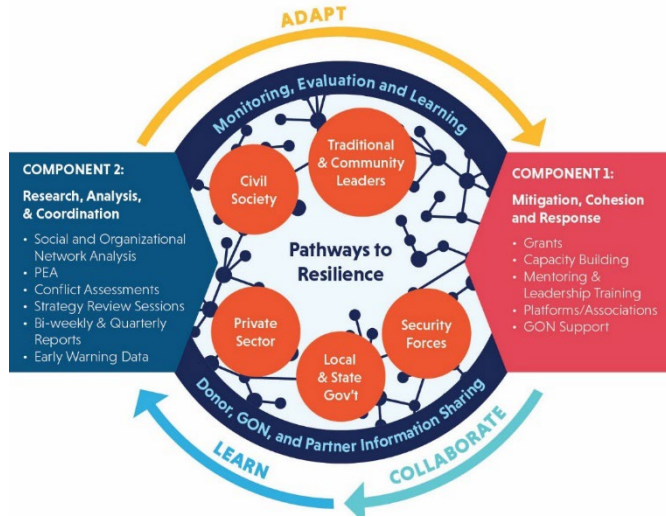
Creative continuously monitored resentments dynamics through its Monitoring and Evaluation plan and subsequent research to ensure context and intervention adaptability. Throughout the program, the interactions between the NE Connection program and the context of implementation were critical to maximizing positive outcomes and minimizing negative outcomes. The program ensured that it designed various activities and adapted the program to address diverse trends, behaviors, and actions emerging in the program environment. In addition, Creative required that NE Connection staff participate in conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm training led by Mercy Corps under a USAID-funded program in October 2021. The conflict-sensitive method went beyond the “do no harm” principle by putting together safeguards to mitigate risks and spoilers by using convening voices such as religious leaders and traditional leaders to ensure those host communities are prepared to tolerate and welcome new members joining their communities.

2.2. Program implementation

2.2.1. Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approach to program implementation

Every quarter, Creative puts a lot of emphasis on evaluating the program's impacts on the communities to adapt when necessary, hear communities' perceptions of the impact of the intervention on their lives, and, if necessary, with USAID approval, course-corrects the program intervention.

Creative implemented a deliberate and systematic CLA process by generating reliable data on program impact and regularly engaging various national, state, and LGA stakeholders to assess and interpret the intervention's results and effectiveness. The MEL team organized various CLA



activities with stakeholders on the relevance and appropriateness of interventions in achieving desired outputs and outcomes.

Quarterly monitoring missions: Creative conducted quarterly monitoring missions throughout the project's lifespan. The mission assessed grant activities' achievements, challenges, and progress toward achieving objectives. It assessed the quality of grantees' data, harvested

outcomes from grantees, conducted review sessions with grantees, and made recommendations for effective and outcome-focused grant interventions.

Data quality assurance – Creative conducted a quarterly Data Quality Assurance (DQA). The assessments utilized the USAID DQA framework and checklist with all the program grantees' monitoring and evaluation focal points. The sessions included an assessment of the existing infrastructure for documenting hard and soft copies of the data collected, the appropriateness of the methodologies, and the consistency and reliability of the data collected. It also included a utility check to identify the degree to which learning from the collected data is incorporated into the activities' planning and deployment.

Performance indicators – Some output-level indicators had a performance or outcome-level indicator that measured whether the activity was relevant. For example, if the program conducted an activity to train young people and help to measure an output indicator, the program had a corresponding indicator in the performance level tracking the impact of the activity. Using that model, Creative could identify whether a specific intervention is successful, or if not, then quickly change and adapt. Please see Table 1 for corresponding illustrative indicators.

Table 1 for corresponding illustrative indicators	
Outputs Indicators	Outcome Indicators
11.2.4: # of local women participating in a substantive role or position in a peacebuilding process supported with USG assistance (GNDR-10)	2.2.2: % of the targeted population that perceive women and women's organizations as having an important voice in responding to VE threats

1.1.6: # of youth groups engaged in civic activities to promote peace receiving USG assistance	2.2.3: % of the targeted population that perceives youth and youth organizations as having an important voice in responding to VE threats
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Quarterly assessments – Assessments throughout the project significantly contributed to the program's agility and adaptability.

- ❖ *Political economy analysis* – NE Connection conducted six rounds of Political Economy Analysis (PEA), examining a range of issues around youth's involvement in democratic governance, understanding community resilience to violent extremist infiltration, assessing conflict between communities and the Savannah/Dangote Sugar Company in Lamurde LGA of Adamawa. In the final year, the Political Economy Analysis focused on understanding the migrant Fulani herder's perspective on violent conflict with farmers in Demsa, Numan, and Lamurde LGAs in Adamawa and Fune LGA in Yobe State. Findings from all the analyses were adapted into program implementation and helped Creative to respond to power dynamics pressures quickly.
- ❖ *Conflict analysis* – ORB conducted quarterly conflict analyses in the BAY states. These analyses provided a timely and broader understanding of the conflict actors, dynamics, and drivers (structural causes and conflict triggers) as they emerge. With USAID's approval, the research assessed, for example, communities' attitudes towards the reintegration of former Boko Haram combatants and other non-state armed groups associated with host communities; women's inclusion in peacebuilding activities; local communities' perceptions of Shila Boys – a name for several notorious criminal gangs in Adamawa state– and Fulani ethnic group perceptions in the farmer and herder conflicts. Understanding these issues became integral to the intervention because the program needed to adjust and integrate various perceptions to remain inclusive and sensitive to local dynamics.

2.2.2. Objectives evaluation

Objective 1: Resilience of communities vulnerable to violent extremist infiltration and conflict enhanced – Under this objective, NE Connection has facilitated partnerships among diverse local actors, enhancing inter and intra-community networks to address unresolved grievances, governance weaknesses, social divisions, marginalization, and environmental shocks. Creative has also developed local capacities to identify and respond to emerging threats. To do this, Creative awarded grants through an annual program statement (APS) or request for applications (RFA). In some

places, Creative directly implemented activities in partnership with local partners. Through this objective, the NE Connection program sought to prevent communities vulnerable to violent extremism by improving resilience. Across the BAY states, Creative has designed and implemented several activity streams to (1) address the underlying grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremist influence and conflict risks; (2) address trust deficits and isolation by creating linkages across and within communities, civil society, and government entities to promote social cohesion; (3) empower communities, civil society, and government leaders to respond to emergent VEO threats and conflict risks. Creative was tracking ten indicators under this objective that focused on enhancing social cohesion and bringing communities together to suppress vulnerability points that violent extremists may exploit. Creative established structures that will help communities mitigate conflicts in the Northeast region, assuring that people live in a secure and cohesive environment, which will subsequently help focus on other needs related to economic development.

Indicators 1.1.1 & 1.2.1: # of USG-supported events, training, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation among key actors in the conflict (PS.6.2-3). #of people participating in supported events, training, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation among key actors in the conflict (PS.6.2-4): Creative facilitated trainings, events, and workshops to build support for peace and reconciliation among key actors in conflict across the target communities in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States. At inception, the program targeted 120. Still, the analysis of updated activities data on Creative’s database revealed that Creative and partners/grantees organized a total of 1,117 events, training, workshops, and other activities to build support for peace and reconciliation among key actors across the three states (Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe) with 30,211 in attendance (19,392 men and 10,819 women). The significant achievement is linked to designing and redesigning activities that align with conflict context and dynamics changes through direct implementation and grant mechanisms for adaptive management.

Type of activities	Adamawa	Borno	Yobe	Total
Advocacy Visits	136	47	84	267
Community Mapping	24	2	5	31
Cultural & Recreational Activities	29	37	34	100
Dialogues	81	81	74	236
Other	62	32	14	108
Radio Program	29	33	13	75
Townhall Meetings	61	11	7	79
Training	83	71	41	195
Workshops	15	6	5	26
Grand Total	520	320	277	1117

Indicator 1.1.2: # of civil society organizations receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions (DR.4.2-2): A key cross-cutting component of NE Connection was building the capacity of local CSOs to provide a bulwark against the influence of violent extremist groups and improving local community resilience. From the program's inception to the end, 55 CSOs received USG assistance and conducted strategic advocacies and implementation across program communities. The support includes building institutional capacity for effective management and activity implementation, improving operational systems (develop policies, rules, regulations, etc.), financial management, proposal development, and enabling local cross-peer network opportunities for learning.

Networking opportunities -- This activity leveraged findings from the Social Network Analysis (SNA) that ORB conducted between August 2021 and April 2022. The SNA identified collaboration, partnership, and coordination gaps among CSOs working on early warning, early response, and social cohesion initiatives across BAY states. Among the key action points developed are the need to establish a physical meeting platform for effective collaboration, conduct advocacy among relevant stakeholders, strengthen existing platforms for sustaining engagement and collaboration, establish a network of working groups on social cohesion and countering and preventing violent extremism, and create a platform (e.g., a WhatsApp group) for CSOs working on response activities for coordination and information sharing. Staff from 30 organizations and representatives of the USAID mission in Nigeria attended this event.

As a result, in FY22 Q4, the group formed a WhatsApp platform for easy information gathering and sharing among network members. The members have continued to engage with each other by layering on each other's interventions and collaborating to apply for grants. They have also been sharing their learning from the different interventions they implement and attending activities implemented by other member organizations to support and identify opportunities for collaboration. The NE Connection team has also leveraged the network to mobilize attendance for virtual activities, such as the VEO tactic learning sessions. Last quarter, the Northeast Youth Initiative for Development (NEYIF) led the effort that sought and got a one million dollar grant to accelerate community response activities. NEYIF picked other network members participating in the CSOs' Networking activities and bidders' conferences.

Capacity building umbrella – The Umbrella has two components: technical assistance to 39 grantees through co-creation and continuous capacity improvement for better program delivery and a phased approach to providing capacity strengthening to 21 nascent organizations. For two years,

Creative has engaged and trained local actors to ensure they have the necessary skills to face the adversities and influence of extremist groups in northeast Nigeria. Robust civil society organizations would help curb the influence of violent extremists when they possess the required knowledge, resources, and capacity to build community resilience and cohesion.

- ❖ Creative faced challenges working with local partners who needed more technical assistance. To support its partners, mostly grantees, Creative conducted co-creation activities covering Year 1 and Year 2 grantees. The co-creation process provided for both Northeast Connection and the potential implementing partners to identify key areas of weakness and areas that need further work to align the technical proposal and the context of the location in which the proposal intends to provide. Co-creation moments also served as information, knowledge sharing, and inquiry to align the grantee's thoughts with the donor implementation processes. Throughout the BAY states, NE Connection staff trained and worked closely with the grantees to finalize their technical and cost proposals to ensure they were responding to the RFA objectives.

- ❖ Creative has supported 21 nascent CSOs to improve their operational systems, fiscal management, proposal development, and activity management and reporting in partnership with three anchor organization – Partners West Africa in Nigeria (PWAN) in Yobe, Peace Ambassadors Centre for Humanitarian Aid and Empowerment (PACHE) in Borno, and American University of Nigeria (AUN) in Adamawa. The capacity-building activity was implemented in three phases. Before Phase 1 began, Creative identified and awarded grants to three “anchor organizations” to lead the capacity strengthening in each state. The anchor led the selection of the cohort of nascent organizations to participate in the capacity-building activity. In phase one, anchor organizations facilitated participatory self-assessments using USAID’s Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCAs), followed by tailored capacity building. CSOs received one-on-one support from anchor organizations to implement key elements of their capacity-building action plan that, included:
 - Improving organizational development, including operational systems and financial management.
 - Improving grant proposal development knowledge and abilities.
 - Improving technical capacity and activity development.

- ❖ In phase 3, anchor organizations continued to provide intensive mentoring and coaching. During this phase, anchor organizations worked to provide intensive and dedicated coaching and mentoring to support concept and rant proposal development, project management and implementation, project performance monitoring, and reporting.

- ❖ *Capstone projects* – To help CSOs showcase what they learn throughout the capacity-building curriculum, Creative provided financial assistance to the 21 local organizations to implement a one to two-day activity tackling an issue in their community. Each organization had to present a proposal package that included a technical proposal, a work plan, a budget, and monitoring and evaluation to show they had gained knowledge from the training. The capstone activities covered a range of interventions, including women's socio-economic inclusion, building skills against violent extremist tactics, promoting inter and intra-community dialogue for social cohesion, and building a better understanding of the impact of climate change on community vulnerabilities vis-a-vis extremist groups' infiltration. Please see Table 3 for details on the capstone activities in each state.

Table 3: Capstone activities per CSOS

Organization	Project title	State	Location	# Days	#Participants
Against All Odds Foundation (AGAOF)	Positioning women and girls to decrease their vulnerability and resist violent extremist organization's influence	Adamawa	Lamurde, Lafiya & Gyawana	2	120 (41 men, 79 women)
Big Family 360 Foundation	Countering violent extremism through skills and leadership roles among youth groups in Numan	Adamawa	Numan	1	20 (12 men, 8 women)
Danuwa foundation (df)	Creating Community Dialogue Forum for Building and Sustaining Peace in Guyuk Local Government	Adamawa	Guyuk & Boshikiri	2	81 (40 men, 41 women)
Desired Peace Households Improvement Initiative (dphii)	Enhancing women groups skills to prevent Violence Extremist Organizations influence in the Boshikiri community of Guyuk Local Government Area (LGA).	Adamawa	Guyuk, Dumna district, & Boshikiri	2	39 (9 men, 30 women)
Mercy Initiative for Rural and Social Development	Socio-cultural displays for Peaceful Coexistence	Adamawa	Yola South, Wauro-Jabbe Community	2	150 (92 men, 58 women)
Michika Youth Integrity Initiative (MYII)	Countering extremism in politics using a community sensitization approach among political, youth, and religious groups in Michika LGA, Adamawa State	Adamawa	Michika LGA, Michika 1 ward, Sabon layi lughu	2	80 (56 men, 24 women)
Nkafamiya Rescue Mission	Empowering women and youth groups by providing basic CVE	Adamawa	Guyuk LGA	2	69 (40 men, 29 women)

	and leadership training to resist VEO influence.				
TODAY FOR TOMORROW FOUNDATION	Strengthening the skills and knowledge of women in conflict mitigation and building Resilience in Numan LGA.	Adamawa	Numan		69 (10 men, 59 women)
Rise to Inspire Africa Initiative	One day town hall meeting on “the role of youths and women in achieving violence-free election in 2023.”	Borno	Jere and Maiduguri	1	60 (38 men, 22 women)
Ambassadors of Dialogue, Climate, and Reintegration (DCR Ambassadors)	Promoting a Culture of non-violent elections among youths in Bolori I of Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Borno State.	Borno	Maiduguri	3	90 (47 men, 43 women)
Concern on Climate Change for The Community Initiative (FOURCi)	Understanding the nexus between Climate change, Natural Resource Management, Conflict, and Violent Extremism.	Borno	Maiduguri and Jere	1	54 (26 men, 28 women)
Concern for Women and Children Development Foundation (COWACDI)	Initiatives to Enhance Peace Building and Community Resilience Against Violence Extremism Infiltration in Borno State	Borno	Maiduguri	One week	50 (25 men, 25 women)
Future Resilience and Development Foundation (FRAD)	Social media initiatives to counter violent extremism in the preparedness of the 2023 election.	Borno	Maiduguri	3	40 (26 men, 14 women)
Hope and Awareness Foundation (HAAF)	Town hall meetings and peacebuilding training for stakeholders and vulnerable People	Borno	Mafa LGA	2	60 (39 men, 21 women)
Kumbal Support Initiative	Violence-free election sensitization and awareness	Borno	Maiduguri	3	51 (22 men, 29 women)
Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation Support Initiative (SPARSI)	Bridge Building for Inter-religious Coexistence to Counter Violent Extremism	Borno	Maiduguri	2	50 (33 men, 17 women)
Al Iman Empowerment and Development Centre	Yobe senior secondary school peace coalition to promote a violence-free school environment, create a generation of youth vanguards for peacebuilding in the community, and prevent drug abuse and related social vices among youths.	Yobe	Damaturu	2	140 (81 men, 59 women)
Almagda Community Development Initiative	Campaign on peaceful co-existence between host communities and IDPs in Two Communities.	Yobe	Fune	2	108 (53 men, 55 women)
JohnBally	Community sensitization and Stakeholder workshop for promoting a peaceful and credible 2023 General Election.	Yobe	Damaturu Central	2	45 (35 men, 10 women)
Taimako	Increased leadership roles of Keke NAPEP Riders and Taxi Drivers in promoting peace and	Yobe	Damaturu	2	120 (108 men, 12)

	security in Damaturu LGA of Yobe State.				
Trauma Healing	Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment through skill Acquisition	Yobe	Fune	2	25 (0 men, 25 women)

#Indicator 1.1.3: # of new groups or initiatives created through USG funding dedicated to resolving the conflict or the drivers of the conflict: This indicator tracks the number of new groups or entities, the launch of new initiatives to resolve conflict, and the drivers of conflict within the 15 LGAs. During the two years, Creative established 242 new community groups, platforms, and initiatives: 174 in Adamawa state, 39 in Borno, and 29 in Yobe state (see **Annex XXX**). These groups include 23 associations, mostly women, 49 campaigns, 58 conflict monitors, 15 networks, and 97 peace platforms. The groups received capacity building under NE Connection's flagship capacity-building curriculum. Creative assisted some groups in becoming institutionalized and registered. Some of those groups have created strategic plans. They plan to engage with the local government to get funding to help communities settle grievances and collectively work together to find a common purpose. After USAID approval of the path to sustainability, Creative provided logistic equipment to some groups to continue providing peacebuilding efforts in their communities. Some of these groups have already started working to assist their communities. For example,

- ❖ The Cohort for Existential Emergency Relief (CEER) established the Community-Based Peace Platform (CBPP) in Yobe to identify, verify, report, and follow up on conflict indicators and violence triggers. The platform members have also supported community development initiatives such as building a skill acquisition center in the Gwange community of Damaturu LGA, where they train young people in tailoring, welding, and barbering.
- ❖ The Centre for Community Development and Research Network (CCDRN) established the Community Advocacy Platform (CAP) in Biu LGA, Borno state, to conduct advocacy to government actors on key community issues and needs, thereby fostering community peace and stability within the LGA. The CAP successfully received support from the LGA Chairman, who contributed N10,000 towards repairing an old transformer that will help communities access stable electricity.
- ❖ Center for Public Education and Mobilization for Development in Nigeria (CEPAD) established a twelve-member committee, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), in 30 communities across four LGAs in Adamawa state (Mubi North, Numan, Lamurde, and Guyuk). The CACs have significantly interfaced with communities and the government for safety and cohesion.

- In Guyuk, CAC is now the highest decision-making body in the office of the Paramount ruler and LGA authority in Guyuk across five communities
- In the Kodomon community in Demsa LGA, the CAC advocacy led the local state representative to pressure the power company to repair electricity after more than one year of total blackout and neglect by the authorities.
- In Dirbishi (Gongola and Tumda), the CAC members mobilized community members to form and register the first-ever Farmers union in the ward.

Illustrative activities

In Year 1 and Year 2, NE Connection awarded grants to three local organizations to implement activities to promote community peacebuilding, civic engagement, and participation in the BAY states. Under this activity stream, the program has recorded the following achievements by grantees:

Centre for Social Cohesion Peace and Empowerment (CENSCOPE) – Throughout the program, CENSCOPE has established Community Peacebuilding Platforms (CPPs) to support peacebuilding activities in six LGAs (Mubi North, Mubi South, Demsa, Guyuk, Lamurde, and Numan) and 33 local communities in Adamawa. CENSCOPE’s assistance consisted of providing CPPs with skills



Cross section of participants at the community mapping assessment workshop

that will lay the foundations that foster social cohesion. Throughout the program, CENSCOPE helped communities identify underlying causes of social rifts, which in most cases, were identity-based discontentment or scarcity of resources rather than specific extremist issues. To guarantee efficacy, inclusion, local ownership, sustainability, and inclusiveness, CENSCOPE ensured that CPPs included representatives from different groups:

traditional leaders from both farmers and herders, religious leaders, youth and women representatives, persons living with disabilities (PWD), and minority ethnic groups. CENSCOPE trained CPP members to address trust deficits (intergenerational and political issues affecting their communities), isolation, and underlying grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremist influence. With USAID financial assistance, CENSCOPE also provided training to CPP members to develop their skills in conflict management and enhance their ability to identify conflict triggers and spoilers.

Across the 33 communities in Adamawa, the CPPs organized peace dialogues, joint community development activities, and sociocultural and sports events to promote cohesion, common ground, and understanding among community members. The CPP joint initiative in these communities improved social, economic, and community interactions among different clans and ethnic groups to foster peaceful co-existence. For example, in Moro 1 (Adamawa), the community market had been abandoned because of the tensions between the Hausa/Fulani and the host community, who banned other groups from trading. During a subsequent monitoring and evaluation visit, the Nigeria Northeast Connection team noticed that over 100 people were trading in the formerly vacant market space. However, the CPPs have initiated inter-community dialogues to ensure all community members can access the marketplace. Together, they organized a collective market cleaning activity to restore the usual trading activities.

Centre for Advocacy, Transparency, and Accountability Initiative (CATAI) – In Year 1, CATAI deployed to Biu and Jere in Borno to promote civic participation in community peacebuilding activities. Through its engagement, CATAI enhanced the resilience of communities by facilitating community-based dialogues where participants identify key challenges and solutions to building social cohesion and mitigating grievances that make communities vulnerable to violent extremist infiltration. In Biu and Jere, CATAI trained 97 stakeholders on community dialogue processes in countering violent extremist infiltration. In Biu, community members trained in dialogue successfully intervened in a long-time conflict between farmers and herders in the Kingal community. The process helped parties to draw lines for cattle routes and land for farming between the farmers and herders. This effort resulted in peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in the community. Among the beneficiaries, CATAI trained community vigilante groups to combat theft and other social vices in the communities; this has also resulted in reduced cases of theft in the community, with the set-up groups arresting criminals and handing them over to the police. CATAI also identified and recruited thirty people to participate in tailoring, carpentry, and food processing training. They had access to soft loans and grants after the training to engage in income-generating activity to strengthen their resilience against extremist groups' incentives.

The Cohort for Existential Emergency Relief (CEER) – In Yobe, CEER's intervention primarily created community peacebuilding platforms in three communities in Potiskum LGA to understand the dynamics and context of local conflicts as well as be able to identify and facilitate amicable resolutions of intra-community tensions, violence, and mistrust. Because of this intervention, a long-term antagonism that existed between Lai-Lai and Goruba-Uku communities was finally resolved.

The Lai-Lai community believes that the Goruba-uku community had continually diverted government projects to their community, thus feeling marginalized. CEER created a peacebuilding platform that led the efforts to help the two communities understand the government's rationale when choosing locations for new project sites. The platform involvement has further led to improved inter-communal relations between both communities. Beyond the dialogues, community leaders across both communities now participate in cross-cultural activities, making the right path to peace for younger people in these communities.

Indicators 1.1.4 and 1.1.5: # of trauma healing programs aimed to support vulnerable community members and # of people who receive trauma awareness and psychosocial support services: Creative helped raise awareness around trauma and provided basic psychosocial first aid services through community-based peer-to-peer support groups in Borno and Yobe. The program partnered with local stakeholders and grantees to educate the beneficiaries on trauma and its harmful effects through outreach and trauma-focused activities. The training will also enable victims to recognize the effects of trauma and understand how to address them, with support from family, community members, and trauma listening centers. Creative efforts for resilience require that people affected by conflicts or social and cultural constraints receive the support they need to participate in peacebuilding efforts. The interventions under this indicator had focused on creating new and supporting existing trauma healing programs and equipping communities with functional, community-driven psychosocial infrastructure and support systems that now provide basic psychosocial first aid services. With help from local partners and funding from USAID, Creative supported 88 trauma healing activities in BAY states. Grantees trained One hundred eighty community members and social workers in Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) and therapeutic counseling to serve as community caregivers (CCG). In partnership with the local governments and partners, Creative has set up 12 listening centers across the three states, aired radio programs, widely distributed trauma skits on social media, and developed and produced 180 PFA guides and distributed them to the CCGs. Local partners have also published and circulated referrals to ensure that community members requiring referrals to care for traumatic stress can be rightly matched with their point of care, starting from first aid to tertiary health support. CCGs have also conducted several community sensitization and awareness campaigns as part of their action plans. By providing psychosocial support to Northeast communities, Creative understood that there is a need to continue community awareness of trauma and psychological help. Assessments have shown that people affected by conflicts and violent extremist influence are often reluctant to seek mental health support. To respond to these needs, Creative partnered with *Safer World Foundation* and

Carefronting Nigeria to provide trauma awareness and psychosocial support services to 7,681 community members (720 in Yobe, 1,513 in Borno, and 1,112 in Adamawa). This intervention has received much-unexpected more support from the communities than Creative anticipated.

Illustrative interventions

In Yobe, Creative created safe listening centers for victims of insurgency and vulnerable young people who have experienced trauma directly or indirectly associated with violent extremist groups or other conflicts within the communities. Hope Interactive trained 80 community members (37 females and 43 males) in understanding trauma and using creative methods of storytelling as an approach to support healing in the communities. These 80 trained “lay Counsellors” or “caregivers” are now providing trauma victims within their communities with basic Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and healing, making referrals where necessary to the appropriate health facility for care.

Safer World Fondation (SWF) and *Carefronting Nigeria* have implemented activities in Borno and Adamawa to support trauma victims and help them heal. SWF provided psychosocial first aid (PFA) training to 12 Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development workers in Maiduguri. Through counseling and healing techniques, the social workers were able to support over 500 victims of violent extremism who experienced post-traumatic shocks. *Carefronting Nigeria* has also established 12 trauma listening centers across 12 communities in Borno. Trauma listening centers serve as safe spaces where community members can freely share their concerns and receive PFA services and therapeutic counseling or be referred to more specialized centers depending on the severity of their case. One hundred seventy-two caregivers were trained in trauma active listening techniques, the roles of a counselor, and various healing practices to better engage with victims. Twenty-six radio programs on trauma were produced and aired in Kanuri and Hausa. The radio program aired 13 episodes to sensitize listeners to PFA counseling and trauma healing services, reaching 500,000 listeners. Short skits on trauma and mental health were also produced and disseminated on social media. In Adamawa, SWF has also established 12 listening centers and trained 180 caregivers in 12 communities of Mubi South and Mubi North LGAs. Since the creation of the listening centers, caregivers reported serving, on average, 120 beneficiaries.

"A lot has improved in our community. First, the level of peace, tolerance, and understanding has improved as 15 of us have earned huge respect from our community members. In addition, I was at work when I got a call from the Yaja community (under Digil ward). I was told that someone had collapsed, and they heard I was a trained caregiver. I took excuses from work and immediately rushed down to the community; I used the referral pathway document that was distributed to us and referred the person to the hospital in Mubi. Upon arrival, we conducted some tests, showing that

the person was hypertensive. The doctors at the facility thanked me for what I did and said that my intervention was timely; otherwise, we might have lost the patient.

Indicator 1.1.6: # of youth groups engaged in civic activities to promote peace receiving USG

assistance: Building resilience included ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups such as youth and women are amplified in the social cohesion initiatives. As Creative was tracking this indicator, it became clear through various assessments that young people and women were the most vulnerable to violent extremist infiltration, either because of a lack of economic opportunities in their communities or the intrinsic need to join violent extremist groups for self-protection and the desire to belong. While engaging them in peacebuilding activities did not provide a long-term solution to the underlying causes affecting their behaviors, exposing them to methods that fostered social cohesion provided a least a platform for young people to feel valued in their communities. Creative tracked the number of youth groups that identified with a party or parties to the conflict and organized or attended events or activities, both public and private, to promote peace in Northeast communities. Wards and communities within Fune and Potiskum LGAs have large numbers of marginalized idle youth; therefore, Creative engaged youth in community clean-up activities and peace dialogues in these LGAs. Activities included cash-for-work community clean-up exercises to promote positive roles for youth and incorporate peaceful dialogues between youth and community leaders to build productive relationships. About 120 youth groups were involved and led initiatives to promote peace across the BAY states. The final evaluation revealed that most of these young people have stepped down their learning to members of their groups and replicated initiatives within their communities. These young people continue to play active roles in detecting and mitigating conflicts in their communities. Young people who were not members of any of these groups before the intervention became interested in joining these initiatives. In addition to 120 groups actively involved in social cohesion, 18 community youth-based groups were registered with the Adamawa Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and linked with Government-Based Organizations such as the Micro Finance Bank and Industrial Training Fund (ITF).

Illustrative activities under 1.1.6

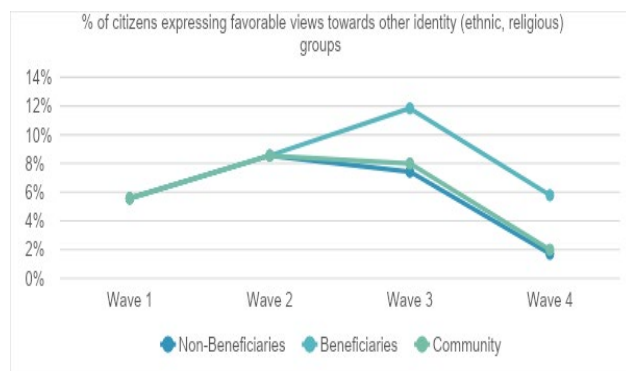
Targeting youth in inter-community exchanges, leadership roles, and advocacy efforts to address their sense of marginalization and promote positive roles for them in the community:

- ❖ To address the vulnerabilities and challenges that youth face in Borno, Creative partnered with the Centre for *Advocacy, Transparency, and Accountability Initiative (CATAI)* to help strengthen youth participation in civic and peacebuilding spaces through knowledge acquisition and community development. CATAI enhanced the capacity of youth in conflict

prevention, advocacy, and accountability and facilitated youth participation in civic and violence prevention initiatives in southern Borno. CATAI trained 90 youth on conflict management strategies, election violence prevention, and civic engagement, with close to 360 participating in multi-stakeholder dialogues and sensitization campaigns on civic engagement.

- ❖ *Cash for work:* Creative organized a community clean-up with 130 youth to clean spaces for public use: car parks, abattoirs, refuse dumps, dirty streets, drainage systems, and dirty public areas for 2 hours daily. During the ten-day cleaning mobilization, the 130 participants received a daily stipend of N4000 to improve their economic status.

Indicator 1.2.2: % of citizens expressing favorable views towards other identities: At the center



of community resilience building, Creative ensured that communities trusted each other. Through violent extremist tactics, it becomes clear that jihadist groups exploit the lack of trust among community members to divide communities and successfully recruit and influence communities' behaviors. Trust building

was a prerequisite to enhance social cohesion and create a sense of common purpose. As communities started trusting each other, they could work together to solve common problems or engage in open and transparent conversations to find ways to solve their differences. The program's final assessment indicated that NE Connection interventions have improved groups' perceptions of other ethnic and religious backgrounds. For example, when asking individuals about trust in other religious identities, Creative recorded an increase of 35 percent of beneficiaries saying that most people of other religions can be trusted, compared to 14% of non-beneficiaries. For expressing trust for other ethnic groups, the beneficiaries of project activities scored 38%, while the non-beneficiaries scored 13%. The margin of change between these two groups reveals an attributive impact of the project on communities' perceptions. At the same time, this increase is seen across all communities. Specific project components were particularly targeted at building social cohesion. Through these activities, beneficiaries have attested to learning new ways of promoting peaceful coexistence and supporting intra- and inter-group cohesion efforts. Sports, dance, drama, food exhibitions, and community cleaning events, implemented by grantees, have created platforms for

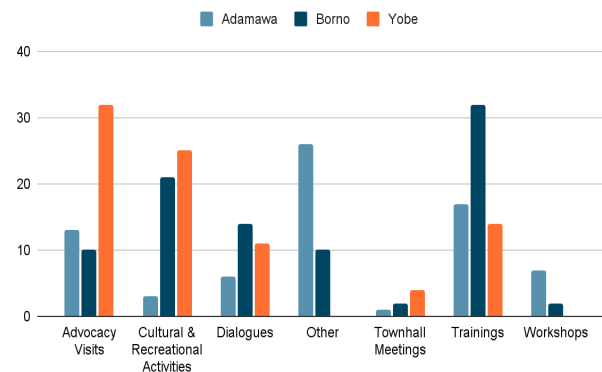
cross-cultural exchanges among community members, resulting in improved perceptions of people from other ethnic groups and religions. As a Creative's beneficiary note:

"I am deeply overwhelmed seeing people from different ethnic groups, religions, ethnicity, and communities coming together. This has created a good relationship, especially with the rival community. I hope and pray that we will continue from here by marking an annual cultural day exhibition which will be celebrated by all" - Ya'u Dauda (Community Leader – Fune LGA, Yobe state).

Indicator 1.2.3: % of people in target population reporting strong social ties with diverse groups:

like indicator 1.2.2, this indicator allows tracking the percentage of community members reporting strong social ties with diverse groups across demographic lines of religion and ethnicity. It is measured by cross-tabulating the frequency of interactions between community members of other groups. It includes the frequency with whom someone has friendly conversations, does business, and attends social events hosted by other groups. NE Connection has maintained consistent group interaction through various activities. Notably, the project's contribution is seen in the difference recorded between the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Non-beneficiaries recorded a decline of 1% in their level of interactions with diverse groups from a baseline score of 48% to an endline score of 47%. At the same time, project beneficiaries recorded an increase of 1% from a baseline score of 48% to an endline score of 49%. Creative implemented 250 social cohesion events, with 73 in Adamawa, 91 in Borno, and 86 in Yobe state.

Social Cohesion Activities conducted across the three states



Illustrative activities under # 1.2.2 and 1.2.3

Creative awarded a grant to Dialogue Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP) to strengthen inter-religious relations among religious actors and groups in eight LGAs in the BAY states. DREP built the capacity of local structures and institutions that promote safe spaces for inter-group engagement, interreligious dialogues, and coexistence across communities in the eight LGAs. Participants in these activities recorded an increase in knowledge and have further attested that these training sessions have increased their capacity for conducting inter-group dialogues, mediations, and negotiations within groups in their communities.

I have learned how to mediate in times of conflict. Previously I just judged directly who was right and wrong, not paying any attention to the root causes of the issues. That narrative has now

changed. – (women leader, Didif-Mayo bani)

Beneficiaries from across religious divides, especially within target communities, now act as models for integration and social cohesion within their communities. They are willing to engage with people from other groups in their groups' activities to strengthen their relationships. The project activities were also all-inclusive, as marginalized groups, most affected by district dynamics within their communities, were heavily involved in project activities.

Improving relationships between host communities and private companies - Creative intervened to end the prevailing grievances and conflict between Dangote Sugar Refinery (DSR) and local communities in Adamawa state. Since the company's establishment, youth, and community members in Demsa, Numan, Lamurde, and Guyuk LGAs have expressed concerns about unfair treatment and job opportunities at Dangote sugar company. Tensions between these two groups have resulted in protests and violent clashes between communities, mostly youth, and the company's security personnel, often resulting in deaths. To address this challenge, Creative developed platforms to organize consultative dialogues between host communities (youth, women, and traditional leaders), stakeholders (including key staff from local government Councils), and representatives from the DSR to create mutual trust between communities and the company as well as to promote a sustainable public-private partnership. As a result of this initiative, the Chief Executive Officer of Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, paid a special visit to the region and has committed \$10 million to host communities to improve DSR's corporate social responsibility through various projects (development of infrastructure, creation of farmers' investment bank, support to schools and more scholarship opportunities).

Tightening ties through cultural and recreational opportunities for inter-community exchanges - NE Connection awarded four grants to strengthen community resilience and promote unity and peaceful coexistence through cultural, recreational, theater, and sports events. Creative awarded a grant to *the American University of Nigeria (AUN)* to utilize sports events to unite community members in 18 communities in Mubi North and Mubi South LGAs. These activities helped foster a sense of belonging, mutual trust, and positive relationships among vulnerable youths in targeted wards and communities. Some key achievements include:

- ❖ The establishment of 36 soccer, basketball, and volleyball teams to organize local sports tournaments and gather community members from diverse backgrounds.
- ❖ Peace orientation and training workshops provided fundamental skills in peaceful conflict resolution and facilitation to 522 beneficiaries in the three LGAs.

- ❖ Community leaders demonstrated a strong understanding of peace through the sport approach in facilitating dialogues.

Creative awarded another grant to *the Centre for Conflict Reconciliation and Documentation (CCRD)* to promote and deepen harmony, tolerance, resilience, peaceful coexistence, and reconciliation and strengthen inter-community peace platforms in Kampala, Nassarawa Bayan GG and Jugol communities in Biu LGA. CCRD trained 18 actors who performed at theatre events, with 109 stakeholders in attendance. Fifty-six team members played in seven football matches, and 18 participated in sack races.

Creative partnered with *Community Engagement Social Development Initiative (CESDI)* to implement an activity aimed at strengthening community resilience to violent extremist influence through cultural, recreational, and drama events in Potiskum (Yobe). CESDI empowered community structures, enhanced social cohesion, and built mutual tolerance among Ari kime, Dorawa, and Afghanistan communities. To achieve the project's objectives, CESDI organized drama and cultural dance exhibitions, community dialogues as a locally driven initiative on nonviolent conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence, and ad hoc training on peacebuilding. Resulting project outcomes include:



Drama and cultural dance exhibition by Kare-Kare, Ngizim, Bolewa, and Fulani tribes in Yobe

- ❖ Cultivating culturally diverse atmospheres through sports and drama events (with thousands of participants, predominantly young males and females) across these communities has facilitated peacebuilding efforts and significantly contributed to social cohesion. For instance, the Bolewa and Ngizim ethnic groups, who have historically been in conflict, were engaged to perform a drama piece together at the Emir of Fika's place for the first time in their history.
- ❖ The training on peacebuilding and nonviolent conflict resolutions has increased the capacity of participants to understand the drivers of conflict, the mediation and mitigation mechanisms, and how to lead inclusive dialogues. The post-training test revealed a 49% increase in participants' knowledge.
- ❖ The intervention helped revive the women's peace club (WPC), a community

organization in Potiskum that educates and sensitizes young men and women on causes of violence such as tribalism, drug abuse, gender violence, and the like.

Indicator 1.2.4: # of local women participating in a substantive role or position in a peacebuilding process supported with USG assistance: Cultural norms and religious beliefs in northeast Nigeria continue to impede women’s participation in the solutions to issues that communities face daily, even when women are the ones most affected by some of the challenges. In the last conflict analysis that covered Maiduguri LGA (Borno), Numan LGA (Adamawa), and Potiskum LGA(Yobe), Creative also confirmed and identified women’s exclusion in community development, specifically in contributing to the peacebuilding process as vulnerability to violent extremist infiltration. Since the inception of the NE Connection, Creative has been working to empower women’s groups and women leaders. Hence, they have the necessary tools to contribute to solving issues related to violent extremism. NE Connection has partnered with the local organizations in the BAY states to provide organizational and technical support to existing women’s organizations, associations, and cooperatives to strengthen their ability to advocate for their needs and design and implement community-based interventions. Interventions under this indicator linked formal community groups with nascent grassroots organizations to provide mentorship and expand women’s influence in peace processes to become champions of resilience within and beyond their communities.

The indicator specifically targeted women and their participation in peacebuilding initiatives. Through NE Connection, out of 30,211 beneficiaries Creative has assisted or reached, excluding media outreach initiatives, 10,819 are women, accounting for 36 percent of the total, which is 1 percent higher from the Nigerian National Gender Policy (NGP). NGP recommends 35 percent affirmative action for a more inclusive representation of women with elective political and appointive public service positions. The Northeast is also a region recognized for its strict religious and social-cultural rules and norms against women’s engagement in public spaces. For Creative, this number is on the higher end because Creative had to conduct advocacies to religious leaders and local authorities for women’s participation. Twenty-eight percent of the woman beneficiaries have taken initiatives and are playing substantive roles in their communities peacebuilding processes. Past women’s engagement was limited to assisting as a silent voice rather than taking any speaking and leadership role.

Findings revealed that some of these women, before NE Connection, were not leaders in their communities. Now they are taking leadership functions, playing key roles in strengthening resilience

and preventing conflicts in their communities through advocacy, mediation, and the organization of social cohesion initiatives. Women now, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized ones, have become outspoken about their issues and continue to feel that they are an integral part of their communities. Throughout the project and beyond, women leaders carried out a series of advocacies to the government stakeholders on some of the identified issues, which yielded positive results. They have also conducted mass sensitization of women and community leaders on peacebuilding and countering violent extremism, the importance of education for young girls, the dangers of hawking, the importance of adult education, personal hygiene, PSEA, GBV, etc. (See Zara's Story in Yobe with CCDRN).

Highlights of women's active participation in peacebuilding processes include:

- ❖ Hauwa Idris Usman, a 20-year-old woman from a minority ethnic group (Karai Karai) in the Damagun community, mediated the conflict in the choice of a new community leader (her father). Hauwa Idris said she put her conflict resolution and mediation training to use as she used the knowledge gained from the training to mediate between the community members and facilitated a fair process in the selection of the new community leader, which the community members fully accepted. Everyone was satisfied with the selection of the new community leader.
- ❖ Hauwa Ali, a laureate of the NE Connection program, and her counterpart women leaders established a temporary learning center in the Sabon Kwalta community in Damaturu LGA, where 25 women attend adult literacy classes daily for basic literacy and numeracy training; the curriculum also incorporates modules on the role of women in P/CVE.
- ❖ Zara Ibrahim from the Sabon Kwalta community in Yobe started a center for women to come together for peer learning, mentoring, and positive interactions. The participants meet at a personal compound and courtyard volunteered by one of the participants and have become a prominent community venue where women gather to socialize with each other and be trained on many aspects of life and livelihood skills. Creative also provided equipment to Zara as part of the path to sustainability.
- ❖ Throughout the two years, Creative, grantees, and women-based groups have organized 180 initiatives where women were either the focus or leading these interventions.
- ❖ Over ten women's groups have been registered at either the LGA level or have become cooperatives to legitimize their actions further.

"As women leaders from various communities, we have registered our group with local government authorities, and we have our constitution. We are now a legal group and have selected general and

sub-community leaders. We have divided women in the communities into two groups to train them. We also have our action plan, which we intend to implement and scheduled to hold our meetings bi-weekly Women leader/Nasarawa Community/Biu LGA/ Borno State

Illustrative activities

Building the Capacity of Women's groups and Female Leaders – Creative awarded three grants across the BAY states to provide organizational and technical support to existing women's organizations, associations, and cooperatives

to strengthen their ability to advocate for their needs, design and implement community-based interventions, expand outreach, and access funding. Creative's partner, *Global Peace Development (GPD)*, fostered a constructive engagement of women and developed their capacity to participate in efforts to mitigate conflicts and violent extremist groups' influence in Adamawa.



Cross section of participants at the town hall meeting

GPD started the constructive engagement and

women strengthening initiative (CEWOS). The capacity-building curriculum included training conflict transformation, preventing and countering violent extremist influence, conducting advocacy, mentoring, leadership, and gender-based violence, and ways for women and girls to amplify their role in community decision-making.

Specific highlights include:

- ✓ The CEWOS initiative has significantly increased interactions between women groups, community leaders, and local officials. According to the women, reaching and connecting with these individuals is a privilege they did not have before.
- ✓ Women's ability to contribute to reducing conflict risks has increased through information exchange among the women's peace and mediation platforms.
- ✓ The women's peace platforms continue receiving full support from traditional and religious leaders to continue advocating for the outright elimination of violence against women.

The Centre for Community Development and Research Network (CCDRN) worked directly with 24 communities in Maiduguri, Biu, Potiskum, and Damaturu in Borno and Yobe to enhance the capacity of women and women leaders to become advocates for peace and development. Like the GPD capacity-building curriculum, CCDRN intervention has facilitated 60 women leaders to

acquire countering and preventing violent extremist tactics and peacebuilding skills, so they are equipped to engage in peacebuilding and violent extremism prevention. Women who have participated in this training have met with the local government authorities and religious and community leaders to advocate for more government action to reduce sources of violence in their community. For example, women led a series of advocacies to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) office in Biu led to a major dismantlement of illicit drug trafficking networks in the area. These networks significantly influence youth drug abuse and are often in connivance with violent extremist groups. Additional intervention and training by CCDRN are now helping over 200 women in Kampala, Jugwal, and Nasarawa communities continue self-sustaining initiatives such as soap making, hairdressing, personal hygiene, etc. Creative partnered with CCDRN to help connect women with and commit the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development to involve women's groups in all programming concerning women in Borno and Yobe.

The Innovative Child Care Women Empowerment Initiative (ICCWEI) strengthened the capacity of local women leaders, women's groups, and organizations in peacebuilding and countering and preventing violent extremists across six communities in Borno. ICCWEI facilitated venues to create positive linkages between the relevant stakeholders and local governments, and the women's groups through information sharing and inter-community exchange for community resilience against extremist groups. ICCWEI identified and trained 24 female leaders on conflict prevention; and organized them in platforms such as women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention (WPCP). Members of the women's platforms hold biweekly meetings to discuss women's issues and their role in building cohesive and resilient communities. To empower these platforms and ensure the continuity of their operations, 180 members received vocational training in tailoring and sewing accessories.

2.2.3. Objective 2: Strengthened local capacity to respond to emerging threats.

Under this objective, Northeast Connection has contributed to developing local response capacity to emerging threats. Activities have increased local ownership by empowering local actors to have greater agency in the decisions affecting their lives and through targeted support based on performance and iterative capacity assessments. Planning and coordination with local actors was a major key in incorporating buy-in, political will, and sustainability. Activities conducted under objective 1 are also relevant under objective 2 with a caveat that objective 2 assessed whether project interventions impacted the communities. The activities were a blend of grants awarded through an APS or RFA and implemented through local partners and direct implementation activities managed

by our program teams.

Indicator 2.1.1: # of actors (CBOs, CSOs, women’s groups, etc.) exchanging information and collaborating on early warning detection: The extent of their networking was determined by several factors, such as funding level, referrals by other organizations, shared funding, shared resources including office time, office space, pamphlets, equipment, shared information like training and educational and joint programming, etc. The indicator tracks the number of actors exchanging information and collaborating on early warning detection. Information exchange and collaboration refer to CSOs alerting each other about emerging threats, violence, or emerging conflict in the Northeast Connection intervention communities. Creative used SNA to track collaboration among the local stakeholders for information exchange on early warning detection. Actors exchange information from EWER on social cohesion, community resilience, and countering violent extremism monthly or quarterly. The collaboration has remained consistent throughout SNA waves. However, findings revealed that competition among organizations for funding and recognition more often affects information exchange.

Illustrative activities

Support existing and new early warning detection systems for information exchange – Under this indicator, Creative developed and expanded local capacity to identify violent extremist behavior, tactics, and conflict risks through early warning systems to mobilize target LGAs and surrounding villages against attacks in the target communities. Three organizations implemented activities in the BAY states by engaging and training local leaders and community groups. Hence, they are better positioned to detect early warning signs by establishing information-sharing platforms with participation from other implementing partners, LGA authorities, CSOs, and women and youth networks.

In Borno, *Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN)* strengthened the capacity of 18 exiting EWER platforms with 360 members across the 18 communities and structured the platforms by helping the community delegate 54 EWER executives to ensure the effective functioning of the platforms. On average, 324 EWER platform members are engaged in monthly meetings to provide updates and technical support.

In Yobe, *the African Youths for Peace Development and Empowerment Foundation (AFRIDEV)* trained members of the existing EWER platforms on early response mechanisms as they applied

them to their context to help them understand and identify conflict risks and triggers of violence. Over 20 violence and suspicious activity cases were identified, reported, and addressed across the 12 communities in Potiskum, Damaturu, and Fune LGAs.

In Adamawa, *the Center for Peace Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN)* has also trained and strengthened the capacity of conflict monitors who engaged in EWER activities to identify, report and address cases of violence and potential threats in their communities. To further support the operations of EWER platforms and ensure their efficacy and swift response, NE Connection provided them with equipment such as motorcycles, flashlights, raincoats, and rubber boots. In addition, CEPAN used radio jingles



Training for conflict monitors in Mubi South, Adamawa

broadcasted in Hausa, Fulfulde, and English to disseminate information enhancing relationships, mutual understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. These jingles raised public awareness of the negative impacts and risks of violent extremism and radicalization while informing the public about the EWER mechanisms to counteract the risks of violent extremist propaganda.

Indicator 2.1.2: # of civil society organizations/citizen actors reporting collaboration ties with local government actors/citizens actors: The indicator tracks the extent of the collaboration between CSOs, citizens, and actors local government actors. By tracking this indicator, Creative understood that collaboration occurs when one or more CSOs partner with state or local government actors to achieve a goal, work on an initiative, or implement an activity or project together. While the number of organizations interviewed had decreased due to inaccessibility and actors' availability, the endline improved over the baseline but declined from the midline. Please see also indicator 2.1.2 for ongoing collaboration between CSOs

Engagement with the local government – Creative partnered with local organizations to strengthen community dialogues and establish sustainable communication channels between citizens and the local government. Creative trained citizens to identify, represent, and advocate for their needs and create spaces for citizen engagement in local community issues and decision-making. Creative awarded two grants to support this effort that helped seek government support and solutions to

community conflicts and grievances.

The Centre for Public Education and Mobilization for Development in Nigeria (CEPAD) and the Center for Community Development and Research (CCDRN) established and strengthened 173 forums and platforms to promote dialogue and access to government through advocacy and sensitization campaigns around fair and inclusive elections, and campaigns against violent extremist recruitment in 36 communities. Creative partners have established community advisory committees (CAC), trained the CACs and government officials on advocacy, lobbying, violent extremist prevention, and community mobilization strategies to engage with key stakeholders, and facilitated citizen-government interaction sessions. These platforms will continue to serve as venues where citizens and government actors discuss issues, security dynamics affecting the communities, and mitigation and accountability measures.

To support these communications, Creative’s local partners produced and distributed 4,500 community development pamphlets, used as advocacy and mobilization tools by the CAC during the citizen-government interaction session. During the program’s final evaluation, local authorities and community members recognized that USAID’s financial assistance had increased collaboration and non-violent conflict resolution strategies between citizens and government officials, thus increasing their capacity to address underlying grievances that make them vulnerable to violent extremist influence and conflict.

Opportunities for engagement with security providers to build constructive relationships and productive community roles in managing security and collaborating for peace and security, early warning, and early response efforts. Creative awarded grants to two local organizations to carry out activities that strengthened coordination and engagement between citizens and security providers in the BAY states. Activities have supported local initiatives in developing networks for exchanging information and collaboration on emergent community risks and opportunities. This involved training on early warning systems and supporting the establishment of EWER platforms. Under **indicator 2.1.3**, some examples show how this collaboration helped communities identify armed groups coming into the communities to kidnap or loot. The program has recorded the following achievements by grantees:

- ❖ *Global Peace Development (GPD)* – In Adamawa state, GPD conducted assessments in 18 communities across the three target communities of Demsa, Mubi North, and Mubi South

LGAs to identify the communities' key challenges face regarding their interactions and relationships with security agents. GDP used a combination of training, stakeholder consultations, dialogue sessions, townhall meetings, and validation meetings to achieve the following results:

- ❖ The establishment of the community Action and Response Team (CART), Ward Action and Response Team (WART), and the Local Peace Alliance (LOPA) across the three LGAs have empowered communities to be actively involved in the process of promoting community safety and resilience against all forms of violence.

- ❖ In Demsa, the Executive Chairman committed to adopting the Peace Alliance as a formal structure to help prevent and identify early warning signs of conflict across wards and communities in the LGA.



Community action and response team sharing experience during dialogue sessions.

- ❖ In other LGAs, Creative worked with local authorities to ensure that

LOPA increasingly became parallel platforms to support local governments in building social cohesion. Creative has provided equipment to all LOPA as part of its path to sustainability.

- ❖ There is now improved communication and synergy between security agents and the LOPA, who are working together to prevent crimes and violent conflict in communities, wards, and LGA. For instance, Kodomun CART tracked and retrieved seven of 17 stolen sheep back to the owners through improved synergy and responsiveness.
- ❖ Community perception of distrust against security agents has changed due to increased joint surveillance and referral of early warning issues that could jeopardize citizens' safety.
- ❖ Community ownership of the early warning platforms has increased as the CARTs continue implementing activities geared toward community resilience against violence and extremism.

The Cohort for Existential Emergency Relief (CEER). In four LGAs (Biu, Maiduguri, Damaturu, and Potiskum) of Borno and Yobe, CEER built the capacity of leaders and community-based peace platforms in 24 communities to monitor, document, and report early warning signs and conflicts as

well as strengthen linkages, engagements, and cooperation between community-based peace platforms and security authorities. For example, in Maiduguri, a community member confided to Creative that people were scared to report to the police any inter-gang conflicts because of fear of reprisal. With the training, community members trust and reach out to the police and provide enough information to counter gang fights. Now that organized criminals are aware of such relationships, fewer gang communities are recorded.

Other results achieved through these activities included:

- ❖ Communities increased their understanding of the drivers of conflict and push and pull factors of radicalization.
- ❖ Police may now respond quickly to emerging threats because of the collaboration of community members.
- ❖ There is improved coordination and collaboration between community members and security providers, both formal and informal, to counter violent extremist attacks and prevent conflict occurrences in communities.

Indicator 2.1.3: # of targeted communities successfully staving off VEO incursion because of USG assistance. With financial assistance from USAID, community members across the BAY states conducted 16 community actions that staved off violent extremist infiltration – seven in Borno, five in Adamawa, and four in Yobe (4) – using knowledge, tactics, and skills they acquired throughout the program. Sixteen cases of the ones were directly reported during the final assessment fieldwork. Creative believes there were more of these instances where NE Connection beneficiaries have used skills learned through the program to shield against violent extremist infiltration.

- ❖ Community members who participated in GPD’s training in Mubi North and Mubi South (Adamawa) on conflict sensitivity, the EWER mechanism, policy advocacy, peacebuilding, and monitoring early warning incidences and extremist infiltration have developed an action plan that included conducting step-down training on EW/ER in their respective communities. They met with all community peace volunteers, the Gongola Community Action, and the Response Team (G-WART). G-WART helped the police identify and arrest Shila boys running from security agencies in Yola and forming a cell in Mubi North. G-WART also continues working with community members, the local vigilantes, and hunters to foster operational harmony and cohesion amongst the parties through dialogue and provide opportunities for community security coordination.
- ❖ One of the established NE Connection local peace structures responded to a security incident in the Gongol community, Dirbishi Ward, Mubi South (Adamawa). For example,

on March 28, 2022, community members noticed unidentified individuals around the market squares and immediately notified the members of the local peace structure. The team communicated with the Shunwa community, which is also a nearby community. The two communities monitored the situation and were able to alert security personnel of the threat. They also identified kidnappers attempting to force their way into their target's house. Community members and security agencies took action and forced the kidnappers out of the community.

- ❖ In August 2022, the Numan TPAC created groups to address thematic issues related to farmer and herder conflicts, drug abuse, land disputes, boundary issue, sexual-based violence/rape, and illegal immigrants, among others. On November 1, 2021, TPAC members met with the community's leaders to raise awareness about illegal immigrants living in their community and threatening the peace and security of the host communities.
- ❖ Creative established the Peace Ambassadors Platform in the Wuro Barka community that engages youth in productive livelihood activities. The Peace Ambassadors Platform initiative allows youth to take contracts from various farming activities, and youth are paid afterward, allowing them to have some income for their families. When collecting data for the final evaluation, community members revealed that all farming activities within the community are now channeled through the platform, thereby enhancing community cohesion among the youth and community leaders. Also, because young people are no longer idle, there is a decrease in drug abuse among them because they are required to be drug-free to participate in farming activities.

Indicator 2.1.4: # of national host inhabitants reached through USG-assisted public information campaigns to support peaceful resolution of conflicts. The indicator measures the number of community members reached through the NE Connection's public information campaigns (radio and TV programs, program newsletter publications, town halls, and sensitization). These are indigenous people of a specific geographical location, villages, and towns within the states of implementation who have identified themselves with such places and have lived and continue to live in that location and engage in livelihood-generating activities. Creative messaging campaigns reached 14,231,151 community members using radio jingles, drama, skits, TV shows, and other media components. These figures were estimated from the Broadcasting Board of Governors(BBG media reach of radio programs across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States, plus the number of people reached via the social media platforms of NE Connection's grantees.

Illustrative activities under 2.1.4

Outreach campaigns to counter VE messaging and misinformation – Creative partnered with local partners to tack the widespread violent extremist messaging by developing relevant, constructive messages in local languages to counter violent extremist narratives and conduct community outreach campaigns, peace-based radio dramas, and jingles; develop and distribute Information, Education and Communication Materials (IEC) to counter violent extremist messaging and misinformation. Creative awarded grants to three local partners in all the 15 LGAs across the BAY states, including *Media Communication for Health and Development initiative* (MECOHEDI) in Borno, *CCRD* in Adamawa, and *Hope Interactive* in Yobe.

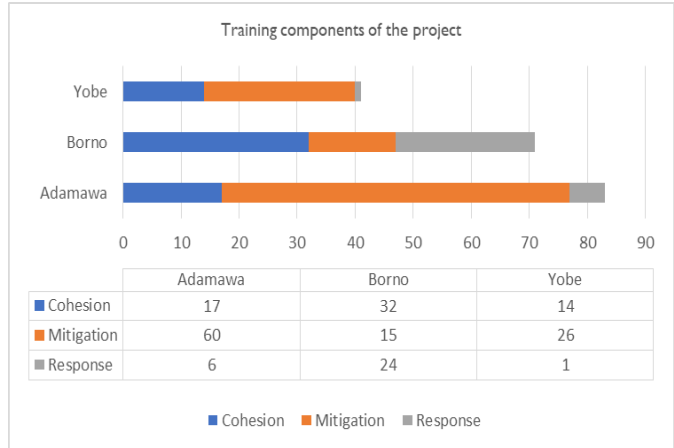


- ❖ In Borno, MECOHEDI conducted community-based stage plays, motorized sensitization campaigns in local languages, and live radio shows targeting communities at risk of terrorist groups' infiltration. MECOHEDI also aired 540 radio jingles sessions on two radio stations, organized three community theatre stage plays, and distributed 1,624 IEC materials. MECOHEDI has also established and trained 540 members of countering violent extremism task force, whose role is to continue to educate community members on better ways to avoid being the prey of jihadist messaging.
- ❖ In Adamawa, CCRD collaborated with six popular local musicians to produce a unity song –*haske a karshen rami* – (light at the end of the tunnel). The song was produced in Hausa with key messages in other local languages and played during marketplace concerts in each of the 18 communities. CCRD also organized town hall meetings to engage young community ambassadors for peace in dialogues that solicit youth's opinions and perspectives on countering extremist messaging and misinformation in their communities.
- ❖ *Hope Interactive* aired 56 radio jingles on transformative peace messaging against radicalization and violent extremism and developed fourteen action plans to counter extremist narratives. In Yobe, Hope Interactive used street walk campaigns, public lectures, focus group discussions with religious and ethnic groups leaders, intra- and inter-community dialogue sessions involving stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and social status, and theater performances to increase citizen's awareness of the extremist influence and reduce

misinformation. Two hundred people participated in the peace walks, 5000 people were reached through the live call-in radio programs, and 280 participated in the public lectures and dialogue sessions.

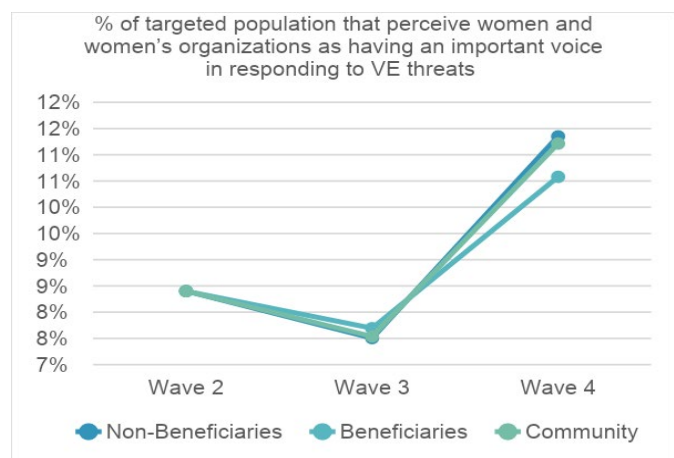
Indicator 2.2.1: Percentage increase in knowledge of community members trained on violent extremist threats and tactics: Creative organized training focusing on social cohesion, conflict mitigation, and the response components of the project, as shown in the chart below.

These training sessions have reflected increased knowledge and skills among community members, and there is evidence of this because of the community’s actions. The training components improved and built the capacity of community actors who contribute to peace efforts, serve as early warning focal points, and provide trauma awareness and psychosocial support services to victims of violence and insurgency within their communities. Some of the interventions and training Creative conducted with its partners filled the gap in helping the community become more aware of vulnerabilities violent extremist groups could exploit to infiltrate. For many of them, NE Connection was one of the rare programs that courageously decided to work with the communities in the most dangerous places.



Indicator 2.2.2: Percentage of targeted population that perceive women and women’s organizations as having an important voice in responding to violent extremist threats. Under

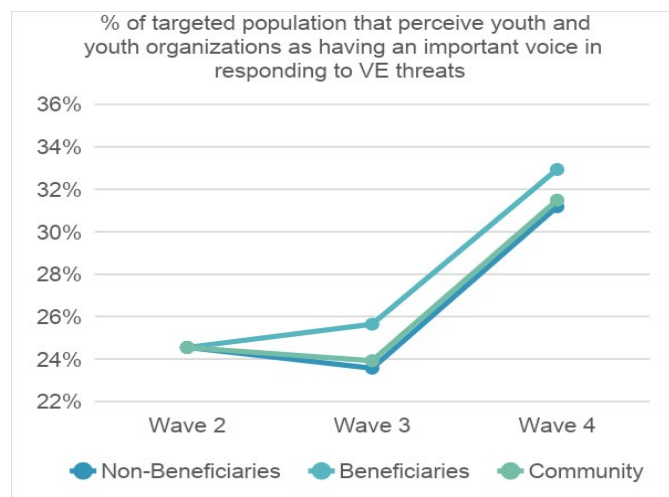
Indicator 1.2.4, Creative trained women and created platforms where their voices could be heard in a social and political context that restricted them from any public engagement. Through the NE Connection project, Creative increased women’s participation in responding to violent extremism threats. The program tracked community members’ perceptions, asking program beneficiaries to



name groups they consider important actors in the fight against violent extremists without being

prompted about a specific group. Creative surveyed a group of respondents to measure the progress made since the beginning of the project. The responses indicated an increase from 9 percent at baseline to an endline value of 11 percent across groups (beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries) and the entire community, with some differences across states, as Borno indicated an improved perception of 13 percent at the endline from a baseline of 7 percent, and Adamawa an increase from 8 percent to 12 percent. However, there was a decline in this indicator in Yobe State. Supporting these positive changes, respondents recognized women’s actions as contributing to strengthening community resilience and local development. Creative has trained many women, including over 50, on women’s role and contribution to peacebuilding, improving their skills in seasoning, soap production, and managing small businesses. Creative has restored women’s confidence in their societal role, allowing them to continue to have important voices in their communities. Please refer to illustrative activities under **indicator 1.2.4**.

Indicator 2.2.3: % of the targeted population perceive youth and youth organizations as having an important voice in responding to VE threats. Under indicator XXX, Creative ensured that young people received the training and the opportunities to contribute to communities’ resilience. The program monitored how the community members perceived the degree of youth engagement to determine the extent of effectiveness and whether the NE Connection had any influence on these roles.



To strengthen the efficacy of the responses and minimize any form of bias, respondents were asked to name groups they consider important actors in the fight against VEOs without being prompted about a specific group. The responses indicated an increase from 25 percent at baseline to an endline value of 31 percent across the communities, with an inter-group difference for beneficiaries (33%) and non-beneficiaries (31%). Please see **indicator 1.1.6** for illustrative interventions leading to these results.

2.3. Grants Updates

Please see annex D for grant updates.

3. Main Fieldwork Analyses – Contractual Deliverables

3.1. Conflict Analysis.

Creative conducted seven conflict analyses to provide a nuanced understanding of the conflict's profile, actors, dynamics, and drivers (structural causes and conflict triggers). The conflict analysis included state-specific sections and an overall assessment of the conflict in northeast Nigeria. Findings have helped the program adapt its intervention strategy and be more sensitive to local complexities.

Table 4: Conflict Analyses in Year 1 and Year 2

Period	Main findings /Highlights
FY21 Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Economic needs remain the biggest concern, alongside security. The threat of VEO attacks and the need for security restrictions on the movement of people and goods have created a worrying dependence on humanitarian assistance in many communities. ❖ Economic incentives contribute to vulnerability to VE recruitment (as it exists) and vulnerabilities along with grievances related to long-term poor governance.
FY21 Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The biggest security development and impact in the northeast region is the death of Abubakar Shekau, the previous leader of Boko Haram ❖ Adamawa has the second largest IDP population in the Northeast region, driving competition and conflict between host communities and IDPs. ❖ Ethnic and farmer-herder conflicts are key drivers of conflict in the state and the general insecurity caused by gangs of young men referred to as “Shila Boys.” ❖ Other national-level and political conflict drivers (farmer/herder, electoral politics, unemployment, poverty) are present and increasing across the BAY states.
FY21 Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Borno suffers significantly from poverty and insecurity, mostly from VEOs and other armed groups. Boko Haram and ISWAP remain present in Borno, but statuses are shifting, primarily with Boko Haram members. ❖ Although not unique to Adamawa state, the farmer-herder crisis continued to expand. Farmers and herders agree that there is a need for an increased security presence in the community as community members are taking justice into their own hands. ❖ In Yobe, respondents point to the declining threat of VEOs in the state. However, respondents mentioned other ongoing security issues in the state, including petty crimes and drug violence.
FY22 Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In Borno, the study assessed communities' attitudes toward reintegrating former Boko Haram and other non-state armed groups (NSAG) associates into host communities. ❖ In Adamawa, the quarter's analysis focused on local communities' perceptions of the ongoing threat posed by one of the most notorious criminal gangs currently operating in the state, the Shila Boys ❖ In Yobe, the conflict analysis explored the perceptions and experiences of the Fulani ethnic group with the larger ethnic conflict.
FY22 Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The study analyzed conflicts across these communities, especially the farmer-herder conflicts and community issues. ❖ Farmer-herder clashes are further exacerbated by the Savannah Sugar Company, which has bought much of the region's viable land for farming and herding. ❖ Respondents praised civilian-led security forces, primarily hunter and vigilante groups, for improving the security situations.
FY22 Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In FY22 Q3, ORB conducted a qualitative study of the evolving conflict landscape in Northeast Nigeria, focusing particularly on the ongoing efforts in conflict resolution and the farmer-herder conflict. ORB interviewed Fulani traditional herders (Ardo/Wakila Ardo), Fulani herder thought/opinion leaders, government natural resource managers, farmer association leaders, and traditional leaders.

FY22 Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Women’s experiences with conflict and role in developing conflict resilience in their communities. ❖ Involving women in community resilience efforts is necessary to alleviate suffering in a community
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3.2. Political Economy Analysis

Period	Highlights and Themes
FY21 Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identification of critical local actors (individuals, groups, and institutions) willing to participate in dialogue, local planning, service learning, economic development activities, research, and early warning and response efforts. ❖ Determining the willingness and motivation of community groups to engage with relevant authorities and security providers to participate in local conflict resolution mechanisms. ❖ Interest and capacity in all the LGAs to coordinate with authorities and support local solutions to building resilience to violence. ❖ There are official and unofficial relationships in place to support local resilience. While an increase in cross-religion and cross-ethnic cooperation was reported, the data showed strong issues related to social cohesion (specifically around a sense of belonging and identity)
FY21 Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Exploring transitional justice and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms in the BAY states to address challenges related to systemic abuse and massive human rights violations. ❖ Findings revealed that transitional justice institutions and mechanisms are categorized as formal and informal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formal institutions are embedded in government institutions such as courts (Federal, state, magistrate, customary, and sharia), state ministries of justice, security agencies, the national human rights commission, and the legal aid council ○ Informal transitional justice institutions are coordinated by traditional leaders (Bulamas, Alkalis, Hakimis, and Lawanis), district and warheads, religious leaders (pastors and imams), and community elders. ❖ There is no legal framework for transitional justice or ADR in the BAY states; however, some institutional frameworks exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Borno has a state-specific ADR framework known as the Amicable Dispute Resolution Corridor. It is housed in the high court in Maiduguri. ○ Yobe state has the Sulhu Centre, which has a 26-member ADR Committee to support the state in managing disputes using ADR. ○ Unlike some states such as Lagos, Oyo, and Enugu, which have Multi-Door Court Houses, Adamawa state does not have such a framework or other framework to support transitional justice and ADR. ❖ Traditional actors involved in ADR do not have the relevant skill and competence to effectively utilize the spectrum of ADR mechanisms. Many rely on religious, cultural, and traditional knowledge, native sense, and wisdom in justice dispensation. ❖ The protracted nature of the insurgency and VEO attacks have resulted in the emergence of the military and CJTF as actors in informal transitional justice systems. ❖ ISWAP’s justice system is being accepted and operational in some communities, particularly in Borno state. ❖ Women and young people mostly participate in informal transitional justice as disputants or victims.
FY22 Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ This study explored the involvement of youth in governance and their perceptions of inclusion in the BAY states ❖ Findings revealed that national legal, institutional, and policy frameworks that support youth inclusion exists, such as the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Not Too Young to Run, and the National Youth Policy. ❖ These frameworks have been adopted in Adamawa and Yobe states but are not enforced, while Borno has yet to adopt the policies. The study also revealed that the structures that will empower youth to benefit from the provisions of these frameworks to influence or participate in democratic governance are weak or absent in Adamawa and Yobe states.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Yobe and Adamawa had more youth appointed into political positions and structures than Borno. ❖ VEO activities influence political elites and traditional leaders' decisions to include youth in democratic and political governance to discourage their participation in VEOs. ❖ Youths' willingness to participate in governance and leadership is high, but their capacity and opportunities available for inclusion are low ❖ The perception of youth exclusion is stronger in democratic governance than in traditional systems. Due to the inherited nature of many traditional positions, youth involvement and participation in traditional leadership are often detailed.
FY22 Q2	<p>This study provided information on the interconnected power relations in the study area's politics, economics, and other social dynamics. It highlights the relationships and incentives that influence interactions between various actors. In addition, the study examined the willingness of community groups to engage local authorities and showcased appropriate actors that can participate in interventions geared towards building community resilience. The study also highlighted some threats and emerging dynamics in the target locations. Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Religious and traditional leaders advocate for peace and obedience using various platforms. Still, they are reluctant to hold political leaders accountable for their inability to provide socio-economic infrastructures that will reduce VEO infiltration and support peacebuilding. ❖ Political leaders often patronize and offer financial support to religious and traditional leaders, who occasionally provide food to some community members. These relationships enable political leaders to remain unchallenged, while traditional and religious leaders benefit from the financial support they offer. ❖ Most respondents expressed desire, determination, and willingness to engage and collaborate with governmental agencies, institutions, and security providers to support and participate in conflict resolution mechanisms, projects, and interventions. ❖ Various communities in the study areas designed and established context-specific partnerships and systems for collective action to enhance community resilience and combat violent extremist group infiltration. These are cross-cutting partnerships that exist between informal security providers (CJTF, Hunters, and Vigilante groups) within the target communities.
FY22 Q3	<p>This PEA examined the nature and drivers of labor, land, environment, and human rights conflicts between host communities and the Dangote Sugar Refinery (DSR) in Lamurde LGA. Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Community members hold strong positions against land grabbing and exploitation without adequate compensation by the DSR. There was a massive expansion of the company's activities, allegedly forcing it to acquire more land than was originally allocated. ❖ Regarding employment opportunities, the study showed that members of host communities are only recruited in lower-paying positions to provide manual labor. Respondents notified that DSR has no community members in management or senior leadership positions. They also complained that jobs are distributed along tribal and ethnic groups, with the Lunguda tribe being more favored than the Bachama ethnic group, despite the heterogeneous nature of the community. ❖ The occupation of more land by DSR shrinks the farmland available to farmers to cultivate crops, which leads to tensions between farmers and herders competing to control and use the limited natural resources available. ❖ The host communities expressed their grievance regarding DSR's industrial waste that causes environmental pollution, soil degradation, and contamination of available water sources. The stagnant wastewater contributes to the spread of malaria and other diseases, often leading to deaths. It also affects land productivity and crop yield, contributing to food insecurity and climate shocks.
FY22 Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Creative conducted this study to understand the issues, context, and dynamics from the perspectives of migrant Fulani herders. In most studies on farmer-herder conflicts, the perception of migrant Fulani herders was not widely represented; therefore, the study focused exclusively on herders' perspectives for a better and more nuanced understanding of conflict drivers in Northeast Nigeria. Key findings are as follows: ❖ Some of the root causes that contribute to fueling the conflict between the migrant Fulani herders

	<p>and farmers include farmers' intrusion into herders' grazing routes, lack of access to water points for herds and increase in human and cattle populations; local authorities' bias against herders when resolving conflicts; unfair distribution of basic social amenities; youth drug addiction and extortion of herders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In some LGAs, such as Lamurde, there seems to be a cordial relationship between Fulani herders and the host communities. In Demsa, Fune, and Numan LGAs, the study noted increased hatred, hostility, and distrust among the two parties. ❖ The study did not establish a direct link between migrant herders and VEOs. However, herders who travel deep into the forests around the Biu axis in Borno state admit to paying a fee referred to as "<i>Zakat</i>" when they encounter Boko Haram members. According to the Fulani herders, Boko Haram members often force them to pay zakat by taking one cow for every 30 cows. ❖ Migrant Fulani herders affirmed that the restoration of grazing routes, water points, fairness of the government, and enforced laws against farmers perpetrating attacks and extortion of herders) would mitigate violence between the parties. ❖ They reported that they trust traditional and community leaders, such as Emirs, Ardos, Jeros, district heads, and religious leaders, to manage conflicts between farmers and herders.
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4. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Security – The security condition, as described in the context and the assessment of the assumption section, has remained volatile and, at some point, has impeded the program's ability to meet deadlines and quickly respond to community needs. In the Communities across LGAs in Adamawa State (Yola North, Yola South, and Girei LGAs), vulnerability to violent extremists and their ability to disrupt social norms remains high. In these LGAs, the influence of the Shila Boys continues to terrorize the Adamawa state capital Jimeta-Yola and potentially exacerbates the youth's vulnerability to joining violent extremism. In addition, rumors that Jihadist groups and ISWAP were working together to control a major portion of the region had spread fear in the communities where Creative was operating. NE Connection's assessments have also noted that violent extremist groups' incentives are more attractive than what the program offered or the government as counter incentives. Extremists' recruitment tactics, per our assessments, indicated that violent extremist groups understand the needs of the communities, and communities may perceive them as compassionate. Coupled with a decreased trust in government institutions, communities often rely upon violent extremist groups for social welfare and justice. Creative PEA FY21 Q3 noted that those aggrieved at the government are more likely to accept the ISWAP justice system. The complexities of the security situation make any program implementation unpredictable and, at times, very difficult. This challenge comes with risk to staff physical security and mental health. Creative was fortunate enough to navigate these dynamics better and end the program with no direct physical harm to its staff.

Impediments to social cohesion and resilience – The program assumed that enhancing social cohesion would contribute to community resilience. That assumption still holds. However, Creative faces a significant challenge when community members refuse to accept internally displaced persons

or former insurgents into the communities. Creative documented instances, for example, where the community vehemently rejected forgiveness and reintegration of defected insurgents back into the communities. In other places, locals are upset when the government and implementing partners assist IDPs (see conflict analysis FY21 Q3 and FY 22 Q1), claiming that immigrants receive better treatment than host communities.

Flooding across communities in the Northeast – BAY states experienced flooding at varying degrees impeding access to project communities and, in some instances, delaying activity implementation. Flooding has also affected the participation of community members in project activities, as some had to relocate to neighboring communities temporarily. Below are some impacts of flooding in program implementation communities in the BAY states.

- ❖ In Shani LGA (Borno), Relief Rescue Initiative (RRI), one of the NE Connection grantees, had trouble leaving Kubo, Kubo Dungu, and Jeki communities after implementation due to flooding. The incident delayed the implementation of other planned activities, as the grantees had to spend nine additional days in the communities to allow the water to drain.
- ❖ In Numan LGA (Adamawa), RRI experienced another flooding while implementing an activity in the Shafron, Kwa, and Waduku communities, which led to the usage of canoes with an additional cost of N50,000 to have access back to the base.
- ❖ In Mubi South (Adamawa), Safer world Foundation – Creative’s grantee working in the LGA– could not reach some communities during the rainy season, making it difficult for them to conduct activities.

Poor telecommunication network – Connectivity presented a major setback in ensuring timely communication between grantees, Creative field staff, and the backstopping team in the home office. Poor mobile networks in hard-to-reach communities made it difficult to establish consistent communication with participants and community leaders when urgent and important messages needed dissemination.

Annexes

Annex A: Progress Summary FY21 – FY23

Annex B: NE Connection FY23 Q1FR

Annex C: NE Connection Success Story

Annex D: NE Connection Grants

Annex E: Community Platform Establish Under Northeast Connection Program Across the BAY states

Annex F: Nigeria Northeast Connection - Personnel Identifying Data