Welcome to the story of Smart Peace, an integrated peace programme undertaken by a diverse group of specialist organisations between 2018 and 2021.
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About Smart Peace
Smart Peace was an integrated peace programme by a diverse group of specialist organisations, bringing together innovative peacebuilding practice with qualitative and quantitative research, evaluation and behavioural science. Between 2018 and 2021, Smart Peace partners developed targeted and adaptive conflict resolution initiatives that were responsive to changing local peace priorities, building ‘live learning’ into peace practice in order to reduce violence and build peace in northeast Nigeria, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Myanmar.

Led by Conciliation Resources, an international peacebuilding NGO, and working in collaboration with local partners, the Smart Peace consortium included the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Chatham House, ETH Zurich, International Crisis Group, The Asia Foundation and the Behavioural Insights Team.
Why was Smart Peace needed?

Violent conflict is complex and fast-changing, and conflict resolution needs to be able to tackle multifaceted and persistent crises. But too often, peace interventions function in isolation and to fixed agendas, and local and international partners do not work together. Cycles of violence, trauma and exclusion in CAR, Myanmar and Nigeria have created self-sustaining conflict systems. Smart Peace aimed to help break these cycles, working collaboratively and flexibly to link up conflict resolution initiatives, and gathering rapid and robust evidence of what is working and what is not in order to learn and adapt quickly.

What was Smart Peace trying to do?

Smart Peace sought to respond to volatile and changing conflict dynamics by:

1. Aligning peacebuilding initiatives with local peace needs and resources
2. Supporting inclusion in conflict resolution
3. Enabling more coherent local, national and international responses to violent conflict
4. Building knowledge and awareness of how to build peace better
About Smart Peace

Where did Smart Peace happen?

**Central African Republic**

Smart Peace supported mediation of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, and strengthened local peace structures and links between local and national peace processes in Bangui, Bossangoa province and border regions with Cameroon.

**Northeast Nigeria**

Smart Peace helped to support reintegration within communities of people associated with armed groups, and to transform local security groups to be more inclusive, responding to rising violence in Borno and Yobe states as part of the violent insurgency by Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa.

**Myanmar**

Smart Peace worked with negotiating parties and civil society to support transformation of governance and transition in the security sector, and to improve social cohesion, adapting to significant contextual changes including the Covid-19 pandemic and the military takeover of power.
Developing the Smart Peace approach

What challenges were anticipated going into the programme?

Bringing together diverse organisations for joined-up peace activities meant finding ways to work together towards shared goals, while maintaining partners’ unique approaches, histories and networks. Peacebuilding is sensitive and complex, and it is hard to integrate research and programming effectively and ethically, using different methodologies in ways that are complementary. Smart Peace needed to be flexible in order to respond quickly to changes in contexts, and to embed learning and regular reflection into programming – in addition to the challenges of operating in highly volatile and difficult conflict settings.

What is evidence-based adaptive peacebuilding?

Smart Peace took an adaptive, collaborative approach to peacebuilding that supports innovation. Changes to activities and strategies were based on regular and joint analysis of the conflict context using Smart Peace partners’ different insights and methodologies, emerging evidence of what was working and what wasn’t, and quantitative and qualitative research.

Analysis and evidence were used collectively among partners in regional hubs in order to assess and review the logic and impact of their work on a regular basis. This ensured that decisions on what to do and what not to do were informed by partners’ varied experiences, skills and perspectives, which helped build up a more comprehensive picture of the conflict and how best to build peace.
Developing the Smart Peace approach (continued)

Why use an evidence-based adaptive model of working?

This approach addressed the complexities of conflict, recognising that linear approaches to peacebuilding haven’t always worked in the past. Combining live analysis and research with implementation ensured that Smart Peace activities remained relevant in rapidly changing conflict contexts. This proved especially useful as the global Covid-19 pandemic hit mid-programme, creating challenges that could not have been predicted.

By working together, partners pushed each other to think differently and try new ideas. This required partners to be willing to change how they worked and give up time for collective analysis, coordination and discussion, but resulted in better programming.

Learn more about our adaptive and collaborative peacebuilding consortium
About Smart Peace

Smart Peace approach

Collaboration is key

Collaboration and adaptation worked hand-in-hand in Smart Peace to enable the programme to tackle complex conflicts from different directions in an integrated way, and to apply lessons learned in ‘real time’. Collaboration between Smart Peace partners involved knowledge exchange, shared analysis, and joined-up programming and advocacy. Continuous analysis and assessment supported rapid and robust decision-making in order to adjust programme design and implementation in response both to events and lessons, while ensuring that all partners worked to a shared vision and objectives.
Working in partnership

Real collaboration required partners to think and act differently

Partners needed to learn about each other’s priorities and trust each other’s methodologies and values. This took time, space and resources to identify areas of common ground where collaboration could add real value. The starting point was to work with the right partners in the right places around a mutual programme concept and design.

‘Joined-up’ rather than ‘joint’ activities allowed partners space to maximise their respective strengths

In CAR, for example, Smart Peace partners had different approaches and targets for influencing policy, and a fully integrated advocacy strategy would have been counterproductive. A ‘joined-up’ strategy enabled partners working at community and at national level to develop mutually reinforcing messages, working in conjunction with Smart Peace communication and policy specialists.
In northeast Nigeria, Smart Peace partners Conciliation Resources (CR) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) were able to coordinate specialist expertise and networks to work with government bodies, vigilante leaders and communities towards more mutually complementary ‘community security’. ‘Multi-track’ dialogues among government and formal and informal security providers ensured community priorities were heard in policy dialogues. ETH Zürich (ETH) and the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) deployed cutting edge research methodologies including randomised control trials and ‘conjoint experiments’ to better understand the drivers of community support for reintegration of returnees formerly associated with armed groups.

Communications are essential for successful partnership and need to be resourced in remote areas and across language barriers

Ensuring functioning phone and internet connections or the availability of appropriate interpretation can mean the difference between success and failure.
About Smart Peace

Timing and timeframes

Adaptation occurred within a long-term approach rather than abruptly stopping or starting new activities. This enhanced value for money and impact, as regular evaluation and reflection ensured activities remained relevant and effective within a coherent strategy.

Practical examples included:

- Reorienting strategies in response to new conflict dynamics – such as pivoting from reintegration to gender sensitivity regarding community security groups in northeast Nigeria.
- Reconfiguring networks in response to deteriorating security – such as temporarily shifting peacebuilding activities to the national level in CAR when access to the local communities became impossible.
- Scaling down activities that became impracticable or moving them online – such as dialogues on governance in Myanmar in the face of Covid-19.

A range of different types of joint programme review ensured that changes happened when they were needed. Reviews varied from monthly, to quarterly and annual assessments, and from looking across the whole consortium, to country Hubs and individual programmes. Combining formal and informal spaces for dialogue and relationship-building enabled highly productive and flexible exchange of technical and contextual knowledge.

Collaboration and adaptation take time and resources to set up and sustain, and need reliable and long-term funding. Short-term or unpredictable support undermines confidence and preparedness to invest resources.
About Smart Peace

Networks and knowledge

Connecting networks of contacts and combining knowledge of conflict resolution methods among partners requires high levels of trust but can deliver significant results for peace.

- In northeast Nigeria, CR, Chatham House, HD and International Crisis Group together hosted Nigeria’s first Open Dialogue on Reintegration, Reconciliation and Resettlement, which involved significant international, national and community representation and was the first time communities had a platform to present their positions directly to government.
- In Myanmar, partners shared expertise in public health messaging and local networks to raise awareness of Covid-19 in conflict-affected area.
- In CAR, partners shared technical expertise, advice and policy contacts on resolving conflicts between farmers and herders.

Network sharing has produced ‘spin-off’ peace projects among Smart Peace partners. The Asia Foundation, ETH and BIT used their combined expertise in election monitoring, behavioural analysis and quantitative evaluation to support elections in Bangladesh in 2019 in a supplement to the Smart Peace programme. ETH also engaged in spin-off projects with HD and CR focused around local mediation and ceasefire monitoring.
Smart Peace learning

Smart Peace trialled a range of approaches to research, analysis and evaluation in order to support better programming.
Analysis and research

Analysis and research provided the evidence base for designing, implementing and adapting programming.

Partners valued exposure to different methodologies. In Myanmar, political analysis by International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) highlighted some structural obstacles and potential pitfalls in the formal peace process. It sparked collective discussions among partners and was instrumental in decision-making to seek ways to mitigate risks. Discussions among partners informed a strategic shift towards incrementally building local engagement and knowledge over longer time horizons.

Experimental evaluation methods to support ‘live’ peacebuilding programming were crucial to determine what works and what doesn’t, and need to be tailored to specific activities.

Systematic quantitative and experimental analysis of peacebuilding programming can play an important role in knowledge creation and learning. This type of analysis is often only suitable for projects with relatively large samples and the possibility of a comparison group. Identifying suitable projects, and developing close collaboration necessary to apply these approaches takes time and rigour.
Analysis and research (continued)

Multiple monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) methods benefited from partners’ different expertise and methods were tailored for different contexts and interventions. During co-creation, partners took time to develop shared analysis, planning and monitoring tools using language everyone understood and identified with, and developed lasting collaboration that benefited all partners.

MEL methods needed to be ‘nimble’ and responsive to support rapid adaptive programming. Reporting on changes in conflict dynamics and relationships proved more valuable and meaningful than being tied to rigid results frameworks and budget lines.

Developing theories of change (ToC) at different levels of the programme – from consortium through to individual interventions – was essential for effective collaboration, coordination and adaptation. Integrated ToCs took time to develop, but they enabled partners to understand multiple stages of programming and how they interlinked, and different parts of the consortium to understand each other and how their work linked together. Hub-level ToCs were a particularly useful way to build adaptability and ensure shared understanding of different activities and processes. Collaboration among partners improved ToCs, such as inputting Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)’s expertise.
## Analytical and evaluative methods used in Smart Peace

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<td>• SenseMaker was used to collect hundreds of individual stories or ‘micro-narratives’ to better understand and ‘quantify’ individuals’ perceptions of conflict within local communities.</td>
<td>• BIT with Conciliation Resources (CR), ETH and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) developed a guide for how to conduct local dialogues informed by behavioural science.</td>
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<td>• ETH Zürich (ETH) collected data on instances of violence in CAR and fed findings back to Smart Peace partners.</td>
<td>• ETH, BIT and HD developed a randomised control trial to evaluate the impact of using radio shows for peacebuilding, and a conjoint experiment to determine which factors were most influential in shifting community support for reintegration.</td>
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<td>• Crisis Group continuously monitored political and conflict dynamics at the local, national and regional levels and shared these insights with Smart Peace partners.</td>
<td>• HD led a series of collaborative policy dialogue interventions at state and federal level in Nigeria aimed at revising policies on reconciliation and reintegration of ex-fighters to be more gender sensitive and inclusive.</td>
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<td>• Crisis Group was able to establish unique access to ‘graduates’ of the Operation Safe Corridor programme, using their insights to evaluate current approaches to reintegration and to recommend ways to strengthen them.</td>
<td>• Nigeria Hub partners conducted a hub-level peer review to ensure the quality of joint efforts and support adaptation of their programme activities.</td>
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About Smart Peace

Analytical and evaluative methods used in Smart Peace (continued)

Myanmar

• Crisis Group’s thematic research and analysis in Myanmar provided a strong evidence base for programme design and policy influence. Peer review and strategy testing evaluative methods helped apply this evidence base to programme activities, drawing together common threads and adapting to change.

• BIT and ETH worked with local partners to assess the impact of TV shows on social cohesion.

• Myanmar Hub partners conducted a hub-level peer review to ensure the quality of joint efforts and support adaptation of their programme activities.

Cross-consortium

• Smart Peace applied a peer review methodology to review and adapt its activities. The methodology is a behavioural science-informed approach to ensuring the quality of decision-making in complex operating conditions first developed by HD and adapted to the consortium.

• Smart Peace used Outcome Harvesting to collect evidence of change and how an intervention contributed to these.

Learn more about our adaptive and collaborative peacebuilding consortium

Smart Peace in practice
Central African Republic

- Mediating herder-farmer violence
- Supporting young people's pathways to peace
- CAR resources
Central African Republic

Mediating herder-farmer violence

**CONFLICT CHALLENGE**

Why do herder-farmer relations need to be mediated, and why is this difficult?

Tensions between communities of farmers and herders have long been a source of violence in CAR. Especially in CAR’s borderlands, farmer-herder disputes are an ‘engine of conflict’, aggravating friction between communities to fuel wider fighting and civil war.

Farmer-herder tensions are driven by disputes over the use and ownership of land. More recently, farmer-herder violence has merged with the wider crisis in CAR, and communities have increasingly become divided along sectarian lines, between herders mainly associated with Muslims and farmers largely linked to Animists or Christians. Militia groups that had initially been established to protect communities from violence have since morphed, often transitioning into fully-fledged armed groups mainly comprising young men. ‘Transnational’ herding communities often cross CAR’s borders with neighbouring countries, but many herder families have also been displaced by violence, including across national borders.
What did Smart Peace do differently to mediate herder-farmer violence more effectively?

Resolving conflicts between farmers and herders in CAR is difficult. Violence takes place largely in the borderlands. CAR’s borders are porous and poorly controlled, and state authority in the peripheries is weak. Traditional government and agro-pastoral community mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms have found it increasingly difficult to tackle farmer-herder violence due to collapsing local authority structures and declining community cohesion. Fighting also occurs largely outside the purview of national peace processes that try to address civil war.

Given the remoteness of farmer-herder violence both from the capital Bangui and from national peace efforts, Smart Peace has focused on assisting local capacity to resolve conflicts. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) has been supporting the establishment of agro-pastoral ‘local mediation networks’ in three areas affected by herder-farmer violence near CAR’s border with Cameroon, in Niem-Yéléwa, Gamboula and Bea Panzi. Designed to be self-sustaining and mutually supportive, the networks include influential members of farmer and herder communities, as well as faith and customary leaders and local authorities – both men and women.
Smart Peace has helped to train and support nine local women and 54 men to work within the networks, in order to identify emerging conflict between herders and farmers, and offer mediation to find solutions, prevent escalation and promote peaceful co-existence. Training on land law, agro-pastoral systems and mediation techniques has provided the mediators with knowledge and tools to understand the causes and dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts and ways to address them.

The networks have enabled mediators to build links and reinforce dialogue between communities and local authorities, and led to more contact, understanding and collaboration between authorities within CAR and across the CAR-Cameroon border.

Security issues related to cross-border transhumance (a seasonal movement of livestock from one grazing ground to another), particularly the presence of armed groups, have been discussed extensively. Plans have been developed for a meeting between military and local authorities of CAR and Cameroon to develop a joint military strategy to prevent incursions by armed groups.

Inclusion has been a central focus in the establishment of local mediator networks. Specialist training has helped women participants as well as minorities such as Pygmy groups to engage with traditionally male-dominated communities. Integrating gender and minority perspectives into networks has contributed to a more inclusive mechanism for managing agro-pastoral conflicts than traditional mechanisms.
How have farmer-herder relations changed?

Since Smart Peace began in March 2020, local mediation networks have successfully identified and resolved 109 conflicts on the CAR-Cameroon border.

In combination with other peace initiatives, including dialogue with armed groups and relationship-building between authorities on both sides of the border, they have brought about clear improvements in the management of violent conflict in CAR’s western border zones. Herders are reported to have started to return to their areas of origin, and, building on this, HD has begun planning support for the return of refugee herder communities. Women’s integration into local mediation networks has enabled progress on managing tensions over access to water points, between mostly Muslim Fulani herders and Christian local women farmers, and has also enabled resolution of conflicts over the devastation of crops caused by herders’ livestock.

Local authorities in CAR have expressed interest in learning from the local mediator networks and potentially using them as a model for conflict resolution in other borderlands in the country. Within the Smart Peace consortium, HD has shared contacts and expertise to help partner organisation Conciliation Resources to speed up their work on farmer-herder conflicts elsewhere in CAR.
How should these efforts to mediate herder-farmer violence be built upon?

Local mediation networks established under Smart Peace have proved an effective mechanism for tackling one of the most important and persistent drivers of violence in three provinces in CAR. But farmer-herder tensions are felt across the country and its borders, and have potential to escalate into new conflict, particularly in the event of large-scale return of displaced herding communities. Strengthening, refining and extending the networks is vital to ensuring sustainable peace for CAR, and offers a viable model for peaceful resolution of local conflict in other regions.
Central African Republic

Supporting young people’s pathways to peace

CONFLICT CHALLENGE

Why do young people need to be included in efforts to sustain peace, and why is this difficult?

Young people have suffered significantly from violence in CAR’s recurrent crises. Many have been displaced and robbed of education and livelihoods, and face the collapse of social relationships. Multiple sources of insecurity feed off each other to create self-sustaining cycles of violence – from crime and banditry, to fighting between armed groups and the mobilisation of ethnic or religious identity groups.

Young men – and some young women – have joined armed groups, often to achieve protection or revenge driven by experiences of loss, trauma and fear. Peace initiatives in CAR need to understand the challenges young people face and respond to their different interests and needs. Yet, young people, especially uneducated young men and women from rural areas, those working in the informal economy and those associated with armed groups, are excluded from efforts to prevent violence and sustain peace. They are too often seen as part of the violence ‘problem’ rather than solution.
What did Smart Peace do differently to support young people’s pathways to peace more effectively?

Young people in CAR need alternatives to joining armed groups, and peace processes need to address their needs. But national and international peace strategies have focused on a national-level view of conflict rather than local drivers of violence. The voices of local young people remain unheard in peace process design and implementation, with the role of young women and girls particularly poorly understood.

Under Smart Peace, Conciliation Resources (CR) conducted a series of ‘Listening Exercises’ with young people associated with armed groups in CAR. These aimed to shed light on the diverse experiences and perspectives of marginalised young people, and help them articulate their needs to decision-makers. Listening Exercises allow participants time and space to tell their stories in their own words. They seek to mitigate common research challenges such as ‘self-censoring’ by interviewees, and can help give young people who may be frightened, suspicious or traumatised, confidence to express their views openly.
The exercises were led by local researchers in partnership with local civil society, youth associations and CR. Researchers had an in-depth understanding of local circumstances and spent significant time in communities, conducting interviews in local languages in an informal atmosphere. This helped generate more in-depth and honest insights. The exercises prioritised gender and inclusion.

A women-only workshop helped to enable women’s participation. Research actively considered issues of age, socio-economic background, family support systems, and rank within armed groups in order to understand different experiences of peace and conflict, and of pathways into and out of violence.

The process needed to adapt to fast-changing conditions. The first Listening Exercises occurred in Bossangoa and Paoua with 101 young people, including 30 young women. Recurrence of widespread conflict in CAR in December 2020 made these zones insecure, however, and the process adapted to engage young people not associated with armed groups living in the capital Bangui. Findings from this part of the exercise were intended to inform policy discussions at a time when the CAR Government was preparing to launch a new national dialogue initiative in response to the resurgence of fighting.
How has Smart Peace helped young people in CAR to engage in peacebuilding?

The Listening Exercises enhanced understanding of young people’s motivations for joining armed groups and barriers to leaving. Some young men join under pressure from families to defend the community. Those without family are vulnerable to recruitment and find it harder to reintegrate without a support network. Young women face abuses within armed groups and additional stigma on attempting to leave.

The reports from the research have been widely disseminated. In 2020, young people presented findings to representatives of government ministries who were visiting Paoua and Bossangoa, including ministries for youth, disarmament and reconciliation. Ministries, UN agencies and donor governments have reported that the findings have provided significant value in the design of demobilisation programmes and post-conflict peace interventions.

Direct contact between decision-makers and young women and men helped build communication channels and foster mutual understanding. The research process helped build the capacity of civil society and local researchers, and improve methodologies for participatory research in remote conflict-affected areas.
How should these efforts to support young people’s pathways to peace be built upon?

Listening Exercises opened a window into the views of young people, and gave them channels to decision-makers. This needs to be built on. Local and international civil society can work together to support young people to find coherent strategies out of armed violence, and to articulate their demands in ways that policymakers will listen to. Local and international partners with links to local peace networks in CAR, experience in designing and implementing peace processes, and skills in communicating ideas can help to take this process to the next phase – so that national peace strategies in CAR take young people seriously, and young people are supported to realise their peacebuilding potential.

Acknowledgement

The Listening Exercise with young people associated with armed groups in Paoua and Bossangoa was co-funded by the Smart Peace (UK Government) and the Alternative to Violence (UN Peacebuilding Fund) projects.
CAR resources

In conflict-ridden CAR, act locally for smart peace, Richard Moncrieff, Allard Duursma, Lisa Heinzel and Nyeko Caesar Poblicks, July 2021

Youth visions for peace in the Central African Republic: Voices from Bangui, Conciliation Resources, Ben Shepherd, Théophane Ngbaba and Lisa Heinzel, August 2021

Experiences of young ex-combatants in the Central African Republic, Conciliation Resources, Ben Shepherd and Lisa Heinzel, May 2021

French version: Les expériences des jeunes ex-combattant(e)s en République centrafricaine
https://www.c-r.org/fr/learning-hub/les-exp%C3%A9riences-des-jeunes-ex-combattantes-en-r%C3%A9publique-centrafricaine

The young are key to avoiding old mistakes in Central African Republic, Basile Semba, The New Humanitarian, 24 May 2021
CAR resources (continued)

- Listening to young people associated with armed groups in northwestern Central African Republic, Conciliation Resources, Ben Shepherd and Lisa Heinzel, July 2020

  **French version:** À l’écoute des jeunes associés à des groupes armés dans le nord-ouest de la république centrafricaine
  [Link](https://www.c-r.org/fr/learning-hub/a%CC%80le%CC%81coute-des-jeunes-associe%CC%81s-a%CC%80des-groupes-arme%CC%81s-dans-le-nord-ouest-de-la)


- Young people and armed groups in the Central African Republic: voices from Bossangoa, Conciliation Resources, Ben Shepherd and Lisa Heinzel, October 2020

  **French version:** Les Jeunes et les groupes armés en République Centrafricaine: Les voix de Bossangoa
  [Link](https://www.c-r.org/fr/learning-hub/les-jeunes-et-les-groupes-arme%CC%81s-en-re%CC%81publique-centrafricaine-les-voix-de-bossangoa)

Nigeria

• Reconciling former Boko Haram associates in communities
• Transforming community security groups
• Nigeria resources
Reconciling former Boko Haram associates in communities

Why should people formerly associated with Boko Haram be reintegrated and why is this difficult?

The Boko Haram (BH) insurgency and its offshoot Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) have been wreaking havoc on communities in northeast Nigeria since 2009. An important part of building peace involves providing combatants and others associated with armed groups who want to leave with effective ways out, including safe return and reintroduction to their communities.

But official processes for reintegration, primarily Operation Safe Corridor, have prioritised the ‘return’ phase, with until recently much less support for community reintegration or public communication to explain policies. Communities feel excluded from decisions and that reintegration is imposed on them. Existing reintegration initiatives have largely failed to address community resistance to returnees, which is grounded in fear, perceptions of injustice, suspicion that returnees remain aligned with BH or ISWA, or frustration that returnees’ needs are seemingly prioritised over those of ‘innocent’ civilians.
Community security groups (CSGs) are officially mandated with facilitating reintegration, but some CSGs have attacked returnees rather than supporting them or handing them over to authorities. Returnees have said they are more likely to take part in reconciliation initiatives that are not run exclusively by the Nigerian military and that offer additional support beyond being returned to their community. Distrust of formal reintegration processes has been a significant factor in motivating multiple community, vigilante and local reconciliation and reintegration efforts which run parallel to the Nigeria Government-led formal process.
What did Smart Peace do differently to make reintegration more effective?

Effective reintegration requires working with communities and returnees, and with national and state government institutions and civil society. Smart Peace partners have pooled their expertise and networks to develop a set of collaborative programmes to support reintegration from both ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’.

Conciliation Resources and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue have conducted over 500 sensitisation and outreach activities that have connected with more than 25,000 people in order to improve understanding of reintegration processes and dispel misconceptions. More than 375 dialogues have been held within communities to unpack different concerns and attitudes, build trust among different identity groups, and create spaces to talk about the potential benefits of reintegration. And over 140 dialogues have been facilitated between returnees, members of camps for internally displaced people, and communities, in order to build empathy and confidence.
Smart Peace led introductory mediation training with the Civilian Joint Task Force, the military and the Security and Civil Defence Corps – quasi-state Nigerian security bodies with mandates to support reintegration. The training was designed to enhance understanding of how formal and informal security institutions could work together to facilitate more effective reintegration, and to change narratives around reintegration in policy circles.

The Behavioural Insights Team evaluated the role of local radio in influencing community attitudes to reintegration, which provided valuable insights into what type of messaging and framing was the most effective at eliciting public support for reintegration and empathy for returnees.

 Actors engaged in the reintegration process in northeast Nigeria need to understand the varied experiences of returnees and diverse attitudes towards reintegration of different groups within communities. In response, Smart Peace focused on the emerging gender dynamics of reintegration, drawing lessons from gender-sensitive analysis and inclusive dialogues with communities to better identify and resolve gendered challenges to reintegration.
How has the reintegration of former Boko Haram associates changed?

Community members in participating areas, including women, reported being more comfortable discussing reintegration. There was evidence of a growing recognition that reintegration is essential for local security and restoring peace, and that communities had more faith in their own ability to enable reintegration.

There has been a tangible reduction in the stigmatisation of returnees, reflected in reports since January 2021 from people associated with BH rejoining communities in a number of districts that they have not faced any harassment. Returnees participating in Smart Peace activities included BH recruiters, victims of kidnap, BH ‘wives’, people who provided logistical or financial support, and civilians who lived under BH rule (‘awam’). Participation by returnees in Smart Peace and other community reconciliation activities has increased, particularly among people who have some form of sympathetic support network in the community. Returnees have also proactively approached Smart Peace personnel and counsellors, asking how they can participate and seeking mentoring and guidance on reintegration.

Twelve Community Reintegration and Reconciliation Coordination Committees were established in order to improve communication and collaboration between disparate reintegration mechanisms within communities. These Committees are diverse, involving state security officials, local government representatives, community and religious leaders, community women leaders, members of CSGs and community representatives.
How should these efforts to support the reintegration of former Boko Haram associates be built upon?

Prospects for a negotiated solution to complex violence in northeast Nigeria are currently slim. Providing stronger incentives and clearer pathways out of violence for members and associates of armed groups and networks – including through reintegration – is an essential part of a viable response to continued fighting. To work, this response must be joined up, and must include working with both communities and government representatives in order to shift attitudes and increase engagement with the reintegration of ex-combatants, and connecting informal and formal security structures, as part of a more holistic reintegration strategy that puts communities first.
Nigeria

Transforming community security groups

**CONFLICT CHALLENGE**

**Why do community security groups need to be transformed and why is this difficult?**

Many community security groups (CSGs) operate in northeast Nigeria, purportedly to protect communities from armed violence and to support reintegration of ex-combatants. But CSGs have in fact been disconnected from communities’ needs, while community peace groups have lacked incentives or capacity to talk to CSGs.

Communities see CSGs both positively and negatively – as an essential defence against violence by predatory armed actors like Boko Haram, but also as a source of exploitation and human rights abuses. Women and girls have been especially vulnerable. For example, CSGs have been deployed to provide security in schools, but many schoolgirls are equally afraid of CSGs.
CONFLICT CHALLENGE (CONTINUED)

CSGs do not coordinate with each other or have consistent rules of engagement. Multiple CSGs in Yobe state have very different attitudes towards former armed group members seeking to return to their communities, and some people suspected of being associated with Boko Haram have been attacked or killed. Communities often do not cooperate with CSGs or withhold important security information, and CSGs see communities as uncooperative or sympathetic towards armed groups.

Mistrust between communities and CSGs is disruptive and can provoke new conflict. CSGs need to transform away from intimidation and towards community security. Trust needs to be built between CSGs and communities, as well as among different CSGs.
What did Smart Peace do differently to transform community security groups more effectively?

Smart Peace in northeast Nigeria was designed at a time when violence was declining. It had initially planned to support demobilisation and reintegration of CSGs back into communities. But rapidly escalating violence early in the project meant that CSGs in fact remained a vital security resource for communities, protecting them from different armed actors including Boko Haram, and acting as bridges to the military. Smart Peace quickly shifted focus to maintaining CSGs but transforming them to be more responsive to communities. Priorities identified by communities for CSGs’ transformation were women’s participation, and increased sensitivity to gender and civilian rights.

Smart Peace partners worked cooperatively: Conciliation Resources focused at local level on gender sensitivity with CSG ‘foot soldiers’, while Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue worked at leadership level with CSG group commanders, and state and district coordinators. All activities were undertaken closely with local peacebuilding partners. Cooperation maximised Smart Peace partners’ respective strengths to support CSGs’ transformation from multiple directions as part of an integrated effort. For example, different CSGs and community groups received consistent language and messaging in relation to gender sensitivity, which helped reinforce understanding and increase uptake. Smart Peace partners also coordinated where they worked, enabling the project to reach more people.
Smart Peace activities included conflict analysis, trust building, facilitating dialogue, capacity building and sensitisation. Some examples of activities include the following.

- In Borno State 386 women participated in gender-sensitisation and awareness-raising activities. These happened separately with CSGs and communities, focusing on supporting women to join CSGs and countering societal resistance to this. Women-only workshops and separate focus group discussions with female CSG members recognised that women often feel unable to speak confidently in the presence of men.

- Dialogues between women and CSGs involved 340 women in Yobe State and 531 women in Borno State, which provided platforms for women to discuss how to safely participate in CSGs, and the specific challenges that different groups of women face when interacting with CSGs.

- Over 20 training sessions and 400 sensitisation activities took place with CSGs, including on human rights, conflict analysis and dialogue.

- More than 450 members of different CSGs participated in 15 discussions that provided spaces for regular dialogue among CSGs and with communities. Over 500 problem-solving dialogues were also held between communities and CSG steering committees.
How have community security groups changed?

At the start of Smart Peace there were no women in CSGs in Yobe State, while no women held senior positions in Borno State. By summer 2021, more than 140 women had joined CSGs in Yobe State. Increasing women’s participation has helped to make CSGs’ operations more sensitive to women’s needs. Searches on women travellers are now being conducted by women CSG members. Women members of CSGs can mentor and support the reintegration of women associated with Boko Haram who have returned to the community. And some women CSG members are guarding routes from collection points to protect women fetching water.

Women CSG members have led sensitisation sessions to dispel rumours about their role and improve community relations, which has helped to overcome cultural and religious barriers to women’s participation. Increasing acceptance of female CSG members has been reported across all target communities. Women CSG members in Borno State now play an active role in reintegration processes, and were officially added as representatives in the Steering Committee for the formal reintegration process, Operation Safe Corridor, which is chaired by the Office of the National Security Advisor.

CSGs say they have a greater respect for human rights in their operations, which has been corroborated by community members. Different CSGs have shown increased levels of trust and coordination with each other, for example, establishing joint security meetings and undertaking joint patrols in some communities.
How should these efforts to transform community security groups be built upon?

Going forward, Smart Peace partners hope to use lessons from Smart Peace activities as the basis for broader efforts to work with CSGs and communities for peace in northeast Nigeria. These would happen on two fronts: first, through practical processes to transform CSGs in additional communities and Local Government Areas; and second, through advocacy activities aimed at influencing a range of policymakers and practitioners at both state and federal levels in Nigeria, in order to develop their strategies and tactics so that they are better able to reinforce and broaden efforts to make CSGs more gender sensitive, responsive to the needs of local people and cognisant of human rights.
Nigeria resources


The Islamic State Franchises in Africa: Lessons from Lake Chad, International Crisis Group, October 2020
And accompanying video
https://twitter.com/CrisisGroup/status/1324297247895465984

Applying behavioural insights and dialogue to build Smart Peace in conflict settings, Behavioural Insights Team, September 2021

Gender-inclusive peacemaking: Strategies for mediation practitioners by Cate Buchanan (Mediation Practice Series, paper 9)

Getting Boko Haram Fighters to Defect, Vincent Foucher, International Crisis Group, May 2021, World Politics Review
Myanmar

- Supporting discussions on security sector transition
- Supporting transformation of governance
- Myanmar resources
Supporting discussions on security sector transition

**Myanmar**

**CONFLICT CHALLENGE**

**Why is transition of the security sector in Myanmar important and why is it difficult?**

The peace process in Myanmar has sought to resolve longstanding conflicts between the government and military, and multiple ‘ethnic armed organisations’ (EAOs) that have been fighting for decades for greater autonomy in parts of the country. The signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the state and a number of EAOs in 2015 was a significant milestone. However, since then progress towards more substantive political agreements has been slow, while formal negotiations have been suspended since February 2021 due to the political turmoil in the country.

A major source of dispute between EAOs and the state has been over transforming the security sector – the police, military and intelligence services – and in particular the extent to which power should be devolved under a future governance system that might result from peace talks. Progress is further hampered by disparities between the negotiating parties’ different interpretations of terminology around the security sector, which makes productive dialogue much more difficult.
What did Smart Peace do to make dialogue on transition of the security sector more effective?

Through Smart Peace, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) provided technical advisory support to several parties involved in negotiations on the security sector. Advice focused on how various security sector components could be structured under different governance systems that have been under consideration in the peace process, including various models of federalism. Smart Peace support aimed to facilitate negotiations by building a common understanding of possible trajectories for security sector transition among the parties, and also strengthening trust between them.

HD’s technical assistance also sought to make discussions about transforming the security sector more inclusive, as a way to strengthen public buy-in and ensure that the security needs of people and communities across all sectors of society in Myanmar are taken into account. HD encouraged the inclusion of women in technical training processes. In parallel, HD further engaged directly with women members of ethnic groups that are engaged in armed conflict, with civil society networks that promote women’s inclusion in the peace processes, and with representatives of Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC) teams. These discussions focused on the implications of security sector policies for women in society and the implementation of ceasefire arrangements on the ground.
Collaboration among the Smart Peace hub partners enhanced the effectiveness of the activities. For example, International Crisis Group provided risk analysis regarding potential application of federal governance models in Myanmar. HD applied this analysis to enhance the conflict sensitivity of its activities, adapting advisory support and materials used with the negotiating parties on transforming the security sector under different federal models, and reviewing issues that might exacerbate tensions between identity groups involved in Smart Peace activities.

The Asia Foundation provided guidance on fiscal arrangements to inform HD’s discussions on the financial implications of changes in security sector policies, while the two organisations also shared lessons on how to include women more effectively in policy dialogue.
How have prospects for the transition of the security sector changed?

HD facilitated discussions with EAOs and other parties to the peace process over options for transforming the security sector under different governance models. Supporting the parties to identify and engage in dialogue on mutually relevant topics has started them on the path of considering areas of common ground where potential agreement could be made, or at least discussed. This is an important contribution to peace in Myanmar given how contentious security sector discussions have been, and how these contribute to the persistent disputes over how the country should be governed.

Efforts to promote a more inclusive security discourse broadened the negotiating parties’ recognition of a more holistic approach to security and defence, including human security needs such as the social and economic welfare of all sectors of society, and how policy decisions could affect these. HD welcomed a decision by EAOs to routinely include a number of women’s representatives alongside EAO leaders during HD’s technical assistance sessions. HD’s parallel direct support for ethnic women’s representatives, civil society and JMC teams strengthened their technical understanding of security sector themes. This has complemented their own advocacy efforts, providing them with relevant technical knowledge and terminology so that they can tailor how they present their concerns to the negotiating parties to be more impactful.
How should these efforts to support the transition of the security sector in Myanmar be built upon?

Given the broad scope and implications of security sector policy decisions, gradually working towards a common vision for a security sector transition will require dedicated support over time. While formal peace process talks are currently on hold, informal bilateral negotiations with armed groups are likely to continue and issues around the security sector and ceasefire arrangements remain relevant. Inclusion of women and civil society actors, including those engaged in monitoring and mediating ceasefire arrangements on the ground, will remain a vital part of informing future security sector policy discussions in the country.
Why does governance need be transformed in Myanmar and why is this difficult?

Armed groups in Myanmar have resisted central government and military control since independence in 1948. Most of the numerous armed groups active today are organised along ethnic lines and are concentrated in border areas. They have developed a degree of autonomy in territories under their control over more than 70 years of persistent and often intense violent conflict.

Failure to resolve armed conflict in Myanmar has stemmed in large part from an inability to create governance systems that allow minority communities and local leaders to participate effectively in decision-making. Inclusive and sustainable peace requires excluded groups to be involved in reform processes, including women and youth. A period of optimism from 2011-15 saw significant progress in political reform and the achievement of a promising ceasefire agreement between the government and several armed groups. However, relative gains were lost as both the reform and the ceasefire processes stalled and then collapsed with the 2021 military coup.
What did Smart Peace do to make governance transformation more effective?

Formal peace processes in Myanmar have historically been exclusive. A key barrier to expanding inclusion of different social groups has been uneven levels of technical knowledge and negotiating skills among different parts of government and the military, armed groups, and civil society engaging in peace talks and processes of political or constitutional reform. From 2011, space for dialogue seemed to be opening up through mechanisms for wider consultation and engagement – although in practice these were often constrained by lack of technical know-how among key participant groups.

Under Smart Peace, The Asia Foundation has supported different groups associated with ethnic minorities to build their technical capacity to engage in dialogue for advancing peace and political reform, including civil society organisations, political parties and civilian members of armed groups. Greater technical knowledge can enable these groups to engage more effectively in reform processes and find ways around political deadlocks that have stymied progress. The Asia Foundation worked with a diverse network to develop a toolkit of resources to boost technical knowledge, Envisioning Federalism in Myanmar, which is grounded in localised data and analysis and provides guidance on a range of political, administrative and fiscal aspects of federalism.
Smart Peace activities have been adaptive. Joint analysis by The Asia Foundation and International Crisis Group highlighted waning optimism in the peace process following deadlocked formal talks. Initial plans to convene forums on technical issues among representatives close to negotiating parties were modified as it became clear that the main peace talks were not generating sufficient common ground.

The programme adjusted to work primarily with ethnic organisations that were continuing discussions on peace and political reform, as their substantive participation remains important for longer-term peacebuilding prospects in Myanmar.

The Asia Foundation also modified its methodology for promoting gender inclusion in peace support initiatives. A new Smart Peace programme component focused on tackling barriers to women's participation in policy development on governance reforms. The programme was then adapted again in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and was redirected from in-person training to essential grassroots healthcare and community work in conflict-affected ethnic minority areas.
How have prospects for transforming governance changed?

Through Smart Peace, The Asia Foundation produced technical resources to support different groups’ involvement in peace and reform processes in Myanmar and to strengthen inclusion and representation.

Resources like the Envisioning Federalism in Myanmar toolkit have enabled women, ethnic minorities and other groups to engage on technical aspects of transition as trainers and facilitators. The resources are intended to have long-term relevance, and be flexible and modular, catering for diverse levels of knowledge and offering a wide range of practical use.

The shift in focus away from formal peace talks to a more holistic reform agenda closed some doors but opened others. In-person training had to be reduced due to Covid-19, but new partnerships were established with a broader network, and additional useful resource materials were produced. The pivot in response to Covid-19 enabled vital health and safety information to be delivered to remote and conflict-affected areas, and helped consolidate relationships with different ethnic-based civil society groups. Trust built through these relationships has helped create opportunities to bring new partners into future activities on governance reform, such as ethnically-aligned local health committees and youth organisations.
How should these efforts to support the transformation of governance in Myanmar be built upon?

Technical resources produced through Smart Peace on federalism and inclusive governance, and relationships and trust established among diverse groups, are essential building blocks for public debate around peace and reform in Myanmar.

In the wake of the 2021 military coup, the programme has established a platform for supporting change going forward. Much of Myanmar society is now involved in discussions around future peace and governance arrangements to an unprecedented degree, with new coalitions forming across divides of ethnicity, religion and social status. Ambitious reform proposals are being developed within the pro-democracy movement. Short-term gains may be even less likely than before the military takeover, but working toward a positive, inclusive and decentralised vision of governance is more important than ever.
Myanmar resources

Smart Peace to Champion Diversity over Division, Tabea Campbell Pauli, The Asia Foundation, November 2019

Envisioning Federalism in Myanmar resource kit, The Asia Foundation, July 2021 [restricted]. Older version available

Covid-19 and complex conflicts: the pandemic in Myanmar’s unsettled regions
https://asiafoundation.org/publications/

Covid-19 and Conflict in Myanmar Briefing Paper Series (ENG/BUR)

1. How Have Myanmar’s Conflicts Been Affected by Covid-19 and What Should be Done About It? The Asia Foundation, August 2020


Results and resources
Smart Peace in numbers 2019-2021

7,296 young people were reached through Smart Peace

This included members of youth groups in Myanmar, young people engaged in 'Listening Exercises' to share their perspectives on conflict in CAR, and community security group members in Nigeria.

39 armed groups were engaged through Smart Peace

The programme helped to reform community security groups, including vigilante structures in northeast Nigeria, and worked with ethnic armed organisations in Myanmar on key governance and security sector issues.

69 local peace structures were enabled through Smart Peace

Smart Peace accompanied and enabled local peace structures, including transhumance committees in CAR, reintegration and reconciliation committees in northeast Nigeria, and ceasefire monitoring committees in Myanmar.
Smart Peace in numbers **2019-2021** (continued)

Initiatives such as targeted trainings to women’s leadership and security groups in northeast Nigeria ensured Smart Peace reflected the needs and perspectives of women in addressing conflict.

Smart Peace supported initiatives such as radio broadcasts in CAR and awareness-raising campaigns by national organisations in Myanmar to enable a more effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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**42**

Women’s groups were supported through Smart Peace

**452,000**

People received Covid-19 guidance and information through Smart Peace
Cross-consortium resources

Lessons from an adaptive and collaborative peacebuilding consortium, Laura Aumeer and Veronika Fawad, July 2021

Film: An introduction to Smart Peace, May 2020

Series of four MEL practice papers

- Peer Review for Adaptive Management and Quality Assurance in the Smart Peace Consortium, Ian Wadley, July 2021

- Outcome Harvesting for Adaptive Programming in the Smart Peace Consortium, Yahoska Berrios, July 2021

- Strategy Testing: Connecting Learning to Action in the Smart Peace Consortium, Marly Augustine and Tabea Campbell Pauli, July 2021

- Using a Narrative Inquiry Approach to Guide Project Interventions: SenseMaker in Practice, Steff Deprez, July 2021
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