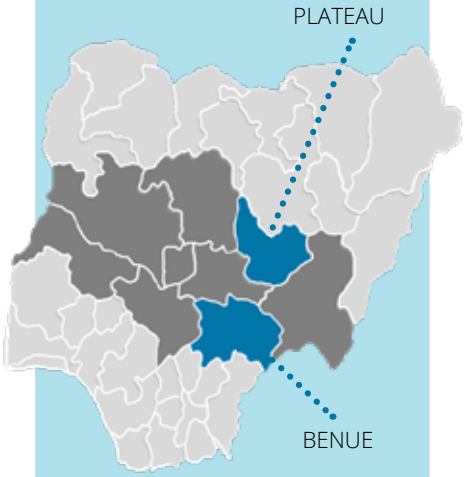
ADVANCING THE CONVERSATION ON THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF PEACEBUILDING

A CASE STUDY APPROACH:
COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF PEACEBUILDING IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

Overview of the conflict context



Located in the **Middle Belt region,** the center of the farmer-herder conflict

A **resource-based** conflict influenced by **ethno-religious differences** between sedentary farmers of Christian faith and nomadic herders of Muslim faith

There have been **significantly more investments in peacebuilding** at the international, national, state and local level **in Plateau State than in Benue State** between 2010 and 2020

Investigations into the question of peacebuilding cost-effectiveness to date have examined either macro trends or granular data, failing to provide the kind of actionable data needed by implementers and decision-makers. Search for Common Ground proposes to look at cost-effectiveness of peacebuilding at a different level. We use Plateau State as a case study to examine scenarios of conflict and identify programmatic factors which have the greatest effect on the mitigation of conflict trends. By comparing it with Benue State, we also sought to understand how violence could have played out if not for specific investments in peacebuilding.

Using conflict event data to evaluate peacebuilding cost-effectiveness: an innovative methodological framework

Mapping of responses to conflict and selection of **a range of interventions** representative of different peacebuilding approaches

Collection and analysis of **ACLED data** on **conflict events and fatalities** to identify conflict trends over the lifecycle of the project

Program evaluations review and **Key Informant Interviews** to attribute identified conflict trends to the project

Addressing the attribution issue - While data on conflict events and fatalities reveals positive and negative conflict trends in correlation with peacebuilding interventions, it is difficult to fully attribute observed variations in conflict trends to a specific peacebuilding program. However, by using granular data on conflict trends, either at the Local Government Area or the city level, and by gathering qualitative data which corroborates the observed trends, we were able to identify which peacebuilding programs contributed to the mitigation of violence.

An overview of selected peacebuilding interventions

8
peacebuilding interventions (5 by Search, 3 by local peacebuilding organizations)

Yearly budgets ranging from
US$30,000 to US$630,000

Implemented for a period ranging from
8 months to 4 years
between 2010 and 2020

6 out of 8 were correlated with a decrease in fatalities ranging between
23% - 100%

Key finding #1: The cost-effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions does not depend on budget size, but rather on the adequate, intentional and strategic allocation of spending and resources across programmatic activities and needs.

To achieve cost-effectiveness, impact-hungry practitioners should implement interventions...

... which target **a geographical area that is proportionate to available resources,** in order to more easily saturate target stakeholders and beneficiaries through their activities.

... which sustain a **relationship of trust with target communities,** for instance by promoting local ownership and participatory decision-making.

... which **strategically engage with both "key people" and "more people"** and **intentionally foster inclusivity** by making sure they do not only target the "usual suspects" or the easy-to-reach communities. In particular, in highly volatile conflict contexts, peacebuilding interventions should be **flexible** and **adaptive** enough to bring in new conflict actors and stakeholders as needs emerge throughout the implementation.

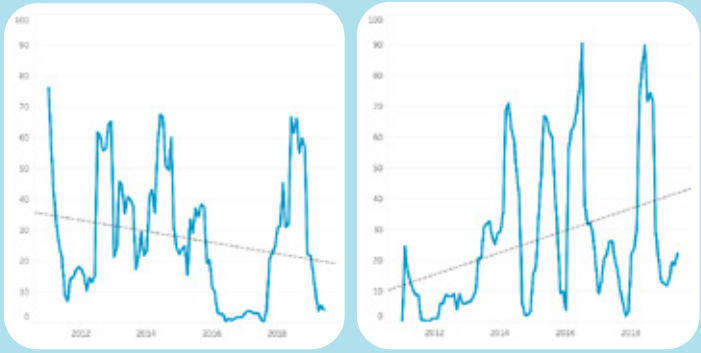
... whose design ensures **sustainable impact,** for instance through capacity-building and empowerment of target communities, but also through the promotion of vertical cohesion and political engagement with local, state and national authorities.

Donors should fund and support these peacebuilding interventions in a way that promotes adaptive management, for instance by supporting cost-extensions and funding subsequent project phases. Donors should also promote an understanding of cost-effectiveness which goes beyond considerations of costs to emphasize the intentional, strategic allocation of resources towards achieving the greatest impact possible.

Key finding #2: Peacebuilding has a significant return on investment and reduces the need for aid and humanitarian interventions.

Not all peacebuilding interventions are effective - however, **well-designed peacebuilding programs can and do prevent violence.** Cumulative investments in peacebuilding have the power to alter scenarios of violence and save hundreds of lives. Plateau State, which has received more investments in peacebuilding between 2010 and 2020, has experienced a decrease in violent conflict, while Benue State, which has received significantly less investments in peacebuilding, has followed a scenario of increasing violence.

Trends in monthly fatalities in Plateau State (left) and Benue State (right) from 2010 to today (6-Month Moving Average)



Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Project

Donors should invest more heavily in peacebuilding, as it does not only save lives, but also **reduces the need for humanitarian interventions** and aid by:

- Preventing displacement and contributing to the return of IDPs to their communities
- Supporting economic growth and development
- Mitigating the effect of conflict on access to basic services like education and medical care

Key finding #3: The use of conflict event data has great potential for future research on cost-effectiveness of peacebuilding.

Conflict event data provided by the ACLED Project is a great resource to evaluate and compare the cost-effectiveness of different peacebuilding interventions. While it remains difficult to fully attribute observed conflict trends to a specific intervention, we can at least determine a program's contribution to these trends by supporting quantitative results with qualitative data from program evaluations and KIIs. This methodology should be tested on a greater sample of peacebuilding interventions to draw stronger conclusions on the comparative impact of different peacebuilding approaches.

Future research on peacebuilding cost-effectiveness using conflict event data would benefit from:

- The production and collection of **more granular data** on conflict events, fatalities but also on social cohesion and access to primary services, to better evaluate the impact of peacebuilding on the effects of violence
- **Greater transparency and sharing of program evaluation and cost data** within the peacebuilding field