

TWO COOPERATIVES: TWO SUCCESS STORIES

IDPs, returnees and host community members are resilient and skilled people. They can achieve a lot with very little if they are given the opportunity and the necessary means to impulse change in their lives and develop their communities."

In Gwoza town, the administrative Headquarters of Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA) in North-East Nigeria, Borno State hosts three formal camps: 20 Housing unit, Wakane and GSS camps and has a combined Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnee number of over 11,000.

In December 2017, at the peak of spontaneous refugee and IDP returns in Gwoza, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency provided targeted assistance to the most vulnerable returnees and IDPs to achieve the sustainability of returns and as a form of protection safety nets. Identified IDPs and refugee returnees among the most vulnerable were grouped in clusters of ten (10) individuals (8 females and 2 males) each to align with the composition of the population, in majority female.

Empowered to generate income to support their families, the cooperative members developed internal financial control measures such as the wooden save namely *Asusu*. Among the successful and sustainable income-generating activities functioning are the sewing cooperative and transportation services through motor tricycles popularly called "Keke Napep".

I. THE SEWING COOPERATIVE

Each cooperative received five (5) sewing machines from which they have purchased two additional sewing machines making it to 07 machines. Since their business installation, the cooperative has taken on over 20 apprentices from other camps and surrounding host communities, and as of October 2019, eleven (11) tailors graduated from the cooperative training session and have set up their income-generated activities.

"Our members have benefited from the cooperative since part of our income is shared among ourselves. This has helped us to enroll our children in school, buy school uniforms, books and sandals. In fact, I was able to send my son to further his education in Maiduguri. Now, I often buy condiment to complement my monthly food rations. We could not afford all these a year ago" confessed Zainab Mohammed the chairperson of the cooperative. She continued, "When I first arrived in this camp, I used to borrow sewing machines from the host community but today, thanks to UNHCR support and empowerment, we have our machines and are teaching our skills to other IDPs women and men that are willing to learn the trade."



Besides the money shared among the members, the cooperative had over NGN 65,000(\$180) in their savings account. Ms. Hauwa Danladi, a female-headed household and a mother to 07 children.

"My membership to the cooperative is a blessing. It has helped me sustain my family."

II. A TRICYCLE COOPERATIVE IN WAKANE CAMP, “THREE IN ONE”



UNHCR supports this commercial transportation cooperative within Gwoza town. With ten (10) active members, the structure is comprised of a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, and seven active members with three objectives. First objective: to provide protection safety-net to the most vulnerable PoCs and to mitigate negative coping mechanisms, the second objective: to strengthen the communal relationship and peaceful co-existence among group members; this cooperative programme has enabled peaceful coexistence between members of the Tricycle (Keke) cooperative who are

IDPs and IDPs returnees from different inaccessible communities present in the camp including Valengide, Dure, Wala, Patawe, Ashigashiya, Zalidva, and Shiya Dawe villages with different religions into the cooperatives.

“This cooperative has brought harmony among members of our community, something I had not seen before”; I believe the relationship will continue after-camp life.” John Kulkwa, a member of the cooperative

The money earned from the business partly shared among members and partly re-invested into goat business to support their families with basic necessities including enrolling their children into schools.

Thus far, the cooperative has saved over NGN 250,000 (\$694) and its activities are actively running.

Gwoza is both an IDP displacement and a refugee returnee area. Building on the skills and resources available in communities and implement programmes aiming at both mitigating protection risks both IDPs and returnees and host communities, fostering their resilience and self-reliance will contribute to post-conflict- reconstruction. The two stories are an illustration that affected populations are skilled and can contribute to the development of their communities. More support for similar initiatives is to be encouraged.



In addition to the above two cooperatives, other cooperatives such as the Knitting, the Local Spaghetti Making and the Milling Machine Cooperatives are successfully working and generating income to support their members. The members of cooperatives are also training IDPs and members of the host community interested in the trade to empower their self-reliance and foster peaceful coexistence.