



Funded by European Union

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN COMPLEX CRISIS (BRICC)

STORIES FROM THE FIELD ...

COOPI is a Participatory Foundation, registered in the Registry of Legal Entities of the prefecture of Milan.

It is an NGO registered in the list of civil society organizations pursuant of art.26 of the Italian Law n.125 of 11 August 2014.

COOPI started its operations in Nigeria in July 2014 and is currently present in Yobe (Northeast) and Sokoto (Northwest) States with three field offices (Damaturu and Gashua in Yobe, Northeast and Sokoto in Northwest) with the coordination office in Abuja.

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Contents

About BRICC

- Consortium.....3
- Component.....4
- Impact per component.....5

Stories from the field

- Human interest stories.....
- Case Studies.....
- Photo Stories.....



CONSORTIUM

COOPI is implementing EU-funded project 'Building Resilience in Complex Crisis' (BRICC) reference FED/2019/405-225 in consortium of Mercy Corps (Lead Partner) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

The project covers 6 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Yobe State. However, COOPI is implementing BRICC activities in two LGA's of Yobe state (Geidam and Yunusari).

The goal of BRICC project is to build the resilience of 26,875 Household in Yobe State, to increase their ability to cope with the shocks and stresses of conflict, climate change and complex crisis, and transform the underlying causal dynamics to reduce the risk of future conflict.



Components

The goal of each component is to support early recovery from, and build resilience to conflict in affected and vulnerable communities in Yobe State

- **Unconditional Cash Transfer:** To ensure vulnerable households can meet their basic needs and Yobe State has increased capacity to deliver a social safety nets programme
- **Asset and Social Cohesion:** To strengthened community resilience including improved community conflict resolution capacity.
- **Financial Inclusion:** To ensure women, youth, and adolescents have greater access to financial services
- **Agriculture:** To ensure essential market system functions restored and improved resulting in greater access for vulnerable populations to markets for quality inputs and services, and improved on-farm agricultural production
- **Youth Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training:** To increased access for youth to diverse income sources from off-farm employment

BEING SELF RELIANT WAS NEVER A REALITY FOR ME UNTIL I MET COOPI: Zainab's Story

Zainab Modu



The living conditions of internally displaced persons, host communities, and those returning to their communities of origin in Yobe State has been destroyed by constant attacks and threat from AOGs. This made families constantly depend on assistance from the government, organization, and other external assistance.

Zainab Modu a 37 years old woman with 6 children had to flee from the Mozogun community of Yunusari LGA due to constant attacks from AOGs. Zainab and her husband lost all their means of livelihood to the crisis, ever since Zainab and her family have been surviving on the goodwill of family and friends, and mostly on the assistance provided by humanitarian organizations.

“Before the attacks on my communities in Geidam, I and my husband were farmers and we were living happily together with our children. We harvested products from our farm like rice, beans, corn, and also some rearing of livestock. It took us years to build and accumulate such properties.



But on the day of the attack, almost all our properties were destroyed while some were carted away. we had to look for a place to reside until things settle in our community. On our return, we realized that we have lost everything we have ever worked for in life. All our savings and investment were all gone, and we didn't know where

to start from. We were confused and didn't know what to do or where to go. **Zainab Narrates**

Under the BRICC project, funded by the EU, COOPI provides cash transfer support of about 5,000 Naira monthly to help families cope with the challenges brought on by the crisis and COVID-19.

“I was very lucky to be identified by COOPI team and I have since been receiving cash transfer support. We sometimes get three months’ cash support of about 15,000 Naira to enable us buy essential supplies for my household. I was also included in the SIA (Savings and Investment Association) where we were taught on saving skills and investment opportunities we could adopt in order to have a back-up plan when things are hard.



I started saving, coupled with my side hustle of selling beans cake in the neighbourhood. And with the cash transfer support I was receiving, I saved and purchased a tailoring machine and started learning how to sew clothes. It was not easy at first, but I always get support from COOPI team and they referred me to a fashion artisan who put me

through practical and theoretical sessions. After 5 months, I was able to perfectly sew a complete dress, Zainab expresses with a smile

Zainab never believed she and her family would ever become self-reliant again due to the magnitude of what they lost as a family. Out of the savings and profit from Zainab businesses, her husband was able to purchase farm tools and input to resume their farming business.

My husband now focuses more on farming, while I manage the fashion designing and beans cake business. We now have a monthly stipend which we save for eventuality. I want to use this medium to appreciate EU/COOPI for this wonderful opportunities, assistance and knowledge granted to us free of charge. I and my family will forever be grateful for this.

With support from the European Union, COOPI will continue to scale up intervention within conflict affected locations in assisting vulnerable individuals and families regain their lost livelihood and also become self-reliant.

FARMING WAS MY WAY OUT OF SHOCK: GONI'S STORY



Mustapha Goni

Photo by COOPI

Mustapha Goni, a 55 years old farmer with 14 children is one of COOPI's beneficiaries under the agricultural component of the BRICC project. He was displaced from his community by the Armed Opposition Group in 2017 thereby losing his means of livelihood and a child in the process of fleeing to safety.

*My name is Mustapha Goni, am married to two wives with 14 children. I am an indigene of Geidam LGA, Yobe State and I have always been a farmer but on a small scale that is sufficient to feed and sustain us. The worst occurred when the AOGs stormed my community, destroying lives and properties. In the process, I lost my young daughter. Due to shock, I and my family had to look for shelter in a neighbouring community for few weeks. On our return, we found everything was lost as the AOGs took away foodstuffs, money, our livestock, and other valuables, **Goni expresses bitterly.***

Under the BRICC project funded by the European Union, COOPI empowered local farmers through the provision of training, inputs, and other marketing strategy training. Mustapha was among the hundreds of farmers empowered with improved seeds, fertilizer, and other farming inputs.



I was fortunate to be selected under the agricultural component of the BRICC project. COOPI trained us on new farming techniques, local compost-making techniques and provided us with farm input to support us prepared and return to my farming business. Before joining the BRICC project, I was selling kola nuts just for my family to make ends meet.

*After completing all training and receiving the necessary inputs, I started making the local compost for my crops, with the assistance and guidance of the COOPI team. I made the compost pit and applied it on my farm. **I then realized this method is more effective and cost-effective to foreign ones.** The harvest I had in the next few months was bountiful. I had to expand the size of my farm to plant other crops. I now harvest enough quantity to sustain my family and also sell for additional income. I can now take care of my family as we all invest much of our efforts in the farm. I have been able to save some money and buy additional farm tools. The support and encouragement from COOPI team have been immense. COOPI team always provided us with tips on farming system to help us grow in each of our trades. I am so grateful to the EU for this assistance, and I pray it continues for a long time as other vulnerable families also need such help.*

23 years old Isa Dahiru is another participant who benefited under the agricultural component of



BRICC project. The project is helping in improving his standard of living through training and empowerment. Isa is a young man who needed guidance and support to help him make the right choices in life.

Isa Dahiru

I never thought I would be this self-reliant again, as 2 years ago, I was just a water vendor (Me' ruwa) in Geidam LGA, living from hand to mouth. I couldn't support my younger ones, but here I am today after 2 years with COOPI. I own a farm producing a large amount of wheat. I do harvest over 20 bags of wheat from my farm. Thanks to COOPI and EU for this wonderful support provided to us. This support has been life-changing for many in Geidam LGA, especially the young who don't have anything meaningful to do because of the past crisis.

Isa said his dream is to become one of the biggest producers of wheat in Geidam LGA.



Ever since I started this journey, I believe I would one day be a big producer of wheat and also create jobs for the youth like myself. I want to use this opportunity to thank EU/COOPI for this wonderful assistance. It has been a joy all through, there is no regret for me. I would always remember this as a turning point in my life, **Isa happily expresses.**

With support from the EU, COOPI will continue to reach out to vulnerable individuals, especially the youth as they serve as the bedrock for development in any state. COOPI will continue to support youth like Isa to rebuild, get empowered and regain their livelihood and resilience.

Kaigama's story: Creating pathway for economic recovery and resilience building through savings and investment schemes.

Poverty remains a socio-economic factor that increased terrorism in recent years in Yobe state and pushed local inhabitants to adopt innovative approaches to earn a living for their families.



Saving and Investment Associations (SIA) have become an important means for sustainable livelihoods and building the resilience of individuals and families in Yobe state, Northeast Nigeria. Under the EU-funded project “Building Resilience in Complex

Crisis (BRICC)” COOPI introduced Saving and Investment Scheme to jumpstart a process of economic recovery for the affected population and to help build resilient communities in Geidam and Yunusari Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Yobe state. COOPI integrated over 2,000 beneficiaries into the Savings and Investments Associations with proper training and ongoing support. As a result, beneficiaries regain their social lives through inclusive actions of recovery and revival of livelihoods.

One of them is called Kaigama Bukah, aged 35 years and a returnee from Ngadala community in Asheikiri ward in Geidam LGA of Yobe State. He is married with 4 children, three (3) males and one (1) female. Kaigama is a health practitioner who owned a chemist shop which was burnt to ashes by insurgents, further causing the loss of all his capital and savings, thus making it impossible for him to open a new shop afterwards. Kaigama had to engage himself as a spare tricycle (Keke Napep) driver as a new livelihood strategy, earning approximately between five thousand (5,000) to eight thousand Naira (8000) on a monthly basis. This amount was insufficient and not sustainable to meet his family’s needs forcing him to totally dependent either on relatives and friends or NGOs who provide cash assistance on monthly basis to meet basic needs.

“I was doing well in Geidam, I had my own running business and we were having a normal life till 6 years ago, until this faithful day when we had a loud sound (bomb blast) that erupted the whole area. Kaigama explains to COOPI staff.



Kaigama during one of the SIA meeting.

During that time, I was in my shop and the first thought that came to my mind was to run towards home and find my family. I closed my shop and I headed over to my home to find my family; luckily I was able to locate my family in time and we ran for almost 15 kilometres and had to hide until everything settled down. The attack was huge and lasted for hours. We returned to our homes and found out that just within few hours all of my properties including my house and shop

were burnt to ashes by the OAG's operatives . Confused and frustrated, I left for Kastina State".

Kaigama's voice was very sad and his eyes were full of tears as he told his story.

Continuing on his story, Kaigama added: *"My wife almost left me because I was unable to provide food for her and the kids until other family members intervened. It was a devastating period for me and I almost committed suicide. But "God intervened" and has showed great mercy on me. I returned from Katsina to Geidam to start all over again. Sometimes, I have to send my wife and kids to relatives' houses to eat, because I couldn't provide for them. The children had to drop out of school as I was so helpless then. It was a very close friend of mine by the name Tijjani who helped me to get a tricycle. And so I started working as a tricycle driver making merely five thousand a month, and with that I was able to provide three square meals for my family".*

In light of his story, the local community members selected Kaigama as a member of Sunomari Savings and Investment Association (SSIA) as he had the same interest and goals. Kaigama expressed interest to join the association because he heard about its benefits and also because at community level there are no formal financial institution.

Emphasizing the gratefulness of having been selected as a target beneficiary in the **WFP-COOPI** project, Kaigama stated: *"Right now I have no regrets whatsoever because my life has changed from the previous time. I have acquired a piece of knowledge in financial literacy, basic small scale business development and management, and savings and investment methodology.*

Thanks to knowledge and skills I have acquired through these trainings, I have saved my money by buying more shares in our weekly savings meetings and also collected Investment capital of 120,000 naira with the approval of my fellow group members.



Kaigama in his chemist shop serving to customers.

With that and other savings that I had, I was able to open a new chemist and bought a fridge for my wife to start selling pure water and other soft drinks. I was able to repay my credit before share-out. The savings group taught me how to plan for the future and how to save my money in a safe place. The savings group is even more united than my family because when one is in trouble and need help, the whole group will make sure they provided solutions or look for the support from COOPI team as they are always available for us when we need them”.

Thanks to this initiative, Kaigama now earns approximately 30,000 to 40,000 Naira per week (over 100,000 a month) by rendering his services and selling of medicines including his wife’s pure water and drinks start-ups. His income has remarkably increased and his financial capacity improved to such an extent to allow him to meet his household members’ needs on a sustainable basis.

Nowadays, Kaigama’s children returned back to school and this makes him feel as a fulfilled father able to foster his children’s education thanks to COOPI’s support and training.



Asheikiri CBF on a monitoring visit to Kaigama Bukar at his newly opened chemist courtesy of Sunomari Savings and Investment Association Asheikiri-Geidam LGA

“Thank you COOPI and EU for providing technical training and support to allow me cater autonomously for my family without depending totally on the unconditional food assistance”.

Kaigama’s story demonstrates that savings can serve as investment capital for business, education, and also self-insurance against shocks, property damage, and income uncertainties. For this reason, COOPI with the support of EU under the BRICC project will keep promoting savings groups as a lasting poverty alleviation strategy for crisis-affected population in Northeast Nigeria.

“Valorizing water to restore livelihoods and improve health status of communities in Yobe State”



In Northeast Nigeria, one of the major problems or challenges faced by local inhabitants is the scarcity of water. Water shortage is caused by more recurrent drought coupled with ongoing insurgency and destruction of basic facilities by OAG operatives' coordinated attacks. Indeed, the latter are negatively affecting the provision/maintenance of basic water, health, schools and market infrastructures in Geidam and Yunusari LGAs of Yobe State.

Located at 10 km distance from Geidam LGA, the Mozogun community was attacked vigorously 4 years ago leaving most of the boreholes and hand pumps, and health facilities totally destroyed. The inadequate access to water forced families to flee to neighbouring towns for their survival, while some settled at running stream and fetched water from the same source where animals drink water including bathing that increased the risk of spread of water borne diseases.

COOPI - with the support of EU initiated the “Building Resilience in Complex Crisis (BRICC) Project” in Geidam and Yunusari LGAs of Yobe State to ensure the access to basic facilities by building/rehabilitating basic infrastructures including boreholes (solar powered or hybrid).



One of the beneficiaries of the BRICC Project is Fegi Gumi Bukar, a 55-years-old widow from Anguwar Gabar Mozogun community of Yunusari LGA – who says: *“prior to the rehabilitation of the water point we used to walk almost 10km to fetch water from a dry well. Most times, we ended up fetching just 2-3 buckets due to the long distance and the queue at the*

water points was long. But now we can fetch up to 10 jerry canes a day for drinking, cooking, bathing and washing. We are grateful to COOPI for coming to our aid and for providing us with options as we now have more than 3 hand pumps in our community running effectively”.



Isah Maiganum appreciating the water points' rehabilitation for his dispensary in Garin Gada, Yunusari LGA.

Another successful story comes from Isah Maiganum - a 50-years-old man in charge of Garin Gada Dispensary in Bul-tuwa Ward of Yunusari LGA – who pointed out that before the rehabilitation of the water points and the health facility, he was experiencing several challenges in providing daily services at the clinic (due to lack of water also by local vendors).

He emphasized that water is no longer a challenge following the **reticulation** of water by COOPI to the community facilities with storage tanks. Indeed, he highlighted that the borehole now positively influenced their work and made work easier.

Additionally, he informed that the borehole brought great relief to the neighbouring community and improved access to safe drinking water, thus eventually reducing the spread of water borne diseases and pressure on the health facility.

‘I still remember how difficult it was to get water before this water points were rehabilitated and reticulated by COOPI. Most time we had to spend from our small salary to buy water for official purposes or to drop small water containers to store and use for our routine activities. Sometimes women felt very uncomfortable when they wanted to visit the latrines in the clinic due to poor hygiene conditions because of water challenges. However, the story is now completely different as water is no longer an issue for us and even the neighbouring host communities are benefiting from this rehabilitated borehole. Many thanks to COOPI’, said Isah with a smile on his face.



A rehabilitated hand pump in Mozogun Community

Last but not least, the community leader of Garin Gada, Lawan Mushe, also expressed his gratitude by stating that *“it’s a great achievement for us and the community at large because we now have water readily available for drinking, cooking, bathing and for washing. We had about 9 boreholes in the community but*

only one was functional. We also had to contribute money to buy fuel to pump water for few hours in the morning to allow everyone to fetch the water. It was a difficult situation as people had to make a long queue just to fetch a bucket of water. It was very hard at that time because most people ended up buying water in order to meet up with the daily water needs in their houses. But with help of COOPI, we have access to clean drinking water anytime, any day with as they helped in the construction and rehabilitation of 2 hand-pumps fully installed with big solar system . This has also reduced water-related sickness and we no longer buy water. We appreciate the European Union and COOPI for this help”.

I HAVE BUILT MY RESILIENCE THROUGH SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT TECHNIQUES: Baima's Story



“As a Business person you have to be ready for opportunities,

Baima Alhaji Modu, aged 36, is one of the SIA beneficiaries under the BRICC project who is now making a living from the savings association, and is now an established business man in Geidam LGA.

Before the insurgence and crisis, Baima specializes in cloths and tailoring materials. From his profit, Baima can now afford 3 daily square meals and basic necessity of life. Until 2014 when Geidam fell to the attack of the AOGs, he lost everything that day, and he had to flee from Geidam with his family to Damaturu LGA.

“My name is Baima Alhaji Modu, am married with four (4) children. I was into boutique business, I sell clothes, shoes and bag in Geidam. I was doing well and fine, my children were attending school and everything was going on fine until 2014 December. I was in my shop when I had gunshot and explosions in my community. I ran home to ensure my family was safe, however, on getting home, the AOGs had started burning houses and killing prominent people in the community. I saw people running and looking for safety. So I told my wife to pick what she could carry. I took the whole money I had from the goods I sold, then we fled from Geidam to Damaturu with help of a friend who drove us to Damaturu LGA.”

“I stayed in with my senior brother in Damaturu for 3 days, then we proceeded to Kano state to start a life there because I couldn't return to Geidam LGA. I was a target in Geidam so I had to flee for awhile until everything subsided. However, life in Kano was hard, as we were surviving on the money I had on me, and some casual labourer job I did for people in Kano. A lot of things stopped in my family, my children stopped going to school, my wife started working as house help for families just to survive. whenever I look at my children and wife in that state, I start to shed tears in my heart, but I won't let them see it on my face because I have to be strong for them”.



Bamai was surviving from hand to mouth for a whole year in Kano State. He engaged in hard labour work like bricklaying, farming, and cleaning just to feed his family.

In September 2015, he decided to come face his fears in Geidam with his

family. On arriving to Geidam LGA, Bamai found out that he had lost his source of livelihood, his shop has been burnt down together with his investment. He had to start all over from the scratch.

When I got to Geidam LGA, I was confused because I didn't know where to start from. I was just been optimistic and hoping for the best. I was just happy to be back home. I knew starting my previous business would be difficult since I was not having capital. I reached out to some of my friends for help whom unfortunately also needed help themselves. And so, I just decided to return to doing the same thing I was doing in Kano state, (bricklaying, cleaning, and farming).

Saving and Investment Associations (SIA) have become an important means for sustainable livelihoods and building the resilience of individuals and families in Yobe state, Northeast Nigeria. Under the EU-funded “Building Resilience in Complex Crisis (BRICC) Project” COOPI introduced Saving and Investment Scheme to jumpstart a process of economic recovery for the affected population to build resilient communities in Geidam and Yunusari Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Yobe state .

In 2019, Bamai has been selected as a member of Tailabi Savings and Investment Association (TSIA) by his community members who had the same interest and goals. He was captured as a beneficiary and had the interest to join the association because he heard about its benefits and also because at community level there are no formal financial institutions.

I want to use this medium to thank God and COOPI for this approach and assistance given to us in this community, considering the fact that this place is far and dangerous, you still find ways to reach out to us, I say a big thank you to all organizations responsible for this assistance.



“ I will forever be grateful for this assistance and initiative by EU/ COOPI. I joined the Talafi savings group, we were like 30 members, I never knew I could save talk more of trusting my money in someone else's custody. I started saving 2,000 thousand naira weekly from the money I was paid from my labour, and I was giving a membership certificate. The whole process

was monitored by COOPI's team on a weekly basis. I took a loan of 40,000 naira from the group and ventured into buying and selling of stock fish because it was profitable then but I needed a capital to start-up, thanks to the members they approved of my loan request and I was credited the money.

I bought dry fish worth 40,000 Naira, I resold it after a while and got a profit of 15,000 Naira. I was happy on my first business transaction. It was then I knew a change has come for me. I reinvested the money again and saved the profit I got. I did this for over 6 months and before I knew it I was becoming self-reliant. I no longer work for people again. Out of the profit, I have been able to enrol 2 of my children in school and I also enrolled in a part time course 'BSc environmental health' in Potiskum, Yobe State. I now make a profit of 50,000 Naira monthly from the sales of my fish. I have repaid all the loan and am now an active member in the Tallafi savings group. As a



business person, I now have emergency fund saved for business opportunities or emergencies.

Baima's story demonstrates that savings can serve as investment capital for business, education, and also self-insurance against health shocks and property damage, and help to smooth consumption over income contingencies. For this reason, COOPI, with the support of EU under the BRICC project will keep promoting savings programmes as a promising poverty alleviation strategy for crisis-affected population in Northeast Nigeria.

I WAS THREATENED OUT OF MY COMMUNITY : Modu's Story



Modu Gofama aged 40 years with 7 seven children used to be an established welder in Geidam LGA. He specializes in doors, bed, windows, and gate making. He was making quite a living from his occupation until he started receiving multiple threat from unknown groups in Geidam. At first, he thought that they were all empty threat from jealous people, little did he know

his livelihood and means of surviving was about to be taken away from him.

"I was doing well and living a good life with my family. I was receiving contracts from people within and outside Geidam, so food or shelter was not a problem for me. My children were well taken care of, until I started receiving calls and text from unknown people asking me to leave Geidam or else they will kill me. At first I thought they were empty threats just to scare me off. On April 2015, at about 1:00pm, this AOGs stormed our community and started shooting sporadically, burning houses and properties. A close friend of mine called me to inform me that these AOGs were asking for my house and workshop address. He warned me to leave my shop and run for my life. I called my wife and told her to leave the house immediately and look for safety elsewhere. I left Geidam to Gashua LGA, planning to return the next day if everything subside. However, these AOGs went to my house and burned everything down, also destroyed my workshop with explosives. All my investment of doors, gates, windows and bed were destroyed. When I heard of this, I fell sick for like 2 weeks. I was also told that they will kill me if I ever returned to Geidam. So I took my family to Maiduguri and I stayed there for two years, with my elder brother." **Modu expresses**

During those years in Maiduguri, I tried to keep myself busy by helping my brother out at his taxi business. I was working from 8am to 5pm just to make sure I meet target and also have extra cash in hand. I don't want to be dependent on him totally because he has really done a lot by accommodating and feeding my family all these while. I always had the hope of going back to Geidam to start afresh because I felt like a stranger in Maiduguri. In June 2018, I took a bold step of returning to Geidam after peace was restored in the community. I knew I had to start afresh and work harder in order to survive.



Thanks to some NGOs and friends, shelter and food were provided to us although we survived from hand to mouth for some months.

The goal of BRICC project is to build the resilience of Household, to increase their ability to cope with the shocks and stresses of conflict, climate change and complex crisis, and transform the un-

derlying causal dynamics to reduce the risk of future conflicts. Modu was fortunate to have arrived back to Geidam when COOPI created the savings and investment groups. And so Modu was one of the founding members of Taimako saving group.

“I was so happy when the savings and investment group was introduced. I was fortunate to be one of the founding members. We followed all the training provided to us by COOPI staff. Soon, we grew up to 20 members. I got a loan from the group and started purchasing tools needed for my welder business. A friend had already agreed to give me a space close to where he works, where I will be able to get customers fast”.

*It was not easy at first, but with prayers and hard work I am now regaining **my stand again as a man** and head of the house. I have rebuilt my network of customers and I have two apprentices. I now sell doors, windows, beds, gate, and chairs. On an average, I now make close to 50,000 Naira monthly from sales of these products. My wife and children are doing well. I want to say a big thank you to COOPI/EU for this help. I am grateful and I wish more can be done to neighbouring communities that have been affected by crisis. God bless you”* Modu expresses happily



With programmes like the Savings and Investment association proving to be a community driven tool and platform where families and individuals can harness and build resilience and regain lost livelihood. There is need for scale-up and implementation of similar projects in hard to reach communities in Yobe State.

THE CASH-BASED TRANSFER HELPED ME REVIVE MY BUSINESS AGAIN : Maryam's Story



Hajiya Maryam Bukar, a 60 years old woman, is a victim of the ongoing crisis in the north-easter part of Nigeria where lot of families and individuals were displaced, and their means of livelihood taken away from them.

Maryam lost everything during a dreadful attack by the AOGs. She lost her son and her means of livelihood which was oil extraction, her shop was burnt down

and all her produce was damaged or destroyed.

“I was into oil extraction. I do sell to traders in market and I was making little profit that was sustaining my family, not until when AOGs attacked my community in 2017. The OAGs destroyed my shop, and also went away with some of my tools. I never left Geidam, I stayed behind with my children even though I lost one to the insurgency. I have been surviving from the good will of the community members, who usually give me

food stuff. Sometimes the village head gives us some stipend to survive, but as you know, it can't be enough and sustainable for me and my children” **Maryam expresses**

COOPI located Hajiya Maryam Bukar as she met all eligibility requirement needed to be assisted, and enrolled her in the Unconditional Cash Transfer as this programs aim to reduce poverty by

providing welfare program without any conditions upon the receivers' actions.

“COOPI located me easily and I didn't go through stress to get enrolled. I have been receiving cash assistance of 5,000 for the past 6 months now. I have been able to meet pressing and immediate need, and save little from what I have been receiving and restarted my business”.

I have always wanted to continue my business of oil extraction, this assistance has enabled me revive my business, I now have something to fall back on, I no longer depend on people's assistance before we eat, I want to thank COOPI and EU for this support, I hope this will continue for awhile until we all have gotten to our feet again” Maryam expresses with a smiling face

JOURNEY TO HEALING AND SELF-RELIANCE: HAUWA MUHAMMED'S STORY



My name is Hauwa Muhammed, am 22 years old with two children and I live in Hausari ward, Giedam LGA of Yobe State. My life turnaround when I was selected as one of the beneficiaries of the COOPI BRICC intervention program with funding from the European Union (EU). This exciting experience started for me when I enrolled in the vocational skill acquisition program for youth managed by COOPI. Before the vocational training, I had

*no means of livelihood and fully relied on assistance from humanitarian aid and organization. I lost my father at an early age and I was forced to early married at the age of 15, then after 3 years I lost my husband to the Crisis. I had to survive one way or the other. I engaged myself doing casual jobs just to support myself and my two kids, **Hauwa narrates***

COOPI under the BRICC program funded by the European Union has been building the resilience of over 1920 (Male 974, Female 964) Youths in the North-East part of Nigeria (Yobe). Youth were supported with vocational skills and trades like Tailoring, Furniture making, bag making, cap making, Automobile repairs, phone repairs, bicycle repairs, and many others, that will enable them to be self-reliant and assume their rightful place in the society.



After my enrolment into the vocational skills program, I was taught how to sew and make quality bags with 26 other participants who enrolled along with myself. We were challenged to use the skills acquired to make a better life for ourselves. Before joining the program I worked as a waitress for a food vendor where I earned just 500 daily, it was a tough period for me and my two kids. I have

always had a passion for designing and sewing materials, so when I enrolled in the bag-making trade, I was so happy to participate and learn.

My excitement knew no bounds and the highpoint of our training was when we were trained and handed over to a professional bag maker who taught us the practical aspect of bag making. We were allowed to practice in a safe space until we perfected our skills. On graduation from the safe space, I was determined to take this experience to a new level and make a career out of it but to achieve this I knew I needed to buy my sewing machine.



*Out of my savings from paid chores I did, I was able to afford a sewing machine and the necessary tools needed to start up. I started to sew and sell whatever I could create and start saving on every sales, no matter how little the profit was, **Hauwa expresses.***

*Alhamdulillah! This year by the mercies of Allah, I now make and sells bags on my own without assistance. After the training, I made and sold over 50 handmade bags in Geidam. I make an average of 2,000 Naira profit from the sales of each bags. I have been able to save and cater for my children while also been self-reliant too. I want to employ more ladies like myself with similar situation, and I also want to be an advocate of self-reliance to young girls like myself, as **Hauwa happily expresses.***

I see so much potential for me now and in the future. I also now have the opportunity to teach other women the skills I have learnt and share with how the skills I have acquired has changed my story and empowered me. I appreciate EU/COOPI for this wonderful assistance and showing me the way out of this doldrums of poverty and lack

FROM SMALL SCALE FARMING TO A COMMERCIAL FARMER: MODU KURA'S STORY

Agriculture is the bedrock of economic development in Nigeria, especially in the rural northern-part of Nigeria where individuals and families' major trade is farming. These families depend on farming for income and survival.

But due to the growing crisis in the northern part of Nigeria, especially Yobe State and its environs, families have been rendered homeless, lost their livelihood and exposed to crisis and shocks. Modu Kura is one among many farmers who was affected by the crisis from the AOGs, he was a small scale farmer (subsistence farmer) who mainly survives on the output from his farm. Because of his family size, he hardly has extra farm produce to store or sell, every harvest he made, it goes for family consumption.



My name is Modu Kura, am married with 7 children. I reside in Mozogun community of Geidam LGA. Prior to my meeting with COOPI, I have always been a farmer since the age of 19. I had my own farmland where I usually grow maize, and beans. I enjoy farming because it is something I love doing. My father was a farmer likewise some of my brothers, but none of us have ever practiced commercial farming, which is

farming on a large scale. I was contended with what I usually harvest because I can feed my family from it and I sometimes sell small quantity in order to purchase other basic needs of the family.

In 2021, Modu and his family experienced the worst as the AOGs attacked Geidam LGA, and he and his family fled to Yunusari LGA for safety. The AOGs seized a lot of properties, destroyed farmland by plying the land with vehicles and bikes. Modu's farm land was not spared as he lost lots of farm produce. Modu returned after a week to his community (Mozogun) and has to start from the scratch.

"I returned and saw the damage that was done to my farm. The money and time invested on my farm land were all in vain. I had no choice but to look for an alternative way to survive, so I took some loan from a friend and bought some farm input in other to kick start my farm business just to survive. I resumed farming but things grew worst. I harvested just enough to sustain my family. I then engaged in providing casual labour just to ensure my family were taking care of. So, I worked as a bricklayer and as truck loader in market for people. It was not easy but I just had to find a way to survive. I was earning around 1,000 naira per day from these menial jobs, it was not easy at all", Modu expresses



With support from the European Union, COOPI provided local farmers with extensive trainings, farm inputs such as fertilizer, improve seeds of different crops to help boost their resilience, improve their livelihood and set them on a path to self-reliance. Modu Kura was one among hundreds of local farmers to have been empowerment.



Modu on his farm land

Meeting COOPI was a blessing as I never imagined I would be this stable financially. COOPI identified and trained me on some new methodologies, farming techniques and was empowered with improved seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, how to make local manures and guidance on technical issues. I applied all this knowledge and input to my farming business and the result has been amazing ever since, on my first harvest. I

*sold over 8 bags of beans which was gotten from my farm. I sold each bags for 36,000 Naira, **Modu happily expresses***

Modu is now a commercial farmer, he now plants varieties of crops on his farm land, e.g., tomatoes, onions, rice, beans, salad, pepper, wheat, water melon, cotton and many others.

“few years ago, I was just farming for myself and family to survive, but look at me today? I can call myself a commercial farmer. I sold over 15 baskets of tomatoes, 6 bags of rice, 6 bags of beans, 9 buckets of onions and many more.

Per harvest on an average I make a profit of 150,000 Naira. I now employ people to work for me. I have expanded my farm land by renting others land. This has made me and my family recover

from been dependent on humanitarian help or working for people. I am not only self-reliant, but am an employer of labour, I love what I do.

EU/COOPI exceeded my expectation, and I will forever be grateful to them for this great intervention. COOPI is not just saving lives, but are changing our lives.



Fresh tomatoes picked from Modu's farm

I NOW FEEL LIKE A RESPONSIBLE YOUTH: MUSA'S STORY

Young people are the backbone of a society. Their participation in all aspects of society is very important. Unfortunately, we see many youths being deprived of this due to conflict, war, lack of education and lack of capita. This led to their limited roles in decision-making processes or leadership programs at the local and national level.



COOPI under the BRICC program funded by the European Union scaled up interventions to build the resilience of over 1920 (Male 974, Female 964) youths in North-east Nigeria, specifically Yobe State. **These youth were supported with vocational skills and trades like tailoring, furniture making, cap making, automobile repairs, phone repairs, bicycle repairs, and many others, that will enable them to be self-reliant and assume their rightful place in the society.**

21 years old Alhaji Musa, from Hausari Ward, Geidam LGA is one amongst the youths to have been trained and mentored on vocation skills and trade under the BRICC program. Musa received first hand training on furniture making, practical session was made available for beneficiaries under the furniture making group.

“COOPI provided us with first hand training on furniture making. The instructor was very practical in demonstration, training on how to maximise the market potential, market strategies and also how to retain customers was part of the training we received. I developed interest in furniture making as I wanted to be self-reliant and assist my younger ones” Musa narrates.

Musa lost his father to the ongoing insurgence in the Northeast. Ever since, Musa has had to assume the position as the breadwinner of the family.



Musa in the workshop, doing what he does best

“I lost my father to the crisis in 2019, and ever since I did various menial jobs just to support my mother and siblings. It has not been easy for us. I worked as a bricklayer, truck pusher and labourer for people. After the training provided to us by COOPI, I looked for a furniture expert in Geidam, and I told him I wanted to work and learn under him. He agreed, and I started working with him. Within a few months, he asked me where I learnt some of the skills I had, and I told him I got it from a training from COOPI. He started allowing me make furniture for customers,” Musa happily expresses.

Soon, Musa become the most preferred apprentice by his boss. He gets paid a monthly salary of about 10 to 15 thousand Naira depending on the market situation in his community. He has been able to make extra money from making shelves and other minor furniture work.



"I am so happy because I feel responsible as a young man. All I need now is capital to set up my own workshop where I can employ youths like me and train. I want to be self-reliant and be a job provider to my community. I want to use this medium to appreciate COOPI and EU for this tremendous support provided to us, especially the youth. I and my family are grateful, and we are urging COOPI and EU to provide us with start-up capital and extra trainings so we can take this to another level," Musa added.

With Support from European Union (EU), under the BRICC project, COOPI will continue to reach out to vulnerable youths in Northeast Nigeria like Musa and help them build their capacity through life saving skills and trades.

PHOTO NEWS



A session of conflict analysis for community leaders in Geidam LGA.



Celebration of World water day 2022 in Geidam LGA.



A rehabilitated School block in Morzogum community, Geidam LGA.



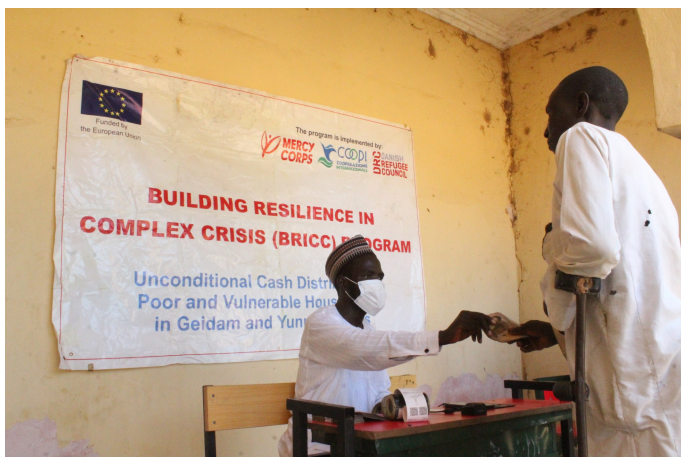
A rehabilitated School block in Morzogum community, Geidam LGA.



A newly constructed market-shed in Morzogum community, Geidam LGA.



A rehabilitated borehole in Yunusari LGA.



During Unconditional Cash transfer to beneficiaries in Geidam LGA.



During Unconditional Cash transfer to beneficiaries in Geidam LGA.



Saving and Investment association meeting in Geidam LGA.



Centre for entrepreneurship constructed by DRC in Damaturu LGA.



Distribution of farm input to farmers in Geidam LGA.



Provision of school desk and tables to schools in Damaturu LGA.



THE BRICC PROJECT IS IMPLEMENTED IN CONSORTIUM WITH

