

# *Farmer-Herder coalitions promoting collaborative production systems.*

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*Azurfa Women and Youth Development Initiative  
(AWOYDI)*

**(A Case Study)**

## Overview

The Azurfa Women and Youth Development Initiative (AWOYDI) is supporting Sustainable Agro-Pastoralism, Regenerative Agriculture, and Livelihood & Economic Empowerment in Kaduna State, with support from the SPRiNG Programme. This intervention has helped prevent violent escalation of conflicts resulting from herders destroying farmlands across several communities and demonstrated how locally-led peace structures can transform conflict into cooperation.



Source: AWOYDI

Through a community-driven peacebuilding intervention, A Farmer-Herders Coalition was established as a registered cooperative in Zango Kataf, Kaura, and Jema'a LGAs. The coalitions comprise approximately 90 registered members, and functions as safe spaces for dialogue, joint problem-solving, and early conflict response. As a result, 9 communities in Zango Kataf, Kaura, and Jema'a LGAs have experienced reduced tensions, improved trust, and stronger collaboration.

The initiative also brought together diverse community members women, youth, farmers, and herders to collectively engage in agricultural production, learning, and resource management through demonstration farms, homestead gardens, and elephant grass planting. In addition, AWOYDI implemented a livelihood and economic empowerment intervention that improved rural incomes, expanded access to financial services, and strengthened community unity, giving over 300 rural women and youths access to formal financial services through 13 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).

## Context

Over the years, communities in the Zango Kataf, Kaura, and Jema'a LGAs of Kaduna state have faced persistent farmer herder conflicts caused by crop destruction, shrinking size of grazing routes, water scarcity, and weak conflict resolution mechanisms. These issues were further worsened by poverty, limited access to financial services, and poor cooperation, leading to deep mistrust between farmers and herders. Prolonged tensions and the absence of structured dialogue platforms threatened livelihoods, weakened social cohesion, and allowed grievances to build up, undermining community stability, often escalating into violence, deepening insecurity and mistrust across communities.

## Approach and Activities

Through its partnership with the SPRiNG programme, AWOYDI **supported the co-creation of community financial institutions, inclusive Farmers-Herders Coalitions and Joint Farm Initiatives** featuring demonstration farms, homestead gardens and elephant grass planting. This approach is a holistic model that links sustainable livelihoods with peace building. Agriculture was a practical entry point for dialogue, trust-building and peaceful coexistence by fostering shared ownership and mutual benefit.

AWODYI instituted **inclusive Farmers-Herders Coalitions** and supported their formal registration as cooperatives, to promote collaboration, shared responsibility, providing legitimacy and a collective voice. **Peace dialogues and mediation training** were carried out to enable grievance resolution, rapid response mechanisms, and joint planning.

The initiative further supported the **establishment of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and community financial institutions**, where members make weekly savings contributions, access loans for micro businesses, and jointly plan to attain long-term economic goals.



Source: AWOYDI

## Results

The intervention significantly reduced violent incidents from an estimated baseline of 12–15 farmer-herder related critical incidents per month to 4–6 reported incidents per month. Examples of successful violence prevention include:

- Initiation of dialogue that prevented violent escalation following disputed relocation orders to pastoralists in Morwa Chieftdom.
- trained mediators successfully stopped retaliatory violence after homes were burned in Chika and Rafin Gora.
- Facilitation of historic agreement in Jema'a Local Government Area, to reopen grazing routes
- Mobilisation of ₦500,000 for construction of a borehole to address conflict arising from competition for access to water.

*'There has been real change even in our homes. Before now, men often believed that we women couldn't contribute anything meaningful to the family but this year, it is different. Through this opportunity, I can now go out without fear and do my business freely in the market, I also use the loan to farm'.*

**Lydia Biniki,  
Village Savings and Loans**

The project has also promoted adoption of more productive systems. 500 women and youth have been trained in regenerative agro-pastoralism, peace dialogue, and economic empowerment. This has contributed to improved productivity, food security, women's empowerment, and social cohesion. In addition, 6 wheelchairs were donated to 6 Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWDs) at the commissioning of the Kaura Community Processing Facility in Kaura LGA, Kaduna State.

With the establishment of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) 600 rural women and youth have improved access to formal financial services for the first time. Over a nine-month period, two VSLA groups in Bungen saved ₦5,276,000; three groups in Biniki accumulated ₦7,235,000; and two groups in Rafin Gora saved ₦5,006,276. This resulted in a total savings of ₦17,517,276 across the three pilot communities.

## Lessons

One of the key lessons from this intervention is when farmers and herders depend on each other for agricultural productivity and income generation, they develop a vested interest in maintaining cooperation. This approach demonstrates that peacebuilding interventions are more durable when they transform conflict from a zero-sum competition into a shared prosperity framework where all parties gain more from collaboration than confrontation.

In addition, peacebuilding should prioritise interventions that make communities economically invested in each other's success, rather than merely teaching conflict resolution skills. When former adversaries jointly invest labour, share resources, and collectively benefit from agricultural outputs, the cost of returning to conflict will become prohibitively high.

# About the SPRiNG Programme

Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG) is a UK-funded initiative designed to support a more peaceful and climate-resilient Nigeria. By addressing the root causes of conflict and vulnerability, SPRiNG works to reduce violence, strengthen local systems, and promote inclusive governance across conflict-affected areas in North-West and North-Central Nigeria.

SPRiNG is grounded in a politically informed, evidence-based approach that integrates environmental science, political economy, and conflict analysis. Our goal is to create a more stable and peaceful Nigeria where citizens benefit from reduced violence and increased resilience to the pressures of climate change.



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