



## Promoting Peace in Post-Conflict Regions through Peace Clubs.

During the implementation of the UNICEF reintegration project, peace clubs were successfully established in the following areas:

**Maimusari UBE and Primary School, Jere:** On May 13, 2024, a peace club consisting of 10 male and 10 female participants was formed.

**Banki Town:** On May 14, 2024, a peace club consisting of 11 female and 9 male participants was established.

**Central Primary School, Pulka Town:** A peace club comprising 10 male and 10 female participants was formed.

The sessions held by these clubs were impactful, as participants gained valuable insights into peaceful coexistence in a diverse society through empathy, tolerance, respect for diversity, and a sense of personal responsibility in building peace.

The overarching goal of this initiative is to foster heightened awareness and promote harmonious coexistence among children, adolescents, and women in post-conflict settings through the establishment of peace clubs in educational institutions and local communities. Participants in the peace club gained valuable insights into the principles and practices of peaceful living within their communities and the broader society, particularly in the context of post-conflict situations. Active participation in discussion questions and interactive activities facilitated the acquisition of essential information and skills necessary for effective peacebuilding efforts



## **Educating Individuals About SGBV, Promoting A Culture Of Prevention, Intervention, And Support.**

In May 2024, a series of impactful community-based initiatives were launched in Banki, Pulka, and Jere to address Sexual and Gender-Based

Violence (SGBV). On May 12th, a comprehensive awareness campaign was conducted, involving 100 participants across the three locations. The campaign focused on educating individuals about SGBV, promoting a culture of prevention, intervention, and support. This initiative aimed to equip community members with the necessary knowledge and resources to combat SGBV effectively, fostering safer and more supportive environments.

Continuing the efforts, on May 14th, an activity under the project initiative 3.4.1 was held to engage men in the prevention of gender-based violence and promote accountability for their actions. This event brought together 100 men, including community leaders, stakeholders, and youth from Banki, Pulka, and Jere. The discussions underscored the critical role men play in influencing societal norms and reducing GBV. By engaging men in proactive roles, the initiative aimed to reduce the incidence of GBV and cultivate a culture of accountability and support within the community.

On May 22nd, safety audits were conducted across all locations as part of activity 3.3.1 to assess current safety measures, identify potential risks, and develop comprehensive safety plans. This activity reached 100 individuals, including 25 men, 25 women, 25 boys, and 25 girls. These audits were designed to ensure a secure environment conducive to effective program delivery and community engagement. Collectively, these initiatives highlight the importance of ongoing community involvement and the pivotal role men play in driving cultural change toward gender equity and violence reduction, ultimately aiming for safer and more equitable communities.

In May 2024, a series of community-based initiatives were launched in Banki, Pulka, and Jere to address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). These initiatives included an awareness campaign focused on educating individuals about SGBV and promoting prevention, intervention, and support, an activity engaging men in the prevention of gender-based violence and promoting accountability, and safety audits to assess current safety measures and develop comprehensive safety plans. The initiatives aimed to equip community members with the knowledge and resources to combat SGBV, engage men in reducing GBV, and ensure a secure environment for program delivery and community engagement.



## Life Skill Mentoring Sessions

On May 14th, 2024, a successful life skills mentoring session was held in Jere, organized by GSF Maiduguri and supported by UNICEF. The session saw the participation of 40 individuals, including 14 males and 26 females, along with 2 GSF staff members.

The event commenced at 2 PM with an opening prayer, followed by a welcome remark and an introduction to the session. The focus of the session was on leadership skills, self-esteem building, and the development of essential life skills. These skills were categorized into social skills (such as self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, and interpersonal relationships), thinking skills (including creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving), and emotional skills (such as coping with stress and emotions).

Participants learned the importance of self-awareness and its role in developing empathy, effective communication, and strong interpersonal relationships. The session emphasized that life skills are interconnected and crucial for building self-esteem, self-efficacy, and holistic development.

The session also addressed low self-esteem, discussing its symptoms and providing strategies to overcome it. Participants engaged in identifying and sharing their interests, aspirations, strengths, and weaknesses. Problem-solving techniques were also covered, focusing on identifying problems, exploring solutions, setting goals, and implementing chosen solutions.

The participants expressed their appreciation for the session, which equipped them with the skills and knowledge to tackle complex social issues within their community. The meeting concluded successfully with positive feedback from all attendees. Future sessions will benefit from mobilization efforts 3–4 days in advance and the inclusion of discussion topics provided by community stakeholders.



## Spark Hope in Borno State through Transformative Dialogue Sessions

In the early days of May 2024, the communities of Pulka Gwoza and Banki-town in Borno State experienced the transformative power of dialogue and reconciliation through two transformative awareness sessions. These significant events, held on May 8th and May 10th, respectively, endeavored to foster peaceful coexistence among children, youth, and women in post-conflict settings.

On May 8th, Pulka Gwoza hosted the inaugural session, attracting a diverse group of thirty enthusiastic participants, comprising seven men, six youth, and seventeen women. The 75-minute

session was skillfully facilitated by dedicated GSF facilitators, experienced community engagement workers, and compassionate case workers. The session commenced with prayers reflecting the individual faiths of the participants.

Two days later, on May 10th, Banki- Town continued the positive momentum with its own ninety-minute session. The event mirrored the structure of Pulka Gwoza's session, attracting thirty participants—eight men, four youth, and eighteen women—and was facilitated by the same dedicated team of professionals.

The primordial objective of the gathering was to augment the cognizance of and foster amity amidst children, adolescents, and women who reside in settings that have been beleaguered by conflict, through the methods of transformative discourse, peacebuilding, transitional equity, and conciliation.

**Transformative Discourse:** The participants were instructed about the precepts of active listening, empathy, transparent communication, and the resolution of conflict without violence.

**Serenity:** The gathering laid stress on the significance of peace, personal responsibility in the furtherance of communal harmony, and the role that peace plays in the development of socio-economics.

**Transitional Equity:** The concept of transitional equity was a subject of discussion, which included its mechanisms, and the role of responsibility in the reconstruction of societies in the wake of conflict. The importance of the acknowledgement of guilt, and the seeking of absolution by the perpetrators of atrocities, were also underscored.

**Conciliation:** The importance of absolution, apology, and redress in the mending of communal relationships and in the furtherance of sustainable peace was emphasized.

Both sessions concluded with overwhelming positive feedback. Participants left with a renewed sense of hope and the tools to contribute to their communities' peaceful and cohesive future. These events, marked by unity and understanding, underscored the transformative power of dialogue and reconciliation in Borno State.



## Strengthen Resilience of Vulnerable Children and Women in Pulka and Bama

Making a tangible difference in the lives of vulnerable children and women in Pulka and Banki, providing them with the tools and support needed to build resilience and reintegrate into society is the aim of psychosocial support. The community's positive response and the observed behavioral changes in children underscore the importance and effectiveness of the project's activities.

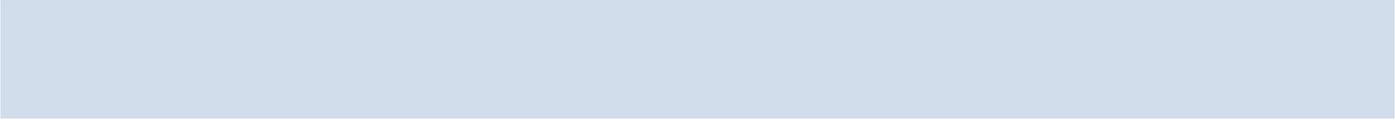
Grow Strong Foundation (GSF), has made significant strides this week in Pulka and Banki to support the resilience and economic reintegration of children and women exiting armed groups, as well as other vulnerable community members. The project, which focuses on psychosocial support (PSS) through Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS), saw the participation of 113 children in various recreational and educational activities.

The week's activities, conducted by UNICEF and the Grow Strong Foundation, included the registration of children at CFS in both Pulka and Banki, where they engaged in storytelling, singing, and dancing. In Pulka, 19 boys and 28 girls participated, while in Banki, 32 boys and 34 girls took part. The CFS activities were conducted in local schools, including Banki Central Primary School and Taradagal Primary School, with a focus on games, creative sports, and storytelling sessions.

In addition to these activities, 47 children from camps A and C were organized for PSS activities, including free play sessions and life skills training aimed at enhancing their psychological well-being. Adolescent boys and girls from the community were

sensitized on the importance of CFS, encouraging them to allow their younger siblings to attend and benefit from the resilience-building activities.

The activities have had a positive impact, especially noted in the behavior of schoolchildren who previously would leave school during break times. Due to the engaging PSS activities, these children now stay in school until the end of the day, showing reduced stress and increased strength to continue their educational activities. Teachers have observed improved academic engagement and appreciation from the children for the activities provided by UNICEF and the Grow Strong Foundation.





# Community Child Protection Efforts Make Strides Across Multiple Regions

Significant strides have been made in community child protection efforts across multiple regions. A crucial awareness session was successfully held, educating the community on identifying vulnerable children, defining vulnerability, and understanding case registration criteria. This initiative led to the identification of numerous vulnerable children, including 5 separated cases in Pulka, 6 separated cases and 1 child at risk (CAR) in Banki, 15 separated children and 5 children at risk in Jere, and 7 separated cases in MMC. The GSF team's advocacy visit to Kwashare Primary School in Pulka revealed that many children are skipping school due to inadequate psychosocial support (PSS). The school management praised previous PSS initiatives and offered a field for future activities, requesting additional PSS materials to sustain engagement.

Further efforts included a Local Coordination Group meeting in Pulka, where GSF was introduced as a Child Protection organization specializing in case management and psychosocial support, with representatives from 12 organizations in attendance. In Kofar Bulama's Sulemanti community, the International Rescue Committee is providing essential healthcare services, while ZOA International offers computer programming, application training, and affiliate marketing courses to literate adolescents, also supporting PSS facilitators. Extensive community sensitization sessions on child protection, gender-based violence (GBV), and reintegration were conducted across various regions, educating participants on recognizing and referring cases. Additionally, GSF established offices at Banki schools and coordinated with UNICEF and Ministry of Women Affairs volunteers to support Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) activities. These comprehensive efforts underscore the commitment to protecting vulnerable children and raising community awareness, demonstrating significant progress and the ongoing need for support



## Capacity Building Empowers Social Workers and Stakeholders

On April 24, 2024, a capacity-building training session was held at Development Hub Hall, bringing together 50 social workers and stakeholders. The training aimed to equip participants with essential skills and knowledge to effectively address complex social issues within their communities. The comprehensive workshop covered key areas including case management, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), violence against children, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and socio-economic reintegration.

The training sessions had a significant impact on the participants. In case management, practical exercises and case studies helped improve their ability to manage cases efficiently, leading to better client outcomes. The PSEA session raised awareness and reinforced preventive strategies, while the violence against children session enhanced the ability to recognize and respond to abuse. Additionally, the MHPSS session boosted participants' confidence in providing mental health support, and the socio-economic reintegration session improved their capacity to help marginalized groups achieve sustainable outcomes.

Overall, the training successfully enhanced the skills and knowledge of social workers and stakeholders, resulting in improved service delivery, increased awareness of social issues, and strengthened community resilience. Continued investment in such capacity-building efforts is essential for sustaining these positive outcomes and promoting long-term social change.

Also, a recent training program targeted 35 participants, including case managers, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) practitioners, facilitators, animators,

and volunteers. The training's core areas covered case management, psychosocial support, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), violence against children, and socio-economic reintegration. The primary goal was to empower frontline workers and volunteers to adeptly tackle the multifaceted challenges encountered by vulnerable populations, particularly children, across diverse contexts.



## GSF Celebrates Children's Day with Inspiring Events

Grow Strong Foundation (GSF) celebrated Children's Day on May 27, 2024, at Old Maiduguri Government School and Damaturu Yobe State. The event focused on promoting children's rights, education, and empowerment through various engaging activities. The day began with an opening prayer and inspiring remarks from the school principal, followed by a passionate rendition of the national anthem by the children. A thought-provoking debate on girl child education versus boy child education showcased the children's critical thinking and public speaking skills. The event also included an informative presentation on child rights, emphasizing the importance of education, healthcare, protection, and participation. The celebration concluded with heartfelt prayers, gift presentations, and closing remarks, leaving a lasting impression on all attendees.

The Children's Day celebration was a resounding success, highlighting GSF's dedication to empowering young minds. The event fostered a sense of community and encouraged children to recognize their potential and advocate for their rights. GSF aims to continue organizing similar

events in the future to further promote children's rights and education. The organization also seeks to expand participation in schools and communities while providing platforms for children to develop their skills and talents. By investing in the well-being and development of children, GSF envisions a brighter future where every child has the opportunity to thrive and contribute positively to society.



## Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) New Partnerships Manager Visits Grow Strong Foundation

The Grow Strong Foundation office was honored to host a visit from the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) new Partnerships Manager, Aisa Akapson, who aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the partnership between the two organizations and explore ways to enhance collaboration and streamline operations. And she was accompanied by Mercy Maisamari

During her visit, the Partnerships Manager met with the Executive Director of Grow Strong Foundation Jameela Idrees, the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Manager, Wayas Kenneth, and the NRC Project Coordinator, Noah A Moses. The discussions focused on evaluating the current status of the partnership, identifying areas for improvement, and developing strategies to make their joint efforts more effective.

The Executive Director expressed appreciation for the NRC's support and highlighted the significant impact of their collaborative projects on the communities they serve. The MEAL Manager provided insights into the monitoring and evaluation processes, emphasizing the

importance of data-driven decision-making to ensure the success and sustainability of their programs. The NRC Project Coordinator discussed ongoing initiatives and future plans, underscoring the need for continuous communication and resource-sharing to achieve common goals.

The visit concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthen the partnership, with both organizations looking forward to implementing the ideas and strategies discussed. The NRC Partnerships Manager expressed optimism about the future of their collaboration, noting that the insights gained during the visit would be instrumental in fostering a more seamless and productive working relationship.

The Grow Strong Foundation hosted a visit from the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) new Partnerships Manager, Aisa Akapson, who aimed to understand the partnership between the two organizations and explore ways to improve collaboration. During her visit, she met with key personnel from both organizations to evaluate the current status of the partnership, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies for more effective collaboration. The visit concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthen the partnership, with both organizations optimistic about the future of their collaboration.



## **GSF Empowers Educators in Conflict-Affected Regions: Strengthening Child Protection Capacities**

In a bid to address the pressing challenges posed by the protracted conflict in Adamawa and Borno states, the Grow Strong Foundation (GSF) recently conducted a comprehensive training program aimed at bolstering the capacity of teachers and facilitators in child protection and safeguarding. With a focus on vulnerable populations affected by the conflict, the training, which spanned three days, delved into critical areas such as Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), psychosocial support (PSS), social-emotional learning (SEL), and adherence to teachers' code of conduct.

The training, held at FH Hall in Maiduguri, Borno State, brought together 30 males and 30 females, including teachers, School-Based Management Committee members, and learning facilitators. Through a combination of presentations, group discussions, role plays, and interactive sessions, participants gained a deeper understanding of key child protection concepts and strategies for mitigating child protection concerns within their communities. Despite challenges such as late arrivals, the dedication of participants and the well-structured nature of the training were lauded, with attendees expressing appreciation for the practical insights and methodologies provided. Moving forward, recommendations emphasize the importance of punctuality to maximize the effectiveness of future training initiatives. GSF remains committed to fostering safer and more nurturing school environments, ultimately contributing to the holistic well-being and development of children in the region. The training was supported by NRC.



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