



**FOSTERING PEACE AND HARMONY THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUE:
YELWA KAGAMA**

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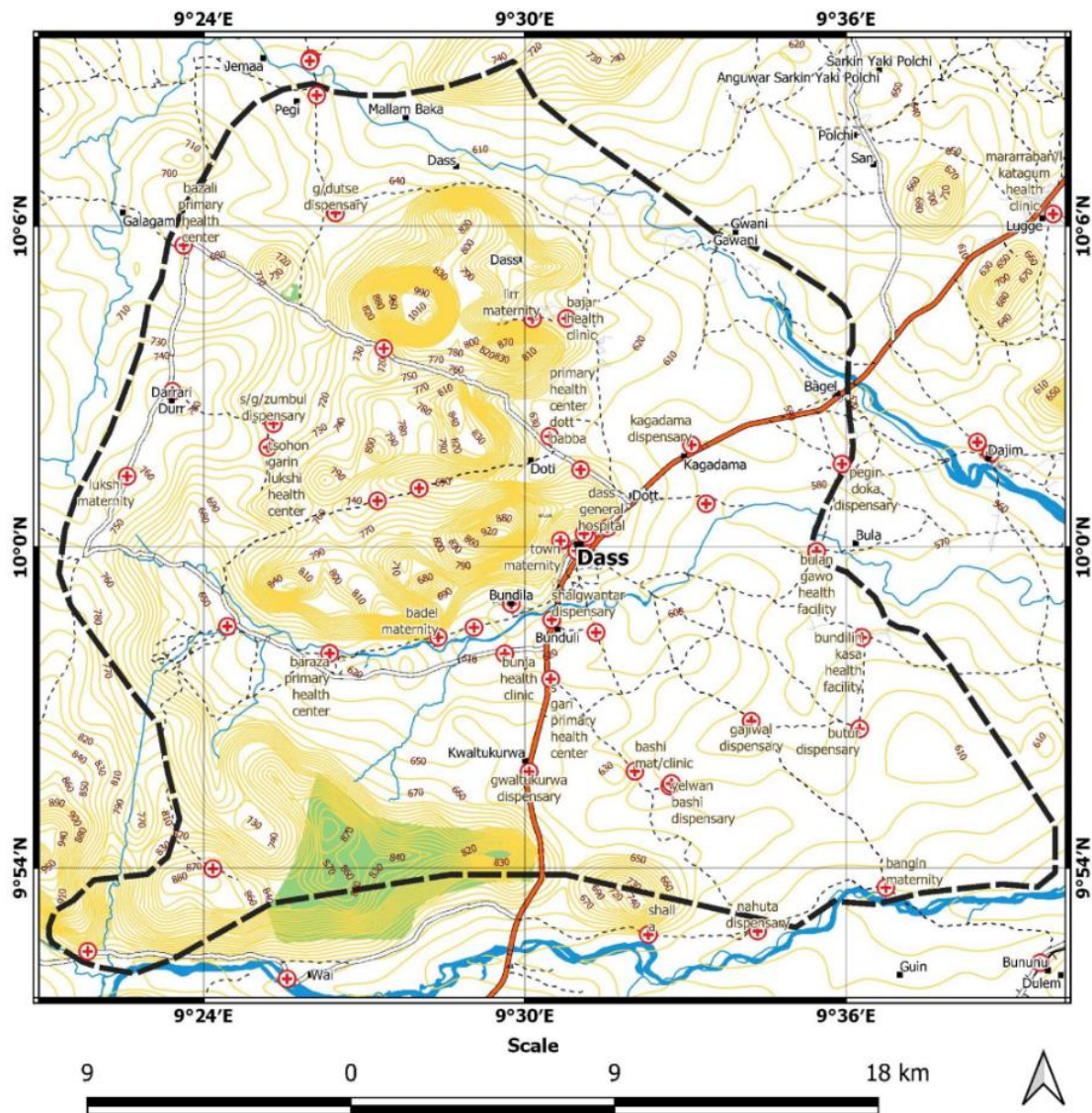
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INTRODUCTION

The Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) fellowship program small peace project conducted was titled “Fostering Peace and Harmony through Community Dialogue.” The project was conducted in the Kagadama community of Bauchi Local Government of Bauchi State, Nigeria on Tuesday 2nd February, 2019 and started 9.00am in the morning. The venue for the community dialogue was Nafada Reception Centre, opposite ECWA Hausa Church, Kagadama.

Yelwa Tudu Kagadama is located in the Dott district of Dass Local Government Area (LGA) of Bauchi State, Nigeria. The coordinate location of the community is 10°01’41.5”N, 09°32’58”E(Places in the World, 2015).The native of the Kagadama community are Jarawa by tribe with their history of settlement in the location stretching back as the period before the jihad of Shehu Dan Fodio.



Legend

- Settlements
- ⊕ Hospital
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Track/footpath
- ++++ Railway
- Contour
- River
- ▭ Selected LGA Boundary
- ▭ Natural reserve/forest
- ▭ Built up areas
- ▭ Buildings



Topographic Map of Dass LGA, Bauchi State

Source: (GIS Mapping, 2020)



Immigration has now seen the community continuously become populated with people of neighbouring cultures. The community has just over fifty thousand (50,000) inhabitants (Ghani, 2020). The two major religions in the community are Islam and Christianity. Vegetation wise, Kagada miles along the guinea savanna planes of Nigeria, specifically characterised with having a zonal soils. The rainfall in the region lasts over six months which covers the area with abundant grasses of 1.5m average height (Wikipedia, 2021). Common trees in this region are locust-bean ashwari, tamarind, acacia, baobab and mango.

Statement of Problem

The Jarawa people are known to be peaceful and this is the reflection of the non-violent ethics embedded in their culture. The people have been living in harmony with one another over the years which has encouraged people from other communities to come and settle there. However, this harmony has recently been threatened because of increased population with people struggling for space, dwindling economy, poor leadership, political aspirations and religious differences. Just like the parent state of Bauchi, Yelwa Tudu Kagadama has had several conflicts in recent past. Major religious crisis in the community were recorded in 1991, 2006 and 2007 between the Muslim and Christian ethno-region groups in the community (Muhammad, 2015). Even though the community has enjoyed some years of peace, the immediate past governor of the state, Gov. Mohammed Abdullahi Abubakar, imposed a 12-hour curfew in that region on Sunday 18th November, 2018, because of a misunderstanding between some youths that led to the death of 3 people and the destruction of some houses (Agwam, 2018).

The community has also experienced some natural disasters mainly in form of flooding. The local branch of Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) in 2019 reported that Yelwa Kagadama community was part of communities in Bauchi State that were affected by flooding that year. The flood led to the death of 7 people, displacement of 280 households and directly affected 4,984 people (ReliefWeb, 2019). Another flooding in September 2020 affected the community for which Bauchi State recorded 16 deaths and destruction of 3,042 houses.

Yelwa Tudu Kagadama experience cholera outbreak in May 2021. Dass LGA. The community recorded 60 cases which is the 5th highest among 15 other LGA affected by the cholera outbreak (Olafusi, 2021). Cholera is triggered by the infection and inflammation of the digestive system with symptoms including abdominal cramps, diarrhea and vomiting.

PROJECTS AND SPONSORSHIP

Because of growing tensions amongst people in the Yelwa Kagadama community, a project on peace and conflict was organised titled “Fostering Peace and Harmony through Community Dialogue” on February 2019. The program was held at the Nafada Reception Centre, opposite ECWA Hausa Church, Kagadama. The project recorded over 30 participants which are from different religious groups and ethnic society. The program saw the participation of various groups which reflects the diverse population settlements of the community. Also in attendance was the traditional leader of the community.

The program extensively dwelt on harmony in the community through dialogue. The major highlights of the program saw Christian leaders share their perspective on the subject and the

Muslim leaders sheared their perspective as well on the subject. Sessions were given for comments, questions, and answers which resulted in discussions that covered some ‘flashpoint’ issues affecting the different groups present. The program took about five (5) hours and ended at about 2:00pm.

The program was sponsored by the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) fellowship and was facilitated by Evng. Mrs. Naomi Musa Tula. Images of the event are shown below:



Participants Registering their Presence at the Project



Facilitator: Evng. Mrs Naomi Musa Tula making presentation on the project topic



Rt. Rev. Musa M. Tula explaining Christian perspective of the project topic



Muslim Cleric explaining Muslim perspective of the project topic



Discussion, comments, question and answer session of the program



Group photograph of facilitator, religious and community leaders after the program



Project Impact and Beneficiaries

All groups in the community benefited from the project including both the religious groups and the ethnic groups. It is fair to claim that there cannot be an exact measure of the impact the project had on the community with the impact reaching far beyond initially anticipated. The community has not recorded conflicts of any kind since the project was conducted. Participants of the project acclaimed that they have not had a program of dialogue like it ever before in the community. The project created a 'blueprint' for long lasting and continual dialogue in the community, especially between the Muslim and Christian religious groups.

Project Outlook

The vision of the project is to reach more people in that community and also to reach other communities around the region. This is based on the realisation of the fact that the impact of the project could be felt with a much greater impact if more people and communities are involved. It is our deepest desire to have the entire Bauchi State and North-East region of Nigeria be involved in active and continual community dialogue on conflicting issues. This will lead to a drastic reduction and subsequent end to conflicts in the region.

To ensure that other needs of the community are addressed, the project team will also explore other projects specifically targeting the problems of flooding, disease outbreaks and economic empowerment. This project is planned to be conducted in the order mentioned because of the urgency of the needs.

In order to achieve the vision explained above, more stakeholders need to get involved. The targeted partners for the execution and sustainability of the projects are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), individual philanthropists and international organisations. Also paramount to the success of the vision on a larger scale is the participation of the government at Federal, State and Local Government levels, specifically through their agencies and organisations. The vision and prospects look big, however, the journey of a thousand mile begins with a step. This narrative is what the project team will use to accomplish its vision which begins with conducting more projects to reach more communities and engaging other organisational stakeholders to participate.

Community Needs

Major needs of the community are the problems the community faces which are highlighted in the report. These needs are; regional conflict dialogue, incessant flooding prevention, health care sensitization and economic empowerment.

Regional conflicts are mainly triggered by religious misunderstanding. Other potential causes of conflicts were increased criminal activities, inter-communal conflicts, farmer & herder clashes, and political affiliations. All the issues that trigger conflict can be managed and eliminated through continual community dialogue which was the main focus of the project.

The community should be regularly sensitized on flood and flood management. This is because the community and state at large experience an increase in severity of flooding which can be attributed to climate change and global warming. The sensitization will help the people to actively prepare and effectively manage flooding in the future.



Health care sensitization will also be of great benefit to the community. This is because the community has experience outbreaks of Lassa fever and cholera in recent times with the most recent outbreak happening in May 2021. The health care sensitization will educate the people in the community on potential diseases, where to get help and how they can prevent future outbreaks.

Economic empowerment is a tool for every community to develop and thrive. This is a major need of most communities in the North-East region of Nigeria. The idea of future projects in this need is to encourage the communities to use their resources and potentials in creating wealth. Emphasis should be placed on developing agricultural and entrepreneurial skills in line with the governments' visions and plans for poverty alleviation.

CONCLUSION

The project conducted at the Yelwa Kagadama community of Dass LGA focused on peace and harmony through communal dialogue. The project recorded huge success with the impact exceeding expectations. Participants testified of the unique nature of the project and expressed hope for regular community dialogue to address conflicting issues. The project also stressed the need to reach more people and to get more stakeholders such as NGOs, philanthropists and agencies involved. Future projects should explore the following needs;

- Reaching more people, and communities to educate them on conflict resolution and dialogue.
- Sensitization on disaster prevention and management with focus on flooding.
- Health care outreach in the region with emphasis on disease outbreaks such as Lassa fever and cholera.
- Economic empowerment programs with emphasis on agriculture and entrepreneurial skills.

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