



Chad

Pilot Project: Supporting Peaceful Coexistence in Chad with Traditional and Religious Authorities

Religious and traditional actors play a key role in fragile societies like Chad's, which is hit by conflict and socially fragmented. Chad is a secular state whose population is predominantly Muslim (60 %) and Christian (35 %). In light of increasing tensions due to violent extremism, especially in the region near Lake Chad, the GIZ project "Improving Livelihoods in Western Chad" (PAMELOT) looked for ways to strengthen social cohesion.

The project idea is based on a cooperation between religious and traditional authorities to promote interreligious dialogues with the hope of preventing the radicalisation of young people. Innovative peace initiatives were carried out from January to December 2022 in the provinces of Kanem, Bahr-El-Gazel und Hadjer-Lamis.

Results

The pilot project reached over 1,650 people of different religions and confessions, who participated in activities promoting peace and preventing violent extremism. The trainings brought together 210 imams, priests, and pastors who planned measures against extremism. Many participants obliged themselves to spread messages of peace in their communities.

Three provincial inter-religious platforms, connected to the national interfaith platform, were founded to better reach out to the local communities. These dialogue formats created safe spaces in which representatives from different religions could hold talks at eye-level. Alongside the more generalised platforms were special fora for women and youth, which drew in new target groups and a greater

Duration:	01/2022 bis 12/2022
Implementation:	GIZ Project "Improving Livelihoods in Western Chad" (PAMELOT)
Partners:	National Interreligious Platform N'Djamena (Muslim, Catholic, Protestant) represented by the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, traditional actors (i.e., sultans, village heads), Muslim and Christian provincial representatives, and representatives of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs

diversity in the dialogue. As one social action delegate from the Bahr-El-Gazel province noted: "Before these activities, we women had never really talked about religion. Today we learned that all religions stand up for peace, forgiveness, tolerance, and coexistence. That's a big step for us."

Further initiatives expanded the reach of the project: Over 400 people who took part in workshops on peace and social cohesion committed to actively spreading messages of peace and to carry out activities in their communities. These multipliers raised awareness of the project's content beyond the direct participants. Radio messages in different languages, like Arabic and Kanembou, sensitised people to peace topics and extremism prevention, while messages of peace were shared across social media. In co-operation

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The Problem

A lack of social cohesion between different population groups in a society characterised by fragility.

The Role of Religious Actors

Key religious figures enjoy respect among the population and can serve as an engine for peaceful coexistence and agitate for interreligious dialogues. They play an especially important part in work aimed at preventing (religious) extremism.

with Koranic schools, a handbook on the subject of peace has been produced and integrated into teaching contexts.

Barriers between the individual religious groups were dismantled. Believers from different confessions took part in interreligious prayer days, which served as a symbol of unity and tolerance. These gatherings saw people come together to pray for peace and exchange messages of peace. One religious leader described it thus: “Before the project, we religious dignitaries only met when other authorities called on us to gather. Thanks to this pilot project, we could get to know each other better and break down the barriers between us.”

Learnings and Perspective

The cooperation between religious and traditional authorities played out quite positively, though it did require regular and transparent communication that took regional and hierarchical differences into consideration. Some of the actors lack the administrative knowledge and financial resources needed to sustainably implement activities. It

also proved important to incorporate religious hierarchies, for example when agreeing upon a training guideline for Koranic schools.

Gender equality also proved to be an important area of learning, as women were seldom represented in public forums. Founding a special women’s platform gave them a new opportunity to network and exchange information with each other.

The project created structures that could support local peace initiatives over the long-term. The national and regional platforms offer a solid foundation for future cooperation. PAMELOT plans to continue some of the pilot activities in the project regions and strengthen cooperation with religious actors.

This pilot project demonstrates that religious actors can play a key role for social change and are especially capable of mobilising communities and actively promoting peace.

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