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UNV Community Village Supervisor Falmata Haruna Bwala (right) promotes the inclusion of women in the VSLA program within the Mafoni community, Maiduguri, Borno State. @UNV 2018

Facilitating access to finance for the displaced in conflict-hit areas in North-East Nigeria, with UNDP and UNV

Despite the situation, Falmata Haruna Bwala did not hesitate to seize the opportunity offered by UNV to serve as a UN Community Volunteer on a UNDP project with funding support from the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). She serves as a Village Supervisor in a region with many displaced and distressed communities, including the Mafoni community.

Falmata says that she has been inspired by one of Mahatma Gandhi's quotes: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others".

Since the beginning of her assignment in March 2018, she invests her energy, field-knowledge and leadership skills in successfully implementing a village savings and loan association (VSLA). This is an income-generating mechanism developed by UNDP to kick-

start economic recovery in specific target areas of North-eastern Nigeria.

As a UN Community Volunteer, she started her assignment by advocating for the VSLA model with traditional community leaders, religious leaders and economic groups. After that she mobilized and sensitized communities on the importance of adopting the VSLA model as a tool to strengthen community resilience.

Falmata successfully organized meetings with youth, women, and elders to present the VSLA mechanism. She has been instrumental in advocating for women leadership in the programme. Some of her additional responsibilities are to conduct the election of the VSLA management committee, formulate the governing rules of the association and monitor the association's weekly meetings.

The VLSA has led the population of the Mafoni community to work together to achieve a common goal. The participation of women also has been accepted and increased. Those tangible changes have impressed Falmata as a UN Community Volunteer.

“ The VSLA has a positive impact on women, youth, elders, families and the community at large. The cultural barriers that come with bringing men and women together at the same time and in the same place were overcome through effective communication. The community is now in full support of the scheme. - Falmata Haruna Bwala.



UNV Community Volunteer Bilkisu Abubakar Ladan (right), promotes the UNDP VSLA project with women from the Konduga District, Borno State, Nigeria. @UNV 2018

Mainari, in the Konduga District, is another community in Borno State targeted by UNDP to benefit from the Village Savings and Loan Association. In this community, Bilkisu Abubakar Ladan started her assignment with UNDP in March 2018 as a UN Community Volunteer.

For her, working in Mainari is a privilege. It has been her wish to help the community which has been a target of recruiting raids by Boko Haram. Many members of the community lost their lives; and houses, markets and properties were destroyed for others.

Through advocacy visits to the district head and his council of chiefs, religious, economic and social group leaders, Bilkisu Abubakar Ladan obtained the consent, commitment and engagement of the community for the VSLA.

As a result, women, youth and elders of the Konduga District have expressed their interest in this opportunity to access finance and launch income generating activities to improve their living conditions. "Working as a UN Community Volunteer at Mainari is very touching and inspiring for me, as I am able to engage with the community members and feel and understand the challenges they are facing," says Bilkisu Abubakar Ladan.

Up to 3 million: this is, according to a UNOCHA report (June 2018), the number of people in North-eastern Nigeria estimated to be facing critical and crisis food and nutrition insecurity levels (IPC 3 and 4) until the end of August. In the three worst-affected states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, 1.7 million persons are internally displaced.

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