



Musa Mishelia stands by a car parked for repairs at a mechanical workshop in Barnawa, Kaduna. Photo: Tida Leo/CCDRN

Empowered and Resilient: Musa’s Story of surviving Conflict and Struggling for a Fresh Start



European Union



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39-year old Musa Mishelia had a great life with his parents and 4 siblings in Maiduguri. His father, a retired military officer was earning a reasonable pension to support him and his siblings. His mother also worked as a Nanny while Musa who is a graduate of Agricultural extension was working as an hotelier, earning enough to meet his own needs and provide additional help for his family. Life was quite rubicund before the unhallowed visit by Boko Haram insurgent changed life's course for Musa and the rest of his siblings.

"When the incidence started in 2009, it started like a play. I was personally affected in 2012, on 28 December, 3 days after Christmas. Boko Haram attacked my family house at Shuwari 5, while I was away at work and slaughtered my dad and one of my younger brothers. They only spared my mum who was forced to watch how they stabbed my dad in the back and slaughtered my brother. Then, they were not harming women and I guess that was why they didn't kill my mum.

"I came home after the attackers had left to see my dad and my brother's body in pool of blood. It was a traumatic experience for I, my mum and remaining siblings. We had to leave the area after burying my dad and brother. My mum couldn't bear the harrowing experience and passed away in January 2013, obviously due to the trauma. She never recovered.

"That was the beginning of our problem. We lost everything. My family became scattered with everyone trying to fend for themselves. My dad was the major bread winner as we were depending on his military pension. For me I was working as an hotelier prior to the attack but I also lost that job because we had to move. We couldn't bear the ordeal" says Musa.

"Before Boko Haram, life was ok for us. My Mum was a Nanny, my Dad was receiving pension and as an hotelier then, I was also receiving salary and was supporting my family. But all that changed dramatically after the attack. Things became really rough. My family became scattered as we couldn't afford to stay together anymore. Everyone went in search of survival".

Slowly Musa became worn down by life's frustrations. He discarded whatever hope and faith he may have once held and adopted a different conviction, taking to alcoholism. It was really difficult for Musa to come to terms with his harrowing experience. Everything looked gloomy and dark until the United Nations Development Programme's intervention that came and provided him a leeway.

"For me, it was like the end has come" he said. "I became addicted to alcoholism because of what happened. We lost everything and I couldn't secure another job due to the conflict even though I am a graduate. I took to smoking and alcohol. It was a dark experience for me. Until this UNDP project came and gave me a direction again. I never dreamt in my life of becoming a Mechanic until this intervention by UNDP provided me with the opportunity to start my life over again." Musa added

In January of 2019, Musa got a hint that UNDP is planning to support Victims of insurgency to acquire some vocational skills in a bid to help them regain their means of livelihood. He applied and was lucky to be among the 50 UNDP beneficiaries selected to learn Mechanical mechatronics and body work at the PAN learning center in Kaduna.

With support from the European Union, UNDP launched the intervention as part of its early recovery response to the conflict in the Northeast of Nigeria which has tremendously escalated the poverty level in the region and disrupted means of livelihood. Many conflict affected youths like Musa have been benefiting from this intervention.



Musa Mishelia, busy working on a car wheel Photo: James Sunday/CCDRN



Musa Mishelia and his colleagues on duty. Photo: James Sunday/CCDRN

In the Nigerian Northeast, so many victims of insurgency are struggling with a loss of hope. They might not even know how to identify exactly what they are experiencing, but their life just feels empty. Dry. Such was Musa's situation until UNDP intervention came to fill the void.

"This intervention brought me out of the darkness that enveloped me due to my experience with the conflict. Luckily I was enrolled into the intervention and brought to Peugeot- PAN learning center in Kaduna where my story actually changed. I lost all hopes after my parents and brother died but now I am on a journey that will change my life forever thanks to UNDP.

"We were 50 beneficiaries who were brought to Kaduna for the training in auto Mechanic for one year. In the cause of the training, UNDP provide us with accommodation, food and stipends for our upkeep and in the process, we also received a thorough mentorship from Centre for Community Development and Research

Network (CCDRN) on how to successfully manage our business and finances.

"I tell you honestly, this is a life changing experience for me and I see a lot of prospect and great future in this. UNDP has really changed everything for me. I decided to stay back in Kaduna to start a new life in Kaduna" Musa said

UNDP partnered with Centre for Community Development and Research Network to provide mentorship support for the trainees, manage cash disbursements and provide thorough monitoring of utilization of the cash grant given to the beneficiaries. Under the intervention, Musa and other beneficiaries who met the set criteria for the cash grant are to receive one hundred and eighty thousand naira in two tranches.

"I have so far received N90, 000 from UNDP through CCDRN and I have bought a couple of tools that I am now using to work. For now, I don't have my own shop; I have attached myself with a professional mechanical workshop for further practical learning. I want to add more knowledge and be more grounded; I decided to attach myself with 'Haske Motors' to learn more before I can get a shop.

"On my own, I am working more on vehicle suspension, changing of brake pads, shaft and doing general servicing. I am not yet into engine repairs because it is a bit complex so we only assist in losing the engines for now. I decided to attach myself here so as to learn more on how to handle engines. I will be here for the next six months to be more grounded. Though it is an informal arrangement but the owner of the place pays us regularly for our upkeep after work. Sometimes daily or weekly and I also go out to work for people sometimes and earn little cash.

Honestly I am happy about my new life, I am a graduate but couldn't secure a white collar job but now I have something that can help me for the rest of my life. At the end of this corona pandemic hopefully, I intend to open my own shop and start up. Hopefully I will also have boys that will learn from me. Already we have been taught and mentored on entrepreneurship during our training by CCDRN and I am already strategizing in line with what we were taught.

"Truly, I don't know how to thank UNDP. They have changed my live for good. Most of us came to PAN learning center without anything but now we are armed with this skill. I lost my hope after the incidence with my family but now I am back on track. I am now empowered and resilient" He said.

Musa has set some goals for his future including setting up his own mechanical workshop, employing and teaching other apprentices as he believes that he can also contribute to the life of other victims of insurgency with the skill he has learnt.

UNDP through its early recovery project in the Northeast of Nigeria is working in partnership with Centre for Community Development and Research Network to help conflict affected women and youth to reestablish their livelihood and regain lost hopes. Most of these beneficiaries have since established profitable ventures across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.