

# Preventing violent extremism among youth in Far North Cameroon through a gender- transformative psycho-social support intervention

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# Background and Project

## **Youth Living Peace:**

Based on Living Peace methodology in DRC since 2013 tested and developed with youth since 2015 in various context

## **Objective:**

Adaptation of the Living Peace methodology with a focus on prevention of violent extremism among male and female youth in Far North Cameroon.

## **Methodology:**

Formative research, adaptation of the YLP intervention, training local NGO and piloting implementation



# Implementation Research and Pilot

## Location

- Far North Cameroon (borders with Nigeria, Tchad and Niger)

## Local partner in research and piloting

- ( Action Locale pour un Développement Participatif Auto-géré (ALDEPA)
- University of Maroua research

## Target groups

- Adolescents between 14-20 years old who had been in contact with Boko Haram (volunteer or forced)
- In-School and out-of school / ex-hostage settlements, prisons

## Key-informants

- Parents, teachers, friends, stakeholders

# Implementation Pilot groups

## Participants : Mora et Zamai

Location	Girls	Boys	Total
Mora	30	30	60
Host Community	9	8	17
IDPs	21	22	43
ZAMAI	45	45	90
Ex hostage	35	23	58
IDPs	10	22	32
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>150</b>

Education	Girls	Boys	Total
Unschoolled	16	4	20
Primary	39	46	85
Secondary	20	25	45
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>150</b>

Age	Girls	Boys	Total
Minimum	14	15	14
Maximum	20	21	21
<b>Average age</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>

## Parents and community members involved in identification participants



# Project design:

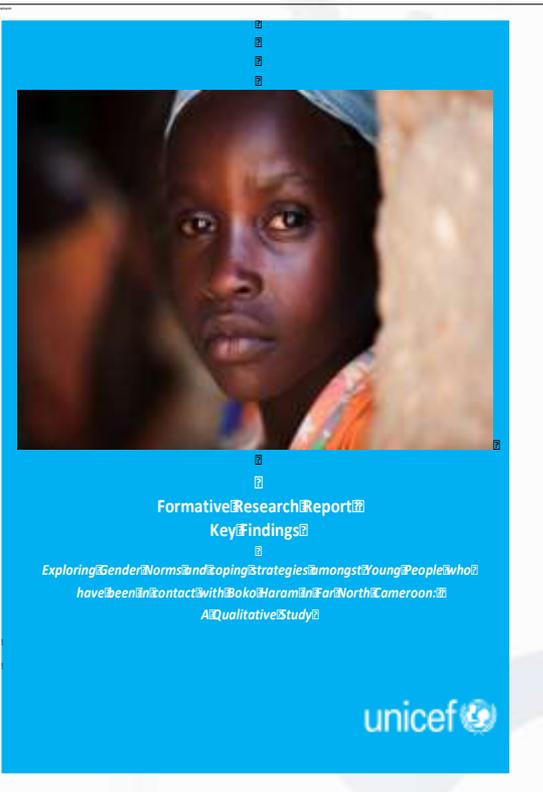
## (1) Formative research

### 1. Formative research questions:

- How do youth cope with their own experiences related to Boko Haram (BH)
- How are their gender identities (and related attitudes and behaviors) linked to psychosocial coping strategies
- How are psychosocial experiences and coping strategies linked to increased vulnerabilities to be recruited by violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram.



# Formative research key findings



- Traditional gender norms increase the risk for boys and girls to get enrolled into BH
- Traumatic experiences increase the risk for development of violent masculinities and submissive femininities
- Security, parental support and education as protective factors for girls
- Parental responses to protect their children from BH reinforce traditional gender relations and increase vulnerabilities
- High levels of stigma towards youth that was with BH in families and communities increases vulnerabilities of youth

# Four phases in the process of change



**Knowing  
yourself and  
the other**

Trust vs.  
insecurity

**Resolving  
problems  
and healing  
wounds.**

Sharing vs.  
isolation

**Integration  
new ideas in  
daily life.**

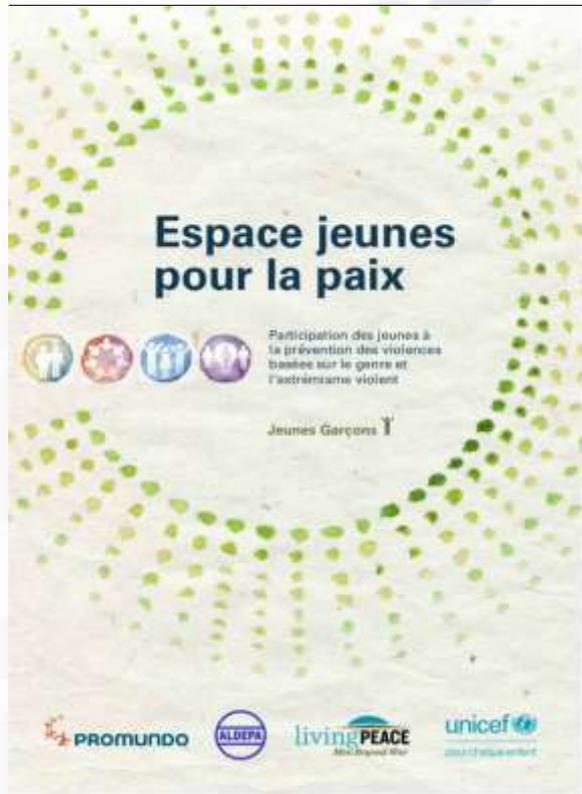
Integration &  
change

**Consolidation  
of change in  
school, family  
and  
community**

Consolidation &  
support

# Project design:

## (2) Adaptation Youth Living Peace intervention



Sessions de groupe	Themes
S1	Welcome / introduction
S2	Image of a boy / girl in the Cameroonian community
S3	Our problems, our experiences
S4	My experiences and my painful memories
S5	Gender and Culture
S6	Power and interpersonal relationships
S7	Sexuality and intimacy
S8	Family and community violence
S9	Use and abuse of psychoactive substances
S10	Learn to plan your life
S11	Solidarity and mutual support for healthy relationships
S12	Meeting with influential people
S13	End GBV and prevent violent extremism
S14	Reflections on Positive Changes in Acquired Attitudes and Behavior

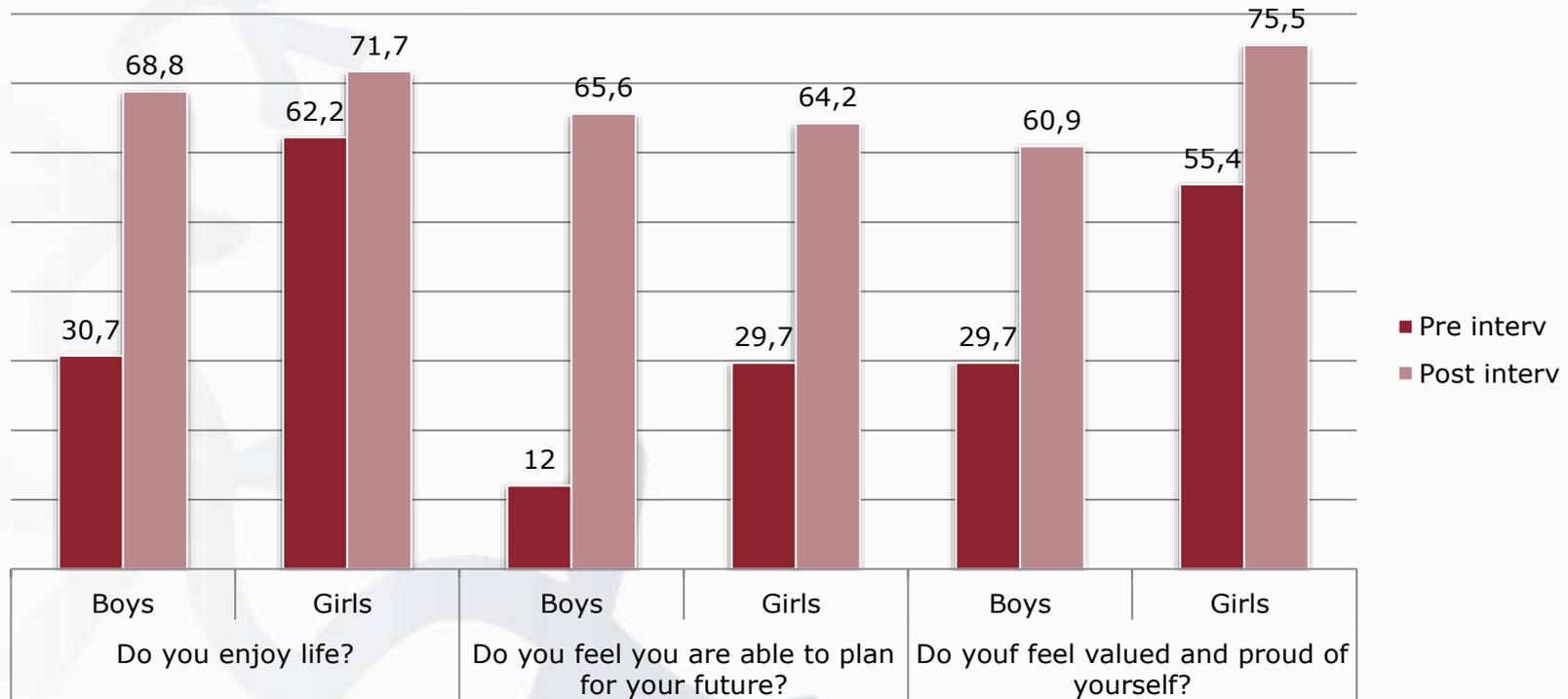
# Methodology

- 15 sessions weekly of 2-3 hours
- 15 participants per group
- 2 trained local facilitators
- Clinical supervision
- Community celebration after last session

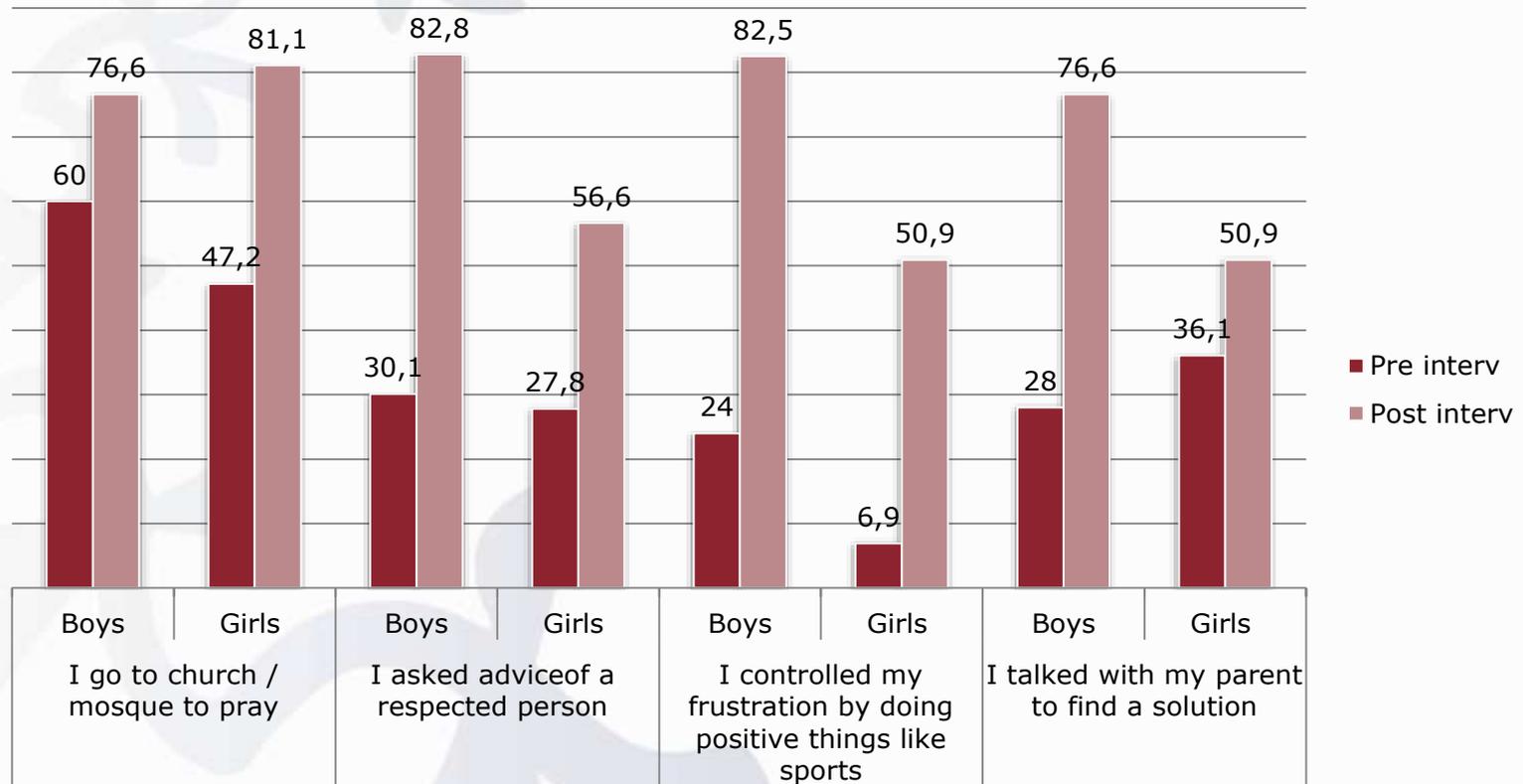


# Pre-Post test findings

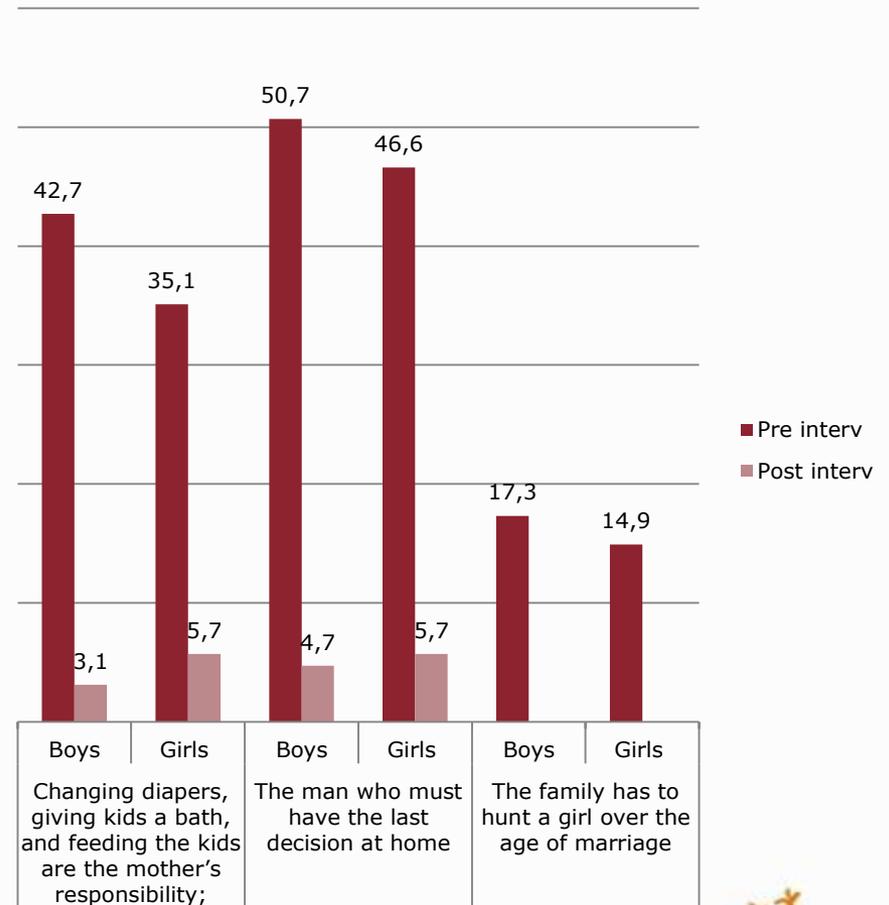
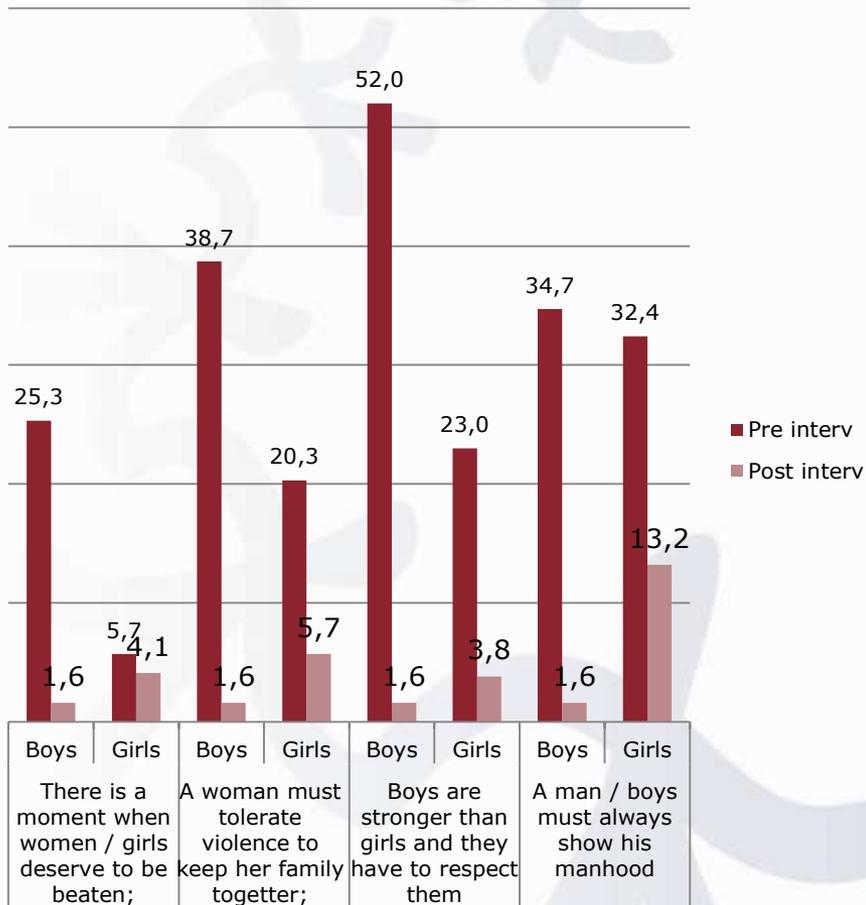
## Psycho-social wellbeing



# Coping behavior



# Attitudes towards gender relations



# CHALLENGES

- ❑ No schooling for children because of lack of school fees and school materials
- ❑ Many young people in the group are vulnerable to poverty and hunger in their families
- ❑ High demand for scaling by adding more group and more area of intervention

## LESSONS LEARNED

- ❑ Good identification of facilitators contributes to the success of the process
- ❑ Strong involvement of local authorities and parents encourages children to join the group and complete the whole process
- ❑ Public testimonies from parents and youth create more empathy than stigma
- ❑ Homework allows non-participants to change and participate indirectly in the process of change

# EXIT STRATEGY

- ❑ How to replicate the experience of the pilot phase to other localities in the far north of Cameroon ?
- ❑ Strengthen a community / village with more groups to ensure / guarantee a good sustainability of the gains
- ❑ How to strengthen children who have changed to be role models and help others (peer education)