

# GERMANY: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

## Nigeria



“I’ve shifted my focus to empowering women to become active participants in the peacebuilding process.”

– Fatima Askira

**Fatima Askira** is a young Nigerian leader, activist and peacebuilder from Maiduguri, in the north-east of Nigeria, who is working to alleviate the devastating impacts of the violence unleashed by Boko Haram in the region. Initially, Askira established the NGO, Borno Women Development Initiative, to provide assistance to women and young people affected by the conflict. The work of the NGO now includes efforts to empower women to become active participants in the peacebuilding process. Askira notes that she is “...trying to create a space where women can express their fears and reservations. All of these women need to be understood and listened to as individuals who have suffered violence and trauma.”

## Ukraine



“We should make the contributions of Roma women visible and ensure that they are recognized as agents of change in their communities.”

– Christyna Bilous

**Christyna Bilous** is a Roma activist and the leader of a self help group in Toretsk, eastern Ukraine. She works to combat the bias and negative stereotypes about the Roma which are deeply rooted in Ukrainian society. Stating that “...the main goal of my work is to dismantle these stereotypes and combat social exclusion, discrimination, and violence against the Roma.”

Bilous advocates for the inclusion of Roma women and girls in local decision-making processes in order to address the issues which continue to challenge them.

With support from UN Women, Bilous established a self help group in her community and is able to advocate for the needs of the community with local authorities. One of the fruits of this community engagement and advocacy is the inclusion of Toretsk as one of four cities in Ukraine joining the Safe Cities and Public Spaces for Women and Girls programme.

## South Sudan



“Our businesses have been growing, only to be disrupted by COVID-19.”

— Margret Raman

**Margret Raman**, a single mother of five, supports her family by selling beans and groundnuts at Masiya Market in Yambio, South Sudan. With the spread of the COVID-19 virus in that country her business has suffered due to the drastic reduction of buyers going to the market. Raman, whose business had grown in the last few years after participating in training on business and financial management skills, is devastated by the impact on her business.

“Since the [advent] of COVID-19, our lives have not been the same. Under normal circumstances, I make about SSP 28,000 [USD 100 ] in a week. This has recently been reduced to below half, SSP 10,000 [USD 34 ] a week.”

Raman has been among the beneficiaries of the livelihood and gender-based violence protection programme to help women grow their small businesses. This programme is funded by the generous support of the Government of Germany.

*Photos: above left: UN Women/Estella Turukoyo John; above right: Illustration by UN Women/Lesly Lotha*

## Myanmar



“I must think about how I, along with the other women, can adapt our small businesses and still make it work.”

— Myint\*

**Myint\*** lives in a village in Rakhine state in western Myanmar, and she had been helping support her family by making multipurpose cloth bags at home and selling them in her village and nearby villages and at a market. With the onset of the COVID-19 virus and the restrictions on all forms of social gatherings she is looking to online platforms as a possible solution for her business.

Myint\* has been part of a UN Women programme strengthening women’s livelihood skills in the agriculture and cottage industries and women’s knowledge of finances, markets and business development. Myint and 690 other women received their grants after learning business development through the programme and writing their own business plans. This programme and others like it have been adapted in order to respond to the pandemic and meet the needs of the communities they serve. This has included raising public awareness of the virus and supporting initiatives combining livelihood and COVID-19 prevention, such as cloth mask production and distribution to communities.

*\*Only a first name is being used in this story to protect the identity of the individual.*