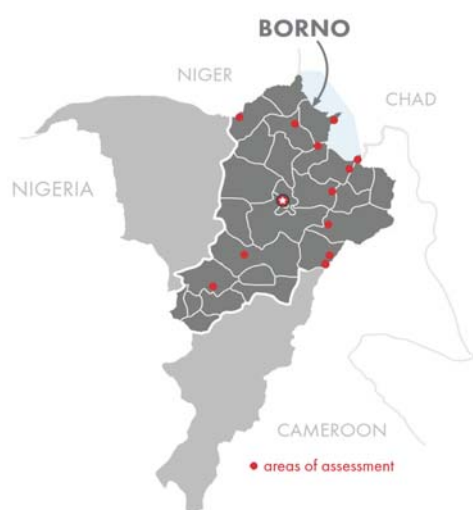


PURSUING PATHWAYS OUT OF CRISIS IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

Borno Strategic Resilience Assessment Research Summary

MARCH 2019



PRIMARY ASSESSMENT SITES

Mercy Corps' [latest resilience research](#)¹ from Northeast Nigeria highlights the profound effect of over 9 years of protracted conflict, as well as the causes of fragility driving the humanitarian crisis. This [Strategic Resilience Assessment \(STRESS\)](#) is unique as the first-ever application of Mercy Corps' resilience framework in a complex crisis setting. Consultations with over 1,500 people in 12 Local Government Areas (LGAs) across Borno State from September 2017 to April 2018 demonstrate the role of social capital, freedom of movement and information, and access to markets as some of the most critical capacities for managing through a high-stakes risk environment. Findings elevate the role of resilience as an organizing principle and approach to bring together critical relief and foundational development investments, to tackle both acute shocks and long-term challenges through integrated peacebuilding and risk management. Amidst continued insecurity and newly

emerging conflict dynamics, the Borno STRESS calls for a different approach in Northeast Nigeria--one that puts a premium on market-driven humanitarian assistance, comprehensive peacebuilding and strategic programmatic layering. This Research Summary and the full STRESS Report communicate resilience-building recommendations for implementers, donors and government officials across the humanitarian and development spectrum.

Findings Highlights

Acute shocks like food insecurity, livelihoods disruptions, limited movement and abuses of power by conflict actors occur simultaneously, and their impacts accumulate and drive new conflict risks, perpetuating the crisis.

The result is a self-reinforcing conflict system, experienced through multiple shock episodes and as an ongoing stress with no clear start or end. Structural constraints--including underdeveloped market infrastructure, poor access to basic services and systemic marginalization of youth--are deepening as conflict and insecurity persist, highlighting the urgency for protecting and strengthening core socio-economic and ecological systems to support the continued use of local resilience strategies.

¹ Borno Strategic Resilience Assessment: Full Report, <https://www.mercycorps.org/research/orno-strategic-resilience-assessment>

Social networks, markets and other local capacities are helping people find ways to cope. Level of exposure to conflict plays a central role in determining the strategies people use and what they prioritize to best support their resilience going forward.

Households and communities rely on friends and family, their independent ability to maintain or find a livelihood using both local and cross-border markets to support them, and--where accessible--humanitarian assistance and proactive migration. There are geographic distinctions to how respondents prioritized coping strategies. Those in areas that have been more exposed to violence and where space, mobility and markets are more constrained tended to emphasize money, food, religious faith or their own capacity to persevere, and other resources with a direct influence on their ability to survive over the immediate term. By contrast, communities in areas that have been less exposed brought up the importance of more medium-term livelihood strategies, such as how to maximize production amid variable rainfall. Adolescent and young women and men face additional burdens to successfully overcoming major risks to their well-being.

Recommendations

Prioritize peacebuilding to manage and prevent new shocks and stresses: Invest in managing future conflict threats that have the potential to develop into new shocks and stresses, further ignite the conflict cycle and disrupt progress towards food and economic security and peace.

Strengthening local capacities around natural resource management and other community goods, like water, can help address risks linked to scarce land in garrison towns. Building skills in dispute resolution and promoting dialogue between communities and government around priorities for recovery can be layered alongside humanitarian relief. Current investment in peacebuilding is insufficient and needs to be scaled up to address bigger concerns, like reintegration of former combatants and potential for renewed outbreaks of violence.

Increase support of market, social and other systems: Accelerate efforts to protect and strengthen local markets and social networks, and preserve key ecological systems from deterioration, particularly around concentrated security perimeters. Applying approaches to restore livelihoods, for example--such as facilitating access to capital for market actors and strengthening networks for sharing accurate market information--can be paired with cash assistance and infrastructure rehabilitation to help address chronic underdevelopment challenges. Failure to strengthen core systems while meeting basic needs is likely to increase the vulnerability of marginalized groups and weaken local capacity to support recovery and development.

Tailor, layer and integrate assistance for holistic, risk-informed support: Communities in Borno State need to draw on a wide range of capacities to deal with short-term and longer term challenges to their sustainable progress out of crisis. These capacities are detailed in the complete Borno STRESS Theory of Change in the [full report](#). Simultaneous investments in peacebuilding, market recovery and development, health, nutrition and WASH services are needed and should be sequenced appropriately to integrate with, and build from, emergency relief. Forms of assistance need to be tailored to the dynamic context to function effectively in the face of compounding risks. Examples include portable assets and skills, geographically tailored information on security and services, and nutrition-sensitive livelihoods adapted for space and resource-scarce environments, such as kitchen gardens. Regular joint contextual analysis of risks by humanitarian and development actors to review approaches and priorities is vital to feed into risk-informed support.

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