



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

BORNO, NORTHEAST NIGERIA STRATEGIC RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT

Full Report and Findings

NOVEMBER 2018



Executive summary¹

Overview

This Strategic Resilience Assessment (STRESS) in Northeast Nigeria illustrates how communities can build resilience to shocks and stresses within the context of ongoing conflict or humanitarian crisis and protect progress toward humanitarian and development goals. Mercy Corps defines resilience as the capacity of communities in complex socio-ecological systems to learn, cope, adapt, and transform in the face of change. Resilience is not the end goal, but rather the way that well-being—in humanitarian and development terms—continues on a positive trajectory in spite of disruption. Undertaken between June 2017 and July 2018 and drawing from both primary and secondary data, this STRESS process seeks to understand what factors support or undermine resilience in the complex crisis context of Borno, and then identify a set of capacities that can contribute to a shared vision for humanitarian and development stakeholders in Borno over the next 3-5 years.

The STRESS process encourages us to think differently. Five overarching questions guide Mercy Corps' STRESS: Resilience to what end? Resilience of which systems? Resilience to which shocks and stresses? Resilience for which groups? Resilience through what capacities? Using a participatory assessment and analysis process, the STRESS goes beyond reporting assessment "findings" in the traditional sense to developing recommendations on how practitioners can meaningfully integrate risk reduction and resilience-building measures. It is designed to capture and analyze the risks communities are facing—combining local insights with an analysis of higher-level trends, systems dynamics, and the factors shaping vulnerability for different groups of people—and what this means for their ability to cope and adapt over time.

RESILIENCE

Mercy Corps defines resilience as the capacity of communities in complex, socio-ecological systems to learn, cope, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses.

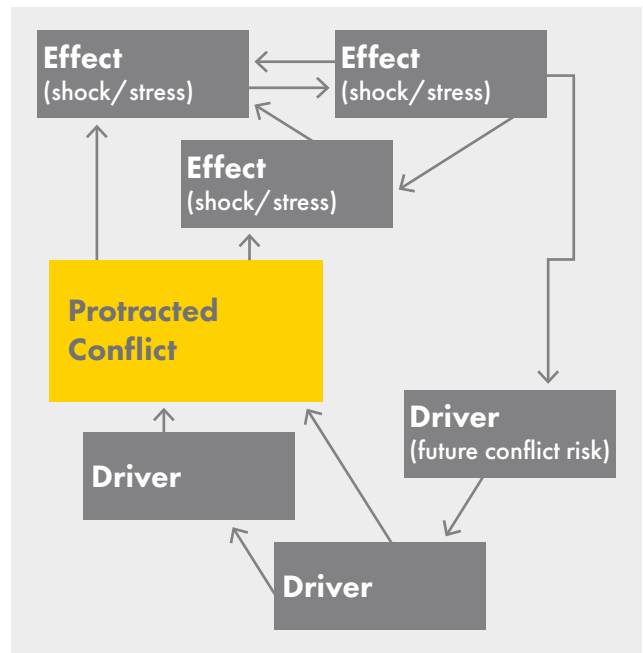


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¹ A sister document to this Full Report, the *Borno Strategic Resilience Assessment Results Synthesis* provides an abbreviated description of major recommendations contained in this document. <https://www.mercycorps.org/research/orno-strategic-resilience-assessment>.

FIGURE 1: Conflict Cycle Diagram

The STRESS in Borno also sought to understand how “the conflict” as an overarching stress impacts people’s livelihoods, social cohesion, and food security, and what it means to build resilience within protracted conflict. We determined that conflict is best understood as a system, with impacts that manifest as discrete shocks and stresses. These shocks and stresses interact and multiply, increasing vulnerability and in some cases driving new conflict risks. By breaking down shocks and stresses this way within the conflict system, resilience capacities can then be defined and strengthened to help address the interrelated drivers and impacts of the challenges communities in Borno are facing. The STRESS findings underscore the imperative for practitioners and policy-makers to deepen our understanding of what builds resilience in the face of conflict at both individual and systemic levels and orient responses toward a holistic approach for strengthening resilience capacities.



A systems analysis of the conflict’s root causes and the current crisis dynamics were integrated into the STRESS methodology. These framed and informed a theory of change for building resilience capacities in Borno. This theory of change seeks to build resilience in support of : 1) inclusive economic opportunities and growth and the benefit those opportunities and growth offer to restore livelihoods; 2) improved social cohesion across communities, particularly recognizing the role of social cohesion as a safety net for coping with shocks and as a critical pathway towards peace and security; and 3) food security, primarily through the lens of food availability and access.

Why Resilience?

Given the overwhelming scale of the challenge in Borno, it is clear that instability at some level will continue into the foreseeable future. The infrastructure damage, lost livelihoods, and years of education missed, when added to the extensive development challenges that existed prior to the conflict, mean these issues are likely to become generational ones. It is also essential to understand the interconnected nature of the shocks and stresses described here. They do not stand in isolation; instead, they are mutually reinforcing. Despite improvements in some areas, any progress is fragile, and a deterioration of security (even temporary) or a bad crop season could upset the delicate recovery process in communities, amplifying household poverty and forcing people to resort to increasingly negative coping strategies.

The future of Borno’s youth depends upon on their ability to manage the shocks and stresses that they face daily. They are confronting changing labor markets, risks from reintegration and return, and political transition, in addition to a landscape increasingly impacted by climate change and resource degradation. This is why we must change our framing of humanitarian programming. Even as we address urgent basic needs, we have a moral imperative to integrate resilience thinking into our program design in ways that strengthen multiple capacities by layering humanitarian and development strategies.

Recommendations for Building Resilience in Borno

The recommendations outlined below are framed around three broad themes to help the humanitarian and development community incorporate resilience into program design and implementation strategies for Borno. Systems-based approaches and tools can help implementers and donors design programs that integrate a long-term vision for change into short-term support activities that build resilience across social, economic, and environmental systems. Fundamentally, systemic change will require a significant shift of mindset from phased thinking and “relief to development continuums” to ways of working that recognize the complexity and interconnected nature of risks and adapt quickly to the changes in the context.



Theme 1: Manage future conflict threats that have the potential to develop into new shocks and stresses and disrupt progress towards improved well-being. This should be done by addressing the dynamics that cause the complex crisis to persist and by strengthening conflict management and prevention mechanisms.

Address the need for more space/land: There is an urgent need to address the balance between necessary security perimeters and adequate land for people and food production in and around garrison towns or camps. New strategies are needed to mitigate the impact of space constraints and limited movement, in order to manage current and future threats to food security and the need for individuals to maintain a livelihood. Without ambitious governance and peacebuilding responses to these issues, and deep consultation with the affected populations (including marginalized populations who are often voiceless in discussions), at best the recovery will be delayed, and at worst the groundwork will be inadvertently laid for future unrest and undermined development gains.

Integrate peacebuilding into assistance: Approaches that support peace and stability need to be integrated into programming; in addition, programs with explicit peacebuilding and conflict-management objectives are necessary. Programs should be designed with regular assessments that look at whether aid is being delivered in ways that unintentionally reinforce corruption or strengthen the position of elites. Examples of interventions to aid peacebuilding might include: assistance designed and delivered in ways that promote social cohesion and strengthen local leadership, promoting inclusive decision-making structures, or building local capacity to identify tensions and manage conflict peacefully. Both IDP and host communities—given the diverse stakeholders within them—should be included in the design and implementation of these approaches, to ensure that marginalized community members are empowered and overall civil society is strengthened.



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Education and Employability: Education provides essential skills to enable livelihood improvements, adopt risk-reducing techniques, and to diversify income. Yet, by the most generous accounting, only 38% of eligible students in Borno are enrolled in school.² So it is not surprising that 51.2% of Borno residents are currently unemployed or underemployed. This lack of education appears to raise different concerns for urban communities than rural communities: urban communities such as Biu and Maiduguri were more likely to lament educational interruptions than the Borno average, and were more likely to view education as a tool for advancement. Rural and

² Four out of 10 15-19 year-olds are furthermore illiterate. Unicef 2017. VTS 2018.

conflict-affected communities such as Gwoza and Kukawa were less likely worry about any educational setbacks or include education as an adaptive strategy. In these communities, education was not seen as a wise investment, particularly for females.³

Comprehensive engagement with young people, religious leaders, and their communities is needed to provide broader access to vocational training, ‘soft’ employability skills, and formal education, particularly for girls. This should be done in a manner that builds social capital with local and state government, opens dialogue and community participation in shaping education services, and integrates accountability mechanisms. If longer-term strategies are not applied to engaging and supporting youth, much of the current effort in the Northeast could be called into question as the population of Borno more than doubles by 2050. Increasing skills that are linked to market needs will help youth diversify their livelihoods and build resilience in the long and short term. There are likely many NGOs—both local and international—already well placed to do this, but it should be done in a way that strengthens the relationship between citizens and the state, and targets youth in the margins.



Theme 2: Address underdevelopment and structural conditions that increase the vulnerability of marginalized groups and constitute potential drivers for new conflicts to emerge.

Social, political, economic and ecological systems in Borno were ill-equipped to act as a safety net or prepare people to effectively manage the impacts of conflict. It is time to prioritize investments in systems that transform and/or strengthen communities’ capacity to achieve their development goals, while explicitly addressing structural constraints that impede risk management capacities. This can be done by reframing “aid” as a mechanism designed to build on the existing capacities and positive examples of resilience currently in communities. Identifying and investing in communities that are demonstrating positive deviance (having a positive impact by doing something other than the norm) and thriving despite a multitude of challenges will help strengthen key enablers for both recovery and improved well-being. These investments should explicitly build up basic services and strengthen human capital (for example, investing in education programs that address gender and youth inequality). Supporting instances of localized, positive coping strategies can make recovery shorter, less costly, and may prevent opportunities for new or exacerbated conflict dynamics to arise.

Increase access to finance: The STRESS indicates that entrepreneurship remains an enduring pillar of resilience in Borno, yet it is hampered by limited access to financial services or other sources of investment capital. Findings from a Mercy Corps baseline study of youth in Borno show that 80% of young people are interested in starting businesses, yet only 1.8% have experience accessing financial services.⁴ This is in part due to the number of banks and MFIs that were destroyed or shut down as a result of the conflict.⁵ More rural and conflicted LGAs—such as Gwoza and Monguno—showed significant levels of informal borrowing, 184% higher and 272% higher respectively than urban areas. This level of informal borrowing is consistent with previous assessments that found 96% of rural residents’ first choice is to borrow from friends and family rather than formal institutions or savings and loan groups (adashe).⁶ This is primarily due to the ease of access to friends and family and the high levels of trust. To support increased access to finance, a multi-pronged approach is necessary: support to rural adashes, the introduction of mobile finance (which will require the improvement of mobile infrastructure), and financial inclusion programs designed specifically to support youth entrepreneurialism.

3 Borno average for people mentioning educational impediments: 5.15%. Borno average discussing education as an adaptive tool moving forward: 7.83%.

4 I-SING Program Baseline Assessment, Mercy Corps, 2017.

5 Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (LMRA), Mercy Corps et al Oct 2017, <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

6 Ibid.

Strengthen the food market system: In many locations, market infrastructure was destroyed by insurgent attacks on places including marketplaces and storage facilities. Although many of these places were in poor condition to begin with, they are now non-functional and in urgent need of rehabilitation.⁷ Limited land access, as well as poor and blocked roads, contribute significantly to disruptions in the food market system, and undermine transport of nutritious, but easily spoiled, foods. Infrastructure and market systems that create employment and support food security efforts should receive leveraged assistance, although communities should be the drivers of how that assistance is prioritized. Despite past recommendations, humanitarian food assistance is not always implemented in a market-aware manner,⁸ and this continues to have negative effects on the market system. The suggestion here is to make progress on the detailed recommendations previously laid out in the Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment.⁹

Improve information sharing: Access to regular, updated information for making decisions and managing day-to-day risks is paramount to resilience, particularly for the displaced.¹⁰ Large numbers of people still lack the most basic data on the safety and security of home communities,¹¹ information on humanitarian distributions, and updates on basic security.¹² Farmers and traders spoke of their frustration with irregular information on the price of commodities, and lack of travel updates or information on restrictions. Practitioners should build access to information into ongoing and planned interventions in order to improve proactive decision-making and help reduce people’s exposure to risks. Donors should also work with the Nigerian government to find systemic solutions that are apolitical but allow increased flows of information on markets, security, health, and other data necessary for resilience. This should be done in a way that builds crucial information systems, including the governance and infrastructure for these systems, in order to support a longer-term development foundation, including through creative partnerships with the private sector.



Theme 3: Be strategic in the layering of interventions and programs, bringing together elements that reinforce capacities for preventing and managing risk. Be aware of geographical differences and tailor activities for vulnerable sub-groups.

Resilience thinking is not commonly applied to conflict contexts, yet there is an increasingly urgent need for practitioners to optimize approaches to deliberately support communities who have suffered from conflict with layered capacities that prevent and better manage stresses and shocks. For example, interventions focused on improving production techniques could be paired with expanding information networks to allow communities and input suppliers to share security updates pertinent to their livelihoods. Recognizing and protecting positive local resilience strategies—such as social networks and entrepreneurialism—is one important aspect of this; however a ‘beyond do-no-harm’ lens is needed to reduce exposure and look at sensitivity more holistically for different subgroups.¹³ Donors need to fund programs that enable more integrated approaches and implementing agencies need to have space, tools, and resources to adjust program details based on local context. Both donors and implementers need to take greater care to avoid cookie-cutter approaches, and instead become more intentional about which packages/recommendations are used where, and how they are layered over space and time.

7 Ibid.

8 For more detail see the recommendations on pp45-46 of the LRMA.

9 Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (LMRA), Mercy Corps et al Oct 2017, <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

10 Fifteen percent of the population reported serious problems due to lack of information. Translators Without Borders 2018.

11 48% of IDP respondents said they lacked basic information on the safety and security of their home communities, needed to plan a move home.

12 Not Ready to Return. NRC. 11 October 2017. More information was requested on humanitarian distributions (53% of sites), additional relief assistance (14% of sites), and general security (20% of sites) IOM DTM 2018.

13 STRESS identified several subgroups needing particular attention within the overall youth and adolescent age group (adolescent boys and girls age 15-19, male and female youth age 20-34), including but not limited to the Almajiri, youth heading households, youth abusing substances, people with disabilities, women and girls experiencing early marriage, reintegrating ex-combatants.

Theory of Change

The Borno STRESS process identified a number of essential capacities for communities to learn, cope, adapt, and transform in the face of the shocks and stresses perpetuated or exacerbated by the larger conflict. These capacities, detailed in the Theory of Change (ToC) below, are interdependent and therefore need to be strengthened concurrently for long-term impact on economic well-being, food security, and peace. Some capacities will need longer timeframes to address and must be considered at a more systemic level, as no one community, donor, NGO, or government agency is capable of building these resilience capacities alone.

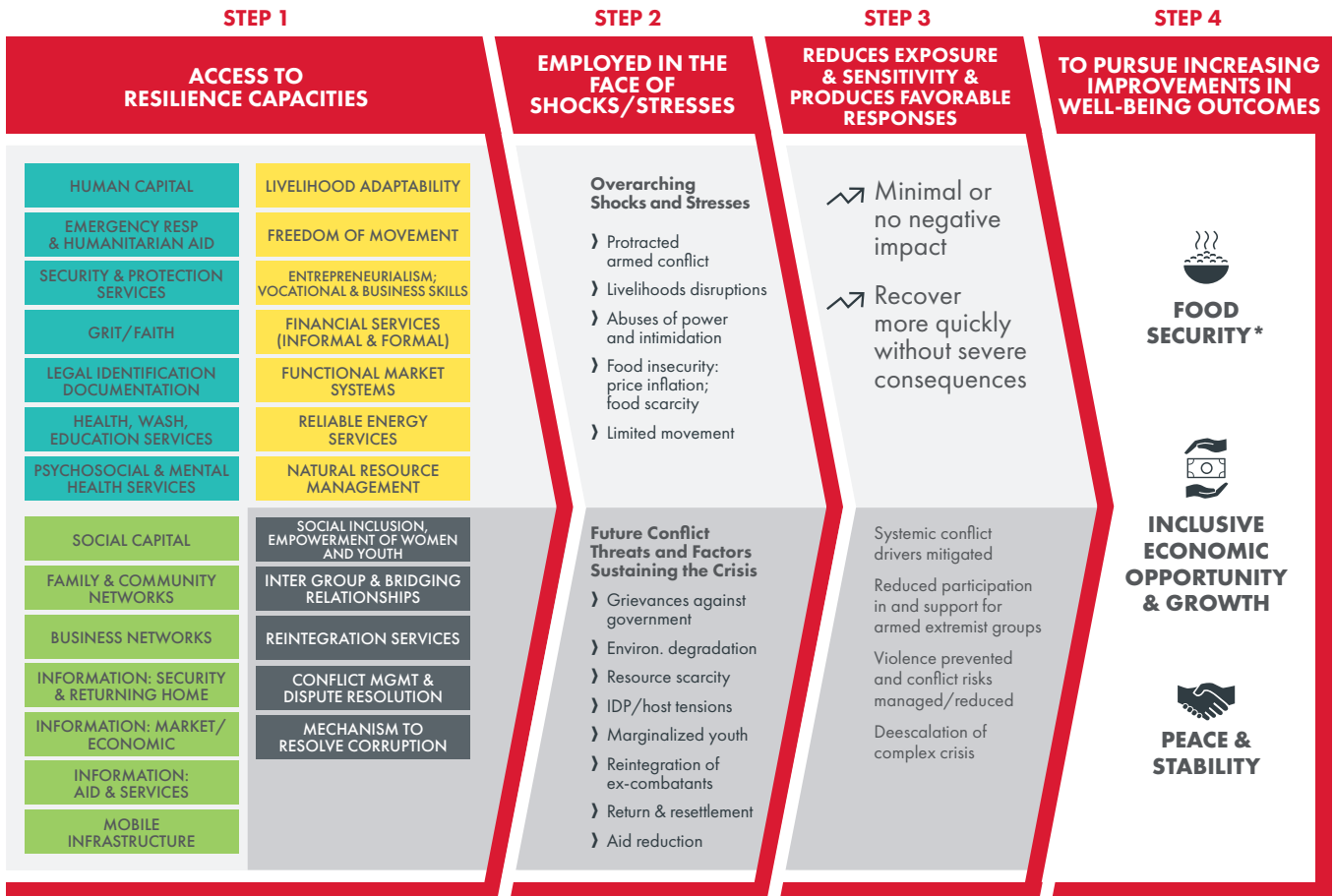
The ToC is framed around an initial 3-5 year timeframe and places an emphasis on reducing the risk of young people and adolescents to the set of shocks and stresses outlined in the diagram. Approaches to build access to and use of these resilience capacities will require recognizing the different strengths of male and female adolescent and youth populations, including factors that affect marginalized sub-populations, as well as the unique challenges they face. The ToC also posits that conflict risks will be reduced through violence prevention and peacebuilding capacities, by alleviating the systemic drivers that sustain this complex crisis.

This report provides guidance to implementers, donors, and government officials on the existing capacities of the people of Borno and how these capacities can be supported and built upon for the recovery of Northeast Nigeria. It calls upon us to look at the challenges in a new light, and to change our ways of working; to ensure that whatever we do, we are building on the existing strengths of the people of Borno.



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Borno STRESS Theory of Change (3-5 Year Timeframe)



LEGEND

Embedded Conflict Track

- Step 1: ACCESS TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING CAPACITIES
- Step 2: EMPLOYED IN THE FACE OF CONFLICT RISKS
- Step 3: PREVENTS AND REDUCES CONFLICT AND THEREFORE REDUCES RISK OF THE "OVERARCHING SHOCKS/STRESSES"
- Step 4: AND ENABLES INCREASING IMPROVEMENT OF WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

- Capacities for Basic Human Needs and Rights
- Capacities to Earn and Maintain a Living
- Capacities for Social Connectivity
- Capacities for Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention

*food security seen primarily through a food access and availability lens

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List of Acronyms

AOG – Armed Opposition Group
DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
CJTF – Civilian Joint Task Force
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
KII – Key Informant Interview
LGA – Local Government Authority
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
JNI - Jama'atu Nasril Islam
NiMet – Nigerian Meteorological Agency
NSCDC – Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps
SGBV – Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
STRESS – Strategic Resilience Assessment
ToC – Theory of Change
MMC – Maiduguri Metropolitan City
WFP – World Food Program



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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale for Study

As the conflict in the Northeast of Nigeria nears a decade, humanitarian access is fluid in Borno, remaining limited in marginalized communities as well as those newly exposed to violence, while improving in others. This increased access in some places has resulted in a drop in household food insecurity according to the World Food Program (WFP), from 58% in 2017 to 27% in March 2018. At the time of this report drafting, only one in four people require support.¹⁴ The crisis, however, is far from over; 25% of Borno residents (1,364,539¹⁵) remain displaced, and only 14% are ready to return home. This is due to damaged infrastructure as well as the lack of security required to definitively end the conflict.¹⁶ Such challenges are compounded by the 380,000 housing units that were razed in Borno during the conflict and the fact that 58% of schools are closed. Over \$5.9 billion in damage occurred in Borno, and although there has been progress towards meeting basic needs, much of this damage remains.¹⁷ In addition to crippled infrastructure, there is the concern that the current deployment of security forces falls well short of what is needed to change the security dynamic.

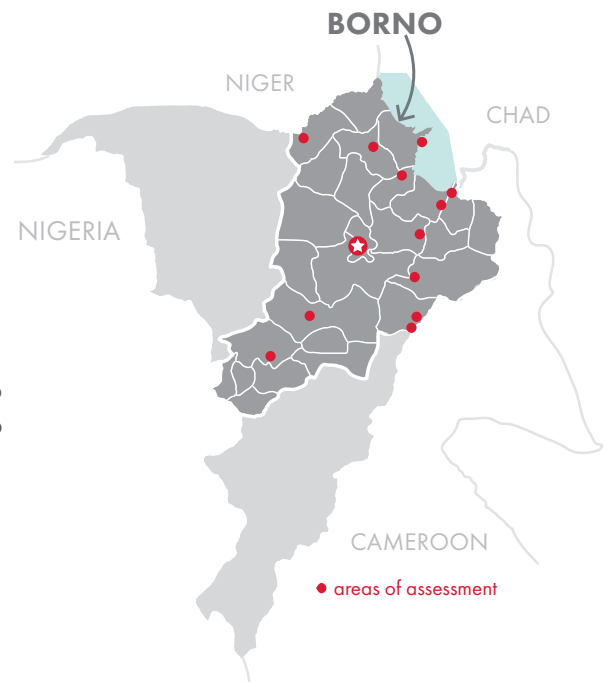


FIGURE 2: Locations of Primary Data Collection

A growing body of research and programming experience highlight that a resilience approach can make an important difference in reducing the likelihood that further shocks and stresses will have lasting consequences for local communities. However, resilience work has focused largely on climate and development-related challenges, and is often done in otherwise stable contexts. In many of the world’s most fragile areas, including Northeast Nigeria, conflict is the primary overarching shock that affects communities. In these locations the value of a resilience approach within relief and recovery is not well-understood and is rarely prioritized, despite the clear value it brings in helping to avoid and mitigate crises.¹⁸

14 20 conflict deaths per day in 2014-15 to five in 2017-18. Council on Foreign Relations, 2018.

15 IOM DTM, Feb 2018.

16 *Not Ready to Return*. NRC., 11 October 2017.

17 IOM 2018. Unicef, 2017. NRPB 2015.

18 Study by USAID Center for Resilience, *Economics of Resilience: An Ounce of Prevention, a Pound of Cure*, <https://www.marketlinks.org/library/economics-resilience-ounce-prevention-pound-cure-after-event-resources>

To help address this critical gap, and in order to learn how resilience can engage and support communities at an earlier stage in the humanitarian response and recovery cycle, Mercy Corps undertook a Strategic Resilience Assessment (STRESS) in Borno State, Northeast Nigeria. The STRESS is a participatory assessment methodology and learning process developed by Mercy Corps designed to engage a wide cross-section of community stakeholders. The process supports a deeper understanding of the community's experiences with vulnerability, development constraints, and shocks and stresses, and informs the development of an operational vision for building resilience in alignment with longer-term development goals.

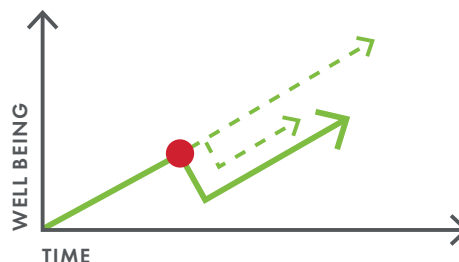


FIGURE 3: Resilience Diagram

The results presented here open a window of understanding—providing perspectives from many vulnerable individuals, often in communities where security still prevents humanitarian access. It is also essential to understand the interconnected nature of the shocks described here. They do not stand in isolation. Instead, they are mutually reinforcing, and built upon a foundation of poor social services, neglect, and corruption. In this context, the STRESS process found three Primary Shocks and Stresses and two Compounding Challenges, which are discussed below.

1.2 Why Resilience?

Despite some promising developments in 2018, it is time to acknowledge the overwhelming scale of the challenge in Borno (and Northeast Nigeria), and recognize that instability at some level will continue into the foreseeable future. Given the extent of the infrastructure damage and the years of education missed, on top of the extensive development challenges that existed prior to the conflict, these issues are likely to become generational ones. Communities in central and southern Borno, for example, are beginning to re-establish themselves and resume a sense of normalcy. They are concerned, however, that the systems needed to support their access to food, production, and education—systems that were weak and dysfunctional prior to the conflict—have been further damaged and remain fragile. A temporary deterioration of security or a bad crop season could upset the delicate recovery, driving poverty deeper and forcing people to resort to increasingly negative coping strategies.

The closure of the border has an effect on us, as it has made commodity prices go up. It has affected not only big businesses but also small businesses, even potters are affected. — Male Youth, Ngala

This reality underlines the critical role of resilience thinking, particularly for Borno's youth, whose futures depend on their capacity to weather the cascading impacts of different shocks and stresses. By contributing to Borno's stabilization through peaceful means, and successfully preparing themselves and their families to thrive into the next half decade amidst uncertainty, young people of the Northeast are a critical pillar for resilience on a large scale. They are confronting changing labor markets, risks from reintegration and return, and political transition in addition to a landscape increasingly impacted by climate change and resource degradation. Response strategies must be aligned to enhance strengths and address the needs of young people—to help them successfully overcome today's shocks in ways that enable them to prepare for risks tomorrow and beyond. The STRESS findings underscore the imperative for practitioners and policy-makers to deepen our understanding of what builds resilience in the face of conflict, at both individual and systemic levels, and orient responses toward a holistic approach for strengthening resilience capacities.

19 From Conflict to Coping, Mercy Corps, <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/coping-drought-ethiopia-building-peace-0>

1.3 Understanding Resilience in a Complex Crisis

Mercy Corps' foundational resilience research in 2012, *From Conflict to Coping*,¹⁹ pointed out the importance of conflict management capacities for drought resilience among pastoralist groups. Peacebuilding programming implemented by Mercy Corps in the Somali-Oromiya region of Ethiopia improved peace and security conditions, enabling greater freedom of movement and access to water, pasture, and other natural resources. This contributed to pastoralists' ability to cope and adapt with the 2011 Horn of Africa drought more successfully than their peers who did not receive peacebuilding interventions. Transposing those lessons learned to Northeast Nigeria, begged the question: *what does resilience mean within a protracted conflict?*

This STRESS has deliberately sought to answer this larger question, delving into the role of practitioners in strengthening resilience in complex crises,²⁰ and at a minimum, ensuring programming does not undermine resilience. While resilience as an approach to development has become more established over the past decade, the bulk of resources and discussion so far has largely concentrated on resilience to natural disasters and in arid lands. Few efforts have examined in-depth what it means for practitioners to apply a resilience approach in protracted crisis. Increasing attention on the nexus between humanitarian and development interventions, as illustrated by high-level commitments such as the *New Way of Working* paper and commitment coming out of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, shows widespread agreement that better approaches in these contexts are needed. While a resilience approach is conceptually ideal for defining strategies to address collective humanitarian and development outcomes, there are significant gaps in understanding what this means practically or looks like in a multi-year conflict with ongoing humanitarian access constraints.

Mercy Corps uses the Strategic Resilience Assessment (STRESS) methodology to understand and develop a vision for building resilience in a given context. Borno provided an opportunity to test the purpose and utility of resilience thinking in a complex crisis, and integrate conflict-analysis elements into the overall STRESS methodology. A complementary case study evaluates this in more detail.²¹ A learning objective that has also been threaded through this STRESS process has been to understand where addressing the root causes of conflict may yield resilience dividends and where resilience capacities may be used to address the root causes of conflict.

In speaking with communities, we found that they infrequently mentioned a specific conflict event (such as a bomb blast or altercation with security forces) as their concern. Because of the complex, interrelated, and reinforcing problems that communities face, it is not easy to pin their major concerns down to a single sector or to describe the risks they face as unique events. Resilience thinking requires that aid workers and community members unpack the dynamics that households and communities are facing by identifying which shocks and stresses they are regularly exposed to or that are likely; disentangling causes and impacts of shocks and stresses; and looking at these risks through economic, ecological, social and political systems lenses. Resilience thinking means shifting from seeing isolated needs (food, shelter, water) to looking at risks more holistically. It also means looking at these risks from the perspective of different population sub-groups and understanding how, and why, shocks and stresses affect them in different ways. Therefore, after analysis, protracted armed conflict is best understood as a complex system and overarching stress, whose impacts cause specific stresses and shock events (e.g. death, violent actions, destruction of property, etc.).

20 Mercy Corps uses the term complex crisis as synonymous with the widely used term "Complex Political Emergency", described by ALNAP as "a situation with complex social, political and economic origins which involves the breakdown of state structures, the disputed legitimacy of host authorities, the abuse of human rights and possibly armed conflict, that creates humanitarian needs. The term is generally used to differentiate humanitarian needs arising from conflict and instability from those that arise from natural disasters."

21 Mercy Corps: *Case Study: The Next Frontier—Priming Resilience in a Protracted Crisis, Northeast Nigeria*, for USAID, November 2018.

Mercy Corps used focus group discussions, expert interviews, and key informant interviews with conflict actors during the *STRESS Inform Phase*, and data collection methods aimed to draw out the widespread effect of conflict on daily life and how it influences vulnerability to other shocks and stresses. We also integrated an analysis of the root causes and current causes of conflict, and how those factors are sustaining the crisis, into the *STRESS Analysis Phase*. This shed light on the importance of connecting the drivers and impacts of conflict shocks and stresses to a broader understanding of social, political, economic and ecological sources of risk in Borno over an extended timeframe. The resulting Borno STRESS Theory of Change includes specific capacities for preventing and managing conflict. Broader learning takeaways on building resilience to and within conflict are discussed in Section 5 of this report.

Table 1. Understanding Resilience in a Complex Crisis

STRESS Question	This means:	In Borno specifically:
Resilience of what?	What systems do target populations depend upon? How are they under threat now and in the future? What systemic constraints existed prior to the complex crisis that continue to make people vulnerable?	Education, health, markets, and other systems are disrupted during protracted conflict yet are critical for supporting ongoing resilience. Environmental systems also become degraded over time (deforestation, resource competition).
Resilience to what?	Which shocks and stresses threaten well-being goals and how? How are they inter-connected and what is likely to change if the crisis drags on?	Categories of shocks and stresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Originating in conflict: Root causes, conflict drivers (factors that must be addressed to reduce/prevent violence), conflict incidents, conflict impacts (e.g. reduced movement, food price shocks), future conflict threats › Not originating in conflict (though may be exacerbated by it): Disease outbreaks, natural disasters, climate change effects
Resilience for whom?	Which groups or communities are we focusing on? What factors make them vulnerable in different ways?	Bring clarity to which groups are affected and in what way. Ensure that those who may be invisible in society have their voices heard.
Resilience through what?	What resources and strategies could be used to improve or maintain well-being when facing shocks and stresses over a prolonged period? What systems are currently supporting resilience locally and can this be sustained?	Resilience capacities —skills or abilities that help people mitigate, adapt, and recover—play a role in minimizing long-term consequences of crisis on people’s wellbeing. They include: <i>coping capacities</i> (relying on family and friends), <i>adaptive capacities</i> (moving to a new location, proactively managing resource conflicts), and <i>transformational capacities</i> (reducing support for violence; restoring access to basic services)
Resilience to what end?	What well-being goals do we aim to protect by building resilience? What are our higher-level goals for communities?	Manage immediate concerns in positive or neutral ways, while identifying and addressing future threats and structural conditions that create concern.



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

2. STRESS Process Methodology: Resilience of What? To What? For Whom? Through What? To What End?

2.1 Approach

Starting with a Scoping Workshop, Mercy Corps team members in Nigeria narrowed the focus of the assessment to 2.3 million Nigerians, aged 10-34, living in Borno State. By focusing on adolescent girls, adolescent boys, young women and young men in the most contested communities, and aiming to examine sub-groups within them, team members felt that greater attention could be given to those groups and allow for a better understanding of the most marginalized people. The process identified a number of essential resilience capacities²² communities need—particularly for adolescents and youth—to learn, cope, adapt and transform in the face of shocks and stresses that pose the greatest risk to their economic well-being, food security and peace. Using this information, Mercy Corps developed a Theory of Change to guide program design and implementation that promotes pathways for communities to move from cycles of coping to a more positive development trajectory. The STRESS also offers an opportunity to shift common practice towards more resilience-oriented thinking and doing, taking the questions above as a starting point.

The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were an opportunity to understand participants' perspectives from a broad resilience lens, drawing out qualitative responses over a wider range

22 Mercy Corps defines resilience capacities as the resources and strategies that enable people and systems to achieve improved well-being in the face of shocks and stresses.

of topics related to resilience than might have been possible with a standardized quantitative survey. The FGDs were designed to integrate learning and action through the use of a participatory risk and resource mapping tool and guided questions that facilitated storytelling around rapid humanitarian access, historical and current experiences with shocks and stresses, and unmet needs and existing capacities. These responses were then filtered through a resilience lens for analysis, resulting in a deeper understanding of the set of capacities used by communities and households to approach challenges. Analysis identified the significance of social networks, freedom of movement, and entrepreneurialism, among other things. The fieldwork for this study was undertaken between June 2017 and July 2018, when Mercy Corps gathered both primary and secondary data, and spoke to approximately 1,500 people (50% men, 50% women) in 50 communities, both urban (IDP camp and non-IDP camp/host communities) and rural, across 12 Local Government Areas (LGAs). From these interviews and further analysis, we developed a picture of resilience in the state of Borno and identified a set of capacities that will contribute to Mercy Corp’s vision over the next 3-5 years.

Several deliberate methodology choices were made to adapt the STRESS for application in Northeast Nigeria, and to facilitate ongoing adaptive management:

- › **Lengthened timeline:** This STRESS spanned over fifteen months, from initial design and pre-scoping work to finalizing the report. Initially ten months were allotted for the assessment, but there were delays, many of which were associated with the reality of working in an insecure environment where uninterrupted humanitarian response is the priority. Acknowledging this, the team facilitated regular check-ins to adjust the timeline, methods and activities as well as partnerships to suit the changing dynamic and learning experience. The intentionally lengthened timeline ensured the STRESS was able to include an element of capacity-building while also allowing for adaptive approaches.
- › **Phased data collection rounds:** The Inform Phase was designed as a rolling process, with one to two weeks built in between each data collection trip in order to adapt the tools and shift the focus to follow interesting themes that came up. This also enabled more flexibility given the constantly shifting security.
- › **Build from secondary sources:** This STRESS included a pre-scoping phase to collect any relevant secondary data which was used to frame the initial Resilience Questions and help narrow data collection. It proved difficult to find reliable Borno-specific data sets, therefore a significant amount of ground-truthing was done and face-to-face interactions were used to collect unpublished secondary sources. A complementary but separate analysis was conducted during the STRESS period looking at existing household level data from the Nigerian census, with the intention of identifying a subset of resilience capacities to explore in more depth.
- › **Dedicated team:** Usually, a STRESS is led by someone within the existing team and staff play significant roles at each phase to fit the methodology’s capacity building objectives. In recognition of the constraints on the local team’s availability to commit consistently, a dedicated team was hired to lead the process and ensure the implementation of an adaptive capacity building strategy that fit the humanitarian teams’ ability to engage.
- › **Conflict integration:** Discussed above in Section 1.3 of this report.

STRESS PRINCIPLES

- › *Embrace complexity and multiple sectors through systematic analysis of social, ecological and economic context.*
- › *Develop practitioner capacity to build proactive resilience strategies and adaptively manage them throughout the program cycle.*
- › *Foster “Good Enough” mentality for continuous, rapid and iterative learning.*

2.2 Research Questions

Mercy Corps designed the FDGs around a participatory, holistic inquiry of the challenges facing marginalized sub-groups in Borno, as well as a curiosity regarding the approaches those sub-groups find most effective in overcoming adversity. The assessment sought qualitative feedback to complement more traditional surveys and existing secondary sources and local communities were given an opportunity to voice their concerns. Specifically, facilitators asked the residents of Borno to map the hazards they experienced, discuss which of these hazards were of the greatest concern to those in the group, and describe what resources were used to respond to the impacts. Interviewers then dug deeper into the responses received, asking questions such as:

- 1 What are/were the challenges in being able to deal with these risks and impacts?
- 2 How do you plan for such challenges in the future? (Probing for what they believe they can manage vs. what is out of their control)
- 3 Do you have social networks to support you, like support from family, friends or traditional leaders? How do they help?
- 4 What is the main bonding of this community; what brings you together as one in the community (religion, culture, livelihood)? Is there strong or poor social cohesion? Why or why not?
- 5 To manage these risks and impacts do you have, or have you asked for help from the government, INGOs, or others?
- 6 What resources, tools or networks do you think would help you be more resilient to these challenges now and in the future?



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

The FDGs were supported by conversations with key informants, exploring areas of particular expertise and including questions on what is driving the conflict, how it is unfolding from the perspective of formal and informal forces as well as how communities throughout Borno are affected. Interviews were also done with various authorities on a variety of potential stresses, such as the role of water scarcity in complicating short-term survival and longer-term development; or discussions with religious authorities to better understand the social fabric of Borno and its role holding communities together. Finally, great care was applied to speaking with the most marginalized of sub-groups to ensure that the specific challenges facing them relative to the community at large were understood—whether those challenges were longstanding concerns or more recently connected to the conflict—as well as the approaches that each group has found to be most useful in coping and adapting in the face of challenges.

Throughout the findings sections of this report are references to the number of times respondents mentioned a particular theme or topic. This is not to suggest that quantitative analysis methods were rigorously applied to qualitative data, but instead to give a sense of the importance a topic occupied at the aggregate level.

2.3 Information Sources

Within Northeast Nigeria, information is often compartmentalized and siloed, and this tendency has been exacerbated by the conflict. Marginalized stakeholders, rural communities and those not receiving deliberate attention within the emergency response have few outlets to ensure that their voices are “heard” by leadership, INGOs and the government. Therefore, this assessment deliberately set out to cultivate a wide diversity of perspectives by speaking with a large cross-section of Borno society. Previous research²³ indicates that exposure to specific issues or sensitivity of responses may vary significantly by age, gender or other socio-cultural characteristics. This explains our targeting strategy for the assessment: current data available explains very little about the issues of specific population groups, so the STRESS process deliberately reached out to youth and adolescent populations and marginalized groups.

At its core, for a contextualized, current picture of the context, the assessment relied on nearly 100 focus group discussions facilitated by both male and female facilitators (per gender group of respondents) to help outline the myriad of issues facing various constituencies in different areas of Borno. As mentioned above, these foundational LGAs were complemented by key informant interviews designed to draw out overlooked aspects of conflict and incorporate the perspectives of numerous constituencies caught up in the conflict, including Almajiri street children, disabled entrepreneurs, kidnapped youth, orphans, rural farmers, school drop-outs, street hawkers, students, taxi drivers, traders, victims of SGBV, vigilantes, war-widows and adolescent girls married at an early age. These insights were enhanced by discussions with other expert stakeholders helping to shape the conflict, including CJTF leadership, military intelligence officers, regular soldiers and those more empathetic of the insurgency. These anonymous informants, both marginalized and militant, shared invaluable, if uncommon, perspectives to help complement more traditional emergency assessments. Finally, STRESS drew upon a background review of secondary sources. These covered a range of topics, from climate trends and water contamination to the experience of marriage among young girls.

2.4 Difficulties and Limitations to Data Gathering

Mercy Corps experienced certain challenges when gathering data amid conflict, including the inability to access several frontline communities and an unwillingness of security stakeholders to share sensitive information. Challenges included routine security hurdles that frequently blocked access both to and from rural communities as well as circumspect responses from the Security Forces. Less expected were the intentional limitations on ordinary information, ranging from local weather data (Nigerian Meteorological Agency, NiMet) to bureaucratic regulations. These difficulties were balanced against the more standard practical challenges of gathering data in the field; Mercy Corps partnered with trusted local CSOs Jama’atul Nasril Islam (JNI) and Herwa Community Development Initiative (Herwa) to gather data in areas where INGOs would have greater access issues. The use of local NGOs was largely constructive for engaging communities throughout Borno, however the communities themselves were often reeling from instability and uncertainty resulting in challenges that made tools such as historical timelines less effective, as well as creating protection concerns around raised expectations. Many respondents were simply so fatigued that their answers were often rudimentary and guarded.



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

23 Rethinking Resilience, www.mercycorps.org/resilience



Borno, Nigeria—Ezra Millstein

3. Understanding the Systems: Resilience of what?

3.1 Key System Elements: Security, Social, Economic, Ecological

Resilience thinking aims to bring typically isolated sectors into a multi-faceted, systems-based understanding of a given context. As such, the STRESS process deliberately focuses on social (including political), economic and ecological systems and goes on to describe the complex and interconnected drivers of instability within these systems and how they reinforce each other. However, in a conflict context, it makes sense to also look at the element of security as a system in itself that interacts with social, economic and ecological systems, and needs to be understood independent of the systems that are in place in a “normal” context. Security, particularly in the case of Northeast Nigeria, plays an overarching role that defines and impacts the potential for long-term well-being and transformational change. Therefore, we must include it in our analysis if we are to design strategies and interventions that appropriately reflect the insights of our assessment and support communities to build their capacities because the Security System is simultaneously trying to resolve the conflict and contributing to it.

24 *Nigeria's 2003 Elections: The Unacknowledged Violence*, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/nigeria0604/1.htm>

25 “Nigeria's Boko Haram attacks in Numbers – as lethal as ever” (Jan 25 2018), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-42735414>

3.2 The Security System in Borno

The wider security environment, with its multitude of stakeholders, is the paramount system influencing life in the Northeast region of Nigeria. Some feel that the roots of today's conflict date back to the election violence of 2003-4, when federal and state elections, and later local government elections, were marred by serious incidents of violence, which left at least 100 dead and many others injured. The scale of the violence and intimidation, much of which was perpetrated by members or supporters of the ruling party, called into question the credibility of these elections.²⁴ As a result, frustrations with the lack of development and inclusion bubbled up at the local community level, creating an opportunity for Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) to develop around 2009. Following a government crackdown in 2011, dissatisfaction boiled over and sparked the current crisis. Since then, open conflict has claimed over 20,000 lives and displaced at least 2 million,²⁵ with Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram) and its offshoot the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP) battling the Government of Nigeria and civilians alike.

The Government of Nigeria's Security Forces work at both federal and local levels and include the 7th and 8th Divisions of the Nigerian Army and NSCDC Civil Defense. They are supported to some degree by the Nigerian Air Force and Nigerian Navy on Lake Chad, as well as by the Multinational Joint Task Force, including troops from neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The Nigerian Government established Operation Lafiya Dole in July 2015; the Headquarters of which is located in Maiduguri and is called HQ Theatre Command. Theatre Command comprises 3 Divisions of the Nigerian Army. The 8th Task Force Division's area of responsibility in Borno State includes the following LGAs: Magumeri, Gubio, Mobbar, Nganzai, Guzamala, Abadam, Kukawa, Monguno and Marte. The 7th Division's area of responsibility in Borno State includes all other LGAs. In addition, 7th Division includes the northern LGAs of Adamawa State. The 3rd Division Tactical's area is located in Damaturu, Yobe State and includes all LGAs. Starting in April 2018, most Local Government Area HQ of Borno State now have a presence of the following security agencies: Military Police, Regular Police, Mobile Police (with EOD team) and the Immigration Service Customs Service. Despite the number of entities involved, together these forces have faced limitations, finding themselves hard-pressed to cover the entirety of Borno and lacking local knowledge.

As such, the Civilian Joint Task Force's 26,000 local volunteers²⁶ have proved important for providing community-level security, as well as being informed local advisors for federal troops. CJTF was formed at the height of the insurgency to protect local communities; they assist the Nigerian security forces with intelligence collection and military operations, particularly in more remote areas. Given the lack of official Nigerian policing capacity, CJTF members also have taken over policing functions in some parts of Borno, often exerting significant control over IDPs. For the most part they are not formally trained—although a small number of fighters have been trained, armed and placed on the military payroll—others are armed but unpaid, and the overwhelming majority neither carry arms nor receive direct financial support for their services. This has led to many CJTF members being dissatisfied with their current status; they would like to be formally integrated into state security forces.²⁷ This creates a number of challenges: the first is the lack of a framework for civilian protection and accountability. Because most of the CJTF never received formal training, they often have little knowledge of existing legal frameworks and civilian protection norms. Given their lack of integration into formal chains of command, civilians have few effective channels to appeal the decisions of vigilante fighters, or demand justice for their abuses—including sexual exploitation, intimidation, aid diversion, and assaults on those suspected of being part of armed groups. CJTF fighters are mostly young men with few alternative livelihood options. Many have little or no formal education and do not fulfill the minimum requirements that would enable them to be integrated into the formal security forces. Drug addiction and abuse problems are widespread and

²⁶ UNDP estimates 25,000-27,000

²⁷ *Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/09/05/achieving-peace-in-northeast-nigeria-reintegration-challenge-pub-77177>

likely growing. Without a comprehensive plan for reintegration into their communities, the Nigerian government risks developing a pool of young men with few opportunities yet significant experience wielding violence and authority. Separate from the CJTF, community vigilantes are mostly professional hunters, for the most part older men though also some youth who inherited it from their fathers, who were operating well before the conflict as both hunters and light security (anti-robbery). Tension persists between CJTF and vigilantes in some cases in that they operate together to secure communities against AOGs, but vigilantes do not receive any formal government stipend or salary and often are overlooked by other organizations.

We never go to NGOs for support and on the other hand government has betrayed us. Because we are the original vigilante of the community but when it came to benefit BOYES [Borno Youth Employment Scheme] ... we were forgotten. They were given training and N15,000 salary monthly. We don't know how to forward a complaint to the government. — FGD with male vigilantes

From the community's perspective, under the current system, suspected Boko Haram members captured during military operations are subjected to an internal military screening process, and those deemed to pose a security risk are placed in military detention. However, the screening criteria and evidence used to detain these suspects are not transparent. Security forces often arbitrarily arrest villagers in areas that are suspected of harboring Boko Haram fighters, and any individuals caught in areas that are not secured by the military are automatically considered suspects, partly because of the operational difficulties of verifying information about their backgrounds.²⁸ The Office of the National Security Adviser is seeking to improve these procedures, however, any efforts will need to address the complexity of people's relationships with the AOGs: while some AOG members willingly joined the group due to social and economic pressures (and were later unable to leave) others were forcibly abducted. Many others fall somewhere in between, and although some played a role in active combat, many others filled non-violent support functions under duress, or merely lived under Boko Haram rule, unable or unwilling to flee.²⁹ Currently there are few opportunities or incentives for Boko Haram associates to reintegrate into communities. This means that many of those who are linked to Boko Haram—but aren't necessarily loyal to them—find themselves outcast by family and friends. Even infants born of rapes and forced marriages are considered to be 'bad blood' and often not accepted into the family circle.³⁰

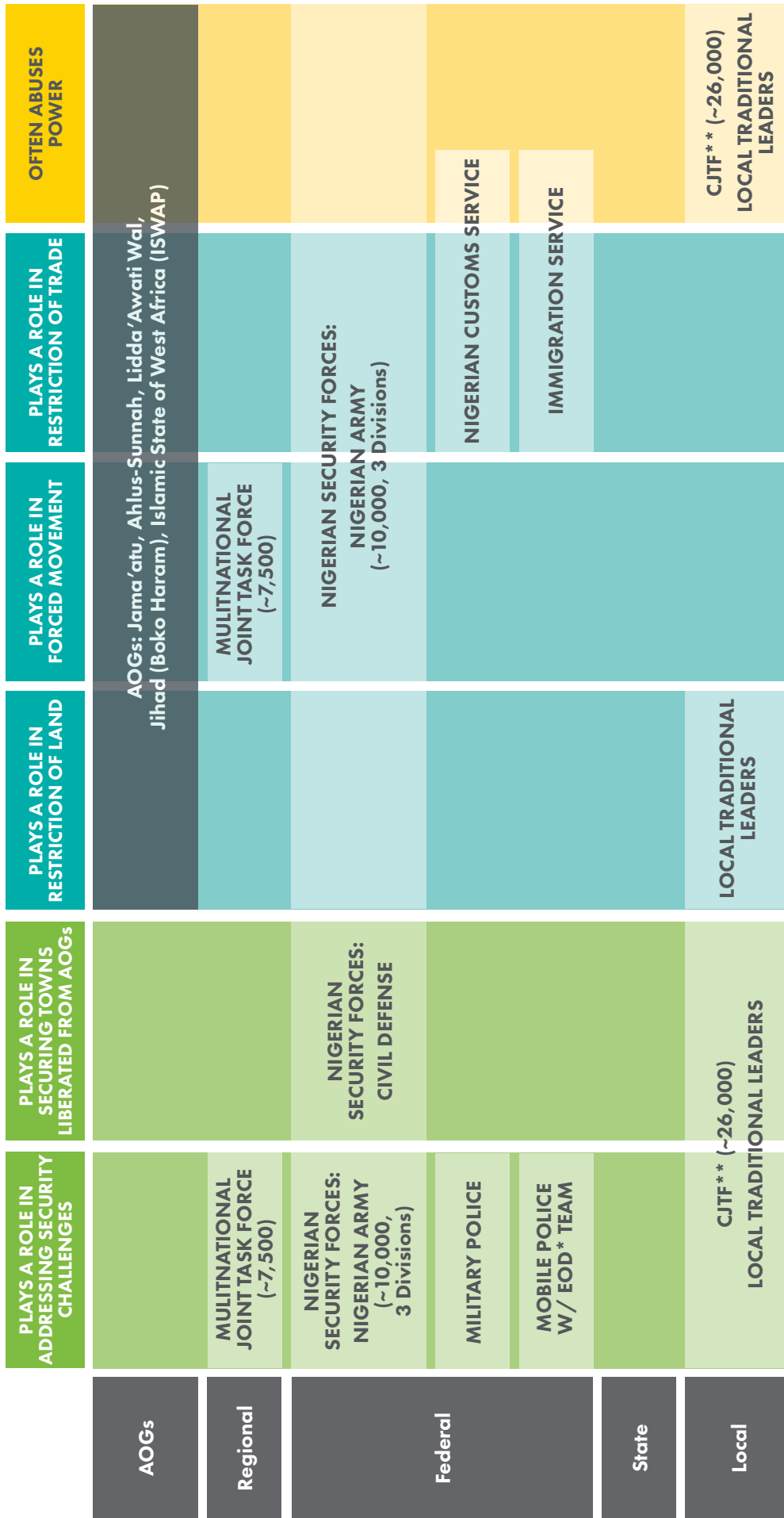
While Operation Last Hold aspires to finally clear the remaining two (of 27) LGAs from Boko Haram control, the reality is that the insurgency is likely to persist at some level for the foreseeable future, and therefore the players are likely to remain in place. None of the underlying drivers of the conflict—such as income disparity between states, lack of development and political exclusion—have been addressed and grievances remain widespread. Anyone who seeks to foment instability can still find willing recruits. This includes formal political stakeholders, who are widely expected to instigate violence in support of more narrow political agendas in the run up to the February 2019 elections. Many informed observers believe there are more "winners" benefiting from a violent status quo than there are alternative stakeholders with the influence to promote peace in the Northeast. The system map below attempts to lie out the players of the Northeast Security System and the role or influence they have within the system, and across systems, which may help humanitarian assistance implementers to unpick the complexity so that peacebuilding capacities can be strengthened more effectively. Managing security is heavily centralized at the federal level, and the state level exerts little control over security management. This is worth noting, especially considering the importance of state level governance capacity in local development.

28 *Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/09/05/achieving-peace-in-northeast-nigeria-reintegration-challenge-pub-77177>

29 Ibid.

30 *Bad Blood*, International Alert, <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/bad-blood>

Security System Actors



LEGEND

- positive influence on resilience
- neutral influence on resilience
- negative influence on resilience
- * Explosive Ordnance Disposal
- ** Civilian Joint Task Force

FIGURE 4: The Security System

3.3 Social Systems in Borno

The importance of social capital and the social networks that characterize them in Nigeria cannot be overstated. Mercy Corps defines social capital as the networks and resources available to people through their relationships with others. It refers to the connections that exist between people, and their shared values and norms of behavior, which enable and encourage mutually advantageous social cooperation.³¹ Social capital can be further broken down into three types: Bonding (networks between similar groups), Bridging (connections between groups that are different), and Linking (trust with people who represent formal or institutionalized power, i.e. the government). In Northeast Nigeria, “linking” social capital is fairly weak—as evidenced by the ongoing conflict, lack of basic services and high levels of corruption—while bonding and bridging social capital is quite strong. For example, previous Mercy Corps research³² has found that 96% of respondents who borrowed money did so from friends, family and neighbors (a proxy for strong relationships) and 70% turned to friends, neighbors or community groups when seeking information on how to deal with restrictions. The desire to stay connected to family and friends is the reason that the average household in the Northeast spends 40% of their household expenditures on phone top-up cards,³³ a number that does not seem to change significantly when households become IDPs. Looking at social capital within specific social systems allows us to better understand how the conflict has impacted social networks, and how they may help strengthen resilience capacities needed to manage shocks and stresses over time. In particular, a deeper exploration of local social capital can shed light on local drivers of current and future conflicts.

Religion remains a powerful source of individual and group social identity, reinforcing social capital in both positive and negative ways, and is often closely linked with political power as well. For many people, involvement in a religious group supports their need for stability, safety, affection, belonging and self-esteem, contributing to resilience capacities and providing a framework for agreed community norms. In the BBC’s 2004 survey of more than 10,000 people, over 90% of Nigerians said they believed in God, prayed regularly, and would die for their beliefs, making it the ‘most religious nation in the world’ at that time.³⁴ This helps to explain why “prayer” came up so frequently in discussions of resilience capacities and coping mechanisms. Nigerian scholars have noted: “People living under conditions of poverty and deprivation may draw meaning—rightly or wrongly—from their religious identity, particularly as religious actors are commonly accessible at the most grass-roots levels.” In northern and especially northeastern Nigeria, rampant levels of poverty and oppression fuel grievances to create an identity crisis that is exploited by religious and political extremists to gain influence. Where youth have limited options to engage, Nigerian scholars note, “providing mainstream paths for young people, within the cultural constraints of their society, can help to alleviate the feelings of anger, frustration, and hopelessness that lead many northern youths to join terrorists.”³⁵

Understanding the role of all three types of social capital in Borno is important for identifying pathways to strengthening resilience because the question remains whether the protracted conflict has increased overall acceptance of violence. Some respondents spoke of a “moral decay” as a root cause of the conflict; the term “moral decay” was used to roughly group issues like substance abuse, laziness, and looking out for your own narrow interest (which drives corruption and bribes). Increased acceptance of violence (or ignorance of religious teaching opposed to violence) would fall into this grouping as well. Social identity researchers have noted “a security-only approach also risks pushing yet more restless, jobless, frustrated northern youths into violent extremism and ‘negative identity’”.³⁶ The lack of linking social capital connecting people and government structures helps explain why 77% of Nigerians are living without official recognition (unregistered births, not enrolled in formal education). But the strong bridging social capital between heterogeneous groups provides an opportunity for building resilience capacities.

31 Adapted from Aldrich and Putnam.

32 Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (Oct 2017). <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

33 *Silencing Boko Haram*, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.ey/>

34 ‘What the World Thinks of God’ http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/02_february/26/world_god.shtml

35 *Social Dynamics of Nigeria’s Boko Haram Insurgency*, http://cega.berkeley.edu/assets/miscellaneous_files/110_-_Agbibo_a_-_ABCA.pdf

36 Ibid.

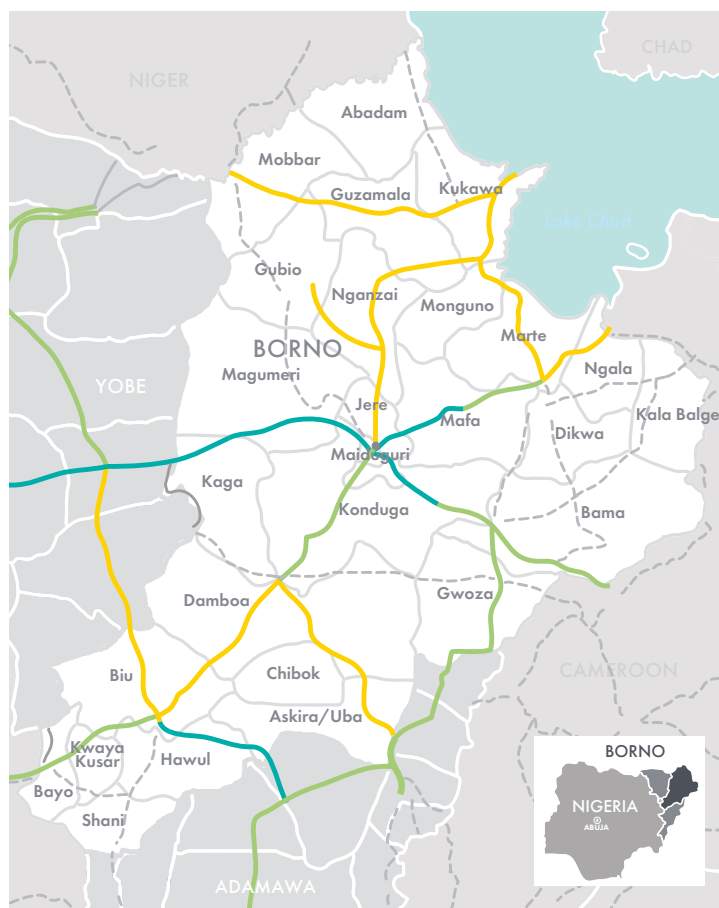
Gender also plays into the complexities of Nigerian social systems: issues such as early marriage, polygamy, weak application of inheritance laws and norms around when it is appropriate for women to speak up or play public roles in society all change the dynamics of how social capital is utilized in a community or a household. This structural marginalization of women and girls has contributed to conflict dynamics as well—interviews with female Boko Haram members suggest that some viewed the group as an opportunity to escape hard agricultural labor and receive an education³⁷. Others were kidnapped and forced into service or marriage, and now find themselves even more ostracized by their community. Women’s wartime roles will need to be fully addressed in peace-building processes, or the system will remain unstable.

3.4 Economic and Market Systems in Borno

The market systems of Borno and the specific challenges the people of Borno face have been discussed at length in the Livelihood Recovery and Market Assessment report, published in late 2017. While some of the recommendations of that report have started to be translated into programming on the ground, given the extent of the damage, many of the findings and recommendations of that report are still applicable. For the purpose of context, the economic systems of Borno are covered only very briefly here.

Many believe that Boko Haram intentionally targeted market infrastructure to cripple the trade routes and breakdown trade relationships. Nearly every type of infrastructure—markets, phone towers, banks/MFIs, electricity tower, roads, input supplier shops, public transport vehicles, warehouse storage, fuel stations, water pumps, and factories—were hit during the insurgency and the economic damage has been estimated at \$9bn.³⁸

In 2014, Nigeria’s GDP overtook the GDP of South Africa and Nigeria became Africa’s biggest economy and the 26th-largest in the world, nearly doubling in size from \$292 billion to \$510 billion in two decades, reflecting growth in the service sector in particular³⁹. Despite a decade of macro-economic gains in trade and agriculture, however, the sluggish pace of poverty reduction, infrastructure development and job creation (particularly for young Nigerians) points to a worrying trend: the benefits of GDP growth are not reaching the country’s poor. With the current rate of population growth in Nigeria at 2% each year according to the UN, an increasing number of Nigerians will face the widening gap between



Map originally created for the Livelihoods and Market Recovery Assessment (2017) and updated in November 2018 for the STRESS

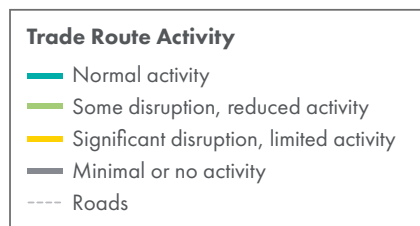


FIGURE 5: Trade Route Map

37 Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/09/05/achieving-peace-in-northeast-nigeria-reintegration-challenge-pub-77177>

38 <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/economic-impact-boko-haram-terro-ne-estimated-9bn-buratai/>

39 Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20140703_NorthernNigeriaHoffmann.pdf

All the development we have had over the years have been taken away by the insurgency as most of the infrastructure we had is now destroyed.

— Male adult Ngala

economic growth and social welfare indicators. Despite a booming economy on paper, economic growth is very unequally distributed. Eighty percent of the nation's wealth is concentrated in the hands of just 1% of the population. While there is limited data, it seems to be concentrated in Lagos State, which has approximately 7% of the national population. Lagos state has seen a reduction in poverty from 44% to 23% between 2004 and 2010 while half of Nigeria's states have experienced an increase in poverty during the same period.⁴⁰ Nearly one in three Nigerians endure a life of severe poverty and 50% of Nigerians in the Northeast live below the poverty line.⁴¹ Further dragging on Nigerian development are grim social indicators and a nagging gender divide, including the fact that women expect to receive 45% less education and 62% less income than men.⁴² Nigeria currently spends less than almost any other African country on education. This has a direct impact on the quality of labor that will be available in the North in the medium-term, and will have significant impacts on productivity and growth in the long run.⁴³

The lack of infrastructure in the Northeast means that the economy is built on rural livelihoods: agriculture, pastoralism, and fisheries management. Rural livelihoods also rely on natural resources, which while abundant, have begun to show strain. Gradual agricultural expansion into areas traditionally utilized by pastoralists, as well as the natural scarcity of surface waters beyond Lake Chad, has caused friction. The uncertainty over increasingly variable rainfall, as well as anthropomorphic changes to the waters around Lake Chad, raise meaningful questions over the ongoing viability of traditional livelihoods in the Northeast.

3.5 Ecological Systems in Borno

Although climate change was not found to be a driver for the conflict in Northeast Nigeria, it is thought to be a 'threat multiplier' given the current issues related to food insecurity. As reported more fully in the Nigeria Climate Change and Environmental Assessment⁴⁴, as regional temperatures increase and staple crops become less viable, current cropping-patterns will become less effective, contributing to further food security challenges. Loss of soil fertility due to land degradation and heat-related loss of soil moisture and biomass will also decrease food yields. Losses in soil moisture may also impact local microclimates, which can contribute significantly to floods and erosion. The shifting climate will likely have negative impacts across most populations, but will have particularly strong impacts on those populations least able to adapt to climate stressors. Borno is highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture; irrigation penetration in smallholder farms is less than 10%. Changes in seasonal rainfall patterns, along with increasing heat stress, will decrease food security across the region. Climatic stresses will mostly be felt as threat multipliers.

The combined influences of climate change and land-use change (as may happen once security perimeters are removed) will have dramatic impacts on food security in Borno, and across Northeast Nigeria. These impacts can be somewhat, but not completely, mitigated by improved agricultural practices and livelihood diversification. Although Nigeria produces large amounts of food, agricultural productivity per unit area is still quite low; uptake of irrigation schemes also remains poor throughout the country. Both increasing temperature and increasingly sporadic and intense rains will create storage and transportation difficulties for small-scale farmers in Northeast Nigeria. Without improved storage facilities or refrigeration, market values and food longevity will decrease which will be exacerbated by the poor infrastructure and security issues of road transport. Increasing temperatures and decreasing water security will also negatively impact livestock, as most livestock suffer from reduced productivity under higher temperatures.

40 World Bank, African Development Indicators, 2014

41 World Bank, 2014

42 Ranking 152/187. Severe poverty: 30%, below the income poverty line: 53.5% (2013). Mean years of schooling: women: 4.9, men: 7.1 GNI per capita: women: 4,132, men: 6,706. UNDP 2016.

43 Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20140703_NorthernNigeriaHoffmann.pdf

44 Taylor Smith, 2017 (Mercy Corps internal report) https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LD6_vDEJ4AiOL8TES1kdLhKkYXdl1stn Coe and Foley, 2001

Any increase in temperature will put additional pressure on surface and groundwater resources in Northeast Nigeria. When combined with changes in precipitation increased temperatures can lead to large-scale changes in the water resources in the region. The most obvious example of this is Lake Chad, which lost more than 90% of its area during the 20th century. It is thought that the blame for this change is split nearly 50/50 between increasing human use and large-scale drought in the Lake Chad basin.⁴⁵ The loss of Lake Chad has severely curtailed some livelihoods (e.g., fishing), and has also led to more contamination of surface and groundwater resources in the region due to more concentrated use.⁴⁶ Changes in the timing and distribution of rainfall, increased summer temperatures and poor water management can all combine to severely reduce water availability. In the near-term, changes in watershed and agricultural management (e.g., introduction of drip irrigation and better control on the dumping of wastes into rivers) are more likely to impact water resources than changes in climate. However, the predicted increases in regional temperature will certainly drive increasing aridity in the coming decades.

As mentioned above, climate change has not played a key role in driving the ongoing conflict in Northeast Nigeria. However, ecological risks are high. The larger social-political-economic context of Nigeria—for example clashes between traditional and western ideas of property rights—cannot be ignored. Climate-related migration also has the ability to stir tensions, whether in the short-term or over larger timescales, such as the return of IDPs after the droughts of the 70s and 80s. In light of the significant IDP issues currently faced by Borno, coupled with lack of government support and unclear land-ownership rights, climate should be considered a future potential stress that needs to be addressed to avoid the escalation of tensions in the context of poor governance.

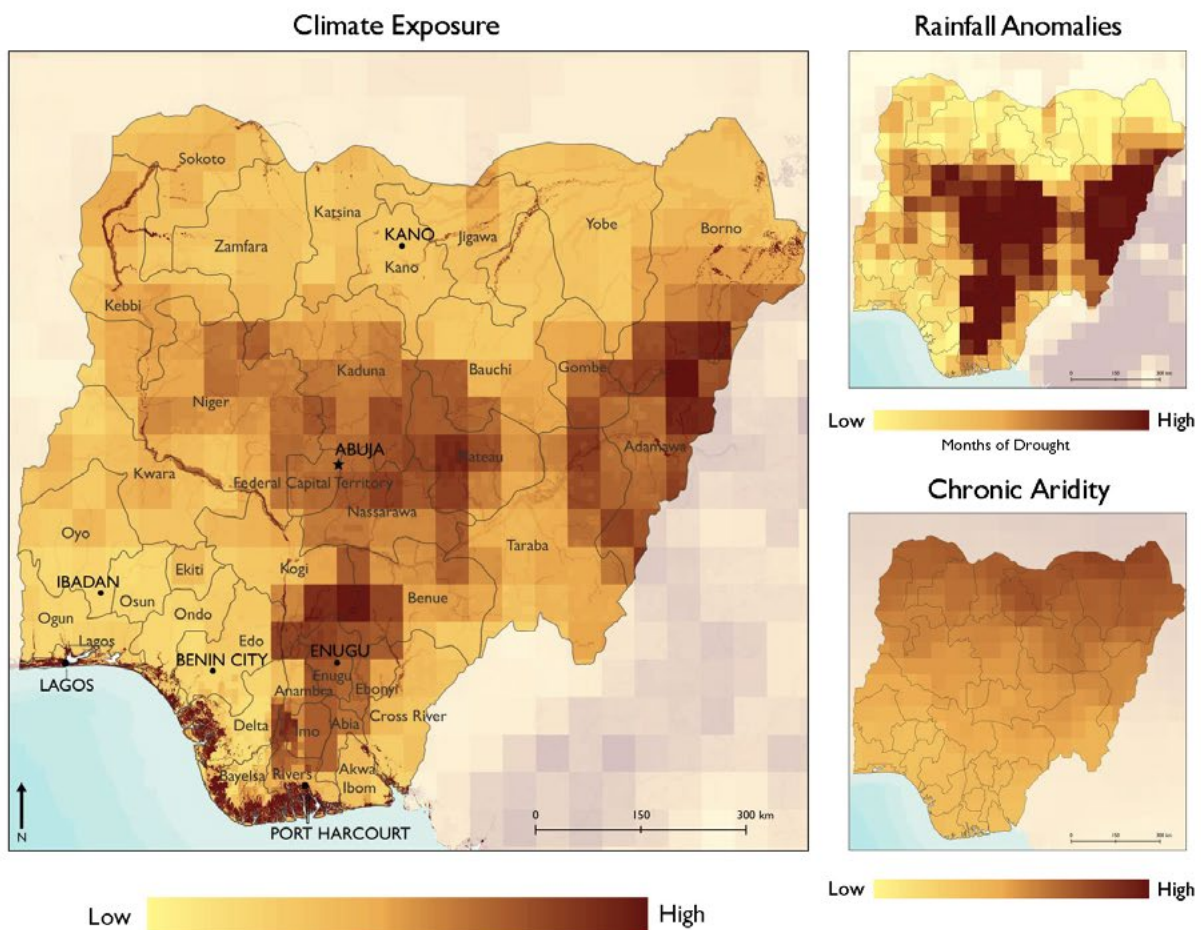


FIGURE 6: Sources of Climate Exposure. Map from USAID.⁴⁷

45 Coe and Foley, 2001.

46 Akpodiogasa, 2010.

47 Moran et al, *Fragility and Climate Risks in Nigeria*, September 2018, for USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TBFK.pdf



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

4. Findings

4.1 Effects of the Crisis on the Lives and Livelihoods of Nigerians in Borno State

4.1.1 Systemic Challenges have Deepened

Northern Nigeria continues to display some of the worst human development indicators in the world, and Borno has suffered more than many of its neighbors. UNDP’s Human Development Index looks at three basic dimensions to provide a summary measure for assessing human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. While the HDI does not break out data to the state level, other data is available to provide a window into these three dimensions of well-being. In Northeast Nigeria, 76.8% of the population lives in absolute poverty and more than half are malnourished, making it the poorest part of the country.⁴⁸ 40% of Nigerian children aged 6–11 do not attend any primary school, and Northern Nigeria has the worst school attendance rates, especially for girls. The literacy rate in Lagos is 92%, but in Borno it is under 15%.⁴⁹ The conflict also had a disproportionate impact on livelihoods and the private sector—\$2.4 billion in losses to agriculture, \$764 million to private enterprise, \$15.3 million in damage to public buildings, and \$306 million to transportation.⁵⁰ At the start of the conflict, nine out of nineteen Northern states had very high levels of unemployment in Nigeria—some as high as 40 per cent—and young northerners were much more likely to be jobless than their southern peers. In addition to these basic human development indicators, the conflict directly affected over 15 million people, including 2,000 kidnapped, 28,000 killed, and approximately 2 million displaced. The economic toll has been similarly stark with \$9 billion in damage and 8.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.⁵¹

48 According to the UN Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index 46% of Nigerians lived below the national poverty line and the NE Region is one of the worst with 76.8% under the poverty line. The poverty indexes for the main affected states are Adamawa 59%, Borno 70.1% and Yobe 90.2%.

49 *Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria*, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/20140703NorthernNigeriaHoffmann.pdf

50 Damage estimates through 2015. RPBA 2015, Vol. III.

51 *Recovery and Peace Building Assessment, 2015, Vol. III*; Council on Foreign Relations (2018); and International Organization for Migration (June 2018).

Borno has been hit particularly hard: 92% of conflict deaths have taken place there and 75% of IDPs have originated from Borno and been displaced within the state.⁵² Monguno LGA has absorbed a high level of people fleeing violence, and therefore has a 62% ratio of IDPs, much higher than the 25% state-wide ratio. Borno has also experienced higher levels of destruction than other locations, with over three-quarters of the damage (\$5.9 billion) in Borno including 95% of lost homes (380,000 homes valued at \$3.2 billion), two-thirds of health care facilities (\$59 million in damages) and the closing of 943 schools (\$144 million in damages).⁵³ Death in the household can bring multiple shocks, both emotional and related to loss of household income (by the deceased) and/or social status, as many families will divide up the marital property without regard for the widow’s needs. The extraordinary differences between LGAs indicates the depth of challenge in each area. For example, one out of every 36 residents of Kukawa have been killed, a far higher rate than the Borno average of one death per 220 residents. Borno’s South Senatorial District, which comprises roughly one-third of the area of Borno, experienced a casualty rate of 14% and a corresponding amount of physical damage.⁵⁴ As a general rule, the farther north the LGA, the more impact the conflict has had on local communities.

Five issues were identified by FDGs as their primary areas of concern: Food insecurity (described as food scarcity, high prices, and hoarding), disruption of livelihoods, armed conflict, the presence of armed stakeholders and limited movement. Of course, all of these challenges are interrelated—for example, food insecurity is linked to limitations on livelihoods as well as to limited movement—underlining the complexity of teasing out individual shocks and stressors in a protracted conflict. The next most pressing concerns, loss of head of household and disease outbreaks, were mentioned less than half as often.⁵⁵

Mercy Corps’ analysis of the data is that given its protracted nature, the conflict has become “normalized” and therefore is almost not noteworthy in conversations about the challenges of daily life. This will have implications on those implementers who seek to build resilience capacities and strengthen the social fabric of communities. The extended risk context and multitude of discrete shocks means that strengthening resilience in this context will be very different from building resilience post-natural disaster, when there is a clearer start and end to the recovery and a collective memory of life pre-disaster. In Borno communities, the capacity to manage the conflict has eroded over time, resulting in the need for ongoing humanitarian support. Some systems have also become more fragile (e.g. agricultural production systems, public services) while other systems have become more resilient or stronger (such as social support systems). To change the conflict dynamics, communities will need to build an image of the desired “new normal” and identify pathways to embedding that “new normal” in daily practice.



FIGURE 7: Top Five Issues Highlighted in FDGs

52 Council on Foreign Relations, 2018.

53 *Recovery and Peace Building Assessment (RPBA) 2015, Vol. III.*

54 The southern senatorial district of Borno, excluding Gwoza LGA, had only 3,027 of the 22,148 state-wide conflict deaths 2011-2017. Council on Foreign Relations, 2018.

55 Food security: 277/14.9%, armed conflict: 228/ 12.2%, armed stakeholders: 197 / 10.6%, limited movement: 189 / 10.1%, loss of head of household: 83 / 4.5%, disease outbreaks: 78 / 4.2%.

4.1.2 Geographical Differences in the Level of Exposure and Sensitivity to Conflict

As Mercy Corps analyzed the data, an important dynamic was revealed: the level of exposure to conflict was very different in different locations, meaning that different resilience capacities were used and will likely be needed in the future. In southern LGAs of Borno, which were less exposed to the conflict, FDG discussions focused on more development-oriented themes, both more diverse and longer-term in focus. Twenty-seven percent of all conversations focused on food insecurity and variable rainfall (due in part to a drought in 2017), whereas conflict and AOGs were mentioned less frequently (13% and 10% respectively). There was also a higher than average emphasis on educational themes (10%) and IDP-host community relations (6%), also reflecting a longer-term view. The support systems and coping mechanisms used are similarly balanced, with the local community (23%), NGOs (15%), and governmental services (11%) receiving much of the credit for addressing local challenges.

There were also geographical variations to food insecurity. For instance, worries about food were greater in Biu and Kaga (36% and 25% respectively) than the state average, yet these two areas have enjoyed relative peace and have been subjected to less restrictions. However, examining these concerns more closely raises an important distinction: in Biu and Kaga, people expressed concerns about maximizing production, while discussions around “food” in the LGAs more exposed to conflict meant the concerns about absence of food and the inability to cultivate were more pressing in those areas.

In northern LGAs of Borno (Central and Northern Senatorial Districts) that experienced higher conflict exposure and more severe impacts, discussions stressed immediate needs over longer-term planning. Kukawa, for instance, has experienced considerable violence over the past six years; residents there were concerned with the conflict’s immediate impact on their personal livelihoods (19%), security limiting their ability to move (13%), and the problems associated with Security Forces and injustices (3%, as compared to 0% in southern areas). Compared to Biu, Kukawa residents were less concerned about immediate food insecurity (Kukawa 14% vs Biu 22%) and education (Kukawa 4% vs Biu 10%). Surprisingly, respondents in Kukawa were less focused on either the conflict (10% compared to 13% in Biu) or AOGs (8% vs 10% in Biu). Monguno painted a similar picture to Kukawa, but was less focused on investments in education (4%), and notably did not mention issues related to IDP-Host-Community relations. Instead, the main concerns were restricted movement (12%), food insecurity (12%), and disease outbreaks (11%).



Gombe, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

With borders to three neighboring states, international borders to Cameroon and Niger, and Lake Chad providing further access to Chad, Borno has historically been an important trade hub for Northeast Nigeria. Maiduguri is a prominent livestock trade route (which was severely disrupted by the conflict in August 2018 when a ban was placed by the Nigerian Military on the sale of imported cattle in an attempt to cut off a potential source of income for Boko Haram). Borno also depends on the trade of cash crops and other food products with Niger and Cameroon, and many of these vibrant cross-border trade relationships are based on long-standing relationships across ethnic groups sharing language, religion and cultural backgrounds.⁵⁶

Respondents consistently said that the security situation along borders was a strong predictor of access to livelihood regardless of whether that border happened to be an international or internal border. The closer respondents were to an open border, the less concern they showed about lost livelihoods. Residents of Ngala in the east, on the Cameroon border, were 33% less likely to have lost their livelihoods than neighboring residents of Gwoza, where the border is less accessible. In the north, residents of Mobbar were 70% less likely to experience problems with their livelihoods than in Kukawa, where the border to Lake Chad has been closed. Kaga, with one of the most open and accessible borders to Yobe in the west, also reported the low concerns over lost livelihoods despite the relatively low rates of government and NGO support in the area. In more isolated areas such as Dikwa, Gwoza, Kukawa, and Monguno, there were more livelihood concerns related to limited movement, as compared to concerns over the conflict causing restrictions. Simply stated, the more isolated an LGA was from outside markets, the greater the likelihood was that respondents would complain about lost livelihoods. This finding is consistent with the findings regarding lack of market access in the LMRA.⁵⁷ Further research would be needed to determine whether LGAs with stronger historical cross-border social connections experience less severe impacts. Still, market relationships seem to play an important role in Borno for resilience.



Borno, Nigeria—Adrian Ouvry

56 Tukur, Mohammed Danladi et al., *The Effect of Insurgency on Borno State Economy (2008 – Oct. 2014)* Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development, per) Vol.6, No.16, 2015, <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/download/25298/25898>

57 Joint Livelihoods and Market Recovery Assessment, Oct 2017, <https://www.mercycorps.org/research/northeast-nigeria-joint-livelihood-and-market-recovery-assessment>

In Damboa, Dikwa, Kukawa, and Monguno, one of the most striking themes was a much higher response rate for comments related to spirituality, as compared to urban areas. People seem to give more time and attention to their own abilities (and to God) in more isolated communities. While social cohesion and NGO support continue to play meaningful roles, the confidence respondents place on their own ability to implement various livelihoods was consistently higher in more isolated communities. And while religious phrasing is open to interpretation, invoking God was dramatically more common in isolated communities where reliance on mobility and governmental services was reduced.

A final geographical theme within Borno is the increasing urban and rural divide, with Biu and Madiuguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) making up the bulk of urbanization in Borno. These two cities comprise 35% of the total population, and the shocks and stresses they are concerned about, as well as the capacities used to address them, are distinct from rural areas. With regards to the conflict, urban residents are notably less concerned about AOGs, and a small urban group was more critical of Security Forces when compared to state averages.⁵⁸ More telling, however, are the coping strategies employed in urban areas: while many were similar to rural locales, residents of Biu and MMC had comparatively less reliance on migration and NGO support, 35% and 33% less respectively. Instead, residents of Biu and MMC are slightly more dependent on banks and government services, with 56% more residents using financial services and 83% more residents utilizing government services. Understanding what people are already using to help them cope provides an important insight for those designing rural or urban interventions that promote resilience.

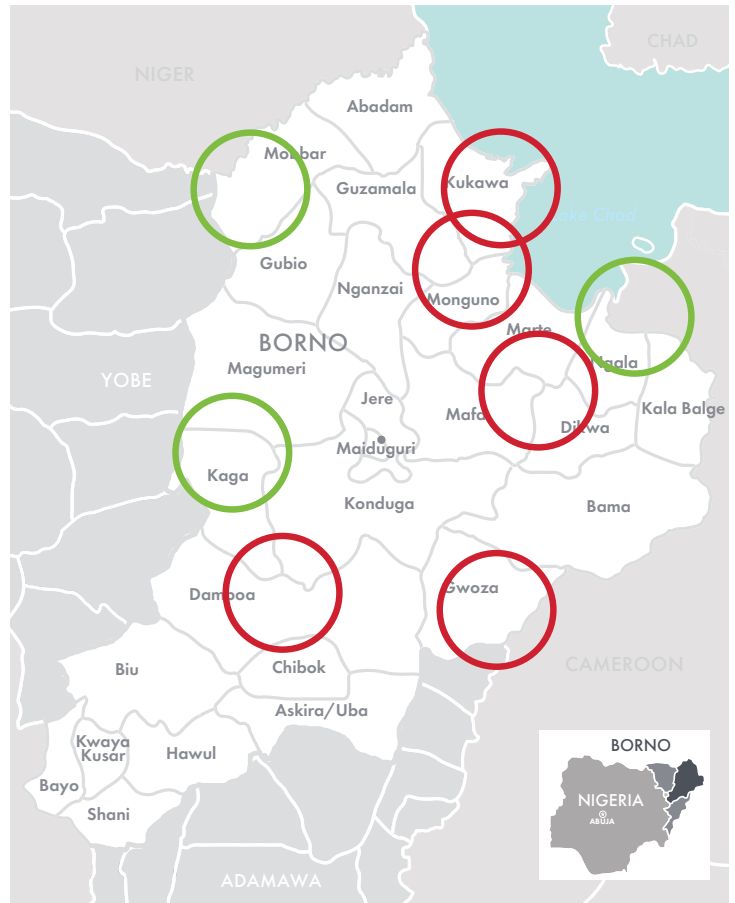


FIGURE 8: The Role of Borders Discussed in FGDs: areas within the green circles reported more access, less affected livelihoods and more ability to cope largely because of their proximity to open borders. Areas in red reported less of these elements.

58 Thirty negative comments were received towards the security forces, 16 in Maiduguri, while 90 positive comments were registered in mostly rural LGAs.

4.2 Resilience To What? Shocks and Stresses Profiles

The STRESS aimed to understand both traditionally endemic and more recent shocks and stresses. Within both of these frames, the “challenges” identified by communities were unpacked and analyzed using a range of sources to examine key dynamics such as frequency, magnitude and overall severity. The interactions between different types of shock or stress were also considered, and with this information, a theory of change was developed for the capacities required to manage and prevent shocks more effectively within the context of the ongoing complex crisis. Drawing clear lines around what constitutes a shock or stress in a protracted conflict proved more art than science, and has challenged the typical ways risk is defined in resilience assessments. The selection of a shock or stress for this STRESS was not based solely on the frequency with which they were mentioned in FDGs. Instead, the shocks and stresses that we outline below stand out as being particularly disruptive when attempting to regain a positive development trajectory for food security, inclusive economic growth and peace—including future risks particularly related to interrupting the cycle of conflict. In reality, many of these shocks or stresses underscore the complexity of disaggregating one risk from another for programmatic targeting, while at the same time highlighting the extreme risks that constitute day-to-day life in Borno. Protracted armed conflict, a primary overarching stress, is explored first. After this, the stresses and shocks are not listed in any priority order.

4.2.1 Overarching Stress: Protracted Armed Conflict ⁵⁹

As the conflict has entered a more stable phase, deaths have dropped over the past year from a high of twenty per day to five per day, and marginalized communities in Borno have seen an increase in humanitarian access. This has corresponded with a 50% reduction in food insecurity, with around only one in four now requiring support.⁶⁰ The crisis, however, is far from over: food security gains are fragile, 25% of Borno residents remain displaced, and a mere 14% are ready to return home as a result of both the broken nature of state infrastructure and the lack security required to definitively end the conflict.⁶¹

Looking at it from a risk management perspective, the conflict is large and complex and will require complex solutions. This makes it more useful to discuss resilience capacities related to specific shocks and stresses within the context of the ongoing armed-conflict. Because a man-made stress can in theory be prevented, unlike natural disaster, a root cause analysis is layered into the STRESS process. This can be used to identify and inform prevention strategies for minimizing future conflict risks. This is particularly helpful since key economic and public service systems remain degraded, and communities appear to have become numb to the conflict. It is unlikely that recovery will follow a strictly linear progression into “stability”. And by some accounts CJTF and others believe the conflict will go on for another 10 years. Certainly, the elections in May 2019 have the capacity to be a driver of violence if the situation is not managed.

The localized impact of armed conflict is often tougher to identify as it threatens both communities and individuals in a multitude of ways. What is clear, however, is that armed conflict remains a pressing issue that has a complicating influence on other shocks and stresses, such as livelihood disruptions. Northern and southern LGAs, and urban and rural areas, are coping with the overarching stress of protracted conflict in different ways. These differences will have an impact on how other shocks are perceived, and which capacities should be strengthened in each community. As referenced earlier, southern and western Borno, while more stable and secure than other areas of Borno, seemed to focus more on the conflict itself relative to other communities experiencing higher rates of violence. Biu and Kaga LGAs, for instance, stated armed conflict as their biggest concerns in 20.3% of the conversations, while Gwoza and Kukawa LGAs—which have faced more extensive

59 We define conflict as any direct instance where armed force is used to contest control of land or other resources between civilians, the Government of Nigeria, and AOGs. Sphere and FAO use this definition for protracted crises: “those environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease and disruption of their livelihoods over a prolonged period of time.”

60 20 per day in 2014-15, to five in 2017-18. Council on Foreign Relations, 2018.

61 *Not Ready to Return*. NRC. 11 October 2017.

4.2.2 Food Insecurity

Borno is a curious setting for food insecurity, given that agriculture is the driver of the economy. However, Northeast Nigeria now faces one of the world’s worst food security crises, with around 3.8 million people who face critical food insecurity⁶² and 2.25 million people receiving food aid. According to FEWS-NET, food insecurity in the Northeast is classified as Phase 3 (Crisis), but would be considered Phase 4 (Emergency) without currently programmed humanitarian assistance.⁶³ It is natural then that food scarcity, hoarding and inflated prices were the most commonly discussed issues throughout the STRESS assessment, with 277 conversations covering the topic of food insecurity. It was the most important subject overall for female youth and adolescents and host communities, and the second and third most important topics for male youth and adolescents and IDPs respectively. The issue of food insecurity was highlighted in areas as diverse as Biu and Damboa in the south, Kukawa and Monguno in the north, and in the capital, Maiduguri. The importance of food was similarly the most significant concern for groups as diverse as Almajiri street children, farmers, street hawkers, and widows.

As is well known, food security is made up of multiple components, for which different resilience capacities might be employed. These three components are shown in the table below, with a brief description of the shocks or stresses faced in Borno that relate to that component. Addressing food insecurity will require building capacities that can manage these shocks and stresses in the immediate term as well as over the long term.

Issues related to Access	Issues related to Availability	Issues related to Utilization
Restrictions on livelihoods means less income to purchase food	Reduced access to seeds, especially good quality seeds, due to transport interruptions	Due to access and availability issues, diet is insufficient
Curfews limit the time that people can come to the market	Restrictions on the transport of fertilizer	Health care facilities are inadequate, preventing people from maintaining a healthy body
Some market structures have been destroyed	Lack of knowledge of improved production and post-harvest techniques	Poor access to improved water sources and hygienic waste disposal
Currency fluctuations increase the cost food, reducing the amount that can be purchased with available income	“Tall crops” are restricted in certain areas for fear that Boko Haram will hide in the fields	Disease outbreaks
Currency fluctuations also increase the price of fuel making goods more costly to transport	Limitations on land due to safety restrictions	
Some roads are closed or inconsistently open, meaning farmers cannot get fresh goods in/out	Climate change driven events, such as variable rainfall or flooding, that destroy crops	
Host communities with same vulnerability profile as IDPs are not receiving aid		

62 Al-jazeera, 20 June 2018

63 FEWS-NET, Sept 2018, <http://fewsn.net/west-africa/nigeria/key-message-update/september-2018>

While common responses about food insecurity typically identified short-term solutions including earning more money (20%) and leaning on the support of family and friends (20%), further investigation routinely revealed the near impossible pressures placed on food producers in Borno. From restricted access to 80% of state land, to prohibitions on agricultural inputs including fertilizer and fuel, to blockages affecting the distribution of \$490m of fish from Kukawa to the rest of Borno, the level of discouragement of food production is only matched by wider state-level food insecurity. Naira fluctuations over the last year, restrictions on the transport of some foodstuffs (to prevent Boko Haram from seizing it) and loss of livelihoods means that prices have increased and any food that is available will require an increased proportion of household income.

Sometimes, food items are not allowed into the community because of insecurity. As a result, various food items become very scarce. — Male adult Damboa

We are now suffering from food scarcity because of our inability to farm, before a small-scale farmer like me gets about 30 to 40 bags from his farm but that is all history now. — Male adult farmer Ngala

In our present situation, we cannot store away food for as a contingency plan because we barely get enough to keep body and soul. — Male adult farmer Ngala

Notably, respondents raised disease outbreaks 78 times in FGDs, and many of these comments were related to recent cholera outbreaks.⁶⁴ Of course there are also a high number of deaths related to malaria in the region, and food insecurity and susceptibility to disease are of course closely linked, as are concerns related to overcrowding of IDP camps and garrison towns. In general, disease was more of a concern in urban areas.

While the cost of living—measured by the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)—for a family of five in northeastern Nigeria decreased in Maiduguri, and the Consumer Price Index has continued to decline,⁶⁵ marginalized Nigerians throughout Borno continue to emphasize how fragile their socioeconomic progress is. Food insecurity remains the paramount, ongoing concern relative to the conflict and its myriad of other impacts.

4.2.3 Limits on Livelihoods

Across all LGAs, marginalized Nigerians spoke about the impact that direct conflict and the subsequent security response are having on livelihoods. IOM puts the Northeast average at 28% of IDPs and 56% of host community IDPs doing some type of farming, but land access remains significantly limited due to security perimeters. Prior to the conflict 70-80% of the Northeast population were estimated to be farmers. The overall impact of the conflict on agriculture is estimated at about USD 3.7 billion, according to the World Bank. Threats to livelihoods were significantly more disconcerting to respondents than threats to physical safety resulting from the conflict, and only slightly less of a concern than food scarcity. Obviously threats to livelihoods and physical safety are closely interconnected. The issue of the limits on livelihoods was raised repeatedly across all focus groups, as well as across all demographic groups (women, men, adolescent girls and boys). Livelihoods provide a principal coping mechanism for addressing food insecurity, movement restrictions and many challenges associated with the protracted conflict.

Agricultural labor also provided over half of all formal jobs (and a significant proportion of informal jobs) prior to the conflict and was a significant coping mechanism for the poor and landless, helping to prevent food insecurity by increasing income. Previous research by Mercy Corps found that lack of access to appropriate agricultural inputs (fertilizer and seeds) was the most frequently cited frustration for farmers. Because of the

64 <http://fews.net/west-africa/nigeria/food-security-outlook-update/august-2018>

65 WFP monthly market monitoring, <https://www.wfp.org/content/nigeria-market-monitoring-bulletin>

challenges of purchasing seeds (both financial and supply-related), farmers are using more local seed, which is of lower quality and produces a lower yield, further compounding the food security issues of Borno.

Borno residents are able to access a small percentage of the territory of their LGA—in many garrison towns this equates to less than 250m² per person. Well over half of Borno is either unemployed or underemployed and the limits on movement, particularly in garrison towns, prevent employment-related movements. This has obvious long-term impacts on food security and economic recovery and growth. This challenge is illustrated by the Baga fish trade, previously valued at \$19 million in annual sales,⁶⁶ now reduced to a fraction of that due to administrative and security-related barriers.⁶⁷

Linked to the agricultural economy, focus group participants raised water-related concerns 71 times, split between those concerned about not enough water (variable rainfall, water scarcity) and too much water (seasonal flooding). These concerns were highly localized, with both flooding and variable rainfall more significant in rural LGAs, while it was not a significant concern in cities such as Maiduguri.

Livelihoods interventions need to pivot toward building capacities at multiple points across market systems—not only focusing on what is required at the producer level, but also helping to support functions to adapt strategies. This will help to ensure that people’s livelihoods are able to improve despite the current restricted context and will help them to be more resilient to shocks in the future.



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

Before, we used to farm and have variety of goods and also have some that we sell in the market. Now that we don’t, we go to the bush to get some firewood and sell it...the revenue is very low. So, we have no any alternative than to wait and see what God will provide for us.

— Male Adolescent, Monguno

I sell soup ingredients but the fact that Mainok was destroyed by Boko Haram many people have fled and have not returned yet market still closed so it is not easy business under such conditions

— Female Adult, Mainok

When we were in the bush (nomadic settlements) we engaged in farming and we sell our livestock to eat and go about with our needs, now that our livestock is snatched from us by Boko Haram we have no means of livelihood but small jobs to keep and body and soul. — Male Adult, Beneshok IDP Camp

As the situation continues, it is increasingly important to focus less on the scarcity of food and more on the absence of space.

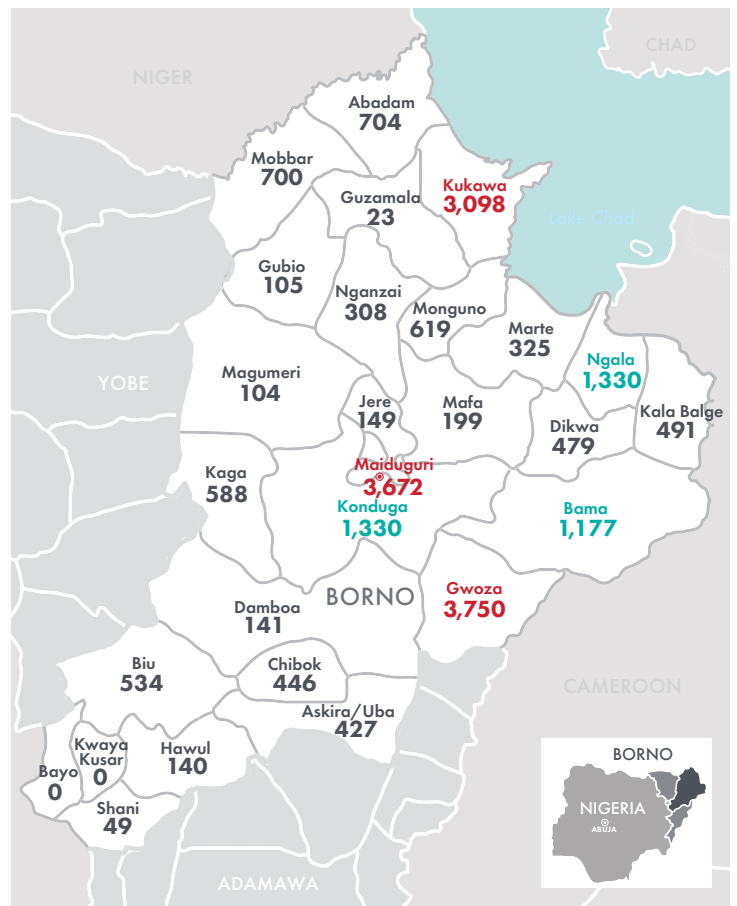
66 Marketing and Distribution of Fish from Lake Chad, June 2001, <http://aquaticcommons.org/3598/1/16P068.pdf>

67 Fish Business in Lake Chad Region Ruined by Boko Haram, Jan 2018, <http://sunnewsonline.com/fish-business-in-lake-chad-region-ruined-by-boko-haram/>

4.2.4 Abuses of Power and Intimidation

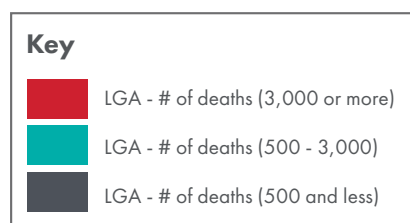
Directly related to the challenge identified by communities as “the presence of armed stakeholders” is the intimidation and abuse of power felt as a result of armed stakeholders in local communities. Armed stakeholders may be from any of the security-related groups (as noted in the Security System section above), including Nigerian Security Forces, CJTF paramilitaries, or others, such as AOGs, who are active within and/or in close proximity to communities where we have conducted our FGDs. Participants in all 12 LGAs surveyed raised concerns about their presence, with over 10% of comments (197 conversations) critical of the impact of armed stakeholders. Such concerns should not be altogether surprising considering the Nigerian security forces have in excess of 15,000 troops, including 10,000 members of the 7th and 8th divisions, as well as 5,000 forces in the Civil Defense Corps brought in to secure recently liberated communities.⁶⁸ Add to these numbers the 7,500 members of the Multinational Joint Task Force and 26,000 members of the Civilian Joint Task Force and the presence of armed stakeholders quickly become significant, especially when concentrated in conflicted communities. In addition, the estimated 5,000 members of Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram) in eastern Borno and 3,000 members of the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP) in northern Borno further add to the stresses from armed stakeholders holding and fighting over territory.

One of the primary reasons marginalized Nigerians in Borno are critical of armed stakeholders is because 28,000 people have been killed since 2011. Gaining the most attention are AOGs, who have killed 12,000 people and kidnapped several thousand more, often gratuitously. And while it is common to assume that AOGs are the main driver of casualties, in reality, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project cites that they are responsible for less than half of the direct deaths in Borno. In fact, security forces and paramilitaries are behind 60% of the fatalities.⁶⁹ Participants in focus groups discussed losing the head of household in 83 different conversations, pointing to the loss of emotional, financial, and/or physical security that comes as a result. While participants discussed losing the head of household consistently across all areas of Borno, these comments were particularly common in areas experiencing more conflict.



ACLED & CFR databases, 2017

FIGURE 10: Deaths



68 An overview of Nigerian security agencies includes: 1) Armed Forces: Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force; 2) Nigeria Police (Regular Police, Mobile Police with EOD teams, others); 3) Nigerian Paramilitary Organizations, Nigerian Customs Service NCS, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps NSCDC, a security organization. The main function is to protect Nigerian citizens and to protect the country from danger. The Nigerian Prisons Service, Federal Fire Service in Nigeria, Nigerian Immigration Service – NIS, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency – NDLEA, Federal Road Safety Commission – FRSC, Starting in April 2018, most Local Government Area HQ of Borno State now have a presence of the following security agencies: Military Police (Regular Police, Mobile Police with EOD team), Immigration Service Customs Service.

69 Total casualties: 27,709; AOGs responsible for 11,696, state security forces responsible for 9,079, and militia responsible for 6,934. ACLED 2011-2017.

While Mercy Corps did not pursue in-depth the criticisms of Security Forces or complaints about general corruption during the assessment, a larger trend of impunity is clear: nearly everything is secondary to ongoing security initiatives. This fact is hitting livelihoods particularly hard. The LMRA⁷⁰ speaks at length about the negative impact that security-based road closures are having on farmers and traders. The issue is also highlighted by the smoked fish industry in Baga, which has been significantly reduced as a result of road closures and informal fees placed on fish trading.⁷¹ The justification for these restrictions is to restrict logistical support and revenue to AOGs, however, fish traders feel it is simply corruption.

The prevalence of sexual violence in Northeastern Nigeria has been heavily reported, and it is well known that armed stakeholders on both sides of the conflict have been accused. In IDP camps, military personnel and “vigilante groups” were implicated in sexual exploitation and abuse. Restrictions on freedom of movement were compounded by fears of harassment and sexual violence.⁷² Amnesty International has accused Nigerian Security Forces of carrying out “systemic patterns of violence and abuse” against young women and children that have reportedly been rescued from Boko Haram.⁷³ Because women are often absent from government and traditional decision-making structures in Northeastern Nigeria, it is critical that transitional justice processes—such as community level reconciliation efforts—include them and address legal accountability for sexual violence. Under the military’s purview DDR efforts to date have not addressed gender-based violence issues, and have lacked even the most basic elements of gender sensitivity.^{74,75}

A final critique of armed stakeholders reveals the deep frustration of communities: despite all of the sacrifices, many feel little has been accomplished. While several Borno LGAs have been liberated from AOG control, high levels of risk remain. Security incidents continue, intimidation continues, and people remain limited to “cleared” areas. The psychological and economic impact that this has on the community and its individuals have not been worth the “payoff”. To be fair, state security forces currently deployed to Borno fall well below the 2% minimum ratio of civilians to security forces considered necessary to adequately secure a community facing insurgency. Security forces may have legitimate reasons for not having made more progress, but this does not mitigate the community’s frustration. Ambitious governance and peacebuilding responses are needed to address these issues, as well as deep consultation with the affected populations, including marginalized populations.

I was farming at a large scale, but now things have because of the insurgency. We cannot move two kilometres outside the town because Boko Haram is lurking and will attack. — Female adult Dikwa



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

70 Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (LRMA, Oct 2017). <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

71 <https://allafrica.com/stories/201801300032.html> and <https://www.thepointng.com/fresh-oppression-in-lake-chad-fish-business/>

72 Humanitarian Practice Network, <https://odihpn.org/magazine/sexual-violence-and-the-boko-haram-crisis-in-north-east-nigeria/>

73 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/23/charity-accuses-nigerian-troops-abusing-boko-haram-wives/>

74 *Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/09/05/achieving-peace-in-northeast-nigeria-reintegration-challenge-pub-77177>

75 International Crisis Group, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/nigeria-women-and-boko-haram-insurgency>

4.2.5 Limited Movement

One of the most consistently raised concerns in the focus groups was the frustration associated with limited movement. In 189 conversations throughout Borno, residents shifted the discussions back to the challenges associated with garrison towns, transit blockades, and curfews, while lamenting the disproportionate effect of these limitations on their resilience. Many towns have security trenches encircling them—called ‘garrison towns’⁷⁶—and people often cannot move outside these barriers, even to carry out livelihoods activities, as those found outside of these trenches may be assumed to be Boko Haram. This physical isolation is reinforced by transit blockades; roads between towns or villages cannot be accessed except with military escort. The military is the only source of information on security checkpoints and roadblocks, and protocol dictates that military routines change frequently for security reasons, so transporters struggle to know when and where goods (including perishable agricultural goods) can be transported.⁷⁷ Dusk-‘til-dawn curfews further exacerbate the problem, reducing the working day and making it difficult to get personal business and work completed outside the hours of the curfew. Many businesses also report a loss of income because they cannot keep shops or businesses open outside of curfew hours. These limitations on movement prevent the use of resilience capacities such as freedom of movement, entrepreneurialism, and functional market systems (see Theory of Change, Section 5).

And what pains me is that we are all packaged in one place we don’t go anywhere. And putting our people in one place is a big problem. We don’t have any business or going places to get means. — Male Youth, Monguno

Freedom of movement is a particularly important resilience capacity in Northeast Nigeria given the level of displacement. The dual nature of mobility is recognized, but as a resilience capacity “freedom of movement” relates to the opportunity to make positive desired changes, such as moving to be closer to family, trading in a new area to balance out the loss of income, or the ability to access farmland. In general, we consider displacement a shock when it is forced, and a positive coping mechanism when it is voluntary, recognizing that the line is often blurred between them.

The larger reality in Borno is that only 20% of land is deemed secure, significantly limiting access to land. In Gwoza LGA, for instance, 200,000 people have access to 83 km² within Gwoza Town, which at 2% of the LGA, works out to 415m² per person.⁷⁸ In Mobbar, 154,000 people are confined to 36 km², working out to 234m², while in Dikwa 115,000 are limited to 25 km², which works out to 220m². For largely agrarian communities often comprised of 70-80% farmers, such urban confinement is certainly not playing to the strengths of local residents.

Food is scarce because there is no space to farm. If not for the support of INGOs, the situation would have been unbearable — Male adult Damboa

I am a farmer, after returning from my farm, I sell small items in front of my house. However, immediately when the curfew (dusk till dawn) was introduced in the community, my sales rate plummeted due to the limited time for business as I conduct most of my business in the evening, and that has affected my food intake drastically, the money I gain from the business is not enough to meet my needs.

— Female youth Mirnga, Bui

76 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-borno/nigeria-puts-fortress-towns-at-heart-of-new-boko-haram-strategy-idUSKBN1DV4GU>

77 Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (LRMA, Oct 2017). <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

78 While Gwoza Town remains the primary location of most Gwoza LGA residents, smaller secured outposts do exist.

Estimated Population Density In Secured Urban Area ⁷⁹

LGA	Secured urban area (km ²)	LGA population	Residents per km ²	M ² per resident
Kala/Balge	8.3	68,944	8,306.50	120.4
Nganzai	18.4	142,322	7,734.90	129.3
Mafa	21.8	128,654	5,901.50	169.4
Guzamala	22.3	134,924	6,050	165.8
Gubio	23.6	187,849	7,959.70	125.6
Dikwa	25.3	114,802	4,537.60	217.4
Chibok	25.6	112,815	4,406.80	226.9
Mobbar	36.2	153,834	4,249.60	235.3
Damboa	53.9	151,616	2,812.90	355.5
Konduga	66.7	188,117	2,820.30	354.6
Ngala	78.1	101,679	1,301.90	768.1
Gwoza	82.9	199,702	2,408.90	415.1
Kaga	93.9	132,650	1,412.70	707.9
Monguno	102	208,815	2,047.20	488.5
Bama	120.8	182,947	1,514.50	660.3
Kukawa	210.2	110,854	527.4	1,896.20

Beyond the garrison towns there are the wider challenges hindering movement between urban areas, in particular the 643 km of major roads in Borno that currently require military approval to use. As shown in the maps above in Section 3.4, roads from Maiduguri to outlying LGAs such as Damboa, Dikwa, Ngala and Bama, are damaged or closed for security reasons. With 66% of all major roads in Borno requiring a military escort, communities are increasingly vulnerable to irregular schedules, as well as changing restrictions on the number of vehicles allowed and expectations for bribes—all of which directly increase the price of transport and impact prices, affecting the viability of businesses requiring transport (as most agricultural businesses do). An entrepreneur in Gwoza shared how an unexpected road blockade directly led to the complete collapse of his trading business as the livestock he bought in nearby Madagali to transport to Gwoza were all essentially lost due to the closure of the road without a military escort. There are also restrictions on what may be transported—trucks carrying food, fertilizer, certain chemicals (such as herbicides), fuel, or quick-cooking food may be stopped and confiscated if drivers do not have a license with an official cover letter from government officials or permission from security agencies.⁸⁰ These items are all seen as valuable to Boko Haram, and are restricted to ensure that supply lines are cut off to AOGs. However, restricting these goods means that it is difficult for farmers to get inputs (such as fertilizer) and communities to get certain kinds of food items—both of which contribute directly to food security. When speaking with traders in particular, limited movement was the most pressing concern alongside securing enough food to eat.

⁷⁹ Table developed by Mercy Corps from calculations of secure area of trenches based on own estimates. LGA data drawn from City Data: <https://www.citypopulation.de/php/nigeria-admin.php?adm1id=NGA008>

The road closures (Dikwa to Maiduguri) is what matters most to me, because if the road is open all the time, all the goods we need will be transported easily.

— Male youth Dikwa

Road closures is the major cause of food price hike. — Male adolescent Dikwa

While limited movement was mentioned in 10% of comments across the state, in the LGAs where borders (domestic or international) were more open, people seem to report fewer disruptions to their livelihoods. Borno shares international borders with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, and in areas where cross-border trade remains active, such as Mobbar on the Nigerien border, limited movement was only referenced in 2% of conversations. Urban areas, such as Maiduguri, also rarely mentioned it. However, in Gwoza, where trade with neighboring Adamawa and Cameroon is now much more difficult, limitations on movement were among the most important issues discussed. A similar situation was found in Dikwa, Monguno, and other isolated LGAs. This again highlights the role that social networks play, and the resilience capacity that is undermined when borders are closed. These social networks are grounded in historic trade connections and provide an opportunity for strengthening livelihoods in LGAs where border trade is important. LGAs that have these links, even when they have higher exposure to conflict, have lower sensitivity to that conflict if the trade routes remain open (formally or informally). However if trade routes are closed due to security issues, their sensitivity to the conflict increases dramatically as livelihoods are cut off, and they are less able to manage overall.

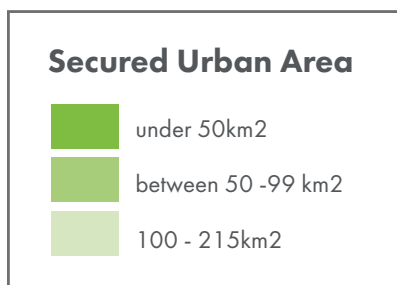
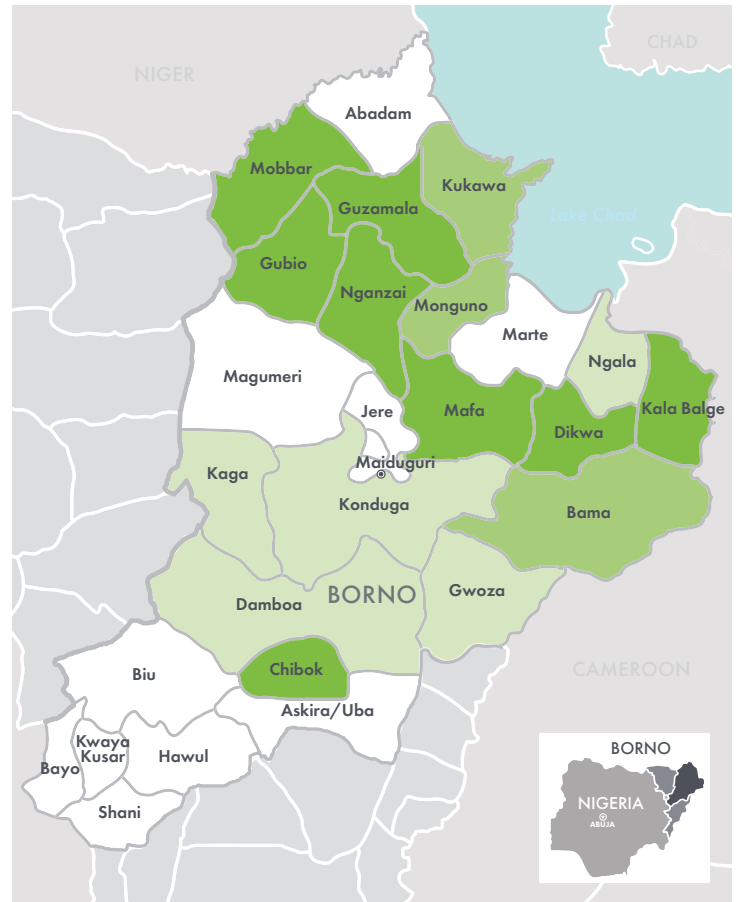


FIGURE 11:
Estimated Secured Urban Area
(calculations from 2017,
based on corresponding table)

80 Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (LRMA, Oct 2017). <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

The closure of the border has an effect on us as it has made commodity prices go up. It has affected not only big businesses but also small businesses, even potters are affected. — Male youth Ngala

At a certain point, freedom of movement will be largely restored, and the stressor will become the resource strain of the 1.4 million current IDPs returning to towns and villages with destroyed infrastructure. This will undoubtedly be a shock largely due to the logistical challenges of relocating large numbers of people. Most recently this challenge played out in the relocation of 20,000 IDPs to Bama LGA and 3,500 IDPs to Kukawa LGA, where IDPs were resettled despite a lack of basic services and adequate shelter. Strengthening resilience capacities with the idea of preparing specific populations for return will support efforts to ensure that the impact of future shocks are reduced.

4.2.6 Restricted Communication

Given the restrictions on road traffic, telecommunications take on a greater importance with regard to maintaining business and personal relationships. According to research done in 2015, in the aftermath of the deliberate mobile network shutdown by the government business relationships and functions were affected, but focus group discussants were most concerned about the impact the shutdown had on their interaction with friends and family over the course of the day. A general theme that emerged was a feeling of insecurity caused by the mobile phone disruption. It became clear that this is because phones are often used as a component of personal safety—people tell each other if they are delayed coming home, or check on the situation in certain areas. Others talked about a sense of isolation in the wake of the shutdown; they reported feeling “cut off from life and from everyone and everything else in Nigeria”.⁸¹ After the destruction of several cell masts by Boko Haram, what had been a temporary shut-down became more permanent, and there remain many areas of the Northeast that no longer have mobile networks. For example, if you are in Maiduguri and you want to get a message to north Borno, many would suggest that it is best for you to drive it there. Key Informant Interviews indicated that the military won’t allow mobile network providers to rebuild the towers in order to restore service, and that the military often jams the cell signal from Niger and Cameroon in the name of security. Citizens clearly do not have the same perspective as the military about the threat from cell service. As one woman put it: “It was a very dumb decision. We use phones more than [the terrorists], so why would you shut down the phones that are more productive towards prevention and say you’re trying to [stop attacks]. It’s not sequential in any way... It made it easier for us to be targets...”⁸² It also makes mobile banking impossible, providing a clear barrier to financial inclusion for Borno residents, despite the strong interest in this service⁸³ For all the reasons outlined here, access to mobile phone networks should be considered an important resilience capacity.

4.2.7 Future Conflict Threats

The STRESS process uncovered the following emerging dynamics that, if not successfully managed, have the potential to escalate or prolong the current complex crisis by exacerbating preexisting conditions or creating new conflicts.

- 1 Grievances against government:** Increasing anger at the government for its failure to resolve the current crisis; anticipated likelihood that reconstruction will be slow, further exacerbating grievances against government and government service provision.
- 2 Environmental degradation:** Increasing deforestation as people are crowded into garrison towns and IDP camps, alongside climate change, desertification and rainfall variability; this is happening in an energy scarce environment.

81 <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.ey/>

82 <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.ey/>

83 The LMRA found that 75% of those surveyed in Central Borno, 56% in South Borno, and 45% in North Borno would be interested in mobile money if it were available.

- 3 **Increasing resource scarcity:** Increasing competition for scarce food, energy, land, aid, and other resources as people are confined to garrison towns and IDPs camps; increased scarcity due to limited mobility and increased density risks igniting conflict. **IDP/Host community tensions:** Increasing tensions between host communities and IDPs due to growing resentment against IDPs and distribution of aid favoring IDPs.
- 4 **Marginalized and traumatized youth:** Increasing number of children/youth who have been traumatized by conflict, neglected and poorly educated (e.g., Almajiris).
- 5 **Reintegration of ex-combatants and other people affiliated with Boko Haram and AOGs:** Ex-combatants and other people affiliated with Boko Haram who have sought to leave the armed group and return to their community have been rejected and isolated, leading some of these people to rejoin the armed group. Many are returning with serious injuries and disabilities, raising questions about the types of employment they will be able to find. This issue is already present and is likely to increase.
- 6 **Challenges related to return and resettlement,** including loss of houses and assets and loss of access to land due to lost knowledge about boundaries, inheritance disputes resulting from death or displacement of landowners, and people taking advantage of this uncertainty to grab land. This is not happening yet as return is not yet happening, but it is a risk looking ahead.
- 7 **Shift or reduction in humanitarian aid** as donor interest shifts elsewhere or if donors do not understand what needs to happen.

4.2.8 Compounding Challenges and Systemic Constraints

In addition to the shocks and stresses discussed above, the STRESS examined two particularly stark systemic issues that work as amplifiers to the shocks and stresses, and at the same time are significant for their potential in driving these future conflict threats:

Skepticism of Government Support: While the Nigerian Government remains responsible for securing Borno and providing services to its residents, the reality is more complicated. Nigeria has among the highest number of people in the world living without official recognition (unregistered births, no formal education), leading to a troubling 20% of Borno society who continue to be marginalized by state structures (for example: Almajiri street children, youth who abuse substances, girls experiencing early marriage). The consequence is broad social disbelief that the government can or will provide necessary services. Many people reportedly “do not see the point” of engaging with government structures and facilities, creating a negative cycle that makes it more difficult to reach them. From a resilience point of view, official structures currently play a limited role in the risk management strategies that households are using to cope with the conflict. Focus group participants referenced social bonds (family and friends) five times more often than the government as a resource people turn to for help, with NGO support next most likely to be mentioned after social networks. This lack of trust in government structures is likely to slow the pace of recovery in the immediate term, as people do not feel motivated to engage in recovery activities, particularly where they have not been engaged in the process. In the worst case, this fundamental mistrust in government can provide kindling to re-ignite grievances and further escalate conflict.

This skepticism also feeds into concerns about the Nigerian Security Forces’ ability or willingness to protect the citizens of Borno. In 12 out of 27 LGA Focus Groups, people were more concerned about the risks created by government security forces than risks from Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs), a viewpoint at least partly fueled by concerns about corruption and inadequate social services. Focus group participants considered governmental support to be roughly as useful as begging on the street.

*There were many promises of job and salary from politicians.
It was not fulfilled.* — FGD with male vigilantes

Systemic Marginalization: Discussions with a variety of sub-groups among the youth and adolescents STRESS spoke with, including Almajiri street children, youth who abuse substances, people with disabilities, and girls experiencing early marriage, revealed they feel ignored by community stakeholders and removed from humanitarian efforts. This is not a result of the conflict; this social marginalization existed prior to the conflict⁸⁴ and many of those interviewed describe it as a key contributor to the conflict. This systemic marginalization encouraged alienated individuals to join AOGs where they believed they would be valued or given business opportunities.⁸⁵ This systemic disenfranchisement in concert with a fundamental lack of public services presents a daunting forecast for future progress.⁸⁶ Not only does this mass marginalization, especially of youth, constitute a potential future stress for society at large, it also makes these populations more sensitive to the negative impacts of conflict. Marginalized populations are more likely to face protection issues; they lack the education and skills to diversify their livelihoods; and they are more exposed to shocks, both endemic and unexpected. The issue is exacerbated by the cluster system for humanitarian coordination, which compartmentalizes responses. Without active efforts on the part of humanitarians, the Humanitarian Response Plan will merely moderate the gradual demise of a traditionally resilience state.



Borno, Nigeria—Ezra Millstein

84 This includes 500,000 5-14-year-olds outside of formal education, 227,000 Almajiri street children, 42,000 Nigerians living with disabilities, an estimated 90,000 residents abusing substances, and a purported 250,000 women married before age 15.

85 *Motivations and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth*, Feb 2016, <https://www.mercycorps.org/research/motivations-and-empty-promises-voices-former-boko-haram-combatants-and-nigerian>

86 Fifty-one percent of Borno is either unemployed or underemployed. Labor Force Statistics Vol. 1. National Bureau of Statistics 2017, p. 42. Sixty-five percent of health care facilities lack access to water. Health Sector Dashboard Jan – Mar 2018..

4.3 Resilience for Whom? Vulnerability Profiles – Looking Beyond the Numbers

While understanding the most prominent challenges in Borno is useful, it is also beneficial to appreciate that not all shocks and stresses impact marginalized Nigerians in the same way. This section outlines some of the concerns for specific groups.

4.3.1 Adolescent Boys and Girls (15-19)

This assessment focused in on the 350,000⁸⁷ 15-19 year-olds in Borno with the perspective that this sub-group would be more responsive to focus group discussions than the wider adolescent cohort. Indeed, both female and male adolescents shared relatively consistent impressions that in many ways paralleled Borno as a whole. The adolescents' feelings about the significance of armed conflict, the presence of armed stakeholders, and food scarcity were all relatively constant with more mature cohorts. While there is often understandable concern that adolescent males are vulnerable to being recruited into the conflict and adolescent females are susceptible to abuse, neither group indicated unusual levels of exposure to the presence of armed stakeholders. Adolescent girls were slightly more concerned about the wider armed conflict than adolescent boys. Only adolescent girls disclosed a particular frustration with armed stakeholders in Monguno LGA, where it was the most popular topic of conversation (mentioned in 20% of FGDs with adolescent girls). The issue was not mentioned as a concern, however, by adolescent girls in area of the more stable south and west of Borno. Adolescent girls emphasized domestic abuse and SGBV to the same (small) degree as adults.

In Nigeria, 43% of girls are married before their 18th birthday, and 17% are married before they turn 15; in Borno specifically the median age at marriage is 17.4 years old.⁸⁸ In FGDs with adolescent girls and young women, many noted they were married at age 12, 13, 14 and 15. The STRESS team expected this age group on the whole to speak more about concerns related to being married at a young age. In each FDG the assessment team “would listen for it”, and a separate group of women who had been married at a young age was convened to delve into their experiences. Issues relating to forced divorce were common themes coming out of these deeper discussions. In looking across the aggregate set of FGD respondents, there were anecdotal indicators that early marriage may be on the rise under the protracted conflict as compared to “stable” times, potentially hinting at families seeing it as a security measure to protect their daughters amidst insecurity. While there was little explicit discussion of it in the FDGs, secondary sources confirm early marriage and early first pregnancy are widespread issues in Northeast Nigeria. Strong cultural customs surrounding marriage may be one reason it was not more discussed within the context of challenges.



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

87 Females 15-19: 175,610, males 15-19: 171,318, totaling: 346,928. VTS 2018.82 <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.ey/>

88 *National Strategy to End Child Marriage in Nigeria*, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/national-strategy-end-child-marriage-nigeria-2016-2021/>

Early marriage is part and parcel of our culture, that’s why it has been in practice for a very long time. Most parents don’t even enroll their children to school, so by the time a child grew up parents were eager to get [their] children wedded early. — FGD with young women who were married at an early age, Maiduguri

Instead the primary vulnerability discussed by adolescents in Borno was centered on immediate needs—adolescents were concerned about food scarcity to the same degree as adults. Female adolescents also vocalized their sensitivity to both disease and the loss of head of household. Disease was a more constant theme in rural areas of Northeastern Borno for adolescent girls, presumably due to the outbreaks of cholera and malaria, while the loss of head of household in Maiduguri was more of a concern largely owing to the relative costs associated with urban living and a lack of more traditional economic alternatives available in rural areas. Notable, however, was that adolescent girls were significantly less focused on lost education than expected. With the number of female and male adolescents attending secondary school in Borno at approximate parity, it is surprising that female adolescents expressed much less concern about a loss of education than both female and male youth, and especially adolescent males.⁸⁹

Adolescent males, while not significantly concerned about being profiled or recruited into the conflict, nor about losing a head of household, were alternatively focused on lost education and limited movement as they increasingly took responsibility for their own welfare. This is most evident in listening to the concerns of Almajiri street children, who emphasized education 60% more often than the conflict, even while arguably being the most vulnerable to its influences.⁹⁰ This disparity is further highlighted by adolescent boys being four times as likely as adolescent girls to lament losing access to education and twice as likely to express frustration at limited movement. Adolescent boys were as focused on the impacts of limited movement as more career-oriented male youth and almost as worried about the limitations placed on livelihoods. Adolescent youth, 15-19 years old, would appear to be among the most independent and career-minded of groups in Borno.



Borno, Nigeria—Ezra Millstein

89 Percentage of female children attending secondary school: 39.3% Percentage of male children attending secondary school: 41.5%. MICS 2017.

90 Orphans, alternatively, highlighted their sensitivity to the conflict and losing a head of household.

4.3.2 Female and Male Youth (20-34)

More mature female and male youth, 20-34, shared many of the same perspectives with each other, as well as with their adolescent peers.⁹¹ This includes relatively consistent sensitivity to both the conflict and to food scarcity, although women were slightly more troubled by the presence of armed stakeholders and the conflict as a whole than male youth. Different sensitivities emerged instead between more narrow themes and sub-groups, with widows, for instance, being more vulnerable to the conflict and women in general being more likely to discuss past challenges. However, female youth in Borno shouldn't be seen as passive victims to conventional threats amidst conflict. Instead, it should be noted that female youth emphasized psychological trauma and forced marriage 50% more often in conversations than physical abuse. This is not to say that there are not direct threats or violent challenges, but instead that female youth are often, in their own words, more vulnerable to early marriage and other less confrontational traumas that otherwise might be assumed. This matches up with surveys highlighting both the strident nature of Borno women, as well as the widespread nature of both early and polygamous relationships.⁹² In speaking with a dedicated focus group of female youth who had all experienced early marriage and eight years of conflict in Borno, only one participant bothered to mention the wider conflict or its armed stakeholders. Instead, the more significant focus of discussion emphasized the sensitivity of female youth to less direct abuse including early marriage and its impact on education.

› Mercy Corps previously interviewed 47 former youth members of Boko Haram to better understand their choice to join, or what made them vulnerable to forced recruitment. WE LEARNED:

There is no demographic profile of a Boko Haram member. Members we spoke to came from diverse backgrounds: some had jobs, and others did not; some had attended secular school, others Islamic school, and others had dropped out. Profiling in youth interventions based on demographics is unlikely to be successful.

Influence from social and business peers is a key factor in recruitment. Almost all former members cited a friend, family member, or business colleague as a factor in their joining Boko Haram. That person's influence in the youth's life mattered more than the number of people in a youth's network who joined.

Youth see in Boko Haram an opportunity to get ahead through business support. Boko Haram has exploited the desire of youth to get ahead economically and distinguish themselves in their communities. Many youth accepting loans prior to joining or joined with the hope of receiving loans or capital for their small, informal businesses.

Broad frustrations with government created initial community acceptance of Boko Haram. Boko Haram took advantage of deep grievances with the government to gain a foothold in communities. About half of former members said their communities at some time generally supported the group, hoping it would bring a change in government. That support later waned as Boko Haram's tactics became more brutal.

Local counter-narratives on the hypocrisy of Boko Haram are working. Youth who resisted joining shared a narrative of Boko Haram as a corrupt, greedy organization focused on enriching its leaders. These messages are being crafted by religious and traditional leaders at a very local level and speak to community members' existing concerns about corruption and unresponsive governance.

Mercy Corps, *Motivations and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth*, 2016

<https://www.mercycorps.org/research/motivations-and-empty-promises-voices-former-boko-haram-combatants-and-nigerian>

91 Females 20-34: 463,459, males 20-34: 336,483, totaling: 799,943. VTS 2018.

92 Only 18.5% of women in Borno, 15-49, believe men have the right to beat women, well below the national average of 33.7%. For women in Borno, 15-49, 21.4% were married before age 15 and 42.1% are in a polyamorous relationship. MICS 2017.

Further differences emerged about financial security, with female youth considerably more sensitive to the loss of the head of household than even adolescent girls. Because women see themselves as the caregiver of the family, when a household loses its primary provider, women often have to shoulder the burden of both earning enough to take care of the household and continuing to serve as the household caregiver. As with adolescent girls, the vulnerability to loss of head of household was particularly acute in urban Maiduguri, where costs are often higher and support systems are less established. Male youth, alternatively, were unconcerned with such social reliance and instead were more sensitive to anything that limited their own movement as well as other obstacles that impacted their ability to make a living. This difference was highlighted in Gwoza, where male youth vocalized their vulnerability to limits placed on movement and livelihoods five-times more often than expressing concern about either the wider conflict or food security; while female adults emphasized their sensitivity to the conflict and food scarcity by discussing these threats 50% more often than movement or making money.

4.3.3 IDP vs. Host Communities

Given that 25% of Borno remains displaced, it is helpful to explore varying sensitivities between IDPs and host communities. The first notable difference, unsurprisingly, is that IDPs shared greater concern about both the wider conflict and the presence of armed stakeholders. Yet beyond this larger issue, IDPs and host communities remain largely similar in their sensitivities and concerns, including the significance of larger issues such as food scarcity and limits to livelihoods, as well as more specialized concerns like disease and sensitivity to the loss of head of household. This similarity demonstrates that while IDPs and host communities face different challenges and are often framed in separate contexts, there remain meaningful similarities between them, including the notable absence of any mention of vulnerabilities involving IDP-host community friction.

The only slight variation of note is that host community participants were more troubled by local disruptions, including interruptions to education and the market, than IDPs appeared to be. Educational sensitivities amongst host communities were largely concentrated in more stable urban areas including Biu, Damboa and Maiduguri, while vulnerabilities to market disruptions were more widespread, yet still minor relative to other sensitivities. In general, the vulnerabilities IDPs expressed were more often than not the same as those expressed by host communities.



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

4.4 Resilience Through What? Capacities

What does it mean to be resilient in Borno? As described by one key informant, “You roll with the punches. You do whatever you have to do to survive—but in a good way. It’s not man-eat-man in the desert.” This encapsulates much of what has been gleaned from the diverse respondents’ descriptions of how they continue to persevere. Contrary to a cut-throat mentality to survive amidst conflict, it seems that the people of Borno have more of a flexible acceptance of their challenges, buoyed in parts by mobility, relief, supportive communities and an indefatigable sense of Nigerian “Hustle.”

We are not lazy, that’s why we work everywhere we go. — Male Adult, Chungulki IDP Camp

While humanitarian relief and development are often considered discrete phases of recovery by the NGO and donor community, this rarely reflects the truth on the ground. This is especially true within the conflict in Northeast Nigeria where the Emir of Kano famously argued that the popular maxim “peace before progress” approach has it wrong, and that “progress before peace” is in fact the wiser, more relevant strategy for Northeast Nigeria. Most germane to this critique is the overly simplistic strategy of waiting for a security solution to defeat an insurgency that was itself largely nurtured by a lack of development and social services. As one focus group participant in Damboa described it, “If we have development, poverty will go away. If people are employed in one occupation or the other, nobody will lure them into mischief.” Deferring opportunities until all uncertainties have been resolved is an extremely risky proposition that potentially could cost the Northeast dearly if stability is not achieved in a timely manner.

4.4.1 Livelihoods

Relying on livelihoods was the most commonly cited coping strategy to address the myriad of challenges in Borno. Be it hawking items informally on the street or developing a more established vocation, 242 people throughout Borno spoke about the significance of making an independent living. While significant for everyone in both IDPs and host communities, it was particularly relevant for men 20-34, and to a slightly lesser degree men 15-19. Women were also focused on finding livelihoods, with a slightly smaller emphasis than men, primarily because women had more diverse conversations identifying a wide variety of solutions to help them cope. Adolescents were just as vocal about the importance of livelihoods and in general were more enthusiastic about pursuing them in urban areas where they are more readily available. This matches up well with the 63.4% of 15-17 year-olds who are working outside the home in Borno—29.6% under hazardous conditions.⁹³

Nobody taught us how to do it, but in the course of struggle for survival... that make us compellingly go into doing business. — Almajiri Youth

Ironically, the importance of livelihoods was less pronounced for more established farmers, traders and taxi cab drivers, while relatively more important to Almajiri students, street hawkers and youth abusing substances, hinting at the potentially idealized nature of entrepreneurship/employment as compared to the realities of what they entail.

The importance given to livelihoods as a coping strategy was fairly consistent across geographies; the exceptions were areas of northern Borno where migration opportunities and humanitarian support were available, such as Mobbar and Ngala. In areas that had one or the other, it stayed significant. This hints at livelihoods serving as a stop-gap strategy when other alternatives are less accessible, a strategy that is consistent with peaceful times in Nigeria, when additional agriculture labor would be taken on if household requirements made it necessary.

93 MICS, 2018.

Naturally, accessing finance and resources remains a widespread challenge in Borno as people cope with the economic implications of the conflict. Respondents mention borrowing money three times more often than they mention accessing savings or selling assets. Men, in particular, rarely mentioned accessing savings or selling items and more often would mention begging as a coping technique for dealing with daily shocks and stresses. Women, alternatively, were more likely to sell assets or access credit. This was particularly true in Maiduguri where the cost of living is higher. With mobile banking was inaccessible in most Borno LGAs,⁹⁴ Borno residents along the border frequently used mobile banking services via networks in Cameroon and Niger. Outlying residents who had bank accounts in Dikwa, for example, would overcome the lack of local services by giving their ATM cards and PINs to any long-distance driver who was “familiar” to them, ie known by their larger network of friends or family. After three to four days, and minus a N100 fee, the cash would arrive without fail. The Adashe system of group savings and loans is another widespread financial tool that provides limited financing for larger purchases. According to a KII with an Uwar Asashe (Contribution Mother), the monthly contribution allows members to access funds regularly for short-term emergency loans, as well as finance larger purchases. “Despite the challenges, we still have very good things to say of Adashe, because if not for Adashe some of us will not be able to pay school fees, to buy food in bulk, expand our businesses, and meet up with personal family issues which sometimes are not even envisaged.”

Whenever we have money we try to save a small amount in anticipation of problems. We also operate a thrift account. — Male adult farmers Jere

Throughout the focus group and key informant conversations, Borno respondents stressed the importance of their own professional development as the best tool for addressing immediate concerns. The constant refrain from respondents was for relief stakeholders to avoid traditional handouts and instead enable the dynamic strengths of individuals and communities through vocational programming, business start-up resources, freer movement and market access to better adapt to the constantly changing challenges inherent in Borno. These recommendations echo those already provided in the LRMA.

4.4.2 Mobility and Migration

As is traditional in the Northeast, migration is used both as a coping mechanism and a proactive tool to pursue opportunities. In the current context, it can be either a positive (choosing to move to be more secure or closer to family) or a negative (a forced move into a garrison town). The importance of mobility and migration was highlighted by 189 different comments lamenting limited movement as one of the primary stresses challenging survival, as well as 150 different comments where residents shared how movement had been key to their survival. These movements for survival include anything from running without notice to longer-planned migration and were widespread throughout the assessment. Notably, while males of all ages were most vocal in their criticism of limits imposed on movement, females and males both credited mobility as a key capacity in overcoming recent challenges. This difference may be because culturally, women are expected to stay close to home, whereas it is normal for men to travel far from home to trade or for other livelihoods opportunities. These cultural norms and expectations mean that men feel frustrated more quickly by restrictions to their movements.

Mobility and migration was a particularly important in rural areas that were close to open borders, such as Mobbar on the Nigerian border, Ngala on the Cameroonian border, and Kaga on the border with Yobe State. Mobility was notably less significant in garrison towns like Dikwa where movement is curtailed, as well as urban areas such as Biu and Maiduguri where there is a relative abundance of alternatives to migration.

⁹⁴ The LMRA found that 75% of those surveyed in Central Borno, 56% in South Borno, and 45% in North Borno would be interested in mobile money if it were available.

Many of us travel to Lagos, Port Harcourt, Benin to work and save some money. — Male adult Gwoza

Across all LGAs, host communities were consistently more positive about migration as an option for coping or improving oneself than IDPs who had just used this capacity.⁹⁵ This could be due to the “grass is always greener” effect: host communities may find migration to be a better option than those who have just experienced it and are ready to stay in one place. Interestingly, farmers were notably more positive regarding mobility than traders—a surprising finding given their respective livelihoods, which could be due to the reliance of farmers on others for moving their product. When roads are closed, traders are already connected to transporters who may be able to find alternative routes, whereas farmers are dependent on others to ensure that their crops can be sold, or inputs purchased. The lack of visibility around their options leads them to rate mobility as more important.

4.4.3 Social Capital and Networks

People with good social connections or strong social networks tend to have better capacities than those who don't; be it the ability to borrow informally, share resources or secure some sort of livelihood. These social connections can be based on the religion, ethnicity, where you were born and many other elements. Camaraderie often exists between people who face the same adversity. As such, Borno communities relied upon social cohesion and the informal networks of family, friends and neighbors when facing challenges—this capacity was mentioned 241 times. In fact, the word “community” was mentioned 30% more than any other word in the FDGs. As mentioned in section 4.3 above, family, friends and neighbors act as reliable sources of financial, information and security support. These capacities are widespread in both rural and urban areas, providing both bonding and bridging social capital.⁹⁶ Social cohesion was particularly strong in host communities and IDP communities amidst less secure LGAs and bridging capital seems to play a central role as people reach out for contacts to manage the complexities of displacement. At times the bridging function operates at the level of community, where entire villages relate to other entire villages; this was particularly true in locations that had experienced more adversity—these communities seemed to have more empathy across the IDPs/host community divide than was seen in more settled areas. Adolescent girls were particularly vocal in crediting social cohesion as the capacity that helped them overcome varying challenges; surprisingly, males 20-34 gave similar credit to social cohesion.

While a robust system, social cohesion, in all its forms, should not be considered static. In areas of Borno such as Monguno and Ngala where humanitarian assistance was considered an important coping mechanism (over 20% of all discussions), social cohesion was markedly lower (less than 10% of all comments).⁹⁷ Meanwhile in areas where humanitarian relief was not discussed as often (less than 10% of all comments), such as Kaga and Maiduguri, social cohesion was significantly higher (above 20%), highlighting the possible disruptive influence of outside assistance and the changing nature of social cohesion.

And of course, there are many reported instances of those perceived to have violated norms or taboos (e.g. the forced “wives” of Boko Haram) who are shunned by their families and communities. However, different groups of marginalized Nigerians were quick to highlight how supportive the public and informal networks could be, including CJTF members, orphans, farmers, street hawkers, taxi drivers and even substance abusers. Still, there seems to be a gendered element at play in these networks, as reliance upon them was much lower for those women who had been married at an early age, assaulted or widowed.

95 IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix for Sept 2018 reports that IDPs in Borno are 51% in camps and 49% with host families, making it likely that host communities had exposure to the challenges faced by IDPs.

96 Bonding social capital is often described as horizontal ties between individuals within the same social group (as opposed to vertical ties between social groups). Bonding social capital is often associated with local communities where many people know many other people in the group (network closure). Bridging social capital is described as ties between individuals which cross social divides or between different social groups. <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/explanation-types-social-capital/>

97 Excluding Dikwa and Gwoza due to their isolated circumstances.



Borno, Nigeria—Ton Saater

Our family and close neighbours have helped us. Especially when an attack happens, they carry us in wheel barrows and on their backs because we cannot run.

— Disabled IDP female adult Maiduguri

The unity among us has its roots in family. We used to play together as kids.

— Male adult Baga

The main reason why I am staying here is that the elders of this community are united and they stand their ground in fighting against moral decadence in the community. — Male adult Baga

Whenever we have money we try to save a small amount in anticipation of problems. We also operate a thrift account.

— Male adult farmers Jere

4.4.4 Faith, Grit, and Determination

Another resilience capacity of note is faith in God. God was mentioned 80 different times within the assessment, most often in the northern LGAs facing the most violence (including Dikwa, Kukawa, and Moguno). Adolescents and IDPs were slightly more likely to invoke God in the assessment. Areas with less exposure to violence and more opportunities for commerce were similarly less likely to endorse God as a resilience tactic, as were older female and male youth and host communities. Curiously, not one woman who married at an early age, nor any woman who had been widowed, identified God as a support strategy.

Alongside, or perhaps in contrast, to faith, many participants in the assessment articulated various examples of grit or determination. One example of grit that many participants describe was what at first seemed to be a focus on entrepreneurialism, but underlying the desire to succeed specifically in business was a timeless perseverance rooted in low expectations and an exceptionally high tolerance for adversity. Many participants described another element of grit in the survey: a proactive hustle, or individuals striving to make things happen (known colloquially as “the Nigerian hustle”). Sometimes these two facets of grit worked together, and other times they operated in isolation. Civic optimism similarly played a notable role in the surveys: 47 respondents cited progress in their local community as a meaningful signal that progress is possible. Such confidence was common for both female and male youth throughout rural host communities, but was less prominent with adolescents and IDP communities, and almost nonexistent in the larger city of Maiduguri.

Even before the Boko haram crises, our elders were our guides, that’s why Boko haram didn’t gain any popularity in our community. — Male adult Damboa

For every situation God puts you in, he will not let you alone. He will definitely provide a way out. Other wives go out in search of where NGOs are distributing foods to get card (food voucher) which helps us cope with food security challenges. We the men in politics under these situations we cope by begging. You know one of the cultures of Kanuri people is that they like being praised or hailed so we go to any politician we know and praise him so that he give use some money to take care of our family. — Male KII Maiduguri

4.4.5 Humanitarian Assistance

With over \$2 billion invested in humanitarian assistance supporting food, shelter, and livelihood needs over recent years, it is not surprising that the use of humanitarian assistance was a common coping strategies used to overcome adversity in Borno. In all, 232 people commented on how humanitarian assistance had played a key role in supporting them in recent years. This endorsement was consistent amongst adolescents and youth. The only variation was that there was a higher percentage of reliance on humanitarian assistance In IDPs compared to their host community peers. Farmers and traders were similarly enthusiastic to credit humanitarian stakeholders, as were widows—the only group that listed humanitarian assistance as the primary coping strategy above all else. Almajiri youth, the disabled and those who were married early all were considerably less interested in discussing humanitarian relief, as it has arguably done little to support their resilience.

We don't know the government. We don't even know our councilor, we only know NGOs when it comes to aid. — Male adult farmer Ngala

Owing to the geographical variations, responses in Borno reflected different impressions of humanitarian assistance. In LGAS where humanitarian assistance is pronounced (Dikwa, Gwoza, Mobbar, Monguno, and Ngala) there was an understandable emphasis on the importance of humanitarian relief. In areas where emergency programming has less relevance, including Kaga and Maiduguri, other capacities play more significant roles.



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

4.4.6 Negative Coping

The above coping mechanisms are primarily employed in positive ways; however there are, of course, many negative coping mechanisms also being used, which generally do not build resilience and can lead to the use of even more negative coping mechanisms. The two most frequently mentioned approaches were begging and child labor. While not discussed as often as the primary approaches above, these two negative coping mechanisms were nonetheless mentioned frequently throughout the state. Begging, for instance, was only mentioned by 75 people (primarily based in/around Maiduguru), yet these were found across a wide range of groups, and included approximately equal numbers of adult females and males, as well as adolescent boys, subgroups of Almajiri, the disabled, orphans and widows. Respondents were also equally balanced between IDP and host communities. Men are twice as likely to beg as to ask the government for help.

A second difficult issue is the topic of child labor. While only 13 people specifically mentioned children working as a coping strategy, often in response to a lack of food, the practice is evidently more widespread. Complementary survey data highlights that on average 23.7% of children in Borno, aged 5-11, work at least one hour per week generating economic activity and a further 83.3% work up to 28 hours within the home.⁹⁸

Finally, in times of food scarcity, it must be noted that those living on the margins of Borno society must often go to great lengths to eat. One coping mechanism is a reliance on the “famine herb” *Leptadania Hastata*, better known by its Kanuri name *yadiya*. This plant is notable in Nigeria as it is renowned for possessing antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-androgenic, anti-diabetic and aphrodisiac qualities, and is commonly used to treat ailments. Its role within the recent conflict, however, is better famed for its availability year-round as a “food of last resort” during periods of severe food insecurity. This is part of the reason *yadiya* is also rumored to be “the food of Boko Haram,” reflecting its wide-spread availability in rural areas, as well as its further use as a bandage when its latex is applied to a wound. As a fisherman from Kukawa put it, when fish is unavailable and market goods are too expensive, “when we’re in big trouble, we have to turn to eating *yadiya*. These were the types of grasses we consumed as a food for some time.” Numerous respondents echoed this sentiment, citing the eating of *yadiya* as a stopgap approach to hunger in rural areas. Urban areas had similarly stark approaches to dealing with hunger. As an Almajiri recounted when faced with putrid food or nothing at all, “We add potash to the rotten food to make it edible.”



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

98 MICS, 2017.

4.5 Further Analysis

4.5.1 What Was Found vs. the Unexpected

A notable theme that emerged from primary data was the level of independence demonstrated, both on an individual and local community level. Most commonly, respondents found solutions to the challenges they faced close to home, often using their social capital to solve problems. This is in part because of the limited reach of government services (mentioned as significant by 1 in 10 respondents in southern Borno). Government services were largely nonexistent in the most conflict-affected areas of Borno, and with public services unreliable or absent, respondents cited supportive friends, family and neighbors five times more often than the government as solutions to the conflict and its effects. Independent choices to revive or restart livelihoods were also frequently mentioned, underlining the importance of self-sufficiency. Respondents' views on NGO support were that while their reach is farther than government outreach, it was still viewed as secondary to local, informal approaches.

Building on this theme, it is clear that as a result of the conflict, young people are becoming independent and self-reliant at a fairly early age (12-13). Highlighting these trends were numerous anecdotal cases where children would step up to attempt to solve problems, including responding to the loss of their head of household. Despite 943 schools having been closed in recent years, adolescents spoke with no greater frequency about interrupted education than adults. While adults consistently spoke about potential solutions to the challenges they faced, adolescents were even more likely to focus their attention on what they could do to improve their situation (42% of all conversations). This includes adolescent respondents speaking 12% more often about how earning money will improve their circumstances in comparison to the conflict they've grown up with. Young people mirrored adults in citing both migration and livelihoods as primary paths to overcoming the problems they're both currently facing and anticipating in the future. The youth of Borno are clearly very eager participants in actively finding solutions to the problems they are facing, displaying resilience capacities that could be reinforced.



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

The assessment team was also surprised by the normalization of the conflict. As referenced earlier, respondents in southern and western Borno—while more stable and secure than other areas of Borno—would often focus more on the conflict itself than less secure areas did. Biu and Kaga LGAs, for instance, cited armed conflict and AOGs as 20.3% and 33.3% of their biggest concerns, while Gwoza and Kukawa LGAs (which have faced more extensive and recent violence) only cited the conflict and AOGs 16.4% and 17.8% of the time. Within the most active areas of conflict, marginalized people consistently prioritized issues not directly related to the conflict: money, food, freedom of movement and any other issue that directly influences their ability to survive over the short-term. Many people seem so overwhelmed that they can't process past experiences, much less plan for the future, so they focus on meeting immediate needs. Longer-term concerns, including traumatic stress, remain largely unresolved, which is likely to have important resilience implications. Building capacities that help people focus on both the long and short term has the potential to speed up recovery in the areas that are ready to turn a corner in the conflict.

4.5.2 What We Expected, but Was Absent

4.5.2.1 Water insecurity beyond immediate needs

In its current form, water is essentially an open resource, facilitating a race of ever deepening boreholes. Various water-related issues were mentioned fewer than 100 times out of 3344 comments by respondents. While wider water insecurity—looking beyond having immediate drinking water for its year-round availability for multiple uses—was not perceived as a major concern in Borno in comparison to other immediate concerns STRESS respondents highlighted, demographic issues and a changing climate pose notable challenges for water resources, and in turn, agricultural livelihoods. Secondary sources do not point to a definitive understanding of the groundwater dynamics of Borno and the impact of unregulated borehole construction. Research on Lake Chad shows that the lake has shrunk 90% since 1964, yet Mercy Corps still heard comments such as “There is water, look—it’s there!” indicating a lack of local understanding regarding the longer-term problem. While structures to discuss and plan water and other natural resources exist at a high level, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, natural resource management in practice is not widely applied. To avoid future resource conflicts, and support adaptation of the agricultural sector in particular to changing ecological and climate dynamics, greater attention should be paid to ensuring water resources are managed equitably and sustainably, and that any revenue schemes invest back into longer-term plans for sustainability.



Gombe, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

4.6 The Role of Humanitarian Assistance

4.6.1 Nigerian Preferences for Humanitarian Aid

While the international community has invested \$2.2 billion in Nigerian aid over the last eight years,¹⁰⁰ it has consistently centered around traditional direct-delivery approaches to alleviate an exceptional emergency. Local reactions to this approach have been decidedly mixed.¹⁰¹ Naturally, food security is critical, as stated clearly by a young man in Dikwa: “Food first before anything else. You cannot do anything without food.” Yet beyond immediate food security, local communities throughout Borno have also consistently emphasized their preference for sustainable independence, and the tools to best achieve it. This is supported by the widespread popularity of finding sustainable livelihoods as a path towards overcoming the challenges individuals and their communities face. One out of every five comments shared during the STRESS assessment—far more than any other concerns—involved the importance of becoming self-reliant through entrepreneurship. And while more immediate humanitarian aid was valued as a coping strategy and listed third in the list of valued approaches, respondents were unambiguous in their distaste for dependency. “We want to have jobs so that we can cater for ourselves without having to depend on begging,” proclaimed one man from Maiduguri. Such perspectives (including the desire to help local community members) are strongly supported by other data. Instead of long-term reliance on external systems, the vast majority of Nigerians surveyed throughout Borno sought vocational training, startup capital, and personal mobility as tools to overcome current and future challenges.

4.6.2 Resilience Perspectives on Humanitarian Aid

Given the preferences of Nigerians uncovered during the STRESS, and emerging best practice, it is essential that implementers, donors and the Government move away from thinking of humanitarian responses in a phased “relief-to-development” manner. The STRESS and Livelihoods and Market Recovery Assessment show that humanitarian approaches can be integrated with longer-term investments focused on building resilience. Resilience seeks to avoid undermining the foundational systems that will support sustainable development; at our best, we can strengthen these systems. Of course, we must continue to help people meet their basic needs, yet at the same time, the STRESS findings highlight that longer-term thinking must be incorporated. With each passing season, the skills and support base underpinning Borno’s longer-term resilience are stretched further. Nowhere is this clearer than in the discussion of food security—in the Northeast IOM estimates that 56% of host communities and 28% of IDPs are farming; a sad figure in a context where 70-80% of the population were estimated to be farmers. Food aid is critical at the moment, but it should not be provided in ways that undermine the agricultural trade that farmers will rely in the future. Access to land must be provided, reductions in restrictions of agricultural goods and road transport are necessary, and cash programming must be favored over direct distribution so that traders are not put entirely out of business, as they have been in other protracted crises.

There is a responsibility to bolster the inherent resilience that Nigerians demonstrate. While there remains a short-term imperative to address immediate food insecurity and larger security constraints, it is time to prioritize supporting the inherent entrepreneurship of Borno traders, craftsmen, farmers and pastoralists. This includes exploring creative ways to support women in entrepreneurship. Conflict-affected communities in Borno need opportunities that go beyond the compartmentalized responses inherent within a cluster system. Without these opportunities the Humanitarian Response Plan is merely moderating the gradual demise of a traditionally resilient state.

Opportunities must be sought to underpin STRESS’ balanced perspective on humanitarian programming while building on the inherent resilience of local communities. This can be done by: a) Promoting social cohesion through humanitarian assistance approaches that bring different groups together and avoid exacerbating tensions; b) Delivery of assistance in a way that strengthens local leadership and decision-making structures and women’s participation in them; c) Supporting both IDP and host communities; d) Assessing whether aid is being delivered in a way that reinforces corruption and grievances because it’s going to same elites responsible for manipulating the system and skimming off the top.

100 Financial Tracking Service (as of May 2018). <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/536/summary>.

101 See “Market-friendly Humanitarian Aid”, Northeast Nigeria Joint Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment (LMRA), Oct 2017, pp41-46. <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>



Borno, Nigeria—Tom Saater

5. Theory of Change: Resilience Capacities to Be Prioritized and Strengthened in Borno over the Next Three to Five Years

Resilience is about enhancing people’s capacity to proactively and positively manage change in their lives. Access to, and use of, resilience capacities, when employed in the face of shocks and stresses, can change the current dynamics of the protracted crisis in Northeast Nigeria. However, strengthening them in isolation from one another or promoting their use as “one-off” capacities will not be enough to reduce the need for assistance over the long term. If utilized correctly, these capacities can help communities reach food security and recover more rapidly without lasting negative consequences. Economic opportunities and growth are likely to follow, as a ‘virtuous circle’ is created within market systems. Specific violence prevention and peacebuilding capacities can help both peacefully manage conflict and alleviate the systemic drivers that initiated (and are now sustaining) the complex crisis and are therefore driving shocks and stresses. These capacities can be used to prevent and manage current and future conflict threats, and should be complemented with investment in foundational systems strengthening for development.

While many of these capacities are relevant across age groups and speak to broader systemic changes, a particular focus has been placed on supporting greater resilience among youth and adolescents because of their pivotal role in building Nigeria's future. Programs should be designed to address their needs and to specifically recognize their unique strengths, vulnerabilities and constraints (often systemic). Youth include several marginalized sub-populations including Almajiri street children, girls entering into early marriage (including forced marriage), youth and adolescent ex-combatants, youth who head their households and 'Boko Haram wives' and the infants they produce. These sub-populations will require particular programmatic attention in order to elevate and strengthen their resilience capacities and support positive coping mechanisms in the immediate term. Across the board this resilience-building work will require more multi-sector approaches and longer-term funding mechanisms or creative use and planning of humanitarian funding streams, alongside an understanding of interdependencies. Without this forethought, the conflict will continue to string out into the future.

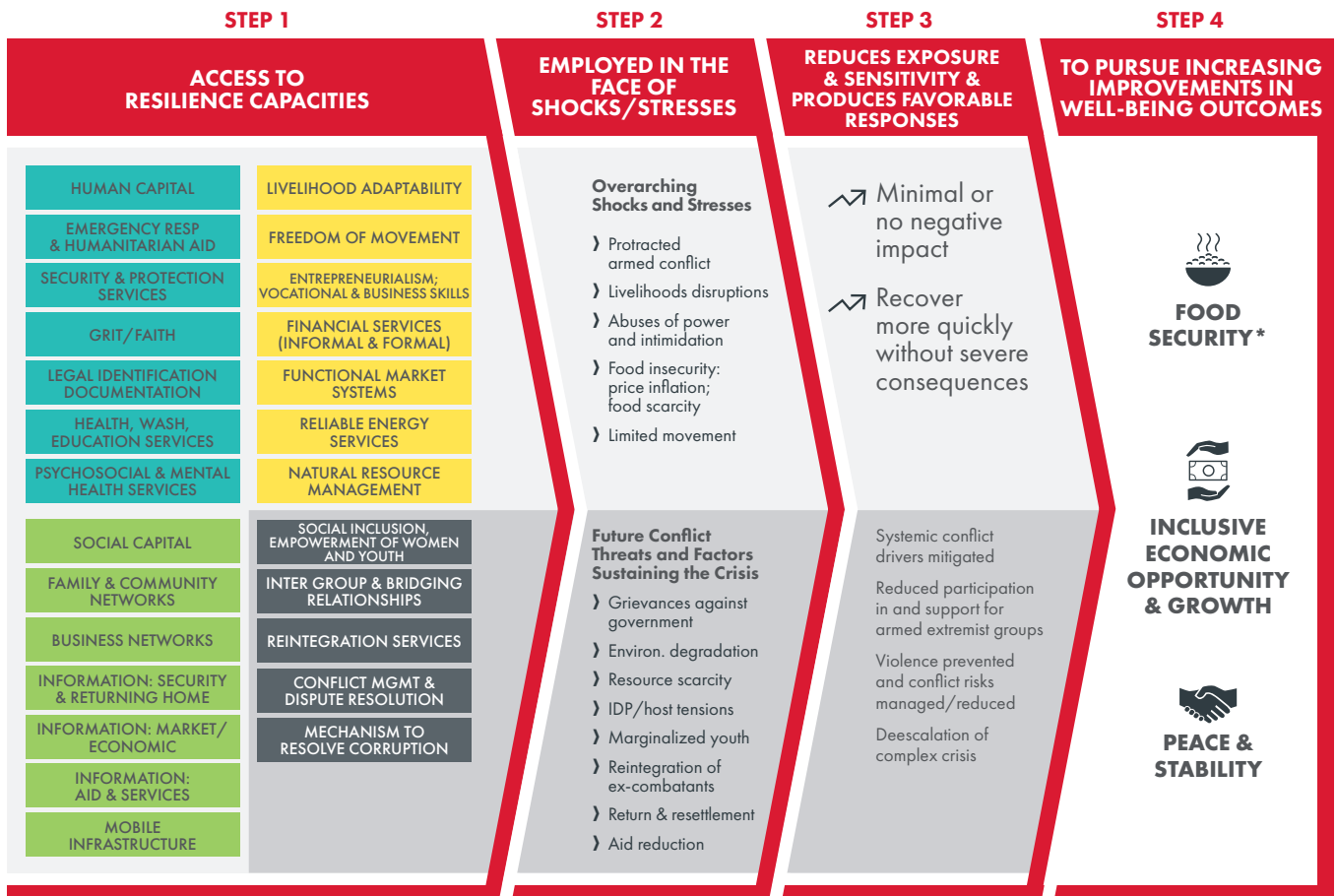
The Theory of Change (ToC) is framed around an initial 3 to 5 year timeframe and places an emphasis on reducing exposure and sensitivity to the set of shocks and stresses outlined in the diagram. The shocks and stresses prioritized here are those most preventing communities in Borno from progressing towards increased well-being in the 3-5 year timeframe. Building access to and use of these resilience capacities will require recognizing the unique strengths and constraints faced by male and female adolescent and youth populations, including factors that affect marginalized sub-populations. The ToC also makes the case that conflict risks will be reduced through violence prevention and peacebuilding capacities, which are employed both to prevent and manage conflict, and to alleviate the systemic drivers and new threats that are sustaining this complex crisis. The embedded conflict track in the ToC shows that incorporating explicit conflict reduction and peacebuilding capacities is a necessity to help prevent or reduce the other shocks and stresses most affecting communities and developing into new drivers of conflict.

The ToC confirms that practitioners building resilience in Borno must simultaneously strengthen people's capacities to absorb the impacts of shocks and stresses as well as adapt to the complex risk environment in ways that preserve human capital and protect support systems from degrading over the prolonged crisis, while transforming the underlying drivers of conflict.



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

Borno STRESS Theory of Change (3-5 Year Timeframe)



LEGEND

Embedded Conflict Track

- Step 1: ACCESS TO VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING CAPACITIES
- Step 2: EMPLOYED IN THE FACE OF CONFLICT RISKS
- Step 3: PREVENTS AND REDUCES CONFLICT AND THEREFORE REDUCES RISK OF THE "OVERARCHING SHOCKS/STRESSES"
- Step 4: AND ENABLES INCREASING IMPROVEMENT OF WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

- Capacities for Basic Human Needs and Rights
- Capacities to Earn and Maintain a Living
- Capacities for Social Connectivity
- Capacities for Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention

*food security seen primarily through a food access and availability lens

Below is a further articulation of the ToC graphic, providing more detail on each of the resilience capacities outlined in Step 1. These descriptions articulate in brief what the capacity will look like when functioning well, so that practitioners know what their aim is in building or strengthening them. Each capacity will need to be contextualized further when incorporating into programming.

Capacities for Basic Human Needs and Rights – institutional, policy, legal, infrastructure and cultural conditions that govern formal and informal activities within society that are designed to support resilience. Some of these capacities will have a dual nature, i.e. security is both needed for peace and part of the current problem undermining it. Humanitarian aid is also both part of the solution and part of the problem. This duality is understood and addressed in systemic ways.

- › **Human Capital** – the skills, knowledge and experience possessed by an individual or population
- › **Emergency Response and Humanitarian Aid** – access to humanitarian aid is market-aware,¹⁰² Does No Harm, and addresses immediate threats to life.
- › **Security and Protection Services** – accountable to all citizens in Borno and designed to guard against crime and maintain peace without undermining human rights. Services are deployed and managed in a way that supports wider social cohesion, ensures personal safety and enables the basic functioning of markets and access to public services, therefore contributing to restoring stability.
- › **Faith and/or Grit** – a set of beliefs, or personal determination, that help people to persevere in the face of adversity and can sometimes be understood as “independence” or “hustle.”
- › **Legal Identification and Documentation** – people are easily able to attain a piece of valid certification of their identity, without being subjected to discrimination or abuse.
- › **Basic Health, WASH, Education Services** – Good quality public services are available to all Nigerians, normally organized by the government, for the benefit of all society. Where aid structures are involved with this provision they do not undermine the long-term sustainability of the system. A complementary capacity to this in Borno is access to energy, where reliable energy is needed for these services to function.
- › Psychosocial and Mental Health Services are available to help individuals and communities heal psychological wounds and rebuild social structures, as well as move individuals from passive victims to active survivors. They specifically address the needs of vulnerable sub-groups and understand their role in supporting other societal outcomes such as food security, economic growth, and peace.

Capacities to Earn and Maintain a Living – Refers to the capacity of individuals and households to earn enough to support themselves (and their families), and to adapt these activities and adopt new practices when faced with shocks or stresses to ensure that these activities continue to provide a source of income over time. Includes:

- › **Livelihood Adaptability** – ideally relies on employing a range of approaches or having multiple livelihood options that aren’t vulnerable to the same shock or stress.
- › **Freedom of Movement** – ability to look for work or trade relationships in other locations, or rely on unhindered physical movement of property/goods. For Borno, this is the willing and self-determined relocation out of an insecure zone to a more secure location, and freedom of movement within and beyond security perimeters and across formal/informal borders.
- › **Entrepreneurialism** – general confidence in one’s ability to gain and creatively employ the necessary skills and resources to make an income under changing circumstances. Includes a sense of innovation and curiosity.
- › **Skills and Vocational Training** – beyond simply the desire to be industrious, individuals need appropriate hard and soft skills matched with the needs of the market. For Borno, skills should be relevant to both the current context of the individual, as well as future contexts that they may find themselves in (for example upon returning home).

¹⁰² The *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards* (a Sphere Companion Standard) can be used to support market-aware programming: www.mershandbook.org

- › **Financial Inclusion** – access to formal and informal forms of savings, credit, insurance and remittances, as well as embedded financial services along value chains. In Borno, insurance may include “emergency borrowing” available through adashes, as well as more formal forms of insurance. Mobile banking should also be considered once infrastructure is in place again.
- › **Functional Market Systems** – this includes appropriate infrastructure as well as the relationships and enabling environment for an exchange of goods and services to take place. In Borno, particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring marginalized groups are able to respond to the changing power dynamics that influence market system functionality.
- › **Access to Energy** – ability to safely obtain affordable fuel and energy to operate one’s business and household and to restore basic services. In Borno, lack of access to alternative cooking fuel is contributing to deforestation and heightening vulnerability to desertification, while also increasing protection risks as it becomes necessary to leave secure perimeters to find fuelwood. Under current conditions, solutions should focus on the small scale (household and business level) and consider how to lower the cost through affordable new technology and safe alternatives.
- › **Natural Resource Management** – inclusive community mechanisms for managing access and distribution of natural resources in both the immediate and long-term. In Borno, this includes reviewing land and water usage to help prevent conflicts in dense areas and garrison towns and to help ensure that marginalized and vulnerable groups are able to participate and benefit. This will be especially essential for reintegrated and resettled populations where land disputes may arise. On a systemic level, Borno State and the Lake Chad Basin area more broadly fundamentally must review formal policies and processes that underpin natural resource management, including reviewing and updating state and federal land and water policies for the current context.

Capacities for Social Connectivity – Refers to the linkages between people or units, and includes roles, rules, precedents and procedures that facilitate collective action by making peoples’ behavior more predictable and beneficial. It supports access to other capacities, by providing information and links to livelihood opportunities.

- › **Social Capital** – Social capital supports access to resources to cope with and adapt to a variety of the conflict’s shocks and stresses. Social Capital can be viewed in terms of bonding, bridging and linking capital. Bonding refers to creating ties between people of the same group, bridging refers to creating links between groups that are different, and linking refers to communication and connections to those in authority. All three types play a role in resilience in different ways in Borno.
- › **Family and Community Networks** – rely on the existing connections between family, friends, and neighbors in order to access basic resources vital for survival and adaptation to new circumstances.
- › **Business Networks** – support and build on the existing business and trade relationships in order to respond to new economic challenges. In Borno, cross-border trade connections are important to livelihood adaptation, particularly in areas where borders are open. Business networks can also be used to promote market-aware responses to relief and development challenges.
- › **Information for decision-making in advance of or in response to shocks and stresses:**
 - **Security and Returning Home** – access to factual information is provided through a variety of formats and media (especially radio), addressing the specific concerns of particular sub-groups (young women, disabled)
 - **Economic and Markets** – the transparent distribution of market and transport information through existing channels (for example through NGOs, Business Groups (such as the Transporters Association), or Government), as well as collection of other critical market data. There is data that

is already available through WFP, FEWS-NET, or the Transporters Association (such as the price of commodities in local markets) that could be provided more reliably to smallholder farmers and local traders.

- **Aid and Services** – accessible and up-to-date information about how aid is prioritized and distributed, and projections around future assistance is provided to communities through a variety of formats and media. In Borno, information flow and content should take care to address particular sub-groups who may be in need of additional support or be marginalized in other ways.
- › **Mobile Infrastructure** – network coverage is fully restored and affordable. Mobile communications, especially around garrison towns, are necessary to facilitate the flow of information and reduce psychological stress through supporting bonding social capital. Mobile phone communication is also a critical strategy for drawing on social capital where illiteracy rates are high in the Northeast.

Capacities for Peacebuilding and Violence Prevention – skills and mechanisms that facilitate the establishment of durable peace and try to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation. The skills, mechanisms, and structures that support conflict management in Borno should be integrated across sectors to preserve recovery gains, mitigate an increase in conflict, prevent violence as new dynamics arise and address structural causes. Standalone, specific peacebuilding investments are also critical.

- › **Social Empowerment of Women, Youth and Marginalized Groups** – institutions and processes give women, youth and any “voiceless” sub-groups the ability to define their own priorities and work toward them. Emphasize inclusion of marginalized groups who have either traditionally faced social exclusion or who have been marginalized in connection with the conflict in arenas including: community decision-making, peace and conflict management structures, economic inclusion and the civic sphere.
- › **Intergroup and Bridging Relationships** – opportunities are created for reciprocity and building trust between groups and with formal power structures.
- › **Reintegration Services** – processes for the re-entry into society of those who that been directly involved in the conflict. Those providing these services should be aware of the dual role that women have played in the conflict, as well as the role of those who were forced, rather than choosing, to participate in the conflict directly. Reintegration processes should include family and community members where possible and appropriate in order to build positive networks around those who are re-entering peaceful society. Effective and holistic reintegration of male and female youth and adolescent ex-combatants and victims of violence can reduce the risk that these groups could be re-recruited to violent armed groups and contribute to conflict in the future, and enhance the community’s capacities to support peace.
- › **Conflict Management Mechanisms and Dispute Resolution** – formal and informal mechanisms and skills to resolve differences between individuals and groups, in order to achieve a result perceived as fair for all participants and provide a platform for building a peaceful society. Skills are likely particularly important in garrison towns, where resource scarcity is increasingly an issue, in communities hosting IDPs, and in communities reestablishing as people are returning and resettling.
- › **Accountability Mechanisms for Transparency and to Report and Resolve Corruption** – justice mechanisms exist, especially at state and local levels, that provide a process and/or recognized authority by which people and groups can be held responsible for their actions. These should give voice to those who feel they have been wronged, in a manner that is perceived by all as fair and open. Addressing the systemic influence of corruption in Borno will unlock transformative changes on most, if not all, of the capacities in the ToC. Mechanisms that promote greater visibility of corruption for citizens may help shed light on how to address and reduce social acceptance.



Borno, Nigeria—Corinna Robbins

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 A Resilience Approach to Designing and Implementing Interventions

There are three important principles that we have applied when considering our recommendations:

- 1 Reduce people's exposure to current and future shocks and stresses** — Understand how and why different population groups have different levels of exposure and adjust interventions to account for these differences. For example, promote increased access to farmland to reduce the likelihood of food insecurity and mitigate tensions over resource constraints.
- 2 Reduce people's sensitivity to current and future shocks and stresses** — Understand how and why different population groups experience more or less severe impacts, or are more or less able to take actions to prevent or reduce the impacts. For example, improve mobile phone networks so that farmers and traders are better able to communicate and so that alternative routes or customers can be found when roads are closed for security reasons.
- 3 Reduce conflict risks and drivers** — Understand how and why interventions must tackle both the impacts of the overarching conflict and complex crisis, as well as its ongoing drivers, to reduce exposure and sensitivity to current and future shocks and stresses. For example, by promoting viable economic opportunities and wider societal inclusion of ex-combatants, Almajiri and other marginalized groups may help reduce participation in and support for violence.

6.2 Program and Strategy Recommendations

There are three broad themes to our recommendations: 1) Reducing and managing conflict risks, 2) Addressing the lack of development and poor structural conditions, and 3) Incorporating strategic layering of interventions and programs. Used together, these approaches will help build resilience for communities and the individuals within them. Systems-based approaches and tools can help implementers and donors design programs that integrate a long-term vision for change into short-term support activities that build resilience. Fundamentally, this way of working will require a significant shift of mindset—away from phased thinking and “relief to development continuums” and toward ways of working that recognize the complexity and interconnected nature of risks, identify signs of change beyond individual and household levels, and adapt quickly to the changes in context.



6.2.1 Theme 1: Reduce and Manage Conflict Risks

Manage future conflict threats that have the potential to develop into new shocks and stresses and disrupt progress towards improved well-being. This should be done by addressing the dynamics that cause the complex crisis to persist and by strengthening conflict management and prevention mechanisms.

Address the Need for More Farmland/Space: The twin challenges of freedom of movement and access to land need to be addressed urgently. There is an important balance to be struck between necessary security perimeters and adequate land for food production, as well as appropriate population concentrations in garrison towns and IDP camps. Greater focus needs to be given to the challenges facing the half-million people confined to garrison towns. In order to manage potential future threats to food security and the disenfranchisement of individuals unable to maintain a livelihood, new strategies are needed to mitigate the impact of space constraints and limited movement, particularly in the light of low return rates, limited basic resources and destroyed housing. Advocacy work needs to be done with actors in the Security System and mechanisms need to be put in place to make increasing amounts of farmland available. For example, working to bring about consent and safeguarding of agricultural development within the 3-5km buffer beyond the trench line. Without ambitious governance and peacebuilding responses to these issues, and deep consultation with the affected populations (including marginalized populations who are often voiceless in discussions), at best recovery will be delayed and at worst the groundwork will be laid for future unrest.

Support Freedom of Movement: The sister issue to land access is freedom of movement—one out of seven comments within the STRESS assessment noted the importance of mobility for survival, but 643 km of major roads in Borno (66%) still require military approval to use. While road restrictions are to be expected during the conflict, it is time to identify clear criteria around what may/may not be transported, at what times, and what paperwork is required. Smart, well-connected transporters are able to keep goods (such as agricultural inputs) flowing; therefore there may be a way to streamline processes. Creative solutions using technology could provide pre-clearances or texts regarding alternative routes. While there are many challenges with mobile connectivity, almost anything would be an improvement on the current system. Even a dedicated internal hotline where soldiers at checkpoints could verify paperwork or clarify rules for what can be transported would improve the functioning of the current system. These barriers to trade not only undermine the livelihoods of farmers, traders, and others, they add to the already long list of grievances people have with the operation of the government. By seeking creative solutions to allow the movement of goods and people, the government can begin to build trust and transparency with its people.

Integrate Peacebuilding into Assistance: Approaches that support peace and stability also need to be integrated into programming; at the same time, programs with explicit conflict management and peacebuilding objectives need to be layered alongside ongoing humanitarian assistance. Programs should be designed with regular assessments that look at whether aid is being delivered in ways that unintentionally reinforce corruption or grievances, or strengthen the position of elites.

Examples of interventions might include assistance designed and delivered in ways that promote social cohesion and strengthen local leadership, promoting inclusive decision-making structures or building local capacity to identify tensions and manage conflict peacefully. Both IDP and host communities should be included in these approaches to ensure that marginalized community members are empowered and civil society is strengthened.

Education and Employability: Education provides

essential skills to enable livelihood improvements, adopt risk-reducing techniques, and to diversify income. Yet, by the most generous accounting, only 38% of eligible students in Borno are enrolled in school.¹⁰³ So it is not surprising that 51.2% of Borno is currently unemployed or underemployed. New thinking is needed to provide broader access to vocational training, ‘soft’ employability skills, as well as improved access to formal education, particularly for girls. This must be done through comprehensive engagement with young people, religious leaders, and their communities in a manner that builds social capital with local and state government, opens dialogue and community participation in shaping education services and integrates accountability mechanisms. If longer-term strategies are not applied to the engagement and support of youth, much of the current effort in the Northeast could be called into question as the population of Borno more than doubles



Gombe, Nigeria—Ezra Millstein

by 2050. Grievances related to corrupt governance and limited economic opportunity appear to be key factors driving participation in and support for armed opposition groups such as Boko Haram, and the large numbers of marginalized and traumatized youth in Borno pose a threat to future peace and stability. There are two strategies needed to address youth needs: (1) a dedicated youth program, and (2) an effort to ensure that youth are a priority beneficiary of other programs addressing governance, civic engagement and livelihoods. Increasing skills that are linked to market needs will help youth diversify their livelihoods and build resilience in the long and short term. There are likely many NGOs—both local and international—already well placed to do this, but it should be done in a way that strengthens the relationship between citizens and the state and targets youth in the margins.

Organizing for the Future: One of the chief concerns facing Borno is the lack of formal systems to help troubleshoot both formal and informal resettlement, as both public systems and traditional governance lack the mechanisms and experience to support such migration back to what almost certainly must be complex settings. While progress continues to be made on other fronts, the number of displaced in Borno remains at

103 Four out of 10 15-19 year-olds are furthermore illiterate. Unicef 2017. VTS 2018.

nearly 2 million. In Borno, 51% of all IDPs are living with host communities, while the other half are living in camps.¹⁰⁴ Neither of these situations is sustainable in the long run, and further attention needs to be focused on the return and resettlement of IDPs. It would be wise to invest a tool kit of options, built on local knowledge, to help troubleshoot resettlement challenges, be they rental schemes, resettlement resources, or mediation. Because 25% of Borno residents are displaced, local stakeholders need to start considering how to address the return of these displaced people to homes that may be not only be destroyed, but often occupied. Furthermore, 48% of IDP respondents shared that they lacked fundamental information on the safety and security of their home communities to plan their movements, while a majority of host communities vocalized the need for more information on humanitarian distributions and general security.¹⁰⁵ Given the adversity they have already faced, this group—made up of 79% women and children—has a particular need for strengthened resilience capacities. This can be done immediately through livelihood skill-building, improved information sharing and strengthening conflict management skills.

Reintegration: One of the most concerning issues facing the humanitarian community in the Northeast region of Nigeria is the reintegration of former combatants. The fate and future prospects of thousands of AOG “wives”, as well as the 15,000 AOGs themselves, is a daunting concern. Even when starting with those who were not willingly members of AOGs or their auxiliary, the challenge quickly becomes clear. Women who have escaped Boko Haram are shunned by their families and neighbors—many people view these women and their infants as a direct threat because people fear they have been indoctrinated and radicalized. Some believe that the children born of sexual violence will become the next generation of fighters. Reintegration is extremely sensitive, requiring adequate assessment of how to do it appropriately and successfully. Yet, looking at reintegration through the lens of resilience, both communities and the individuals being reintegrated will need strengthened resilience capacities, and it is essential that social capital be built for both the communities receiving these individuals and the individuals themselves. It has been suggested that deradicalization efforts may be more effective if delivered jointly to relatives or peer groups rather than in isolation, so that empathy and social capital are built alongside reintegration efforts.

Engaging Other Marginalized Stakeholders: While sincere efforts are already made by various programs to engage the less fortunate throughout Borno (often most effectively in smaller field communities), more should be done. Statistics highlight the need for more engagement with marginalized stakeholders: upwards of 15% of the population of Borno not only has received no meaningful support from either the state or INGO community, but notably also feels understandably neglected. This neglect is a growing concern within urban communities already struggling to maintain and rebuild social cohesion. These marginalized stakeholders include 250,000 girls forced into early marriage, 227,000 Almajiris, 60,000 war widows, 90,000 youth abusing substances, 42,000 disabled Nigerians and numerous other groups that feel disregarded.¹⁰⁶ Local umbrella groups only represent a small fraction of eligible beneficiaries. More proactive monitoring criteria is also needed—including the utilization of empowered CRCs, field staff and the beneficiaries themselves—to better engage the 15% of Borno that is currently sidelined. Almajiri, who throughout their young lives often have little connection to the state or formal support, have seen their numbers increase upwards from 227,000. These largely homeless youth should be a concern, as many former Almajiris have found homes with Boko Haram.¹⁰⁷ To safeguard the overall stability of communities, further efforts need to be made to ensure that support is equitably distributed throughout communities that have been unsettled over many years of conflict.

104 IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, Aug 2018.

105 *Not Ready to Return*, NRC., 11 October 2017.

106 INEC, 2015.

107 Borno State Sangaya Schools Association estimate. VTS 2018.



6.2.2 Theme 2: Address Lack of Development and Poor Structural Conditions

Address underdevelopment and structural conditions that increase the vulnerability of marginalized groups and constitute potential drivers for new conflicts to emerge.

Social, political, economic and ecological systems in Borno were ill-equipped to act as a safety net or prepare people to effectively manage the impacts of conflict. It is time to prioritize investments in systems that transform and/or strengthen communities to achieve their development goals, while explicitly addressing structural constraints—the natural resource base, agricultural livelihoods, certain market functions, social networks, quality health services (especially maternal)—that impede risk management capacities. This can be done by reframing “aid” as a mechanism designed to build on existing capacities and positive examples currently within communities. Identifying examples where communities demonstrate positive deviance and thrive despite the multitude of challenges will help strengthen key enablers for both recovery and improved well-being. These investments should explicitly address the fundamental need to build up basic services and strengthen human capital (for example, through education programs that address gender and youth inequality). They are also likely to resonate better with communities who are most comfortable turning to family and friends for support, and who are best placed to access marginalized populations. Failure to support the instances of success amid the chaos will make recovery lengthier and costlier and open up opportunities for new conflict dynamics to arise.

Increase Access to Capital: The STRESS indicates that entrepreneurship remains an enduring pillar of resilience in Borno, yet is hampered by limited access to financial services or other sources of investment capital. Findings from a Mercy Corps baseline study of youth in Borno show that 80% of young people are interested in starting businesses, yet only 1.8% have experience accessing financial services.¹⁰⁸ This is in part due to the number of banks and MFIs that were destroyed or shut down as a result of the conflict.¹⁰⁹ In urban Biu and Maiduguri, STRESS found the sale of assets—usually a negative coping mechanism—were 47% and 83% higher respectively than the state average, raising the question of whether borrowing is being done for the purchase of productive assets (that would generate additional income) or for consumption. More rural and conflicted LGAs in the north—such as Gwoza and Monguno—did not show this trend for the sale of assets, but they did show significantly higher levels of informal borrowing, 184% higher and 272% higher respectively. This is consistent with previous assessments that found 96% of rural residents’ first choice is to borrow from friends and family rather than formal institutions or savings and loan groups (adashe).¹¹⁰ This is primarily due to the ease of access to friends and family, and the high levels of trust. Yet as access to commercial services is gradually restored to rural communities over the months and years ahead, better practice is needed to provide the next generation of livelihoods greater financial options. Potential approaches include further expanding the VSLA concept well beyond its current scope, both in terms of the types of investments made and community outreach. One area of unmet need in local communities is the availability of financing and vocational support beyond the typical \$100 in funding towards current livelihood targets such as tailoring and carpentry. Some see the use of loans of \$250-1000 to support enterprise creation as a potential area for expansion. That enterprise creation includes traditional small-scale farming, rearing of livestock, and micro-oil pressing, as well as more contemporary options such as mechanized knitting and solar engineering are seen as potential areas for expansion.

108 I-SING Baseline Assessment 2017

109 Mercy Corps Livelihood and Market Recovery Assessment, Mercy Corps 2017, <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Northeast%20Nigeria%20Joint%20LMRA%202017.pdf>

110 Ibid.

Strengthening the Food Market System: In many locations, market infrastructure was destroyed by insurgent attacks on marketplaces and storage facilities. Although many of these were in poor condition to begin with, they are now non-functional and in urgent need of rehabilitation.¹¹¹ Limitations on land access, and poor/blocked roads contribute significantly to disruptions in the food market system. Infrastructure and market systems that create employment and support food security efforts should receive leveraged assistance, although communities should be the drivers of how that assistance is prioritized. Despite past recommendations, humanitarian food assistance is not always implemented in a market-aware manner, and this continues to have negative effects on the market system.

Improve Information Sharing: Access to regular, updated information for making decisions and managing day-to-day risks is paramount to resilience, particularly for the displaced.¹¹² Large numbers of people still lack the most basic data on the safety and security of home communities,¹¹³ information on humanitarian distributions and updates on basic security.¹¹⁴ Farmers and traders spoke of their frustration about the irregular information available to them on the price of commodities and lack of travel updates or information on travel restrictions. Practitioners should build access to information into ongoing and planned interventions to improve proactive decision-making and help reduce people's exposure to risks. Donors should work with the Nigerian government to find systemic solutions that are apolitical, but allow increased flows of information on markets, security, health and other data necessary for resilience. This should be done in a way that builds crucial information systems, including their governance and infrastructure, to support a longer-term development foundation, including through creative partnerships with the private sector. Communities have spoken about their frustration with the lack of daily information, including the prices of commodities and updates on travel and other restrictions.

There are some bright spots. For example, the continued broadcasting of relevant information in both Hausa and Kanuri by radio, which is relevant to the roughly one in three IDPs who have access to a radio. While acknowledging radio as the de facto source of news, the scarcity of radios in more rural communities highlights its limitations. The limitations of radio are reinforced by skepticism about formal information; friends and family are usually deemed more reliable source of information.¹¹⁵ An obvious complement to such a situation, however, is mobile telecommunication. Aside from the clear advantages mobile telecommunication offers in terms of providing needed information on a case-by-case basis, surveys highlight that nine out of ten households in Borno had at least one member of the family who owned a mobile telephone.¹¹⁶ The problem is that many rural areas, as well as 750,000 Nigerians in urban areas, lack network access, which is often seen as a security issue.¹¹⁷ Hinting at the accomplishments that could accompany even minimal of cell phone service is the case of Damboa where service was reconnected for a mere one km radius around the center of town in early 2017. Even this limited access has been hailed as a constructive addition; basic communication and financial services are now possible, allowing local residents to better engage their social networks and supporting livelihoods, two principle resilient strengths.¹¹⁸ The hope is that Baga, Bama, Damasak, Dikwa, Gwoza and other rural locales would also be able to benefit from technological lifelines. All INGO actors and associated stakeholders should insist that mobile connectivity be accessible within any urban area where they provide services by January 2019.

111 Ibid.

112 Fifteen percent of the population reported serious problems due to lack of information. Translators Without Borders 2018.

113 48% of IDP respondents said they lacked basic information on the safety and security of their home communities, needed to plan a move home.

114 *Not Ready to Return*, NRC. 11 October 2017. More information was requested on humanitarian distributions (53% of sites), additional relief assistance (14% of sites), and general security (20% of sites IOM DTM 2018).

115 Three out of four sites report that they prefer to receive information over the radio, yet the vast majority of sites report that less than 50 percent of households have access to a functioning radio. Translators Without Borders 2018.

116 91% of Borno households where at least one member owns or has a mobile telephone. MICS5, p. 46.

117 Rural LGAs in Borno often benefit from cellular networks outside of Nigeria, including Abadam LGA receiving coverage from Chad (Tigo), Marte receiving coverage from Cameroon (MTN), and Mobbar receiving coverage from Niger (Airtel). AOGs similarly are often rumored to use Thuraya satellite phones.

118 Unstructured Supplementary Service Data.



6.2.3 Theme 3: Strategic Layering

Be strategic in the layering of interventions and programs, bringing together elements from various sectors that mutually reinforce capacities for preventing and managing risk.

Be aware of geographical differences and tailor activities for vulnerable sub-groups.

Resilience thinking is not commonly applied to conflict contexts. But shocks and stresses are frequent in daily life, and the impacts often aggregate, creating both immediate and longer-term consequences for food security, economic growth and social cohesion. Traditional relief approaches tend to focus primarily on alleviating the effects of shocks and stresses, but to build resilience, approaches must also address the factors driving shocks and stresses in the first place. This is even more important in protracted crisis situations where a linear road to recovery is unlikely. There is a need for practitioners to optimize approaches to deliberately support communities with a range of capacities to manage and prevent stresses and shocks. This can be done within a program and by layering programs in the same area. For example, interventions focused on improving production techniques for immediate livelihoods recovery could be paired with expanding information networks between producers in the community and input suppliers, to allow them to share security updates pertinent to their livelihoods. Another example is layering together agricultural livelihoods recovery programming with programs around nutrition education and reducing early marriage and subsequent early pregnancies, as all of these are needed to reduce malnutrition for adolescent girls specifically. Consider how layering can help achieve both short-term and long-term impacts to help people positively cope now and reduce future vulnerability.

Strengthening communities' capacity to deal more positively with the impacts of shocks and stresses, and address what drives them, requires understanding that the approaches needed may be very different at different stages of the complex crisis, and in different locations, even within the same geography. In areas of Borno like Ngala, where cross-border connections have historically been important for local livelihoods and the economy, reinforcing and strengthening social and business connections across borders will be important for economic recovery and managing unforeseen market restrictions. Southern and some parts of central Borno are much more exposed to chronic aridity and irregular rainfall than areas around Lake Chad, so agricultural recovery in this area should place higher emphasis on climate change adaptation. Similar tailoring is important for different population groups who experience and cope with shocks in different ways.

Program support must facilitate alternatives to negative coping and minimize the need to resort to strategies that will have long-term consequences. This may sound obvious but doing so requires designing beyond a single sector for a holistic, sequenced package of interventions, as well as extending the timeframe of support. Considering both the current volatility of the context and future risks in Borno, programs should also integrate activities to strengthen communities' ability to anticipate and proactively prepare to manage potential stresses, such as increasing competition over scarce land or water resources, a reduction in certain forms of aid and political transition.

This way of working depends on donor funding that promotes strategic layering, enables more integrated approaches, and provides implementing agencies flexibility, space, and resources to continually analyze and adjust based on local context.

Rethinking Response Strategies

This graphic below provides an example of three intervention strategies that could be used for livelihoods recovery: seed distribution, cash distribution and mobile money. Together these examples show what a “more robust” and “less robust” resilience design for a response strategy could look like.

Where the relief strategy or intervention fits on the vertical axis considers the use of layering as a way to build resilience characteristics. Program strategies, and even single interventions, could support better shock/stress management by looking for opportunities to use layering to develop different resilience characteristics within the local context. This layering will be very robust to minimally robust as appropriate. Characteristics that are generally recognized as important for resilience include:

having adequate response redundancy and diversity, reducing the number of single points of failure, connectivity, having abundance/reserves of resources to draw upon, situational awareness, preparedness, autonomy, etc. For example, an agricultural recovery project may promote production in both small animal husbandry and crop production, so that in the event that insecurity restricts access to land, households have an immediate backup. Considering how to build these characteristics through layering interventions sounds theoretical, but we see it in everyday practice without realizing it. For example, in Northeast Nigeria, many NGO staff members carry two SIM cards in case one of the mobile operators cuts service. Households stockpile a surplus of food to deal with rising prices. Traders establish connections with vendors at multiple markets to get up to date information on security, local prices and demand.

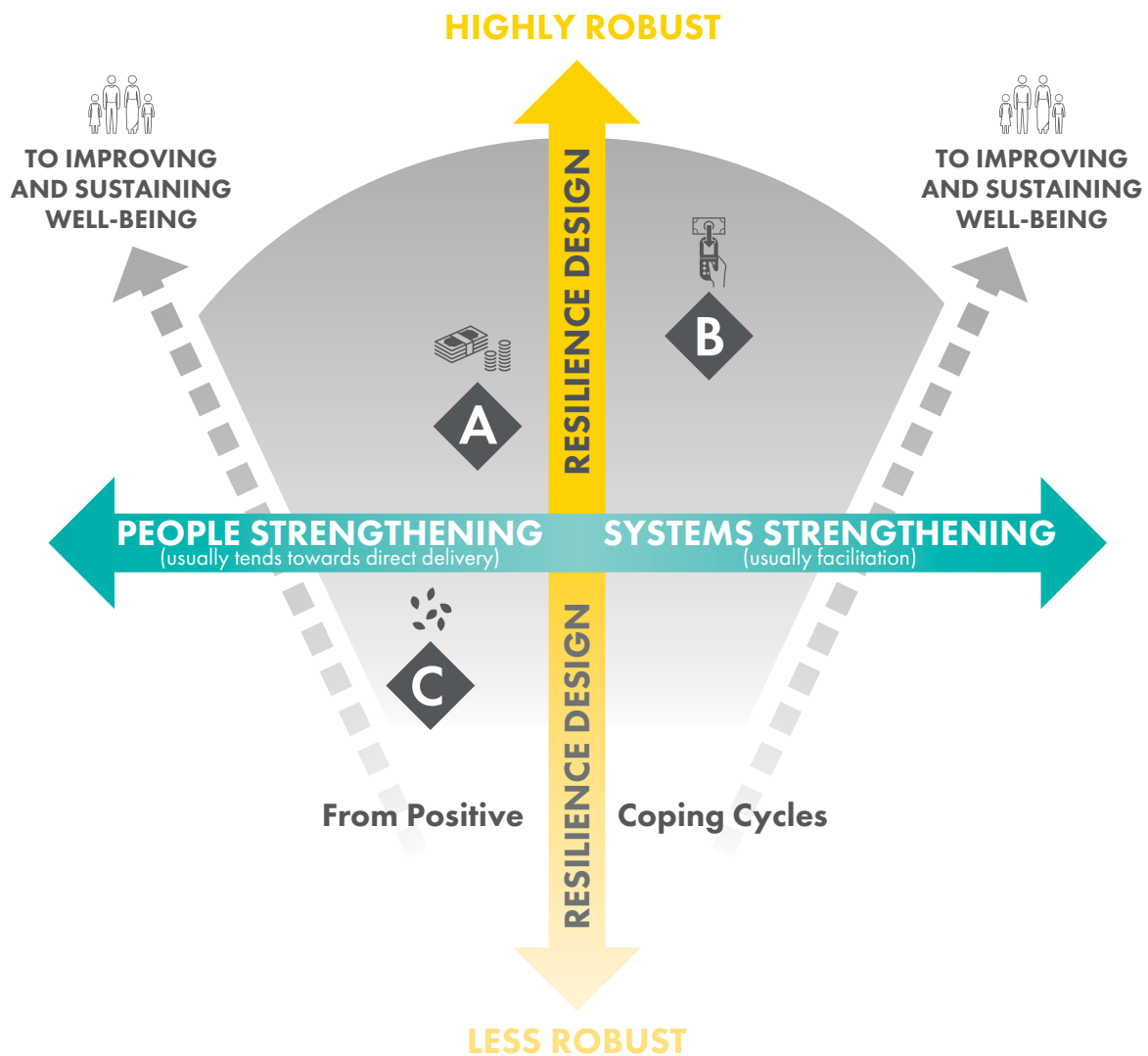
Critical for resilience is not only the WHAT, but the HOW: the horizontal axis prompts us to think about the approach. Interventions delivered through a one-to-one model, including direct provision of assistance to the target population, are placed to the left of the graphic. Often this includes strengthening individual capacities, skills and assets via direct relief or support. Approaches that work through systems, either to deliver support to individuals/households through a facilitative model or with the objective of strengthening systems, are placed to the right of the graphic. Where an approach falls on the horizontal axis may depend on the program or organization’s mandate, type of funding, access, etc. Although individual-level support is usually required for immediate humanitarian response, the ideal is to move toward systemic approaches as soon as possible. This not only provides an opportunity to address systemic issues, but can also help achieve greater scale.

The way interventions are layered to strengthen resilience and what the approach looks like will change depending on access and stability. Early in a crisis, activities may need to be at the bottom of the matrix, but over time should aim to move up and tend towards the right where feasible. This graphic can be used as a reflection tool for practitioners to consider where they would place specific ongoing activities and think about the layering or combining of interventions that would help build capacities to prevent and manage shocks and stresses.



Borno, Nigeria—Ezra Millstein

Rethinking Response Strategies Diagram



Example Response Strategies

Strategy A — unconditional cash grant provided to agricultural households, layered with program-delivered information about seed varieties available from local merchants and latest cropping and fertilizer restrictions. Resilience attributes: autonomy, situational awareness.

Strategy B — input voucher provided to agricultural households via a coupon for use at local input merchants/suppliers. Linkages between input

suppliers and agricultural households established to access and share information about latest cropping and fertilizer restrictions, and suppliers supported to provide training and information on alternate solutions. Resilience attributes: autonomy, situational awareness, connectivity, response diversity.

Strategy C — in-kind seeds distributed to agricultural households with training about cropping techniques.

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Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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