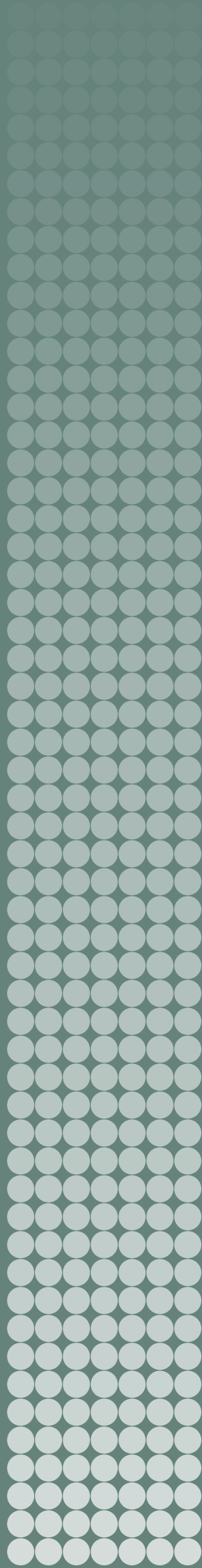


IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN NIGERIA: SPOTLIGHT ON STABILIZATION

CAROLINE DELGADO



**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
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**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Signalistgatan 9
SE-169 70 Solna, Sweden
Telephone: +46 8 655 97 00
Email: sipri@sipri.org
Internet: www.sipri.org

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World Food Programme

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The SIPRI–WFP Knowledge Partnership and Disclaimer

WFP and SIPRI established a knowledge partnership in 2018 to help strengthen WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in the countries where it works. The research for phase I of this partnership visited four case study states—El Salvador, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan and Mali—and produced initial findings in June 2019. The evidence from these case studies indicated that some WFP programming positively contributes to improving the prospects for peace, but also identified various issues that needed to be addressed. The preliminary report made a number of general and country-specific recommendations on how WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace could be improved. However, further research was required to test the robustness and general applicability of the initial findings and recommendations, and to refine and add to them with more case studies. Accordingly, phase II of the inquiry was broadened by adding new states and deepened through a focus on five thematic areas. Eight states were identified for research in phase II: Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. The five thematic areas are climate change, stabilization, gender, cash-based interventions and measurement. The research has inquired into and reported on these areas in all eight states, and there was also a deep dive in each country into one or two of the thematic areas.

The Nigeria case study research focuses on three thematic areas: stabilization, cash-based transfers (CBTs) and measurement. The case study is divided into a series of three reports that reflect the three thematic areas which, although related, explore distinct processes and have different units of analysis. This first report (part I of the series) presents the findings from the stabilization deep dive, which explored the potential for WFP crisis response to contribute to a reduction in direct violence, enhance basic physical security and increase stability.

The CBT deep dive presented in part II of the series examines the specific modality for providing aid and how this modality could affect conflict and peacebuilding dynamics.

Part III of the series presents the findings of the measurement deep dive, which explores how current monitoring systems, internal processes and data can be adapted to capture WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace.

The findings and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions of SIPRI or WFP, or the management, executive directors or boards of these institutions. The authors alone are responsible for any errors or omissions.

Executive summary

Conflict has left 3.5 million people food insecure in the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (the BAY states) in Nigeria. Alarming famine-like consumption patterns were reported in seven hard-to-reach areas of Borno state in 2021. The conflict has also left more than 2 million people displaced, of whom the majority remain in Borno state where they lack access to adequate food, water and other essentials.

Armed violence has been on the rise since 2019, following the reduction seen since the height of the conflict in 2013–15. Violence is driven mainly by the Islamist armed groups collectively referred to as Boko Haram. Recent changes in leadership structures and territorial control have resulted in the Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP) emerging as the principal force in north-east Nigeria, while expanding its territories further towards the centre of the country and its control over the Lake Chad Basin and beyond.

The World Food Programme (WFP) operates in the middle of this intersection between conflict, hunger and displacement. In 2021, it provided food assistance to close to 2.2 million people, most of whom were internally displaced persons (IDPs) or returnees. Over 86 per cent of all the recipients who were intended to benefit from WFP programming, or ‘intended beneficiaries’—who in addition to IDPs and returnees included members of vulnerable host communities and refugees—received unconditional food assistance. Such food assistance has an impact on conflict and peacebuilding dynamics. This series of reports analyses the impact and draws out the contribution of WFP’s programming to increasing the prospects for peace in north-east Nigeria. It focuses on three thematic areas: stabilization, cash-based transfers (CBTs) and measurement. The series is divided into three parts that reflect the three thematic areas which, although related, explore distinct processes and have different units of analysis. This first report (part I of the series) presents the findings from the stabilization deep dive, which explored the potential for WFP crisis response to contribute to a reduction in direct violence, enhance basic physical security and increase stability. The research is largely exploratory since WFP Nigeria does not currently leverage its programming to these ends. Should WFP choose to do so, this would have important implications, not least because contributing to stability requires work on highly political and sensitive drivers of violence, notably the actions of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) such as Boko Haram and the enabling environment in which these groups prosper. This environment, in turn, is linked to entrenched levels of corruption in the Nigerian state, as well as state-perpetrated violence, widespread historical political neglect and, at times, a lack of political will and transparency. In addition, if care is not taken, such objectives could risk compromising humanitarian principles.

The CBT deep dive presented in part II of the series examines the specific modality for providing aid and how this modality could affect conflict and peacebuilding dynamics. Just over half of WFP intended beneficiaries receive food aid through CBTs. Especially when used in conflict settings, the injection of cash affects local economies, social relations and resilience against future shocks, so this modality inevitably affects conflict dynamics. The deep dive explores the potential for CBTs to make a positive contribution to the improving prospects for peace, including the steps WFP should take to reduce the risk that CBTs could fuel the drivers of conflict.

If WFP is seeking to leverage its programming to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in Nigeria, it must develop clear objectives that can be monitored, evaluated and measured. Part III of the series presents the findings of the measurement deep dive, which explores how current monitoring systems, internal processes

and data can be adapted to capture WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace.

Taken together, the three-report series concludes that WFP is well placed to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in Nigeria and makes 28 recommendations to this end. The timing could not be more pertinent, against shifting conflict dynamics in Nigeria and in the light of broader geopolitical developments that are negatively affecting the financial and food resources available to WFP. While humanitarian needs are increasing, WFP Nigeria has been forced to reduce its assistance, and even suspend the provision of food assistance in some areas due to scarcity of funding. As this report was being finalized, the war in Ukraine that followed Russia's invasion of the country in February 2022 was generating serious repercussions for humanitarian food assistance. Among these are a reduction in the food supplies available to WFP, especially of maize and wheat, and a consequential increase in their prices, placing further constraints on the already limited financial resources available for humanitarian assistance.

Peace is a prerequisite for eliminating hunger. While WFP is not a peacebuilding agency, by intentionally seeking to contribute to improving the prospects for peace, its programming can, despite the unfavourable conditions, help to break the vicious circle between hunger and conflict in Nigeria.

Objectives and methodology

The objective of this stabilization deep dive is to explore the potential for WFP crisis response to reduce direct violence, enhance basic physical security and contribute to stability. The study forms part of a broader knowledge partnership between SIPRI and WFP, in which Nigeria is one of 12 case study countries.

The research involved a desk review of programme documents, adding specific questions to the WFP Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM) survey, and in-depth interviews throughout 2021, including during field visits by local researchers to project sites in Nigeria in August 2021. The findings of the three-part series reflect the situation at that time. However, as in any other conflict setting, the context in Nigeria is unstable and dynamic from a political, economic and social perspective. The report should therefore be read with this in mind.

Overview of findings

This stabilization deep dive explores whether WFP's crisis response can contribute to stability by reducing direct violence or the threat of violence, and enhancing basic physical security. The research is based on the assumption that there is a link between food security and violence, and that food security interventions can therefore affect the drivers of violence. While the findings were mixed, both from the quantitative survey results and from the qualitative interviews, as well as between interviewees, two theories of change (TOCs) were imputed.

TOC 1: *If displaced people and vulnerable host communities have equitable, secure and reliable access to life-saving food assistance, **then** direct violence and the threat of violence are reduced.*

Against the scale of the displacement crisis and the pressures faced by both IDPs and host communities, this TOC focuses on reducing individual exposure to violence and enhancing intra-community relations. The TOC encapsulates three specific pathways through which WFP crisis response, specifically its general food distribution (GFD), can contribute to this end. The first is through reducing individual reliance on coping

strategies that expose people to direct violence and basic physical insecurity or the threat of insecurity. The second is through freeing up resources that contribute to longer-term stability, and the third is by reducing resource competition and enhancing IDP-host community relations.

Overall, the findings highlight the potential for WFP's crisis response to increase stability by reducing food- and non-food-related stresses that expose individuals to violence and physical insecurity. GFD helps individuals avoid negative coping strategies, which in turn has a positive impact on reducing sexual and gender-based violence. If the amount of food aid is sufficient to free up resources, GFD allows individuals to meet their basic needs better, and even to save and invest, generating clear gains for longer-term stability. To this end, enhancing the probability of children going to school emerged as the most significant result of WFP's work. However, it should be noted that important worrying findings also surfaced. One such finding was the perception that WFP imposes values that go against cultural traditions and traditional ways of living.

On intercommunity relations, where GFD is designed and delivered in such a way that increases engagement and interaction between IDPs and host communities, it helps to improve perceptions of each other while also reducing stresses and resource competition. To promote understanding and peaceful coexistence, host communities and IDPs must perceive IDPs as contributing to rather than depleting community resources.

TOC 2: *If marginalized communities at risk of Boko Haram influence can ensure safe access to food and essential services, **then** vulnerability to Boko Haram's influence and recruitment can be reduced.*

The research identified a set of factors that push vulnerable individuals into Boko Haram's sphere of influence. These primarily relate to poor governance and poverty, with consequences that include inequality, a ruptured state–citizen contract, limited livelihood opportunities and elevated food insecurity. These factors and consequences combine to pull individuals towards Boko Haram. A complex and paradoxical relationship was found between Boko Haram and conflict-affected communities, which centres on a few shared values, a limited degree of protection and, in some cases, the provision of a degree of stability.

The research concludes that humanitarian aid, including food aid, can have an influence at a specific point in time on whether a person seeks out Boko Haram as a means for survival. Influencing such decisions is particularly urgent given recent developments, such as increased recruitment efforts by ISWAP and indications of growing community support for the group. However, it is important to recognize that the push-pull factors that influence people's decisions to join Boko Haram are complex, and interlinked with a range of other factors and processes that will vary over time and place. Food insecurity plays only a part in the lack of basic needs that pushes people to Boko Haram for protection and survival. Thus, to maximize the potential for WFP's food security interventions to reduce vulnerability to Boko Haram, a holistic approach to protection is needed that ensures that people at risk have access to a wide range of essential services.

This stabilization report ends with a critical cross-cutting observation that efforts to contribute to stability require a coherent approach among humanitarian agencies that builds trust. The crisis in north-east Nigeria—and the crisis response—are hampered by a deep trust deficit among the government and state sectors, civilians and humanitarian agencies. Enhancing stability by reducing direct violence can only be achieved if trust is restored. This includes trust within communities, such as between IDP and host communities as outlined in TOC 1, and between communities

and the government (from the local to the federal level), between communities and humanitarian agencies, and between humanitarian agencies and the state, including the military.

There is an obvious, deep-seated mistrust between the key stakeholders that need to come together to respond to the crisis in north-east Nigeria. Addressing this trust deficit will require concerted and long-term efforts that must ultimately evolve from within Nigerian society. As a minimum, WFP and its collaborating partners should ensure consistent and complementary messaging and communication.

The evidence indicates that WFP programming could contribute to enhancing stability in north-east Nigeria if WFP were to intentionally seek to do so. This report therefore makes eight recommendations, which are summarized below. Contributing to stability could be controversial for a humanitarian agency, given that it would mean working on highly political and sensitive drivers of violence and the enabling environment in which NSAGs prosper. However, WFP's operational footprint, presence and reach make it well placed to not only thoroughly understand, but also mitigate the drivers of violence, and to begin to lay the foundations for longer-term stability and improving the prospects for peace in north-east Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Explore in depth and over time how intended beneficiaries use food assistance, including how it is traded and shared, and how it can free up resources that contribute to longer-term stability.
2. To enhance the potential for GFD to contribute to reducing domestic violence, WFP should further explore the intricate ways in which targeting shifts intra-household relations. In relation to this, WFP should further explore why discriminatory and violent gender norms are less prevalent in camp settings, and capitalize on opportunities to enhance WFP Nigeria's gender-transformative activities.
3. Monitor and manage community perceptions of WFP over time and in the light of the evolving operating environment and changing conflict dynamics.
4. Rigorously explore the linkages presented in this TOC in all areas served by WFP, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. This should include further exploration of the reasons for the perceived link between food insecurity and violence, and the perceived reasons why some people join extremist groups. Ideally, geographical differences should also be explored.
5. Leverage GFD in a way that maximizes its potential to reduce needs-based vulnerabilities in areas where individuals are not yet ready to transition to food for assets programming. This could include piloting GFD+ interventions.
6. Ensure a gender- and youth-sensitive approach to any GFD programming that includes the development of livelihood skills, based on future projections on employment/livelihoods, and on climate change, population growth and the availability of land.

7. If WFP cannot directly engage with leveraging its GFD to reduce communities' vulnerability to the influence of Boko Haram, at a minimum it should explore ways to strategically partner and support local organizations already engaged in prevention of violent extremism (PVE) work, using the knowledge, data and access it possesses.
8. Integrate resources into funding proposals to ensure the strengthening and continuation of coordination platforms.

Abbreviations

BAY	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe
CBT	Cash-based transfer
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
CSO	Civil society organization
DDDR	Demobilization, deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration
FGD	Focus group discussion
FSOM	Food Security Outcome Monitoring
GFD	General food distribution
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State of the West African Province
JAS	Jamaat Ahlussunnah lid-Dawa wal-Jihad
LCB	Lake Chad Basin
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSAG	Non-state armed group
PVE	Prevention of violent extremism
SEMA	State Emergency Management Agency
TOC	Theory of change
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Context analysis

According to the Global Risk Index INFORM, Nigeria is among the countries with the highest projected conflict risk index and at increased risk of socio-economic vulnerability and food insecurity.¹ Nigeria has faced cycles of violence since independence in 1960. While diverse in terms of geography and characteristics, these cycles of violence are related.² The main sources of conflict and violence since 2010 have been what is commonly referred to as the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east, the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta, conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturists in the Middle Belt and the north-west, and urban crime and violence. Violence has reached alarming levels: the murder rate in Nigeria was 34.5 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2016, which compares with a global average of 6 per 100 000 in that year.³ This report focuses on the World Food Programme (WFP) programming in the conflict-affected north-eastern Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states. There is no single group known as Boko Haram, but the term is used to refer to the movement that emerged in the early 2000s and includes its splinters.

Socio-economic needs, social cohesion and trust in government

Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa but lags behind in development terms. Demographically, 43 per cent of its 216.7 million population is aged 14 years or younger, and 40 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line.⁴ Poverty statistics exclude the state of Borno since 85 per cent of the state is considered inaccessible for security reasons.⁵ Earlier estimates that included Borno estimated poverty rates of 75 per cent but because only accessible households in Borno were included, the findings are not considered representative.⁶ Nonetheless, the 2019 surveys found that poverty rates are much higher in the northern states than in the southern states, and in rural areas than in urban areas.⁷

Significant disparities are also found in education levels and quality of education. In 2015, the literacy rate for students attending secondary school across the north-east (the BAY states as well as the states of Gombe, Bauchi and Taraba) was just 31 per cent, compared to 56 per cent nationwide.⁸ In Borno, 75 per cent of school-age children (those aged 4–16) have never attended school.⁹ Limited education, coupled with a lack of other basic services, has resulted in low levels of human capital, which in turn affects economic growth in the region leading to protracted poverty.

The prevalence of deep social and economic disparities within the Nigerian population has deepened perceptions of the political marginalization and exclusion of the north-east. Uneven and limited service provision and governance deficits have increased socio-economic grievances and reduced the legitimacy of the government

¹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), *Humanitarian Response Plan: Nigeria*, Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2020 (OCHA, Mar. 2020).

² World Bank, *Nigeria on the Move: A Journey to Inclusive Growth* (World Bank Group: Washington, DC, 2019).

³ UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Country Profile, 'Nigeria'.

⁴ United Nations Population Fund, World Population Dashboard: Nigeria; United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 'Humanitarian needs overview: Nigeria—Humanitarian Programme Cycle, 2020', Dec. 2019; and Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics, '2019 poverty and inequality in Nigeria: Executive summary', Abuja, May 2020.

⁵ UN OCHA (note 4).

⁶ Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics (note 4).

⁷ Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics (note 4).

⁸ National Population Commission (NPC), *2015 Nigeria Education Data Survey Education Profile* (United States Agency for International Development: Washington, DC, 2016).

⁹ Shehu, F., 'Improving literacy and numeracy in north-east Nigeria thanks to innovative teaching methodology: Teaching at the right level improves literacy and numeracy skills of conflict-affected children', UNICEF Nigeria, 29 Nov. 2021.

Box 1.1. The ethno-religious underpinnings of Boko Haram

Nigeria has long been perceived as divided along religious lines, between Muslims and Christians, but also among the Muslim population. The divisions within the Muslim population are also intertwined with ethnic divides.

Historically, Boko Haram harks back to the two pre-colonial Islamic empires of present-day northern Nigeria—the ethnic Fulani and Hausa-led Sokoto caliphate founded by Dan Fodio (1804–1903) and the ethnic Kanuri-led Kanem-Borno empire (700–1900)—as models.^a Set against the political disempowerment and relative socio-economic deprivation of north-east Nigeria, compared to north-west Nigeria and the predominantly Christian southern Nigeria, Boko Haram seeks a return to a former time of perceived strength and Islamic integrity in the form of the Kanem-Borno empire.^b It believes that this can only be achieved through a Salafist agenda as interpreted by Boko Haram and inspired by Fodio.

Thus, Boko Haram is also at the centre of the division between Sufism and Salafism. Sufism has been the dominant form of Islam in West Africa for centuries. However, Salafist groups have challenged Sufi influence, not least due to Sufi religious leaders' close relations with politicians who Salafists accuse of being corrupt and eroding the values of Islam.^c Like many other Salafist groups, Boko Haram seeks to restore moral order and end the mixing of Islam with 'impure' concepts of democracy, secularism and liberalism.^d As an extremist Salafist Jihadi movement, Boko Haram advocates Islam's return to a previous state through jihad. It also seeks to capitalize on the insecurity felt on both the physical and the spiritual plane by many Muslims in northern Nigeria, linked to the Christian/Muslim divide, disempowerment and deprivation.^e Boko Haram's demands for the introduction of a Salafi-inspired caliphate governed by Sharia law reflect the group's attempt to address these security concerns.^f

^a Pieri, Z. P. and Zenn, J., 'The Boko Haram paradox: Ethnicity, religion and historical memory in pursuit of a caliphate', *African Security*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2016), pp. 66–88.

^b Pieri and Zenn (note a), pp. 66–88.

^c Akinola, O., 'Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic fundamentalism, politics and poverty', *African Security*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2015), pp. 1–29.

^d Akinola, O., 'Beyond Maiduguri: Understanding Boko Haram's rule in rural communities of northeastern Nigeria', *POMEPS Studies* no. 27 (Sep. 2017), pp. 70–73; and Pieri and Zenn (note a), pp. 66–88.

^e Akinola (note c).

^f Akinola (note c).

in the eyes of much of the population, which non-state armed groups (NSAGs) can exploit.¹⁰ Moreover, some argue that the political elite sees the Boko Haram threat as an opportunity to direct state resources into their own coffers, further fuelling violent conflict.¹¹ Weak governance and lack of institutional capacity have also undermined the ability to manage the broader community level tensions and conflicts that existed prior to the emergence of Boko Haram.¹² These include conflicts over grazing land, cattle, water points and cultivable land. The escalating levels of Boko Haram attacks have proved extraordinarily effective at producing a sense of chaos in the north-east and beyond, which has further aggravated the crisis of legitimacy for the Nigerian government.¹³

Overview of the conflict in north-east Nigeria

The north-east is currently among the regions most affected by violent conflict. Two NSAGs drive much of this violence: Jamaat Ahlussunnah lid-Dawa wal-Jihad (JAS) and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). Both JAS and ISWAP are still frequently referred to as Boko Haram, although it should be noted that at no point in history have the insurgents officially called themselves Boko Haram (see

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Business Case Assessment for Accelerating Development Investments in Famine Response and Prevention: Case Study, North-east Nigeria* (UNDP: New York, NY, 2017).

¹¹ Hassan, I., 'Rebel governance? A literature review of Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province', Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Working Paper 897/2022.

¹² UNDP (note 10).

¹³ Day, A. et al., *Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace: How Militias and Paramilitary Groups Shape Post-conflict Transitions* (United Nations University: New York, 2020); and Asfura-Heim, P. and McQuaid, J., *Diagnosing the Boko Haram Conflict: Grievances, Motivations, and Institutional Resilience in Northeast Nigeria* (CNA Analysis and Solutions, 2015).

box 1.1).¹⁴ In the past 10 years, Boko Haram-related conflict has claimed approximately 30 000 lives and caused one of the worst humanitarian crises in the history of Nigeria (see below).¹⁵ No clear typology characterizes the armed conflict in north-east Nigeria, which has been labelled an insurgency, interethnic warfare, opportunistic criminality and revolutionary terrorism.¹⁶

Boko Haram is thought to have been founded by the preacher Mohammed Yusuf in the early 2000s, and was initially a relatively peaceful movement. Prominent political figures, such as the former Borno governor Ali Modu Sheriff, played a vital role in the early strengthening of the group. Following the death of Yusuf in police custody in 2009, however, Boko Haram became increasingly violent. Under its new leader, Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram became known as JAS. Shekau significantly scaled-up attacks on the security forces and broadened JAS targets and methods to include the indiscriminate killing of civilians, the abduction of women and girls, sexual violence, forced recruitment and the use of suicide killings as a political weapon.¹⁷ Between 2012 and 2014, it swiftly expanded the number of attacks and their lethality, and inflicted a number of tactical defeats on the Nigerian armed forces.¹⁸ JAS maintained attack cells in various parts of northern and central Nigeria and, by some estimates, controlled roughly half of Borno state and parts of Yobe and Adamawa by early 2015.¹⁹ In the same year, JAS became the world's deadliest terrorist group, according to the Global Terrorism Index. The group's territorial control has weakened since 2015, however, due to infighting, government military offensives and the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

The fractioning of JAS

The indiscriminate killing of civilians, in particular Muslim civilians, caused a fundamental division within JAS that led to the formation of various splinter groups. In 2015, Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and adopted the ISWAP name.²⁰ However, Shekau's leadership was challenged from within and ISIS supported one of his main challengers, al-Barnawi. Shekau then left ISWAP and revived JAS, which led to periodic clashes between the two.²¹

Since the split between JAS and ISWAP, JAS has operated mainly in southern Borno, including the Sambisa Forest and near the Cameroonian border. ISWAP is present mostly in northern Borno and Yobe state, as well as the southern Diffa region of Niger and around Lake Chad.²²

While Boko Haram lost significant territory between 2015 and 2018, attacks across all three BAY states have intensified since.²³ ISWAP appears to have expanded its presence in Yobe state and northern Borno, and to have recaptured a number of towns

¹⁴ Barnett, J. M., Ahmed Rufa'i and Abdulaziz, A., 'Northwestern Nigeria: A Jihadization of banditry, or a "banditization" of Jihad?', *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Jan. 2022).

¹⁵ Hamid, N. A. et al., 'Boko Haram and humanitarian crisis in north-east Nigeria', *World Applied Sciences Journal*, vol. 35, no. 9 (2017), pp. 1777–82; and Nwankpa, M., 'Understanding the local-global dichotomy and drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency', *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2020), pp. 43–64.

¹⁶ Asfura-Heim and McQuaid (note 13).

¹⁷ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), *Humanitarian Response Strategy January 2019 to December 2021: Nigeria* (OCHA Nigeria, 2018); and Thurston, A., 'Amid Boko Haram's presence, an increasingly specialized literature emerges', *Africa*, vol. 89, no. 2 (2019), pp. 406–9.

¹⁸ Torbjörnsson, D. and Jonsson, M., *Boko Haram: On the Verge of Defeat or a Long Term Threat?* (Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut, FOI: Stockholm, 2017).

¹⁹ Torbjörnsson and Jonsson (note 18).

²⁰ International Crisis Group, 'Facing the challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa', Report no. 273 (May 2019).

²¹ International Crisis Group (note 20).

²² Barkindo, A., 'Boko Haram and the conflict dynamics in the Lake Chad Region', *Borderland Policy Briefing Series* (Dec. 2020).

²³ Felbab-Brown, V., 'Militias (and militancy) in Nigeria's north-east: Not going away', Day et al. (note 13); and Protection Sector North East Nigeria, *Protection Analysis Report*, June 2021.

Box 1.2. The impact on the Lake Chad Basin

The conflict in north-east Nigeria can only be understood in the wider Lake Chad Basin (LCB) context. The LCB comprises north-east Nigeria, far-north Cameroon, Lake Province Chad and the Diffa region of Niger. While long profitable for cross border trade, the porous borders of the region also generate an enabling environment for non-state armed groups. Moreover, the region is among the least developed in Africa, producing a vicious circle of poverty and relative deprivation.^a The lack of official safety nets and protection has allowed Boko Haram, and ISWAP in particular, to position itself as an alternative government by providing social support to abandoned border populations.

In addition to Boko Haram-driven violence, instability in the LCB stems from organized crime and kidnappings for ransom, and community conflicts such as the inter-communal rivalries in Cameroon's far-north linked to competition over natural resources.^b The increasing use of firearms, which are linked to long-standing armed conflicts in Chad, Sudan, Libya, the Central African Republic and Nigeria, in community clashes is raising particular concern. Violent conflict is also intrinsically linked to climate change, notably the 90 per cent reduction in the surface area of Lake Chad in the past 60 years, which has been caused in part by climate change.^c

^a Barkindo, A., 'The Boko Haram and the conflict dynamics in the Chad Basin', *United Nations Development Programme Policy Brief Series*, no. 1 (2020).

^b Hoinathy, R. and Delanga, C., 'Cameroon's community violence adds to Lake Chad Basin security woes', *Institute for Security Studies*, 4 Oct. 2021.

^c United Nations Environment Programme, 'The tale of a disappearing lake', 28 Feb. 2018.

near Lake Chad from the Nigerian army.²⁴ In May 2021, ISWAP fighters surrounded Shekau, who reportedly blew himself up to avoid capture.²⁵ Shekau's death provoked mass defections of JAS fighters, while creating opportunities for ISWAP to consolidate its position in north-east Nigeria and, through its alliance with ISIS, in the wider Lake Chad Basin and Sahel regions (see box 1.2).²⁶

Government response: Military, stabilization and peacebuilding efforts

The government response to the conflict in north-east Nigeria has been overwhelmingly military. In addition to the Nigerian state armed forces, the MNJTF and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have played key roles in the fight against Boko Haram and in regaining the territory lost to the group. The MNJTF is a unit of mainly army, police and paramilitary personnel tasked with combating Boko Haram. It was established together with the governments of Chad, Cameroon and Niger and operates across Borno and Yobe states. Initially established in 1994 to curb arms smuggling across the Lake Chad border, its mandate was expanded in 2015 as a combined military force against Boko Haram.

The CJTF was formed in 2013 by community members in Borno increasingly frustrated by the inability of the Nigerian armed forces to protect them from Boko Haram attacks. The armed forces initially regarded it as a vigilante group made up of community thugs, but collaboration grew over time. Today the CJTF has been incorporated as a community-based approach to counterterrorism and is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice.²⁷

At the end of 2015, President of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari declared a technical defeat of Boko Haram, arguing that it was no longer capable of launching conventional attacks on Nigeria's security forces. However, while Boko Haram has been pushed back into more remote rural areas, Nigeria's security forces have struggled to con-

²⁴ Brechenmacher, S., *Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria After Boko Haram* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington, DC, 2019).

²⁵ Kurtzer, J., Moss, K. and Devermont, J., 'Boko Haram's leader is dead: What are the humanitarian and security implications?', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 15 June 2021.

²⁶ Kurtzer, Moss and Devermont (note 25); and ACLED, '10 conflicts to worry about in 2022: "Nigeria"', 2022.

²⁷ Ashindorbe, K., Afatakpa, F. and Owonikoko, S. B., 'Civilian Joint Task Force and Nigeria's counter-terrorism operation: A critique of the community-based approach to insecurity', *African Security*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2021), pp. 286–305; and Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 'Nigeria', [n.d.].

solidate control over rural areas and protect urban centres from sporadic attacks.²⁸ Continuing attacks on poorly constructed military barracks in rural areas led to the introduction by the Nigerian army of the so-called super camp strategy in 2019.²⁹ This strategy entails consolidating military personnel and resources in a few well-constructed super camps in fewer locations. It was an extension of an earlier policy that involved the fortification of towns into garrison towns and moving local people from rural areas into IDP camps inside these towns. One implication of this strategy, however, is that it has further eroded the protection of civilians in rural areas and their access to livelihoods.³⁰

The military approach has also come at a heavy cost to human rights. The Nigerian security forces and the CJTF have been accused of extrajudicial killings, rape, the destruction of private property, violations of the rules of military engagement and rampant corruption, all of which have taken place within an ingrained culture of impunity.³¹

Nonetheless, improved security in parts of north-eastern Nigeria since early 2016 has spurred a greater focus on economic recovery and growth. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan for 2017–2020 emphasizes agriculture and food security, and the government’s commitment to funding social safety nets. Government-funded social investment programmes across the country include job creation, homegrown school feeding and cash transfers to vulnerable populations.³²

The focus also shifted to conflict stabilization measures, which seek to bolster legitimate state authority, reconciliation and peaceful conflict management systems. The Nigerian government launched its Buhari Plan in 2016, which outlines its post-conflict recovery priorities in the north-east. These range from emergency assistance to stabilization and early recovery. The plan recognizes, among other things, that addressing the immediate socio-economic needs and emergencies arising from the conflict is the only way to bring about stability and early recovery. It also acknowledges that restoring social cohesion and trust in the government is the most critical precondition for stability and recovery in the region.

A regional stabilization strategy developed by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission followed in 2018. Key international donors set up the Oslo Consultative Group on Prevention and Stabilization in the Lake Chad Region to coordinate their response activities. On the ground, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched an initiative on the Integrated Regional Stabilization of the Lake Chad Basin, in an attempt to circumvent some of the blockages at the national level by focusing more on subnational and local coordination.

These donor-funded stabilization and peacebuilding interventions focus on: (a) strengthening local- and state-level conflict prevention and community security mechanisms; (b) rehabilitating civilian infrastructure and basic services to help foster greater trust among communities; and (c) social cohesion and support for the reintegration of former fighters and civilian militia through demobilization, deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR).

The results of these interventions have been mixed. Programmes to strengthen local- and state-level conflict prevention and community security mechanisms have

²⁸ Brechenmacher (note 24).

²⁹ Zenn, J., ‘The humanitarian dilemma around the military’s “super camp” strategy in Nigeria’, Council on Foreign Relations, 5 Sep. 2019.

³⁰ Malik S., ‘Nigeria’s super camps leave civilians exposed to terrorists’, Institute for Security Studies, 30 Nov. 2020.

³¹ Pérouse de Montclos, M.-A., ‘A sectarian Jihad in Nigeria: The case of Boko Haram’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 27, no. 5 (2016), pp. 878–95; US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, ‘Nigeria 2020 human rights report’; and Day et al. (note 13).

³² Federal Republic of Nigeria, Ministry of Budget and National Planning, *Economic Recovery & Growth Plan, 2017–2020*, Feb. 2017.

Box 1.3. The social and economic impacts of Covid-19 in north-east Nigeria

Nigeria has faced three main waves of Covid-19 to date. The government has implemented a range of health and safety measures to contain the spread of the virus, which have had various social and economic implications.

During the first wave, between April and June 2020, widespread measures were introduced, such as market and business closures, movement restrictions and lockdowns.^a The government lifted many of these restrictions as the caseload stabilized, but the pandemic caused longer-term economic damage as farmers had to leave some of their produce to rot in the fields and traders reliant on cross-border trade were susceptible to the global economic slowdown and border closures.^b The pandemic also led to a surge in inflation, putting further pressure on households' purchasing power. In 2020 and 2021, Nigeria witnessed its highest rate of food-price inflation in almost two decades.^c

Although 2021 saw a second wave of Covid infections, few containment measures were reintroduced and these had a less severe impact on the social and economic situation in the north-east. Even though inflation and unemployment rates remained high, the main drivers of humanitarian need in 2021 were conflict and insecurity. The economic hardship generated by the Covid-19 containment measures increased insecurity. Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) capitalized on public frustration with livelihood and movement restrictions and the perceived lack of responsiveness to people's material realities.^d These groups increased their recruitment and training of new fighters and promised protection from both infection and restrictions in the areas they controlled, convincing some to relocate to NSAG-controlled areas.^e NSAGs were also able to capitalize on the government's shift of focus from counterinsurgency operations to pandemic response through increased abductions of civilians and attacks on military and civilian targets in north-east Nigeria.^f

^a USAid and iMMAP, 'Covid-19 situation analysis—Crisis type: Epidemic—Sectoral analysis, annual review, food security, livelihood and nutrition, Nigeria', Feb. 2020 to July 2021.

^b Nagarajan, C., *The Impact of Covid-19 on Conflict, Gender and Social Exclusion in North-east Nigeria* (British Council, 2020).

^c Lain, J. et al., *Covid-19 in Nigeria: Frontline Data and Pathways for Policy* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2021).

^d Sheely, R. et al., "'Living with two worrisome pandemics": How the Covid-19 pandemic is shaping conflict in Nigeria', eds Mercy Corps, *A Clash of Contagions: The Impact in Nigeria, Colombia and Afghanistan* (Mercy Corps: Washington, DC, 2021), pp. 31–70.

^e Ossai, E. C., 'Crises, conflict and cooperation: The two-sided impact of Covid-19 on peace in Nigeria', *African Security*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2021), pp. 410–38.

^f Iweze, D. O., *Covid-19 and Nigeria's Counterinsurgency Operations in the Northeast*, Social Science Research Council, Kujenga Amani, 4 June 2020.

been successful at the local level but proved difficult to scale up. This reduces their ability to address underlying drivers of conflict and structural problems. Systemic governance deficits, such as insufficient local political accountability and weak incentives for the state to prioritize service delivery, are continuing obstacles to the success of programmes that seek to rehabilitate civilian infrastructure and basic services. Finally, the effectiveness of the DDRR programmes has been hampered, among other things, by insufficient transparency in and civilian oversight of the screening and vetting of terrorist suspects by the military.³³

Other actors contributing to peace

Alongside international humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, civil society actors have also been crucial in encouraging peaceful coexistence between different religious groups.³⁴ At least 5000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) form part of a civil society coalition against Boko Haram.³⁵

Beyond the efforts of civil society actors, local conflict resolution involves traditional and religious leaders who enjoy the trust of communities to resolve individual

³³ Brechenmacher (note 24); Latimer, K. et al. *Final Evaluation Report: P06132 Independent Evaluation Provider to the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP)*, UKaid, Nov. 2017; and Kukah Centre and Conciliation Resources, 'Through our eyes: People's perspectives on building peace in Northeast Nigeria', London, May 2018.

³⁴ World Bank. *Nigeria on the Move: A Journey to Inclusive Growth* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2019).

³⁵ Salifu, U. and Ewi, M., 'Boko Haram and violent extremism: Perspectives from peacebuilders', *Institute for Security Studies Policy Brief* no. 97 (2017).

disputes and maintain public calm. They are considered to be close to the people and familiar with their problems, needs and values, and are thought to be more likely to find lasting solutions than justice mechanisms since they seek restorative outcomes rather than to allocate blame.³⁶

Peacebuilding as a process needs to involve those directly affected by conflict, including women. Nigeria's patriarchal society and the resulting cultural, religious and socio-economic inequalities combine with poverty to have severe implications for women's socio-economic development and their political marginalization. Restrictions on women's mobility, and prevalent norms and values that tie women to domestic roles—even though women make up a large proportion of the agricultural and other informal workforce—prevent women's inclusion as actors in processes such as prevention, protection, mediation and peacebuilding.

While women have been largely excluded from formal peacebuilding discussions, they have acted as peacebuilders locally. Their activities include negotiations with Boko Haram at the local level to secure the return of abductees, and rallying across religious divides to draw attention to abuses and demand participation and action for peace.³⁷

Humanitarian response

As of May 2022, 8.4 million people in the BAY states were in acute need of protection and assistance.³⁸ Growing humanitarian needs have been driven by active conflict, waves of new and multiple displacements, chronic poverty, regular epidemics, high levels of population growth, increasing food insecurity and climate change-related hazards, as well as, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic (see box 1.3).³⁹ Humanitarian access outside of the garrison towns is severely restricted due to the threat of attack, hostilities, the lack of safety assurances from NSAGs, explosive hazards, bureaucratic impediments and restrictions on fuel, fertilizer and cash movements, and cargo movement more generally.⁴⁰ In addition, international humanitarian donor support has decreased while needs have significantly increased.⁴¹

Food insecurity

In October 2021, 3.5 million people were projected to be food insecure at the peak of the 2022 lean season between June and August 2022. The number of people anticipated to be in the 'emergency phase' of food insecurity was projected to double to 460 000, compared to the post-harvest period of October to December 2021. These projections anticipated 14 000 people experiencing famine-like conditions in some of the areas currently inaccessible to the humanitarian community. The food security and nutrition situation in these areas remains dire.⁴² In these inaccessible areas, more than half of all households (62.9 per cent) struggle for sufficient food intake and

³⁶ El-Bushra, J., Ladbury, S. and Ukiwo, U. O., 'From design to implementation: Addressing the causes of violent conflict in Nigeria', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol. 3, no. 1, Part 1 (2014).

³⁷ Imam, A., Biu, H. and Yahi, M., 'Women's informal peacebuilding in north-east Nigeria', *CMI Brief* no. 9 (Bergen, 2020); and Enapeh, O. and Jacob-Haliso, O., 'Women, peacebuilding and the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria', *Journal of Social Encounters*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2021), pp. 106–15.

³⁸ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Response Plan: Nigeria*, Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2022 (OCHA, Feb. 2022).

³⁹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 'Humanitarian needs overview 2019: Nigeria', Nov. 2018; and UN OCHA (note 4).

⁴⁰ UNDP (note 10); and UN OCHA (note 1).

⁴¹ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), *Humanitarian Response Plan: Nigeria*, Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2021 (OCHA, Feb. 2021).

⁴² Food Security Cluster, 'Final Fiche report for October 2021: Cadre Harmonisé result for identification of risk areas and vulnerable populations in twenty (20) Nigerian states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria', 19 Nov. 2021.

nearly 80 per cent experience crisis or higher levels (IPC/CH phase 3 and above) of food deprivation and hunger, leading to the use of food-based coping strategies such as reducing portion sizes or the number of meals consumed in a household.⁴³ Insecurity, movement restrictions and pandemic-related closures of businesses, markets and public gatherings have provided obstacles to IDPs, returnees and host communities accessing basic services, livelihoods and land for farming and grazing. This means that reliance on food assistance has continued to increase.⁴⁴

Humanitarian actors and crisis responders address food insecurity through emergency food assistance (in-kind or as CBTs) and livelihood support (agricultural inputs, training and capacity building, and income generation activities).⁴⁵ In July 2021, the food security sector provided around 2.3 million people with food assistance (43 per cent through CBTs) and approximately 670 000 individuals with livelihood support (36 per cent through CBTs).⁴⁶

Displacement

At the time of the research, between 2.7 and 2.9 million people had been internally displaced by conflict and violence.⁴⁷ In 2020 alone, conflict-related violence triggered 86 000 new displacements across the BAY states.⁴⁸ The vast majority of IDPs in the north-east remain in the region, and Borno state alone accounted for 1.6 million IDPs at the end of 2020.⁴⁹ The majority have been displaced more than once.

Approximately 327 000 refugees have crossed the border into Cameroon, Chad and Niger.⁵⁰ Several thousand people move across these borders in both directions every month, either fleeing attacks in their respective areas or searching for better services in camps in Nigeria, or simply to visit family members.⁵¹

The majority of IDPs in Borno state live in camps.⁵² Living conditions in the camps are dire. More than 40 IDP camps across the north-east are classified as in 'high congestion' status, meaning that many who live there have no access to shelter or are forced to sleep in overcrowded conditions.⁵³ IDPs lack adequate water, sanitation and health facilities, and access to safe, clean water. Non-disaggregated sanitation facilities heighten exposure risks for women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence. These conditions also increase the risk of spread of Covid-19 and other communicable diseases.

For protection, IDP camps tend to be located near military super camps. Proximity to military positions makes IDP camps vulnerable to attacks targeting military forces, however, and has resulted in restrictive security measures. Moreover, the concentration of armed forces in super camps reduces the security and protection of IDPs and other civilians outside of these areas.⁵⁴

⁴³ Reliefweb, 'Nigeria: Famine Monitoring System, November 2021 monthly bulletin, Cadre Harmonisé Task Force on Inaccessible Areas', 31 Dec. 2021.

⁴⁴ UN OCHA (note 41); World Food Programme (WFP), *Nigeria Annual Country Report 2020* (WFP: Rome, 2020); and World Food Programme (WFP), *Nigeria Country Strategic Plan, 2019–2022* (WFP: Rome, 2019).

⁴⁵ UNDP (note 10).

⁴⁶ World Food Programme (WFP), *Nigeria Annual Country Report 2021* (WFP: Rome, 2021); WFP *Nigeria Country Strategic Plan, 2019–2022* (note 44); and World Food Programme, 'Nigeria', [n.d.].

⁴⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Nigeria', Sep. 21 update; and UNHCR, 'Nigeria operational data portal', Sep. 21 update.

⁴⁸ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (note 47).

⁴⁹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (note 47).

⁵⁰ UNHCR, 'Nigeria: All population snapshot, Jan. 2022', 8 Feb. 2022.

⁵¹ UNHCR, 'Nigeria: North-east Nigeria Operational Update February 2022', 17 Mar. 2022.

⁵² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (note 47).

⁵³ UN OCHA (note 17).

⁵⁴ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 'Humanitarian needs overview: Nigeria—Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2021', Feb. 2021.

In 2020 the Borno state government started to return IDPs from camps in Maiduguri to their villages or other communities across the state. In 2021 it announced that it would close all the IDP camps in Maiduguri by the end of the year. Moreover, the state government informed humanitarian groups that they would not be allowed to distribute food and non-food items to people who have been relocated to newly resettled communities where the government has built or renovated houses and other infrastructure, in order to promote people's resilience to poverty. Human rights organizations raised concerns about the lack of consultation with IDPs over return and relocation, lack of adequate notice and, critically, the lack of provision for security and basic needs in the areas to which the IDPs were to be relocated.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, 'Nigeria: Halt closures of displaced people's camps', 21 Dec. 2021; and Amnesty International, 'Nigeria: Plans to close IDP camps in Maiduguri could endanger lives', 15 Dec. 2021.

2. The Nigeria case study approach

Objectives and background

This report assesses WFP's potential to contribute to improving the prospects for peace in Nigeria in three specific focus areas (deep dives): stabilization, cash-based transfers (CBTs) and measurement. The stabilization deep dive explores whether, and if so how, WFP's crisis response contributes to a reduction in direct violence and an improvement in basic physical security. The CBT deep dive explores the future role of cash-based programmes in Nigerian conflict and post-conflict settings, builds evidence for best practice and demonstrates WFP's global leadership in these efforts. The overarching objective of the measurement deep dive is to probe the readiness of WFP, and its institutional adaptation needs, to manage the evidence on positive contributions to peace. In Nigeria, this entailed an independent analysis of WFP's preparation, transmission and analysis of performance data.

The research on the WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace under the SIPRI-WFP Knowledge Partnership is based on an understanding that violent conflict and peace are not two opposites in a linear equation, but complex phenomena that occur in complex social systems. Contributions to improving the prospects for peace are therefore not always immediate, obvious or predictable, and need to take place in a system that is highly dynamic, non-linear and emergent.⁵⁶ Multiple factors, drivers and channels combine to shape the prospects for peace and untangling this intricate web of dynamics to draw conclusions about any one driver is analytically challenging. Working towards more inclusive political, economic and social systems will not necessarily show signs of steady progress or achieve the predicted peacebuilding outcome.⁵⁷ Therefore, peacebuilding is fundamentally an experiment.⁵⁸

Methodology

The research is structured around the development of theories of change (TOCs). A TOC spells out an understanding of how a specific activity will result in the achievement of desired changes in a particular context. The development of TOCs that articulate WFP's contribution to increasing the prospects for peace and make clear their underlying assumptions can position WFP as an important actor in joint national and regional efforts to stabilize the wider Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region and the transition to peace in north-east Nigeria. However, it is essential that the TOCs are realistic and do not make massive leaps in logic. Moreover, the TOCs should be dynamic since the characteristics of the complex systems mean that it is not possible to identify with certainty how conflict and peacebuilding environments will behave in the future. Instead, a process is required that uses continuing participatory and locally anchored experimentation and feedback to generate knowledge about the conflict and peacebuilding environment. If the expected results are achieved, a TOC offers a causal pathway that can be explored, assessed for validity and adapted to other contexts.⁵⁹

The research involved a review of WFP programme documents and data sets, and of the literature on Nigeria; remote interviews with WFP country office staff; and consultations with UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations

⁵⁶ De Coning, C., 'Adaptive peacebuilding', *International Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 2 (2018), pp. 301–17.

⁵⁷ De Coning, C., 2019. 'Complexity thinking and adaptive peacebuilding', *Accord*, no. 28 (Mar. 2019).

⁵⁸ Campbell, S. P., *Global Governance and Local Peace: Accountability and Performance in International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2018).

⁵⁹ De Coning (note 56).

(INGOs).⁶⁰ Survey questions were developed in support of the stabilization and CBT deep dives to be included in the WFP Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM) survey. The survey was targeted at 2071 people intended to benefit from the programme, or ‘intended beneficiaries’, and was carried out in June 2021.

In-country research was conducted in August 2021 by a team of three local researchers who visited project sites in the BAY states and the capital, Abuja. The local researchers gathered data through in-depth interviews with WFP intended beneficiaries and non-beneficiary community members, as well as representatives of local authorities, community-based organizations and NGOs in the BAY states. Interviews were also held with government officials in Abuja. Approximately 90 key informant interviews were held, as well as seven focus group discussions (FGDs). The date or location of some interviews has been withheld where this could lead to the identities of the participants being revealed.

WFP in Nigeria

WFP re-established its presence in Nigeria in mid 2016 to provide food security and nutrition assistance to conflict-affected populations in the north-east. In its 2019–2022 Country Strategic Plan, WFP aims to provide life-saving assistance through general food distribution (GFD), accompanied by gender-transformative livelihood support and nutrition-sensitive activities, while also reinforcing national institutional capacities.⁶¹

WFP is a key partner of the government of Nigeria and other UN agencies on crisis response and achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the country’s development priorities, UN agencies work in three broad areas through the UN sustainable development partnership framework for 2018–22: (a) governance, human rights and peace and security; (b) equitable, quality basic services; and (c) sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development. WFP is also one of 28 partner organizations in the food security sector of the Humanitarian Response Plan, coordinated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team partners. The food security sector aims to improve access for the most vulnerable crisis-affected people to timely and appropriate food assistance, and to strengthen the resilience of crisis-affected people by re-establishing, improving and diversifying key agriculture livelihoods.⁶²

Findings: Stabilization deep dive

The WFP–SIPRI Knowledge Partnership research framework approaches stabilization as reducing both the occurrence and the risk of direct violence, thereby enhancing basic physical security. Specifically, the research explores whether, and if so how, WFP’s crisis response can contribute to stability in conflict and peacebuilding environments. It also assesses how WFP’s work fits with other actors’ efforts, and explores how it might better support and collaborate with local, national and international partners. The research seeks to inform WFP’s understanding of the stabilization impacts of its crisis response and of resulting country-specific needs, and how to address these through WFP’s Country Strategic Plan. It will also provide grounds

⁶⁰ The Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions affected the ability to conduct in-country research, which made it necessary to revise the original research design. A remote research strategy was therefore designed involving remote interviews, surveys and, where pertinent, the use of local researchers.

⁶¹ World Food Programme, *Nigeria Country Strategic Plan, 2019–2022* (note 44).

⁶² UN OCHA (note 41).

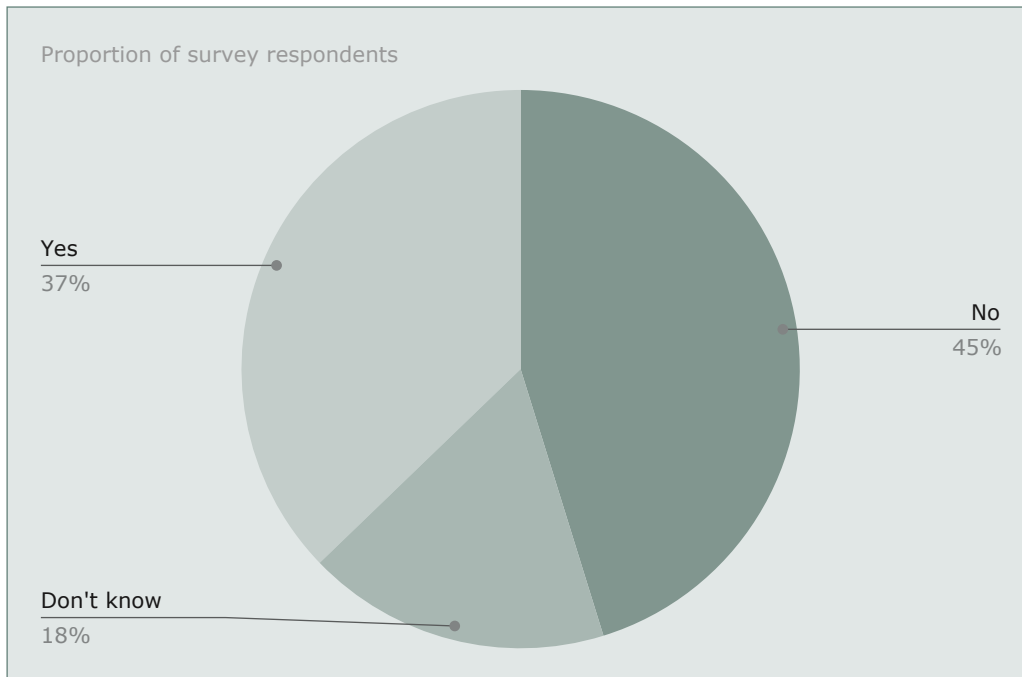


Figure 2.1. Results for survey question: Is there is a link between not having enough to eat and violence in your community?

Source: World Food Programme, Food Security Outcome Monitoring survey, June 2021.

for increasing WFP’s ability to define its role in inter-agency commitments to conflict-, security- and development-related issues.

The research is based on the assumption that there is a link between food security and violence. While this link is highly complex, deeply contextual and can change over time and place, the research sought to obtain a snapshot of whether conflict-affected and food-insecure individuals believe such a link exists. This was done by adding a question to the FSOM survey asking respondents whether they believe that there is a link between not having enough to eat and violence in their communities. The results were mixed (see figure 2.1). Across the BAY states, 37 per cent of respondents believed that there was a link, 18 per cent stated that they did not know and 45 per cent did not think that there was a link. Disaggregating the responses by specific WFP distribution sites found that in some areas, such as Bade and Gujba in Yobe state and in Maiduguri in Borno state, over 70 per cent believed that there was a link. By contrast, in locations such as Gulani and Yunusari in Yobe, and Damboa and Dikwa in Borno, none of the respondents believed that there was a link.

WFP Nigeria is not currently seeking to reduce direct violence or contribute to stability through its programming, and there would be important implications should WFP choose to do so. Contributing to stability would require working on highly political and sensitive drivers of violence: not limited to the actions of NSAGs, but also on the enabling environment in which such groups prosper. This, in turn, is linked to what are perceived as entrenched levels of corruption in the Nigerian state, state-perpetrated violence, widespread historical political neglect and, at times, a lack of political will and transparency. Contributing to stability would require systematic engagement with these drivers and processes, as well as assessment and monitoring of the impact of programming on levels of direct violence or the threat of violence.

Second, measuring and attributing the impact of WFP programming on violence reduction presents many challenges. Various factors combine to drive violence and assessing the amount of violence reduced specifically by WFP programming would be all but impossible. Thus, a different approach to evaluating its contribution to stability

would be required. WFP would need to ask questions in its ongoing surveys that risk compromising perceptions around neutrality. There would also be a strong emphasis on qualitative data collection. Gathering sufficient information would require a large-scale and detailed data collection effort. The anecdotal evidence provided through this research is useful but does not offer a generalizable picture of the pathways identified. Further data would be needed to obtain a more systematic understanding of the relationships outlined in the two TOCs. It would also be beneficial to disaggregate data between population groups, such as IDPs, returnees and youth, as well as by gender and geographically within the BAY states.

Third, contributing to stability in north-east Nigeria would require a regional response that takes account of the broader dynamics of the Lake Chad Basin. While it is beyond the scope of this research to take a regional approach, WFP's presence in the countries/areas that make up this region could facilitate such a response.

Based on these considerations, and in line with the organization's mandate, the findings from the TOCs demonstrate pathways through which WFP could contribute to stabilization. These findings set the stage for further analysis, operational refinement and discussion of WFP's role and impact in complex emergencies.

3. Theory of change 1: Reducing intra-community tensions

*If displaced people and vulnerable host communities have equitable, secure and reliable access to life-saving food assistance, **then** direct violence and the threat of violence are reduced **by** (a) reducing people's reliance on negative coping strategies that expose them to violence; (b) freeing up resources, which contributes to longer-term violence prevention; and (c) reducing the immediate intra-community tensions that result from strains on scarce resources, **thereby** contributing to enhancing stability.*

Contextual background

The scale of displacement and the persistent risk of new or renewed mass displacement (see the context analysis above) mean that the displacement crisis is strongly related to levels of instability in Nigeria. Displacement, whether internal or international as refugees, has been linked to political, economic, social and environmental instability, which can increase levels of direct violence that affects both the IDP population and host communities.⁶³

A clear majority of the displaced persons interviewed stated that they had been violently displaced by Boko Haram or fled due to an imminent threat that Boko Haram might attack their communities. Many had lost family members during such attacks or when trying to reach safer areas. Others were forced to leave children or the elderly behind as they judged that they would not survive the journey. Some interviewees related how they had been displaced from community to community due to continuing violence. A few had tried to return to their communities of origin only to be displaced by Boko Haram violence again. As a result, most arrive at places such as Maiduguri, Mafa and Damaturu with no possessions or means to support themselves. Female- and child-headed households have greater difficulties accessing resources than men and fewer livelihood options. Widows often struggle to retain access to property and savings, which are frequently claimed by the deceased husband's relatives.⁶⁴

The UN estimates that almost 90 per cent of IDPs face extreme or severe intersectoral needs.⁶⁵ WFP assisted 1 187 015 IDPs, refugees and returnees in 2021, who constitute slightly over half of all those who received unconditional food aid in that year.⁶⁶

Analysis

(a) reducing food- and non-food-related stresses allows intended beneficiaries to better avoid negative coping strategies that expose them to violence, while (b) freeing up resources, which contributes to enhancing longer-term stability

Most displaced people in north-east Nigeria remain in the BAY states, settling in communities already facing severe intersectoral vulnerabilities and needs such as

⁶³ Puma, M. J. et al., 'A developing food crisis and potential refugee movements', *Nature Sustainability*, vol. 1, no. 8 (2018), pp. 380–82; Ek, R. and Karadawi, A., 'Implications of refugee flows on political stability in the Sudan', *Ambio*, vol. 20, no. 5 (1991), pp. 196–203; Cazabat, C., Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *The Ripple Effect: Economic Impacts of Internal Displacement*, Oct 2018; and Fajth, V. et al., 'How do refugees affect social life in host communities? The case of Congolese refugees in Rwanda', *Comparative Migration Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1–21.

⁶⁴ Hanna, T. et al., *Assessing the Impact of Conflict on Development in North-east Nigeria* (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Nigeria: Abuja, 2020).

⁶⁵ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), 'Humanitarian needs overview: Nigeria—Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2022', Feb. 2022.

⁶⁶ WFP *Nigeria Annual Country Report 2021* (note 46).

widespread food insecurity, lack of basic services and limited livelihood opportunities.⁶⁷ These conditions can foment resentment among host populations and cause tensions within communities, particularly if displacement becomes protracted.⁶⁸

Against these livelihood constraints and faced with acute and rising multi-dimensional poverty, the research found that IDPs and host communities resort to coping strategies and high-risk practices that expose them directly to violence or the threat of violence. The FSOM survey showed that 13 per cent of respondents knew of someone who had taken such risks to meet their household's food or livelihood needs. The most common risk adopted was taking dangerous routes, such as crossing the defensive trenches surrounding the garrison towns to access firewood. Other common risks taken were sending a family member to beg, child labour, joining security actors and exchanging favours, including sexual favours, for money, food or any other asset.

The qualitative interviews provided further insights into the reasoning behind the adoption of such strategies. Many spoke of how they had to beg to make ends meet or that they would resort to begging if they did not receive GFD. Some said that without food assistance, prostitution and criminal engagement would be the only viable opportunities for survival.⁶⁹ As one woman noted, young girls in IDP camps tend to engage in transactional sex just to obtain the most basic necessities. However, the same woman noted that it is difficult to know the extent of this coping strategy as most women will not talk about it.⁷⁰ Men, on the other hand, are more likely to venture out into unsafe areas to grow food.

These coping strategies expose individuals to different forms of violence. It is well known that those who venture beyond the defensive trenches, whether to collect firewood or to cultivate, risk being attacked or abducted by NSAGs. While both women and men are subjected to attacks, women have been deliberately targeted by Boko Haram for use as spies and suicide bombers.⁷¹ While not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, other research has found that they also run a greater risk of being assaulted or extorted by the Nigerian security forces.⁷² Women and girls face an elevated risk of sexual violence as they seek to ensure the basic needs for survival for themselves and their families. At the same time, women who resort to begging or menial jobs are more likely to be taken advantage of, according to one interviewee.⁷³ Consistent with other research, interviewees also confirmed that domestic violence increases as traditional family structures are disrupted, particularly when men are pressured to provide for their families or are unable to do so.

Regardless of gender, these kinds of coping strategies risk undermining community relations and fomenting perceptions that IDPs cause instability (see below), while leading to feelings of loss of dignity and self-worth among those who are forced to adopt them.

In this context, the provision of WFP crisis response, such as GFD, can help vulnerable households and individuals avoid some of the negative coping strategies that expose them to violence. Many of the intended beneficiaries interviewed stated that receiving GFD helped them to avoid adopting such strategies. Representatives from a local organization in Damaturu even claimed that begging had reduced drastically following the introduction of GFD as people were able to eat. GFD also

⁶⁷ UN OCHA (note 54).

⁶⁸ Haider, H., *Refugee, IDP and Host Community Radicalisation*, GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report no. 1162 (GSDRC: University of Birmingham, 2014).

⁶⁹ Interview, female IDP intended beneficiary, Kukareta; FGD with intended beneficiaries, Nayinwa; and interview, male vendor, Mylakariri.

⁷⁰ Interview, female IDP, Stadium Camp, Maiduguri.

⁷¹ Hanna et al. (note 64).

⁷² UN OCHA (note 54).

⁷³ Interview, government official, Maiduguri.

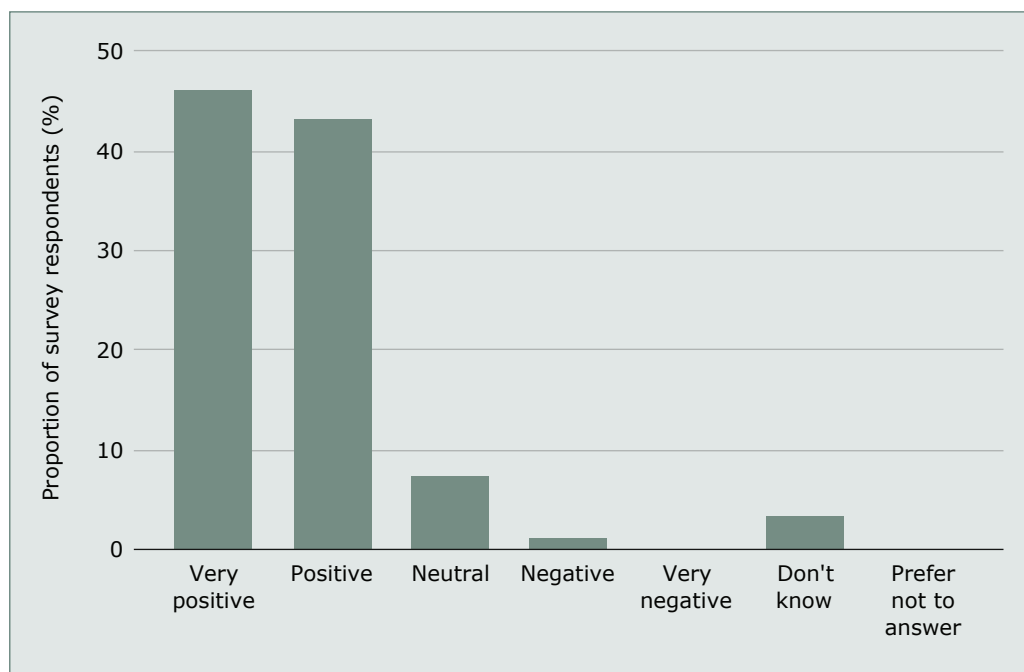


Figure 3.1. Results from survey question: How would you describe current relations between people in your community?

Source: World Food Programme, Food Security Outcome Monitoring survey, June 2021.

frees up resources that that some households use to meet other basic needs such as healthcare, and to purchase non-food items. Moreover, receiving food assistance freed up time that allowed both women and men to work, and children to play.⁷⁴ In this way, GFD helped to restore a sense of normalcy, which is a critical component of stabilization.

These immediate impacts are complemented by the way GFD can enhance longer-term socio-economic stability. The research found that GFD can free up resources that are either saved or invested in businesses. One such example came from an intended beneficiary of WFP GFD programming in the Bulamari 1, Mafa IDP camp: ‘I can invest the little savings I have into some petty trading, which is helping to expand family income’.⁷⁵ The majority of those who reported that GFD freed up resources used these to enrol their children in school.

Both women and men from displaced communities spoke of how GFD reduced family tensions and the pressure on husbands to provide for their families, and thereby reduced domestic violence. In one FGD, women stated that the selection of female heads of household as intended beneficiaries greatly empowered them. In male-headed households, on the other hand, women’s inclusion as intended beneficiaries made them better able to take part in family discussions. Camp settings appear to offer a particular space where WFP can challenge discriminatory and violent gender norms and practices. Several women and girls interviewed in IDP camps told how, to a large extent, the convergence of religious law and gender stereotypes does not play out in the camps. This is primarily due to how the camps are organized and managed, and to the ongoing sensitization on human rights and other social values. The interviews in the camps reflected a broader recognition of female heads of households. Many of the camp-based women and a few men interviewed believed that WFP’s targeting in camps influenced opportunities for equal access to education and funds, opening doors to other services.

⁷⁴ Interview, male CBO representative, Damaturu.

⁷⁵ Interview, intended beneficiary (GFD), Bulamari One, Mafa.

Constraints

Although the findings indicate that WFP's crisis response can contribute to enhancing stability, important findings to the contrary also emerged. In particular, several interviewees claimed that the amount of food aid (CBT or in-kind) was insufficient to meet household food needs, let alone be used for additional purposes. Interviewees also stated that they often share food with those who do not receive assistance. Food sharing can be an important indicator of social cohesion (see below); but it is also a concern as it further reduces the limited provision of food per household, which risks pushing vulnerable households into deeper levels of food insecurity, vulnerability and poverty. The freeing up of resources is also offset by rapidly increasing prices.

These dynamics are a cause for concern. There are well-documented links through which increasing food insecurity can trigger broader instability and violence. Some host community representatives associate increasing food prices with the influx of IDPs. Increasing prices of basic staples are specifically associated with social unrest, since consumers cannot easily substitute staple foods.⁷⁶ The research found some limited evidence of social unrest and food riots.⁷⁷ While these instances were related to the delayed distribution of food aid rather than increasing food prices, they are indicative of the way food insecurity can further increase instability. Representatives from the communities and local government indicated that if people were unable to feed themselves or their households, they would expect this to cause violence.

On the potential for WFP's crisis response to contribute to reducing domestic violence, it was pointed out in one interview that the specific targeting of women as the principal recipient of GFD goes against cultural norms. In particular, it is expected that cash transfers will be paid to a man, regardless of his age or position in the family. Moreover, while GFD reduced women's dependency on their husbands, these changing relations and the economic empowerment of women also caused friction as traditional family structures were ruptured. Some highlighted women challenging patriarchal structures, represented by one interviewee as women becoming emboldened by their association with NGOs. Challenging ingrained traditions can become a source of new tensions and violence, ultimately further enhancing the vulnerability of women and girls to domestic violence.

(c) enhancing stable and peaceful intra-community relations through reducing competition over resources and fostering comprehension and trust

In line with previous research on IDP and host community relations in north-east Nigeria, this research noted both positive and negative relations.⁷⁸ Data from the FSOM survey showed that a clear majority of those surveyed believed that community relations were positive (43 per cent) or very positive (46 per cent) (see figure 3.1). Only among IDPs in informal camps was there a slightly higher proportion who perceived relations as negative (figure 3.2). Among those who reported neutral, negative or

⁷⁶ Weinberg, J. and Bakker, R., 'Let them eat cake: Food prices, domestic policy and social unrest', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2015), pp. 309–26; Martin-Shields, C. and Stojetz, W., *Food Security and Conflict: Empirical Challenges and Future Opportunities for Research and Policy Making on Food Security and Conflict*, FAO Agricultural Development Economics Working Paper 18-04 (FAO: Rome, 2018); and Brinkman H.-J. and Hendrix, C. S. 'Food insecurity and conflict: Applying the WDR framework', World Development Report 2011 Background Paper, 2 Aug. 2010.

⁷⁷ Remote interviews, WFP staff members, 16 Feb. 2021 and 20 Apr. 2021.

⁷⁸ Mohammed, F. K., 'The causes and consequences of internal displacement in Nigeria and related governance challenges', Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) *SWP Working Paper* FG8 (Apr. 2017); Kamta, F. N. and Scheffran, J., 'A social network analysis of internally displaced communities in north-east Nigeria: Potential conflicts with host communities in the Lake Chad region', *GeoJournal*, 3 Sep. 2021, pp. 1–18; and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Food Programme (WFP), *Woodfuel Supply and Energy Demand Assessment for Borno State, Nigeria, 2013–2018* (FAO, UNHCR and WFP: Geneva and Rome, 2019).

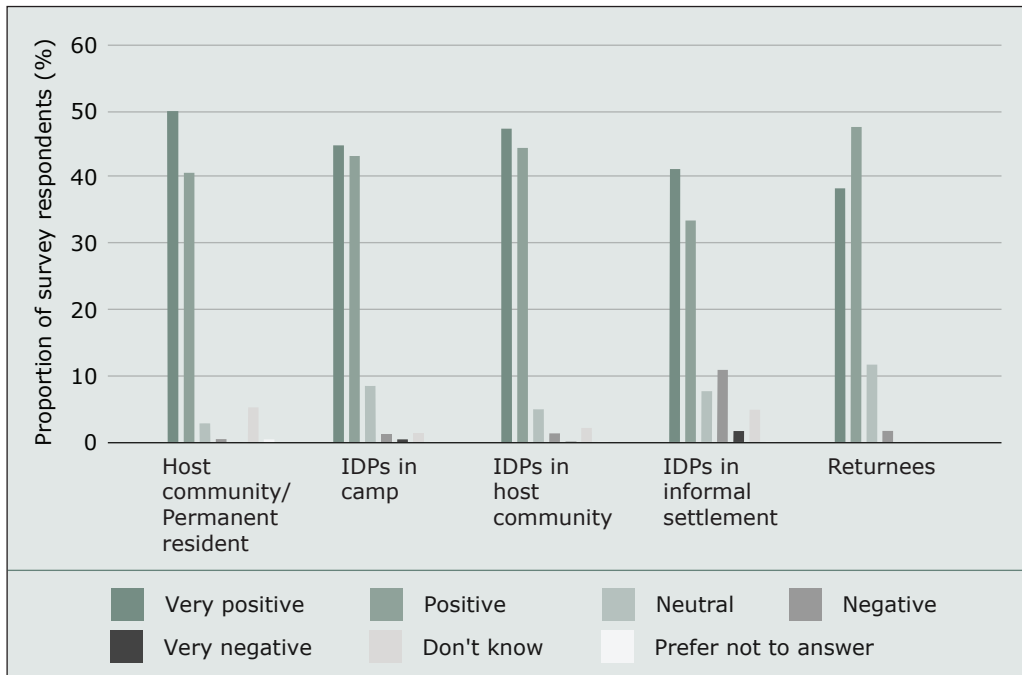


Figure 3.2. Intercommunity relations disaggregated by community

IDP = Internally displaced person

Source: World Food Programme, Food Security Outcome Monitoring survey, June 2021.

very negative relations, perceptions of unfair distribution of humanitarian aid were a leading cause of tensions. While this indicates overall positive relations, the qualitative research that probed deeper into intra-community relations was much less conclusive, highlighting several nuances.

Many interviewees stated that relations were cordial or good, specifically noting an improvement on past relations. FGDs highlighted a variety of indicators that suggested positive interactions and good relations within and between community groups. These include joint socio-cultural festivities and rites, such as weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals and religious observance. Other indicators of positive relations were host communities using the facilities in IDP camps, such as attending health centres and receiving free prescriptions. In some cases, host communities lent a land to IDPs, providing them with opportunities to grow food. IDPs have also been given leadership positions in communities, which provides evidence of trust between IDP and host communities.

While improved relationships are an outcome of many different factors and processes, the research found that reducing the burden on host communities and enhancing integration, understanding and trust were paramount in improving relations. Interviewees among the host communities who indicated positive relations also demonstrated an awareness of why people become displaced, and of the protection needs that displacement entails. Similarly, there was a recognition among the IDPs who reported positive relations of the dire need in host communities, and an understanding that if aid programmes fail to include host communities, they might come to resent IDPs. For this reason, many interviewees from IDP and host communities, and local authorities alike highlighted the need to ensure that more people are included in aid programmes in order to reduce actual or potential tensions over perceptions of unfair targeting.

When considering the role of GFD in enhancing good relations, the research found that interventions helped to increase positive interactions and the sharing of resources. As noted above, many stated that intended beneficiaries share food aid with those who

do not receive support. A few described how they would share their assistance with those who do not receive aid but face equal hardship, among other things as a way to reduce tensions and ensure cordial relations. This directly indicates the potential of WFP's crisis response to enhance stability. Other examples of interaction include building community assets such as a well or a shelter. A representative of the Mafa local authority noted that: 'the various interventions implemented in the community by WFP and other partners not only provide individuals and groups with coping strategies, but also afford them the process of friendship, and this serves as a source of unity and social cohesion'.⁷⁹ A recipient of unconditional CBT in Nayinwa who participated in an FGD told how WFP had: 'brought about togetherness and peace', and reflected that 'sometime back, we could not have gathered to sit like this'.⁸⁰

Our finding that positive relations are stimulated by interaction is encouraging in comparison with other research findings that indicate that communities might report cordial relationships simply due to limited contact, as a result of deliberate efforts by the Nigerian authorities to limit contacts between IDPs and host communities in the north-east.⁸¹ Moreover, interaction indicates vibrant everyday daily public life and freedom of movement. The Stability Index compiled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) concludes that these two factors are the most important influences on the perception of stability in the BAY states.⁸²

Community tensions

It will be important to continue to strengthen efforts to encourage interaction and build trust. While many interviewees highlighted good relations between the various community groups, others discussed more fractious and antagonistic relations. Some IDPs perceived that host communities blame them for causing the difficulties they face, including hunger. Others noted how host communities accuse IDPs of belonging to Boko Haram. Even interviewees who stated that relations were cordial noted that crime had become more problematic in the communities since the arrival of the IDPs.

Interviews with camp-based IDPs highlighted the dire level of need in the camps and of corruption in the camp management systems, which result in strained relations, theft and animosity when aid is disbursed. Some reported that camp officials break into the living spaces of camp residents to steal money or food, while others stated that camp officials demand a cut of the aid for themselves.⁸³ Such behaviour—whether suspected or actual—adds to perceptions of the government and state officials as corrupt and disengaged, and of IDP camps as a site of tension. A camp official interviewee confirmed that such crime does exist, while at the same time expressing dissatisfaction that humanitarian organizations and the government exclude camp officials from their programmes: 'most of the IDPs are far richer than those who protect them . . . what you call stipends (the CBT) most of us do not earn in a month'.⁸⁴ Such sentiments were echoed in an interview with a police officer who stated that the monthly stipend given to an IDP was equivalent to three months' salary.

Several interviewees from host communities displayed open resentment towards IDPs. This resentment is largely derived from continuing perceptions that humanitarian aid predominantly targets IDPs. As seen above, such perceptions are not necessarily unfounded. Statements from interviews told of 'IDPs . . . being seen [by

⁷⁹ Interview, local authority representative, Mafa Local Authority.

⁸⁰ FGD with male intended beneficiaries on CBT unconditional bank transfers, Nayinwa.

⁸¹ Kamta and Scheffran (note 78).

⁸² International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), 'Nigeria: Stability Index, Lake Chad Basin, Findings Round 1 of 2021', Aug. 2021.

⁸³ FGD with civil society organization representatives on projects in IDP/host community locations, Maiduguri.

⁸⁴ Interview, male camp official, Maiduguri.

humanitarian organizations as] the sacred cow and acting as such'; 'IDPs are better off, they get basic needs for free, NGOs always take their side'.⁸⁵ Host community resentment is directed towards IDPs, humanitarian organizations and the government. Feelings of relative deprivation and perceived or actual inequitable targeting sometimes trigger violence. While our research could not ascertain the extent of such violence, we found that when it happens, it tends to be led by youth groups from the host communities who resent not being included in the aid intervention.⁸⁶ A non-beneficiary from the host community summarized what he saw as the prevailing sentiment. He noted that it is: 'quite uncommon for one who has nothing to see people receiving money without feeling somehow unhappy that he is not part of [the target group] . . . being a member of community. If care is not taken, he may [want to] destroy the system'.⁸⁷ However, the same interviewee also argued that people might not act on such perceived unfairness but accept it as destiny.

IDP youth were also singled out by some interviewees for causing tensions and conflict, and this was recognized by the IDP community: 'Our children, they are the ones that mostly bring about this fight . . . that's where the trouble begins'.⁸⁸ Interviews identified unemployment and poverty as playing a significant role in youth-led violence. Many youths, it was argued, want to 'do the right thing' but are constrained by a lack of economic opportunities, which reduces the threshold for engaging in violent or criminal behaviour. This also makes youth vulnerable to corrupt elites (understood as local politicians and other people in power), which use marginalized youth in schemes typically associated with violence in return for a small amount of money.

While they only capture the views of a small number of community members, the interviews present an important counter-narrative to the broader FSOM survey and should not be disregarded. Perceptions matter and influence intra- and inter-community relations. Negative perceptions of IDPs can result in harsher constraints on these populations.⁸⁹ Mistreatment of IDPs can become a grievance against which IDP communities unite, and this can create the background for future clashes or conflict. It is therefore crucial to better understand the differences between the survey results and the qualitative findings. The research highlights the need to validate quantitative findings using qualitative interviews to ensure that programming is leveraged to strengthen processes that foster positive relations, and to help reduce tensions where they exist.

Conclusions

Overall, the findings highlight the potential for WFP's crisis response to contribute to stability by reducing food- and non-food-related stresses that expose individuals to violence, while fostering positive community relations. If the amount of food aid is sufficient to free up resources, GFD allows individuals to better meet their basic needs, save and invest, and there are clear gains for longer-term stability. If GFD is designed and delivered in a way that increases engagement and interactions between IDPs and host communities, it helps to improve the perception of one by the other, while also helping to reduce stresses and resource competition. To promote understanding and thereby peaceful coexistence, host communities and IDPs must perceive that IDPs contribute to rather than deplete community resources.

⁸⁵ Interview, female community member, Maiduguri.

⁸⁶ Interviews, IDPs and host community members, BAY states.

⁸⁷ Interview, male host-community member, Mylakariri.

⁸⁸ Interview, intended GFD beneficiary, Mafa IDP camp.

⁸⁹ Haider (note 68).

Enhancing the probability that children will go to school emerged as the most significant finding on how GFD can contribute to longer-term stability. Poverty and the lack of education—which are interlinked, not least because declining educational levels lead to declines in human development and capital—were overwhelmingly stated in the interviews as the main drivers of violence and the root causes of the conflict in the north-east. Several pathways emerged from the interviews through which low educational attainment leads to increased instability. Idle youth, whether from IDP or host communities, were seen as the main perpetrators of crime and violence, as they have been deprived of any prospects. Several youths interviewed alluded to having no hope for the future. Crime threatens the stability of society and is a symptom of a breakdown in social order.⁹⁰ Linked to such dysfunctional developments, idle youth emerged as a critical factor contributing to IDP–host community tensions.

Displacement in north-east Nigeria is likely to continue, further straining the already stretched resources and capacities of host communities. As TOC 2 outlines in more detail below, shifting conflict dynamics risk intensifying the humanitarian crisis and preventing WFP from a broader transition to resilience programming. Ensuring that emergency programming helps to build the resilience of host communities to continue to receive large displaced populations, and that IDPs can quickly integrate, can contribute to preventing or reducing tensions.

Conflict sensitivity concerns

Leveraging humanitarian aid to enhance stability raises several conflict sensitivity concerns, not least about targeting. Improved targeting practices by WFP have reduced intra-community tensions. One such example is the shift from differential to equal targeting of IDPs and host communities in the same area. Initially, IDPs received unconditional GFD since they live in worse conditions and have little or no access to farmland. Host communities, on the other hand, received conditional assistance since they often have housing and access to land. However, conditional assistance is only provided for part of the year, whereas GFD is provided year round. Tensions mounted during those months when the conditional transfers were paused. Following changes to WFP’s programming so that all intended beneficiaries in the same area receive either GFD or conditional transfers, tensions between IDPs and host communities reduced. The findings around the sharing of food aid, rising food prices and perceived favouritism of IDPs by humanitarian actors highlight the importance of further strengthening and publicizing targeting criteria. Targeting issues around leveraging GFD to enhance intra-community relations are further discussed in the CBT deep dive (part II in this series).

WFP must also carefully manage perceptions linked to the specific operating environment. In the deeply religious and traditional societies of north-east Nigeria, several interviewees argued that the promotion of secular values by NGOs is causing traditional values to break down. Others pointedly suggested that NGOs are causing trouble by labelling traditional gender values practiced for generations as violations of women’s rights.⁹¹ If such perceptions are not addressed, aid interventions risk increasing social instability. At worst, they could enhance support for Boko Haram’s enforcement of gender norms (see TOC 2).⁹²

The operating environment presents further conflict sensitivity concerns linked to the ongoing conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram. The

⁹⁰ Adebayo, A. A., ‘Youth unemployment and crime in Nigeria: A nexus and implications for national development’, *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 5, no. 9 (2013), pp. 350–57.

⁹¹ Interview, female host community member, Maiduguri.

⁹² Interview, NGO representative, Maiduguri.

government is pursuing a predominantly military strategy to stabilize the north-east and the military is actively targeting insurgents in areas where aid is being delivered (see the context analysis above). Aid deliveries to many sites in the region therefore require a military escort. This requirement can cause significant delays, which at times results in perishable food aid having to be destroyed. This, in turn, has caused riots in communities that are expecting aid deliveries. At the same time, Boko Haram is deliberately targeting humanitarian organizations and operations. These developments could combine to perpetuate a narrative that the presence of humanitarian organizations, such as WFP and its cooperating partners, amplifies the risks to communities. While the research found no conclusive evidence of this, it is a risk that should be monitored.

Recommendations

This TOC has set out the pathways through which WFP crisis response could contribute to enhancing stability. Against the mixed findings around GFD freeing up resources and on community relations, the following recommendations emphasize the need to further understand these preliminary pathways.

1. Explore in depth and over time how intended beneficiaries use food assistance, including how it is traded and shared, and how it can free up resources that contribute to longer-term stability.

If findings confirm that intended beneficiaries use, or could use, food assistance in ways that contribute to stability while ensuring their individual nutritional and food security, WFP should adapt the amount provided and the modality to enhance this contribution.

Post-distribution monitoring surveys followed, to the extent possible, by qualitative interviews would allow WFP to assess how food assistance is used set against changing conflict dynamics

1. To enhance the potential for GFD to contribute to reducing domestic violence, WFP should further explore the intricate ways in which targeting shifts intra-household relations. In relation to this, WFP should also explore why discriminatory and violent gender norms are less prevalent in camp settings, in order to capitalize on opportunities to enhance WFP Nigeria's gender-transformative activities.
2. WFP should monitor and manage community perceptions of its presence and interventions. This would involve establishing a baseline of perceptions and tolerance, and tracking this over time against the evolution of the operating environment and changing conflict dynamics.

4. Theory of change 2: GFD and Boko Haram recruitment

*If marginalized communities at risk of Boko Haram recruitment can ensure safe access to food and essential services, **then** vulnerability to Boko Haram influence and some of the immediate push and pull factors of recruitment can be reduced by providing vulnerable populations with alternative means to ensure their survival.*

Contextual background

Recent developments with regard to the Boko Haram insurgency have raised concerns about increased recruitment efforts by the group and increased community support, specifically in relation to ISWAP. Following the death of Abubakar Shekau in May 2021, the group's stronghold in the Sambisa Forest fell into the hands of ISWAP.⁹³ The weakening of JAS in the aftermath of Shekau's death allowed ISWAP to further expand and consolidate power in the broader Lake Chad region.⁹⁴ The Nigerian army reported in September 2021 that ISWAP was engaged in a massive recruitment drive.⁹⁵ All this is happening while ISWAP's popularity among the civilian population is growing.⁹⁶ In October 2021, however, the Nigerian army reported the death of ISWAP's leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi.⁹⁷ With both leaders gone, conflict dynamics in northern Nigeria could rapidly evolve and the violence is unlikely to end soon.⁹⁸ The future of the north-east will depend on the disposition of the remnants of JAS as much as ISWAP, the Nigerian military, and the next moves of other security actors.⁹⁹

Analysis

Boko Haram remains the principal security concern among communities in the north-east

According to the interviews with community members, Boko Haram remains the principal violent security threat to civilians in the region. Interviewees referred to the viciousness and brutality of Boko Haram, its acts of indiscriminate killing and maiming, its abductions and burning or destruction of property and assets, and the looting that many had experienced first-hand. This appears consistent with the broader literature, which, although at times suggests that ISWAP is less brutal than JAS, also notes the ruthlessness of punishment and community policing by ISWAP.

One finding that deviates more from the previous research consulted for this study is on perceptions of the state armed forces. The interviewees indicated broad support for and trust in the armed forces, and almost unanimously labelled Boko Haram a far worse security threat than the armed forces. Indications of trust included individuals sharing intelligence and perceiving the armed forces as striving to protect their communities. Several interviewees nonetheless feared the military in its attempt to

⁹³ International Crisis Group, 'After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria's north east', Briefing no. 180/Africa, 29 Mar. 2022.

⁹⁴ Samuel, M., Hoinathy, R. and Zambo, R., 'Boko Haram desertions could be the tipping point', Institute for Security Studies, 18 Aug. 2021.

⁹⁵ Sahara Reporters, 'Terrorist group, ISWAP is massively recruiting to replace "repentant" members, Nigerian army spokesman', New York, 20 Sep. 2021.

⁹⁶ Krippahl, C., 'Death of Boko Haram's leader spells trouble for Nigeria and its neighbors', Deutsche Welle, 8 June 2021.

⁹⁷ Aljazeera, 'West Africa's top ISIL leader is dead, says Nigerian army', 14 Oct. 2021.

⁹⁸ Reliefweb, OCHA Services, 'Nigeria situation report for Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States, no. 15 (as of 31 October 2021)'.

⁹⁹ Kurtzer, Moss and Devermont (note 25).

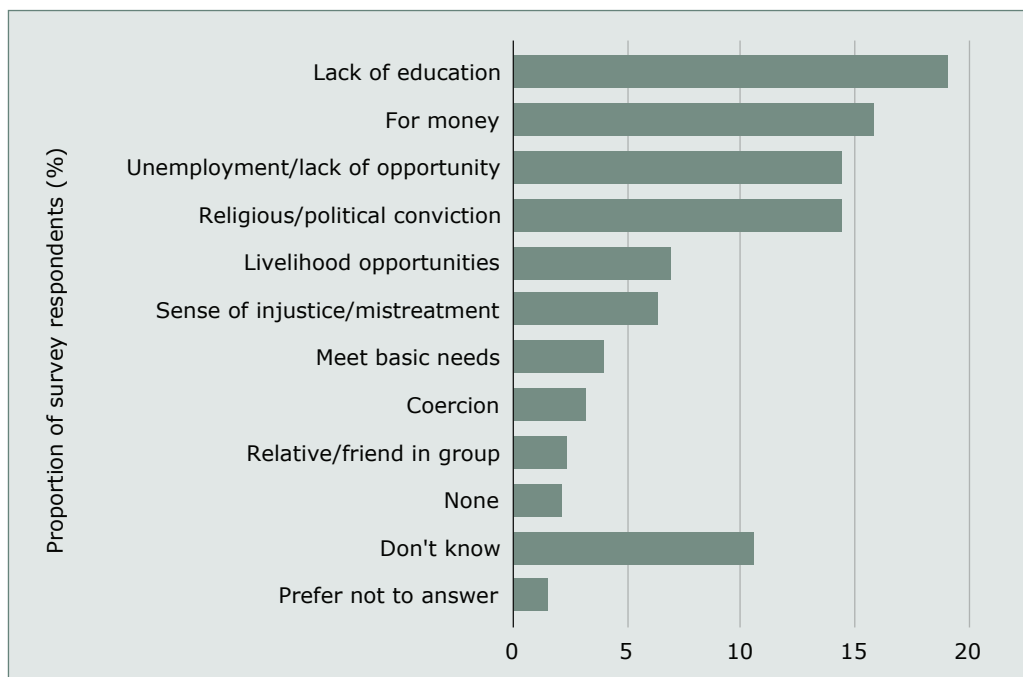


Figure 4.1. Beneficiary perceptions of why people join extremist groups

Note: Respondents could choose up to three reasons. The percentages reflect all answers, not the number of respondents.

Source: World Food Programme, Food Security Outcome Monitoring survey, June 2021.

eliminate Boko Haram. As one interviewee stated, ‘every day we run from the police or the army because they are always looking for Boko Haram members and every youth that looks the way I look is a suspect’.¹⁰⁰ The same interviewee, however, also noted that he feared Boko Haram more than the military or the police, and believed that the army was ‘fighting for us’. Among government officials, there was a recognition of the security threat posed by excessive state-perpetrated violence but, as one government official argued, how this is perceived depends on the individual: ‘If you ask the youth, they will say the police are the worst. If you ask an IDP, they will say Boko Haram is worse’.¹⁰¹

Vulnerabilities to Boko Haram influence and push-pull factors on recruitment

If WFP is to leverage its crisis response in a way that reduces communities’ vulnerabilities to Boko Haram’s influence and, by extension, push-pull recruitment factors, it must first identify and understand these vulnerabilities. The FSOM survey run in advance of the field-based qualitative research found four main reasons why respondents believe people join Boko Haram: the lack of education, for money, unemployment and their religious/political convictions (see figure 4.1). This confirms previous research on the connection between poverty and the growth of Boko Haram (see context analysis).

The FSOM survey findings largely coincide with the findings of the qualitative research. It is possible to discern from the interviews a set of factors that push vulnerable individuals into Boko Haram’s sphere of influence. These are largely related to poor governance and poverty, as poor governance generates the underlying conditions for the high levels of multidimensional poverty. A second set of factors combines to pull individuals towards Boko Haram in a complex and somewhat paradoxical relationship between Boko Haram and conflict-affected communities. This relationship centres on

¹⁰⁰ Interview, male host community member, Maiduguri.

¹⁰¹ Interview, security official, Abuja.

some shared values, and the limited degree of protection and stability that is provided in some cases.

Pushes towards Boko Haram

Poor governance and poverty were the main grievances expressed by the interviewees, who complained of what they perceive as neglect by the state and chronic corruption. They highlighted the government's inability or even unwillingness to address underdevelopment and marginalization in the north-east, which continue to provide the conditions in which Boko Haram thrives. Many interviewees perceived greed and corruption among leading state and government officials as a key reason why the north-east has remained poor despite the abundance of resources in the country. Some saw the widening gap between rich and poor as a driver of conflict in general and of Boko Haram in particular.¹⁰² As one interviewee summarized the situation, 'every other cause of tension including Boko Haram, poverty, loss of livelihood, fighting, displacement and lack of trust all emanate from the state'.¹⁰³ For some interviewees, this combined to erode any hope for the future.

Even among government and state security officials, there was a recognition that corruption and a lack of state presence, as well as disregard for the rule of law and democratic institutions were underlying grievances in the north-east, which favoured Boko Haram. When asked what he considered to be the main reasons for violence in north-east Nigeria, one government official in Abuja listed 'poverty, corruption, impunity and the flagrant display of lawlessness by political leaders and even security personnel'.¹⁰⁴ This was echoed by a state security officer who held that state-sponsored violence was among the main reasons for violence more generally: 'when I [say] the state, I mean those in formal leadership positions, like governors, civil servants, ministers, in short, those in a position to take decisions'.¹⁰⁵

Interviewees also detailed how low levels of education leave individuals vulnerable to Boko Haram's manipulation of religion and its discourse around secularism and western education. This discourse is influential against a background of poor socio-economic conditions and a highly religious people with low levels of literacy. Limited access to education also means that many children and young people are not in school. The resulting youth idleness was thought by many to lead to violence in the community, and to be another factor that leaves youth vulnerable to the influence of Boko Haram.

Closely related to youth idleness is rapid population growth and the high proportion of youth among the population. Nigeria's population is projected to reach 401 million by 2050.¹⁰⁶ Currently, 43 per cent of the population is under the age of 15, the dependency rate is high and many people are seeking to enter the employment market.¹⁰⁷ While there are no separate statistics for the BAY states, the median age of the 30 million people living in the LCB is just over 17 years. This youth bulge is seen as a pressing security threat, set against limited education and employment opportunities, which in turn are a consequence of the lack of meaningful state presence in the north-east. The agricultural base in this predominantly rural region cannot support the rapid population growth. Land is scarce and the impact of climate change has led to a loss of surface and groundwater, degradation of topsoil and desertification. As a consequence, many young people are unable to provide for themselves and their families. As a WFP representative summarized, 'one million people between 16- and 20-years old [in the

¹⁰² Interview, male community member, Yobe.

¹⁰³ Interview, civil society organization representative, Abuja.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, government official, Abuja.

¹⁰⁵ Interview, state security official, Abuja.

¹⁰⁶ World Population Review, 'Nigeria Population 2022 (live)'.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Population Fund (note 4).

BAY states] face this dilemma, and you will find at least a few thousand who are ready and convinced to take up arms and fight for an attractive cause like an Islamic state'.¹⁰⁸

Finally, hunger was specifically identified by some community members as enhancing vulnerability to the influence of Boko Haram. Several argued that people who are unable to feed themselves are susceptible to violence: 'there is nothing hunger cannot push a man into to survive, hunger is war'; or 'those who are lucky get international food aid, those who are not take up arms'.¹⁰⁹ Another stated that 'so long as people are hungry, Boko Haram will continue to have a field day'.¹¹⁰ Referring to recurring violence and attacks against communities, an NGO worker argued that 'some of these people are paid to come and shoot and then go back, so you know, if your level of poverty has gone that far, you will tend to accept a little token to do those kind of things'.¹¹¹

Poverty-related food insecurity is also a cause of stunting, which in some areas of north-east Nigeria affects 30 per cent of population.¹¹² Stunting, in turn, can impede cognitive development and our research found indications that some of those who join Boko Haram—and suicide bombers were specifically mentioned—might be cognitively impaired. Many are likely to have been coerced into becoming a suicide bomber, but stunting can impair critical thinking abilities. This, coupled with a lack of hope, can make it easier for Boko Haram to weaponize individuals, by turning their body into a weapon, regardless of whether Boko Haram employs soft or hard coercion.

Pull factors towards Boko Haram

Set against a weak state presence and weak institutional and governance structures, as well as the high levels of multidimensional poverty, there is a complex relationship between Boko Haram and conflict-affected communities. The support and legitimacy that Boko Haram initially enjoyed when the group was perceived to be rebelling against the neglect of the north-east and representing the population's grievances has largely waned, in no small part due to the group's brutal targeting of Muslim civilians. Nonetheless, while Boko Haram is unequivocally perceived as the primary security threat, specific shared values between Boko Haram and communities translate into a degree of support. As one interviewee explained: 'Boko Haram members were once part of us; some were once reputable people who could teach religious tenets, and their beliefs and culture are the same as ours'.¹¹³

Interviewees explicitly raised gender values. Many stated that the gender values and norms that Boko Haram promotes relate to a culture and traditions that predate Boko Haram. The majority strongly rejected Boko Haram's violent stance on gender, including their prohibition on girls and women accessing education and engaging in economic activity. At the same time, however, as discussed above, many also opposed the way NGOs seek to promote secular gender values.

Shared values are partly the basis for the limited support that Boko Haram still enjoys. Without such support among communities, it would be impossible for it to survive in the forests where its fighters and other members take refuge.¹¹⁴ Government officials in Abuja and the north-east also recognized that there was a degree of support for Boko Haram in the communities, linked to poverty and inequality, as well as corruption and lack of accountability among state officials. Nonetheless, most inter-

¹⁰⁸ Remote interview, WFP staff member, 22 Feb. 2021.

¹⁰⁹ FGD, male civil society representatives and non-WFP beneficiaries, Bulabulin; and Interview, government official, Maiduguri.

¹¹⁰ Interview, female host community member, Maiduguri.

¹¹¹ Interview, male NGO worker, Stadium IDP camp, Maiduguri.

¹¹² Remote interview, WFP staff member, 16 Feb. 2021.

¹¹³ Interview, female IDP intended beneficiary, Maiduguri.

¹¹⁴ Interview, male community member, Mylakariri.

viewees across the board argued that although their underlying beliefs may be similar, the way that Boko Haram interprets Islam and Sharia and enforces those norms is wrong. Its violent behaviour goes against the teachings, deeds and practice of Sharia.

Despite the brutality, and the terror it instils in communities, interviewees confirmed that many community members look to Boko Haram for protection and survival. In some instances, Boko Haram provides a safety net for communities. Interviewees mentioned that Boko Haram supplies goods and products to retailers, such as drugs to pharmacies, and distributes fertilizer to help agricultural production. It also provides monetary support, water and food, and has set price caps on local agricultural produce, making food more affordable. For example, in 2017 a sack of maize would sell for 3500 Naira in the areas ISWAP controlled around Lake Chad, as opposed to 11 000 Naira in Maiduguri.¹¹⁵

Indirectly, Boko Haram provides protection by allowing people to live in their homes and farm their land. ISWAP, in particular, has made inroads among Muslim civilians by treating them better than its parent organization and by filling gaps in governance and service delivery.¹¹⁶ While the interviewees did not distinguish between the two factions by name, one interviewee described the complex relationship as there being a good and a bad Boko Haram. The good Boko Haram supports and helps communities in dire situations, whereas the bad Boko Haram kills, destroys and loots.¹¹⁷ Another interviewee argued that community support for Boko Haram is ‘natural’ because ‘the majority are poor and hungry, so anybody who offers help will naturally get their support and loyalty’.¹¹⁸ Several interviewees indicated that Boko Haram has changed its recruitment discourse. While previously, Boko Haram would promise a fighter paradise if he was killed in battle, now they offer to support to him and his family while he is alive: ‘Boko Haram has learned a new way to gain people’s hearts; through the stomach they are now gaining people without force’.¹¹⁹

In a context where people are desperately trying to survive, Boko Haram paradoxically provides a degree of stability. People are seeking out Boko Haram, believing to a certain extent that they and their families will be ensured a better life and be protected. Boko Haram takes advantage of the government’s inability to provide a better life or better economic opportunities to recruit more members. The differences between what is immediately on offer from Boko Haram and from the government can be stark: ‘being a Boko Haram member promises a better future. For example, the government can give people 500 Naira (less than US\$1) during elections to buy a vote whereas Boko Haram can give as much as 100,000–200,000 Naira (\$200–\$500) to help people in need’.¹²⁰

Conclusions

This TOC is unlikely to have any influence on the armed capacity of Boko Haram or on conflict intensity. However, many individuals are recruited to Boko Haram as a result of poverty and the lack of economic alternatives. Once they have joined the insurgency, they are usually unable to leave and sometimes killed trying to escape. Thus, reducing individual vulnerability to Boko Haram’s influence and recruitment could reduce direct violence or the threat of violence. This is particularly urgent given recent developments, such as the increased recruitment efforts of and indications of

¹¹⁵ International Crisis Group (note 20).

¹¹⁶ International Crisis Group (note 20).

¹¹⁷ Interview, female IDP intended beneficiary, Maiduguri.

¹¹⁸ Interview, government official, Maiduguri.

¹¹⁹ Interview, female community member, Maiduguri.

¹²⁰ Interview, female IDP intended beneficiary, Maiduguri.

growing community support for ISWAP. This research concludes that humanitarian aid, including food aid, can influence a personal decision at a specific point in time on whether to seek out Boko Haram as a survival strategy. While few intended beneficiaries stated outright that GFD prevented them from turning to Boko Haram, many spoke of how the food aid had assisted their struggle for survival. Several also said that being able to eat allows your mind to function better and helps people to think about options, including questioning ideologies.¹²¹ In addition, as elaborated in TOC 1, GFD can contribute to enhancing education levels, which is essential for addressing Boko Haram recruitment in the long term.

It is important to recognize, however, that the push-pull factors influencing people's decisions to join Boko Haram are complex and interlinked with a range of other factors and processes that will vary over time and place. Food insecurity plays a part in the lack of ability to meet basic needs that pushes people to Boko Haram for protection and survival. Thus, to maximize the potential for WFP's food security interventions to reduce vulnerability to Boko Haram, a holistic approach to protection is needed that ensures that people at risk have access to a wide range of essential services. This means linking WFP's crisis response to its resilience programming and exploring ways to enhance the resilience of current recipients of GFD. This could include the piloting of GFD+, which adds a resilience component to GFD without making participation in resilience-related activities compulsory. GFD+ is implemented in other WFP country programmes as a way of bridging crisis response and resilience programming in protracted crises. WFP could facilitate the sharing of experience and lessons learned across its country programmes. In addition, working in partnership with other actors engaged more directly in peacebuilding operations would both complement each partner's actions and improve access for the most vulnerable communities.

WFP crisis response already focuses on enabling the humanitarian community to reach and operate in areas of humanitarian crisis. WFP plays a leading role in north-east Nigeria by facilitating such access. In 2020, WFP moved personnel from 110 agencies through the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), which was of particular importance given the movement restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. UNHAS is crucial for humanitarian actors, providing access to populations outside the major towns, particularly in Borno state. As one interviewee argued, without UNHAS, humanitarian assistance would not reach very far beyond Maiduguri.¹²² Although humanitarian services are not provided to reduce recruitment into armed groups, given the clear link between essential service provision and vulnerability to Boko Haram influence, their contribution to reducing the immediate drivers of Boko Haram recruitment should not be underestimated.

Conflict sensitivity concerns

As a humanitarian agency, a major conflict sensitivity concern is how seeking to reduce community vulnerability to the influence and recruitment efforts of NSAGs might compromise humanitarian principles, in particular of neutrality or impartiality. Essentially, this requires a tacit judgement by WFP about who is 'on the right and wrong side', and leveraging its support in accordance with that judgement. Moreover, the military primarily determines access to conflict-affected communities, as the provision of food aid often requires a military escort. There is therefore a risk that food aid becomes—or is perceived to be—a tool in the government's fight against Boko Haram. This risk could be particularly pronounced if humanitarian aid is labelled one of the

¹²¹ Remote interview, Christian Aid Nigeria staff member, 17 Aug. 2021.

¹²² Remote interview, WFP staff member, 30 Mar. 2021.

tools for stabilizing the north-east in the government’s main stabilization policy (see the context analysis). These risks could affect the perception of WFP, which in turn might reduce trust in the organization and its access to conflict-affected communities. The perception that WFP is taking sides, or that it is even part of the government’s efforts to eliminate Boko Haram, would place intended beneficiaries at heightened risk through retaliatory action against WFP by Boko Haram. It has already actively targeted humanitarian organizations, including through ISWAP attacks on UN humanitarian hubs in Dikwa, Ngala and Rann.

Recommendations

4. Rigorously explore the linkages presented in this TOC in all areas served by WFP, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. This should include further exploration of the reasons for the perceived link between food insecurity and violence, as indicated in figure 2.1, and the perceived reasons why some people join extremist groups (see figure 4.1) Ideally, geographical differences should also be explored. These efforts could be made in partnership with local organizations already engaged in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE), such as the Borno Women’s Development Initiative which is a WFP collaborating partner (see part III in this series).
5. Leverage GFD in a way that maximizes its potential to reduce needs-based vulnerabilities in areas where individuals are not yet ready to transition to food for assets programming. This could include piloting GFD+ interventions. The monitoring of retention of these programmes could serve as a proxy for reduced reliance on Boko Haram for survival.
6. Ensure that any GFD programming that involves the development of livelihood skills—based on future employment/livelihood projections set against climate change, population growth and availability of land—takes a gender- and youth-sensitive approach.
7. If WFP cannot directly engage in leveraging its GFD to reduce communities’ vulnerability to Boko Haram influence, at a minimum it should explore ways to partner strategically with and support local organizations already engaged in PVE work, using the knowledge, data and access it has.

5. Critical cross-cutting observation: Efforts to contribute to stability demand a coherent approach among humanitarian agencies that builds trust and reduces tensions

The crises in north-east Nigeria—and the crisis response—are exacerbated by a deep trust deficit among the government/state sectors, civilians and humanitarian interveners. Enhanced stability by reducing direct violence, as outlined in TOC 1 and TOC 2, can only be achieved if trust is restored. This means trust within communities, and between IDP and host communities as outlined in TOC 1; between communities and the government from the local to the federal level; between communities and humanitarian agencies; and between humanitarian agencies and the state, including the military.

Analysis

Citizen–state trust deficit

The lack of trust between communities and the government has deep historical roots, fuelled by the reluctance or inability of successive governments to address inequalities and development needs (see context analysis). Both the FSOM survey and the qualitative interviews strongly indicate that citizens expect the government to respond to their needs in an equitable manner. However, the qualitative interviews found that the control of local governance structures by elites (popularly referred to as politicians by the respondents) reflect exclusionary local power dynamics and result in a narrow set of interests being promoted. This leads to services that favour certain groups over others.

Representatives from both IDP and host community populations alleged that the local governance structures to which they would normally go to seek redress, such as traditional rulers, women and youth groups or associations, and local government authorities such as the chairs and ward councillors, are all controlled by higher level politicians. These politicians are believed to manipulate the local officials under their control to favour certain groups, depending on their political affiliations. Interviewees perceived that such control affects the distribution of resources, such as food, the e-card issued to IDPs by the Governor and the allocation of land to IDPs, among other things.

These concerns are echoed by some CSO leaders, who believe that the distribution of humanitarian assistance provided to IDP camps and host communities by the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is dependent on the specific interests of the elites. Similarly, powerful individuals among IDP or host community populations are able to attract humanitarian assistance. CSO leaders expressed a worry that WFP's CBT programme could eventually be highjacked in a similar way.

Similar concerns were expressed about the provisions in the Buhari Plan for consultations with local communities. Interviewees argued that such consultations were based on how people are aligned with government actors. Some argued that politicians' security organizations used the Covid-19 pandemic and the deteriorating security situation to circumvent the process of citizen engagement and fostering citizen buy-in into government reconstruction efforts.

Corruption, inefficiency and weak accountability also weaken citizens' trust in the security forces.¹²³ However, as indicated in TOC 2, the research found encouraging improvements in how conflict-affected individuals perceive the security forces. That said, the relatively small number of people interviewed, coupled with considerations around how free interviewees felt to speak about the military as a security threat, mean that it is impossible to draw firm conclusions from these perceptions.

State-aid provider trust deficit

The more recent responses to the Boko Haram insurgency, including the stabilization efforts, have further eroded trust not only between the conflict-affected communities and the state, but also between the state and humanitarian organizations.

Humanitarian organizations have been accused of providing aid to Boko Haram, while organizations' efforts to uphold their humanitarian principles have been interpreted as contempt for government efforts. Reviews of stabilization efforts in north-east Nigeria demonstrate the difficulties that humanitarian and development organizations face in seeking to contribute to effective local stabilization efforts while working with a host government that lacks political commitment, transparency and coordination.¹²⁴

At the same time, there are concerns among humanitarian organizations that while the government is keen to collect information from humanitarian and development actors, it is reluctant to share information with them. This further prevents effective and efficient coordination and risks duplication of effort.

This risk is elevated by weaknesses in the platforms that exist at the state and national levels for coordination between humanitarian organizations and government institutions. These platforms aim to enhance partnerships, cooperation and joint planning between state institutions and humanitarian and development organizations, and to bring a broader range of perspectives and expertise to the table.¹²⁵ These platforms tend to be project bound, however, and as projects come to an end, the platforms are not sustained. Even the platforms run by SEMA and NEMA at times operate on an ad hoc basis, dependent on funding and project requirements. It was argued that they revert to traditional methods of governance once there are no longer any incentives to maintain the structures and processes required for joint efforts.

Citizen-aid provider trust deficit

The findings also identified conflicting and inconsistent messaging from INGOs, NGOs and state institutions. One way in which this manifests itself, according to some interviewees, is through conflicting messaging from WFP and its collaborating partners on the reasons for delays in cash transfers. Others likened this to the behaviour of politicians who make promises but do not match them with action. As also elaborated in TOC 1, there are concerns among communities that INGOs, NGOs and UN agencies are enforcing secular values that go against tradition and culture, and that this is a cause of community tension. At the same time, there is a risk that aid providers become associated with violence, as they are increasingly targeted by Boko Haram.

¹²³ Brechenmacher (note 24).

¹²⁴ Brechenmacher (note 24).

¹²⁵ Nigeria INGO Forum, Humanitarian coordination architecture, [n.d.].

Conclusions

There is a clear, deep-running mistrust between the key stakeholders that need to come together to respond to the crisis in north-east Nigeria. Addressing citizen–state mistrust will require concerted, long-term efforts that must evolve from within Nigerian society. At a minimum, it is imperative that WFP and its collaboration partners inform each other of the complaints and feedback each receives from their intended beneficiaries and broader communities, to ensure consistent and complementary messaging and communication. Together with humanitarian and development partners, WFP should ensure that funding proposals and operational support include resources to maintain coordination platforms in the longer term. This will be important to avoid fuelling perceptions that the humanitarian response is conflicted, contradictory and in competition with itself, which interviewees argued generates apathy and even antipathy towards humanitarian and development initiatives.

Recommendation

8. Integrate resources into funding proposals that ensure the strengthening and continuation of coordination platforms.

About the author

Dr Caroline Delgado (Sweden) is a Senior Researcher and Director of the Food, Peace and Security Programme at SIPRI. She joined SIPRI in 2019 where she works on issues related to sustainable peace and the triple nexus. Caroline is also one of the focal points for the Global Registry of Violent Deaths (GReVD). She has a background in both academic and policy-oriented research, specializing in how security is understood, practised and produced in conflict and post-conflict transition contexts.



**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Signalistgatan 9
SE-169 72 Solna, Sweden
Telephone: +46 8 655 97 00
Email: sipri@sipri.org
Internet: www.sipri.org

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