



**United Nations Trust Fund
for Human Security**

Nigeria

Transitioning from humanitarian relief to long-term development: Addressing the herdsman-farmers conflict in Nigeria

Background information

The struggle between herders and farmers in Nigeria over farmland and pasture is a serious and escalating conflict registering huge casualties and raising tensions particularly in the country's Middle Belt. Drought and desertification in the north have forced pastoralist herdsman to seek grazing lands further south resulting in competition over resources and clashes with settled farmers. The conflicts have taken on religious and ethnic undertones further polarizing communities and complicating efforts to mitigate the violence.

Moreover, they result in significant loss of lives and livelihoods, undermine food security, permit the proliferation of small arms, displace large numbers of people, and divert resources meant for development. Vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth, IDPs, and indigenous people are particularly impacted.

As such, there is a need to support Government efforts to mitigate the challenges to sustainable peace and development by addressing the underlying determinants of the conflicts, building capacities to prevent conflict and promoting social cohesion among communities.

Goals and objectives

The overall goal of the programme is to support Nigeria's response to end the conflict between herdsman and farmers in Benue and Nasarawa States through an integrated and comprehensive response that bridges the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Specifically, it aims to: (i) reduce vulnerability of affected persons through community-based strategies that enhance the ability of communities to identify and mitigate risks; (ii) expand livelihoods and establish synergies between farming and livestock activities; (iii) prevent violent conflicts and build peace through local peace committees that foster dialogue, reconciliation and social cohesion; (iv) enhance coherence of legislative and policy frameworks, and develop a multi-stakeholder platform for a holistic, human security-based response to the crisis.



DURATION

October 2018 — December 2022



UN IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

UNDP, UNHCR, FAO



OTHER KEY PARTNERS

Federal Government of Nigeria
Benue and Nasarawa State
Governments, Institute for Peace
and Conflict Resolution, ECOWAS



BENEFICIARIES

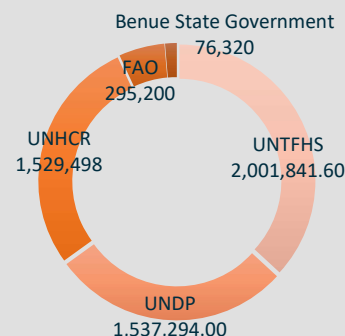
1,261,000



TOTAL BUDGET

US\$ 5,440,153.60

POOLING OF RESOURCES



Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of this pilot programme are 1,261,000 people of Benue and Nasarawa States, with a focus on the local populations of five areas mainly from the Tiv and Idoma ethnic groups as well as the predominantly Fulani herder community with a balance of 40% male and 60% female. The beneficiaries also consist of approximately 200,000 IDPs and returnees, and the programme also reaches out to host communities as well as the private sector.

Applying the Human Security approach

A piecemeal approach will not address the pervasive cycle of violence and multi-faceted nature of the herder-farmer conflict. Instead, a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict while reducing the vulnerability of communities to protection risks is required. As such, the programme outlines a comprehensive response to the crisis, including elements of protection, early recovery, peacebuilding and dialogue. These elements are designed to build synergies across programme activities for sustainable results and long-term preventive capacities for communities to achieve peace and development.

The programme is the first integrated UN programme responding to the farmer-herder conflicts. It recognizes the challenges to human security of both farmers and herders and activities are thus structured around addressing these risks to safeguard livelihoods and promote peace. By institutionalizing improved structural protection mechanisms and dispute resolution at the local level, the programme creates a conducive environment to rebuild sustainable livelihoods and a more robust local economy. Being tailored to the real needs of people based on an in-depth study of the situation, programme initiatives are highly context-specific.

Furthermore, the pilot programme applies the human security approach to contribute to the implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus where practical lessons and best practices will inform policies in Benue and Nasarawa State as well as other parts of Nigeria. Likewise, this programme has a strong potential to contribute to regional dialogues on conflict prevention, mitigation of climate-induced resource scarcity and competition, and sustainable development in complex environments.

Achievements

- The programme sustainably strengthened community protection by establishing Protection Action Groups (PAGs) in all 10 communities to prevent conflict and enhance social cohesion through advocacy, awareness-raising, and capacity-building. The programme also supported the organization of the Farmer-Herder Peace Forum, which facilitated regular dialogue sessions among farmers, herders, and other stakeholders, contributing to state policy development and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.
- The programme also strengthened the livelihood opportunities and economic empowerment of farmers and livestock breeders. It provided vocational training to 400 beneficiaries, primarily IDPs and locals, along with the provision of start-up kits to support economic self-reliance. Additionally, 200 people received skills upgrades in crop farming, as well as seedlings and farm tools. Boreholes were also established to provide water for farming and domestic use, directly benefiting displaced farmers and supporting 826,600 community members.
- The programme strengthened peacebuilding mechanisms at both the state and community levels by training PAGs on conflict reporting, resolution, and violence prevention. In collaboration with state governments, the programme designed and installed an Early Warning and Early Response System (EWERS). The EWERS application was successfully tested and accepted, with both state governments providing control rooms, ICT equipment, and training for 40 staff on equipment management. This initiative also facilitated the legislative process for the Peace Agency bill, which aims to institutionalize peacebuilding activities linked to the EWERS control rooms.
- The programme supported the Regional Summit in Abuja, Nigeria, themed “Promoting Regional Peace and Climate Security in the Livestock and Crop Farming Sectors.” The summit brought together representatives from Chad, Niger, Benin, and Cameroon, alongside traditional authorities, private and international organizations, diplomats, media, academia, and policymakers. It provided a platform for developing conflict resolution techniques, peacebuilding mechanisms, and promoting dialogue on advancing conflict resolution, climate security, and peace in the livestock and crop farming sectors.



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