

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS A PATHWAY TO TRANSFORMED AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

TRENDS AND PROSPECTS  
FROM NORTHEAST NIGERIA

KEY INSIGHTS



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# **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS A PATHWAY TO TRANSFORMED AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES**

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## RE-WEAVING SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACE THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Since violence, conflict and peace all shape and are shaped by macro- and micro-economic dynamics, economic development policy, particularly for conflict-affected states, must take account of this and be designed to strengthen peace. A minimum requirement in this regard should be that such strategies should be participatory and inclusive in order to counter the marginalisation that gives rise to discontent and radicalisation.

For Nigeria, however, economic development in isolation cannot achieve peace and stability. This is because peace is not just about the absence of violence or conflict. Rather, it is when people anticipate and manage their conflicts and differences without violence, while making equitable progress in their lives. Economic development must thus encompass democratic, transparent and accountable systems of governance, a vibrant and empowered civil society, rule of law that incorporates the protection of human rights for all, and equal access to opportunities, services and support, to achieve sustainable peace that benefits all Nigerians.

Crucially also, Nigeria must now begin to respond constructively to the challenge of structural violence which validates harm, including unprovoked violence against minority or marginalised groups. Failing to do so legitimises other forms of violence. For example, score settling and reprisal attacks in the case of farmer–pastoralist conflicts, which encourages more violence, resulting from past experiences, reinforces the idea that justice for the victims of violence is unattainable. Such unfairness erodes resilience and undermines stability while also contributing to growing unemployment and low economic investments that support human development.

Fierce competition over access to scarce economic or natural resources is a key contributory factor to violence and conflicts in Nigeria. This is especially aggravated when livelihoods are based on environmentally damaging practices such as illegal mining or overgrazing. As such, long-term peace and stability within and between groups would really only be possible when people have fair access to opportunities to build sustainable livelihoods, combined with general well-

## KEY INSIGHTS

being, justice and security, within a context of representative and accountable governance.

Progressing human development is at the heart of this, and local residents in Borno and Kano echo the growing urgency for this need to be met. Part of this is understanding what local communities perceive as important to their own development. This ensures ownership and buy-in. Through consultations, residents in Borno and Kano overwhelmingly indicated that centres for skills development would be vital to addressing the crisis of idle youth. This requires urgent attention as the ongoing youth crisis is laying the grounds for Boko Haram recruitment and broader violence within communities.

Another need expressed by local communities is for small business capital or financing, as well as skills development to run businesses. In addition, there is a call for skilled community members to mentor youth through apprenticeships and skills transfer initiatives. If programmes of this nature encourage inter-ethnic learning opportunities, this will promote greater interdependence between ethnic groups, which can contribute to broader social cohesion. These conditions would address the grievances and vulnerabilities that lead to violence and would also increase the opportunity cost for groups and communities to engage in violence.

With collaboration among stakeholders – community leaders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development agencies – it is important for government to stimulate market-driven economic development that is collectivist in nature and linked to negotiated off-take

agreements with the private sector. This limits competition over economic resources, such as water and arable land, and ensures sustainability for economic development efforts. Such an approach is essential because people will abide by arrangements if they produce incentives that do not undermine their economic survival.

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In the context of mitigating farmer–herder conflicts, integrated agricultural sector economic development projects should be considered for their potential to transform conflict systems. An example would be to support women and youths to set up small-scale value chain businesses that convert agricultural crop waste into cattle feed, while providing access to affordable loans and technical assistance to small-scale farmers to improve yields on smaller parcels of farmland, which can then provide more grazing land for pastoralists.

Drawing from the key drivers of recruitment to violence, strengthening the private sector will be essential. The private sector is vital for creating jobs, improving the population's purchasing power, stimulating local economies and promoting investments that fuel business expansion. It also tends to recover faster than public sector initiatives following conflict. It is therefore important

for government to incentivise private sector development in post-conflict settings by creating the enabling business environment that encourages sustained investment and economic growth and strengthens local enterprises to create jobs and stimulate the economy. Direct government support can come in the form of economic infrastructure development, improved security architecture, better technical education investments to prepare the local workforce, and tax breaks for manufacturers that relocate their operations to conflict-affected parts of the country. Private sector development can have a positive impact in post-conflict situations if implemented in a way that is sensitive and addresses contextual social, economic and political characteristics with a focus on marginalised groups whose grievances can be manipulated by insurgent or violent groups.

To fight corruption, which significantly encumbers development and governance outcomes for Nigerians, it is crucial to address the lack of transparency of critical financial and other information that is fundamental to economic development. This includes greater transparency over budgets and revenues; strengthening

institutional capacity, processes and systems that block leakages and opportunities for corruption; and providing incentives that increase the political will to tackle impunity, holding public officers accountable and punishing those that are complicit in corruption.

Technology can enable government to achieve these objectives by building digital platforms to manage government finances, promote personnel integrity, and create transparency in key risk areas of government operations such as procurement and contract negotiations. Combining these efforts with a strong and independent audit system, backed by a well-resourced judiciary, would move Nigeria forward in combatting pervasive administrative, political and grand corruption. To support this, an environment that enables strong and accountable civil society organisations to provide government oversight is crucial. Ultimately, what is most important is a policy thrust by government, backed by a sound strategy that prioritises 'long term, high return institution building activities', coupled with the justice infrastructure and political will to hold those that transgress accountable.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the Government of Nigeria

- 1. The Government of Nigeria must commit to an inclusive development agenda that will address the disparities in human development between the north and south of the country** so that marginalised communities can better adapt to and overcome shocks that induce scarcity, such as economic downturns, climate change and persistent instability. This includes prioritising greater funding for educational facilities, hospitals and utility infrastructure. This is also necessary to support communities in Kano and Borno to overcome the material deprivation caused by instability and violence.
- 2. The pervasive problem of idle youth in the northeast of Nigeria must be dealt with urgently and decisively.** One approach would involve Nigeria addressing macro-economic volatility, driven largely by external trade shocks and the country's reliance on oil export earnings. This situation continues

to erode government revenues and weaken public expenditure on critical infrastructure that would create economic impacts domestically. Skills development centres, knowledge-sharing programmes, investment in vocational education and access to capital can help youths to become active participants in Nigeria's economy, thereby contributing to inclusive growth and stability.

- 3. Nigeria must begin to pursue a deliberate and aggressive macro-economic policy that improves budgetary planning and execution, and provides a platform for sustained economic diversification and non-oil-sector growth as key priorities.** The process of achieving this should involve de-linking public capital expenditures from oil revenues and adopting an appropriate fiscal policy that shores up government savings, ensures intergenerational equity and suits the country's social and economic challenges.

4. **Strengthening budget preparation and execution, and paying particular attention to pro-poor expenditures within government budgets to meet the targets of the SDGs**, will also be central to improving the efficiency and impact of government spending, which will improve service delivery to Nigerians. Weaknesses in budget implementation, transparency and monitoring have resulted in many incomplete projects and the mismanagement of public funds.
  5. **Nigeria must also now consider the privatisation of many state-owned companies that hold dominant actor status in strategic sectors of the national economy.** Corruption, poor management and underperformance have eroded the potentials of such state-owned companies and turned them into a significant financial drain on the treasury. Privatisation will drive a profit motive that accelerates efficiency and growth, promote competition that creates innovation and progress, and create opportunities for smaller businesses to operate within the economy and generate employment.
  6. **It is essential that structural violence is addressed decisively so that score settling and reprisal attacks are minimised.** This requires short-term interventions to prevent the spread of light arms as well as effective channels to deliver justice for victims, and medium-term interventions that address the growing scarcity faced by pastoralist–farmer communities that are most likely to participate in revenge attacks.
  7. **Projects to address the pastoralist–farmer conflicts can come through development projects in the integrated agricultural sector**, such as supporting women and youth to start small-scale value chain businesses – for example, small businesses that turn crop waste into food for cattle.
  8. **Incentivise private sector investment and development in post-conflict communities** by improving the security infrastructure, introducing tax holidays, waivers or subsidies, and investing in power systems, transport infrastructure and programmes that progress the capabilities of marginalised local communities. For example, establish cottage industries that create opportunities for employment for local populations and eliminate the incentives for engaging in violence while also decreasing vulnerability.
- To the international community**
1. **Assist marginalised communities in acquiring capital for small businesses** as well as programmes or information materials on how to start and manage a small business.
  2. **Undertake research that informs the skills that would be in demand in the coming decade** so that the government, the private sector and civil society can work together in exposing youth to meaningful skills development opportunities.

## KEY INSIGHTS

3. **Work with the government and local communities to develop and support projects that empower small-scale integrated agriculture businesses**, such as turning crop waste into cattle feed, which can also have a positive effect on farmer–pastoralist relations.
4. **To tackle corruption, the international community can help with the design and rollout of electronic systems** that manage state finances and create transparency in key risk areas such as procurement.

### To civil society

1. **Ultimately, Nigeria’s central challenge is one of building strong domestic institutions** with the capacity to strengthen transparency and accountability systems and support long-term growth and development. Civil society and government must therefore work closely to monitor, report and promote a culture of openness and accountability in government spending on public capital projects to minimise waste and corruption.
2. **Civil society can play an important role in helping youth secure apprenticeships with established craftsmen or entrepreneurs.** Such programmes can help prevent youth from being recruited into violent extremist groups and gangs, while facilitating skills transfer and increasing their future income prospects.
3. **To prevent competition over scarce resources from turning violent, civil society and NGOs must foster greater collaboration with the private sector**, through which impactful investment, skills transfer and market-driven development can help bring marginalised communities into the national economy.
4. **Civil society collaboration with the private sector can also help reduce scarcity of grazing land, a factor at the heart of intensifying farmer–pastoralist conflicts.** For example, assisting small-scale farmers to implement systems that will improve crop yields on smaller parcels of land can help create more grazing land for pastoralists without harming the profits of small-scale farmers.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## **ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION**

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) was launched in 2000 by officials who worked in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with the aim of ensuring that lessons learnt from South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy are taken into account and utilised in advancing the interests of national reconciliation across Africa. The IJR works with partner organisations across Africa to promote reconciliation and socio-economic justice in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing democratic transition. The IJR is based in Cape Town, South Africa.

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