

RESPONSES TO  
CONFLICTS **BETWEEN**  
**FARMERS AND**

**HERDERS** IN THE MIDDLE  
BELT OF NIGERIA:

**MAPPING PAST EFFORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

CHRIS M.A. KWAJA, PH.D.  
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JANUARY 2018



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## ABOUT THE FORUM ON FARMER AND HERDER RELATIONS IN NIGERIA (FFARN)

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This policy brief is a product of the Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN). FFARN is a network of academics and practitioners from governmental and non-governmental institutions who work on peace and conflict/security issues in Nigeria and who have experience responding to farmer-herder conflict at sub-national, national, and/or regional levels. FFARN provides a monthly platform for interdisciplinary exchange and joint identification of areas for additional research and practice to generate strong evidence for multilevel policy influence on farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

The concept of this policy brief was developed at the first forum of FFARN in August 2017 and validated by members of the FFARN at the second forum on September 23, 2017. Practitioners and scholars jointly prioritized the need for an assessment of existing responses of state and non-state actors to farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria to identify past and ongoing interventions, challenges, weaknesses, and to recommend actions for the future.

Members of FFARN represent academic and practitioner institutions including:

- *Abdulsalami Abubakar Institute for Peace and Sustainable Development (AAIPSD), Niger state, Nigeria*
- *Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria*
- *Centre for Ethno-Religious and Peace Studies, Federal University Wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria*
- *Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Nigeria*
- *Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Nigeria*
- *Global Sentinel-Media Partner*
- *Institute for Peace Studies and Social Rehabilitation, University of Abuja, Nigeria*
- *Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria*
- *Innovative Strategy for Human Development*
- *Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)*
- *Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Commission (NSCDC)*
- *Plateau State Peacebuilding Agency*
- *Civil Organisations Research Advocacy and Funding Initiatives Development (CORAFID)*
- *Interfaith Mediation Center*
- *Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Abuja Province*
- *Mercy Corps*
- *Pastoralist Resolve (PARE)*

- *Peace and Security Network*
- *Search for Common Ground*
- *Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP)*
- *United States Institute for Peace (USIP)*
- *Independent Anthropology, Peacebuilding, and Conflict Transformation Experts: Professor Tukur Baba, Dayo Kusa (PhD), Chom Bagu, and Joseph Ochogwu (PhD).*

Search for Common Ground is the convener of FFARN. Search for Common Ground appreciates the contribution and support of all members of FFARN, as well as staff of Search for Common Ground - Nigeria and the Global Affairs and Partnerships (GAP) Team for their contribution to the development of this policy brief. The FFARN and this publication were made possible, in part, by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York. However, the statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Violent confrontations between farmers and herders have become a defining feature of inter-group relations among communities in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Environmental degradation, social manipulation of ethno-religious biases, and technological advances have altered relationships that were historically interdependent and mutually beneficial. Conflicts between farmers and herders exist on a large scale, both within Nigeria and the greater Lake Chad Basin and Sudano-Sahel region; however, states within Nigeria's Middle Belt have witnessed an increase in casualties as consequences of these fractured relationships. Crop damage, attacks on cattle, and cattle theft/rustling are major conflict triggers that initiate violence between the two groups, which often leads to cycles of revenge attacks.

The tense relationships and cycles of attacks have killed thousands of people and displaced more than 62,000 people in the Middle Belt. The instability and displacement have resulted in extensive loss of crops and cattle in an area considered to be the "food basket" of Nigeria. The federal and state governments, civil society, religious groups, and communities have responded to the different manifestations of this conflict in a variety of ways, but key gaps and opportunities remain to better prevent violence and improve inter-communal relations.

This policy brief examines existing responses by government and non-government actors at the community, state, and national levels to the protracted conflict between farmers and herders, and offers some recommendations for the management or resolution of this conflict.

# INTRODUCTION

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Violent confrontations between farmers and herders are prevalent and pervasive in Central and West Africa. From Mali to South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo to Nigeria, climate variability, environmental degradation, and socio-political upheaval have shifted pastoralist migratory patterns and increased tensions between farmers and herders. These changes have increased confrontations between farmers and herders, leading to violent conflict, deaths, forced displacement and migration, erosion of inter-communal relationships, as well as the destruction of agricultural and livestock outputs.<sup>1</sup> The increased competition for land and water resources further exacerbate everyday conflicts (unrelated to resources) when they occur. For instance, when cattle destroy the crops of a subsistence farmer, it is a direct loss to the farmer's livelihood, and this may exacerbate pre-existing tensions between ethnic groups if the farmer and herder are of different ethnicities, sparking broader conflict and violence. Similar examples play out for herders when cattle are attacked and killed, often in retaliation to destruction of farmland. In Nigeria, the consequences have been severe. More than 6,000 people have been killed and over 62,000 people have been displaced in the Middle Belt states of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau alone. Despite the escalating and expanding violence, there have been no systematic consolidations or assessments of what has been done to this point to address farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. The Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN), a body of the most prominent scholars and practitioners working on farmer-herder conflicts, agreed that a review of state and non-state responses to-date needed to be the next step to serve as the foundation for future initiatives to curb the violence.

This report is the product of collaboration between scholars and practitioners in the FFARN. It will build off the conflict analysis presented in *Past is Prologue: Criminality and Reprisal Attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria*<sup>2</sup> and provide a mapping of past and ongoing initiatives addressing farmer-herder conflict, identifying gaps in the response. It will then offer suggestions on how to fill these gaps in the midst of rising tensions in the Middle Belt.

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- 1 Mercy Corps, Abuja. (2015). The Economic Costs of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace: Effects of Farmers-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt on State, Sector, and National Economies. *Mercy Corps*. Retrieved from <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy%20Corps%20Nigeria%20State%20Costs%20of%20Conflict%20Policy%20Brief%20July%202015.pdf>
  - 2 Bagu, C., Smith, K. (2017). *Past is Prologue: Criminality and Reprisal Attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria*. *Search for Common Ground*.

# MAPPING OF CURRENT RESPONSES TO FARMER-HERDER VIOLENCE

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## Responses by Federal and State Governments

**Creation of Grazing Reserves:** In 1965, the northern regional government of Nigeria<sup>3</sup> initiated one of the first attempts to respond to the crisis of pastoralism that was linked to emerging conflicts between farmers and herders in the country. The *Northern Region Grazing Reserves Law of 1965* created corridors for the passage of migrating livestock and 415 grazing reserves throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> The reserves were envisioned to section off large swathes of land to be exclusively used by herders to graze their livestock. While initially considered a legislative solution, population growth, urbanization, and migration encroached on these designated areas, reducing herders' access and usage of the reserves. In addition, herders were often unable to find sufficient pasture and water within the confines of the reserves due to climate changes and poor maintenance. Keeping livestock in one place increases the animals' vulnerability to disease and banditry, which incentivized herders to keep their herds moving outside the boundaries of the reserves. The federal and state governments have been derelict in the upkeep of these reserves to meet these concerns of farmers and herders. Amidst the absence of a concrete response plan to label and enforce the law on cattle routes by governments at all levels, existing reserves are being distorted.<sup>5</sup>

**Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education:** The federal government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989 through Decree 41. It is presently known as *Nomadic Education Act, Cap No. 20 Laws of the Federation*. The main goal of the program was to economically and socially integrate nomadic pastoralists into the national life, through the provision of relevant, functional, and mobile basic education and livelihoods skills provision. It was also designed to help the pastoralists modernize their techniques of rearing cattle to maximize their economic potential, including dairy processing and marketing, animal vaccinations, and modern herding techniques.<sup>6</sup> The program on nomadic education currently suffers from dilapidated infrastructure and human resource deficits, primarily due to a lack of adequate funding from the federal government.<sup>7</sup>

**Deployment of Security:** The deployment of security agencies has been a dominant feature of the federal government's response to farmer-herder conflict. In Plateau state, a Special Task Force – Operation Safe Haven (STF-OSH) – has been deployed since 2001 to restore law and order. This Task Force is composed of officers

3 The nineteen northern states that make up the North Central, North East and North West were all part of the Northern regional government. The Northern regional government lasted between 1956 and 1966.

4 The Peace and Security Forum. (2017). Resolving the herders/farmers conflict in Nigeria, Policy Brief.

5 By virtue of the provisions of the *Land Use Act of 1976*, it is the responsibility of the State Government to implement policies on grazing and cattle routes.

6 See [www.ncne.gov.ng](http://www.ncne.gov.ng)

7 Alabi, T.C. (2015). Nigeria: 'Poor Funding, Insecurity Challenge to Nomadic Education'. *All Africa*. Retrieved from [www.allafrica.com/stories/201507161190.html](http://www.allafrica.com/stories/201507161190.html)

and infantry of the armed forces, including the police, with the mandate to restore order and stability. Recently, the federal government expanded its mandate to include Kaduna state, thereby replacing Operation *Harbin Kunama II*, (Scorpion Sting).<sup>8</sup> The justification for the replacement was anchored on the fact that the security situation faced by Plateau and Kaduna states was similar. There are reports that security agencies who are part of STF-OSH and were sent to protect at-risk farmer and herder communities have committed crimes and human rights violations, such as physical torture, extortion, and other forms of gender-based violence against the communities they were deployed to protect. In fact, the deployment of security agencies has often had the unintended consequence of breeding local resentment and further increasing divides, as many communities perceive them to be biased with one side. This perceived or actual bias risks alienating the communities and people they are meant to protect.

***The National Grazing Reserve (Establishment) Bill 2016:*** In 2016, the National Assembly attempted to pass legislation to address conflicts between farmers and herders through the controversial *National Grazing Reserve (Establishment) Bill 2016*, which ultimately was not passed. This is largely due to the fact that the *Land Use Act of 1978* vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, alienation, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors.<sup>9</sup> This attempt and others by the National Assembly to legislate on grazing reserves were in violation of the *Land Use Act of 1978* and perceived as a move to usurp the powers of the governors.

***State-level Legislations Prohibiting Open Grazing:*** Benue State Government enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017, on May 22, 2017, in response to the lingering conflict between farmers and herders in the state. Implementation of the law began on November 1, 2017. In the wake of the Benue State legislation, other states have considered similar legislation to respond to lingering conflicts between farmers and herders within their borders. For instance, the Taraba State Governor also signed the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill 2017 into law on July 24, 2017, to begin implementation on January 24, 2018. More analysis on the state level legislation in Benue and opportunities for violence prevention is contained in *The Implications of the Open-Grazing Prohibition & Ranches Establishment Law on Farmer - Herder Relations in the Middle Belt of Nigeria*.

***The Great Green Wall Initiative:*** In response to the economic, political, and security challenges posed by climate variability and environmental degradation, the African Union introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in 2007. The GGWI set out to create an 8,000km (nearly 5,000 miles) of trees along the southern Sahel, accompanied by rural development and ecosystem management initiatives, to combat the encroaching desertification of the Sahara Desert. In 2013, the Nigerian government answered the call by establishing the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA) to fight desertification, which has been responsible for the migration of herders from the northern part of the country to the Middle Belt region in search of water

8 Agande, B. (2017, April 20). Army launches Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna. *Vanguard News*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/army-launches-operation-harbin-kunama-ii-southern-kaduna/>

9 Land Use Decree No.6, Cap 202. *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria*.



and pasture.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of the GGWA is to create a green shelter-belt (wind-breaking trees), in the front line states of Borno, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara, to protect the northern part of the country against desert encroachment. The GGWA has established orchards and nurseries in northern Nigeria, as well as solar and wind-powered boreholes, but their activities have slowed down due to funding challenges from the federal government.<sup>11</sup>

***The Federal Government's Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan:*** In 2015, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) formulated what was referred to as a “comprehensive livestock development plan.” The plan was to address lingering conflict between farmers and herders across the country and develop grazing reserves as well as cattle routes, through a review of the existing program. Despite the fact that the Central Bank of Nigeria release the sum of N100 billion (nearly USD \$300 million) to the 36 states for this purpose, no state has been able to construct a ranch, reserve, or address the issue of stock route due to poor commitment to the issue.<sup>12</sup>

## Responses by Civil Society, Communities, and Other Non-State Actors

***Community-Level Conflict Management and Resolution:*** Traditional and community leaders have been major influencers in conflict management and resolution for localized conflicts between farmers and herders. Many victims perceive formal courts to be corrupt or a waste of time, based on their low adjudication rate. In cases where there have been adjudications, such as in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area (LGA), some individuals have reported that the results further entrenched divisions between the two groups as they declared a winner and a loser.<sup>13</sup> For this reason and in contexts where the state has not been able to effectively respond to localized conflicts, traditional and community leaders have been important bridges within this governance and security vacuum.<sup>14</sup> These leaders are viewed as “the poor man’s high court” and have made significant contributions to peacebuilding processes through the trust and credibility they have within the communities.<sup>15</sup> Farmers and herders have generally lived peacefully and in symbiosis for decades, and the desire for a sustained, mutually beneficial social relationship is a key consideration why farmers and herders prefer the traditional conflict management mechanisms. The participatory nature of traditional conflict resolution, where all the conflicting parties are involved in the process, makes it easy for parties to the conflict to abide or accept the decision.

10 Kwaja, A.M.C. (2013, April 1). In Search of Humanitarian Action Plan: Combating Desertification in the Sahel Region of West Africa. *Searchlight*. Retrieved from <https://futurechallenges.org/local/searchlight/in-search-of-humanitarian-action-plan-combating-desertification-in-the-sahel-region-of-west-africa/>

11 Fulani, I. D. (2017, July 17). Poor funding affecting Nigeria’s Great Green Wall Project. *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/237217-poor-funding-affecting-nigerias-great-green-wall-project.html>

12 International Crisis Group. (2017, September 19). Herders against Farmers: Nigeria’s Expanding Deadly Conflict. *International Crisis Group Africa Report* (No. 252), 10. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/252-nigerias-spreading-herder-farmer-conflict.pdf>

13 Interview. (2017, September 6). Barkin Ladi Local Government Area, Plateau State.

14 Lawry, S.W. (1990). Tenure policy towards common property natural resources management in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Natural Resource Journal*, Vol. 3 (No. 2).

15 Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme. (2012, December). Watching us die on CNN: Report on the study of community-level conflict management mechanisms in the Niger Delta, Middle Belt and North East zones of Nigeria, Vol 1: Analytic Report, Abuja.

***The Use of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT):*** The Middle Belt region is experiencing a “commercialization of cattle theft or rustling,”<sup>16</sup> to meet the demand of an underground and informal criminal economy that has taken advantage of the protracted conflicts between farmers and herders to steal cattle.<sup>17</sup> The increasing price of cattle and the vast syndicate for stolen cattle has made migrating livestock particularly vulnerable to banditry and criminal attacks. This banditry and theft has become one of the features of the social conflict between farmers and pastoralists, with more sophisticated groups of rustlers, coordinating attacks to profit off cattle theft and trade.<sup>18</sup> Bandits profit from instability and often reinforce or ignite existing communal divisions. When cattle are stolen, herders also often respond through violence, creating a cycle of reprisal attacks. In response to cattle theft, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), in partnership with Zycom Surveillance Nigeria and Datamars of Switzerland, has developed and adopted a Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID) system that is capable of tracking and monitoring the movement of cattle.<sup>19</sup> The Cattle Rustling Information System (CATRIS), which was designed by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) is able to provide real time information and alerts on cattle rustling in states within the North West region of the country. CITAD conducted a pilot test of the CATRIS in Kaduna, Kano, and Zamfara states.<sup>20</sup> Additional research is needed on the impact of these initiatives and whether they have led to the return of stolen cattle.

**Programmatic Interventions by Civil Society Organizations:** In 2012, Mercy Corps launched a program on Community-Based Conflict Management and Cooperative Use of Resources (CONCUR), in four states of the Middle Belt – Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau. The intervention focused on working with local actors such as the Pastoralist Resolve (PARE) and the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN).<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Search for Common Ground launched a program in 2015 to build social and cultural bridges between farmers and herders in Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau states. The program used dialogue and mediation as tools for building and strengthening intercultural understanding between the two groups; as well as supporting efforts towards the conflict prevention, management and resolution as the case may be. Through the use of mediation, Nigerian-based organizations and agencies such as the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre (IMC), Justice Development and Peace Caritas, Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) have been deeply involved in series intervention with some degree of success that are linked to fostering harmony, rebuilding trust and the cessation of violence in several communities throughout the Middle Belt.

16 Kwaja, A.M.C. (2013, March 13). Trends and patterns of violence and insecurity in Plateau State, Presentation at the Peace Architecture Dialogue (PAD). *Search for Common Ground*.

17 Kwaja, A.M.C. (2014). Blood, cattle and cash: Cattle rustling and Nigeria’s burgeoning underground economy. *West Africa Insight*, Vol.4 (No. 3).

18 Ibrahim, J. (2014, March 24). State crisis, pastoralist transhumance and rural banditry. *Daily Trust*. Retrieved from [www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/opinion/state-crisis-pastoralist-transhumance-and-rural-banditry/41989.html](http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/opinion/state-crisis-pastoralist-transhumance-and-rural-banditry/41989.html)

19 Ella-Ejeh, J. (2017, September 7). Cattle Breeders Launches Digital Technology to Combat Cattle Rustling. *Global Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://globalsentinelng.com/2017/09/07/cattle-breeders-launches-digital-technology-combat-cattle-rustling/>

20 Ya’u, Y.Z. (2017, September 20). Interview.

21 In one of its reports, on the cost of conflict and benefits of peace, Mercy Corps argues that Nigeria stand to benefit up to \$13.7 billion annually in a scenario of peace between farmers and pastoralists in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau States. Mercy Corps. (2017). CONCUR Impact Evaluation: Reducing Conflict and Increasing Local Economic Activities. *Mercy Corps*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Conflict-Mitigation-Economic-Growth-Nigeria-2017.pdf>

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS GAPS IN RESPONSES AND REDUCE FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT

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Based on the mapping that our group conducted, the FFARN identified nine key recommendations for ways to strengthen, replace, or develop new responses to effectively address these conflicts:

## Recommendations for Federal and State Governments

***The federal government should review the existing structure of cattle routes and reserves:*** In concert with the state and local governments, the federal government should conduct a comprehensive review on the existing structures providing for cattle routes and reserves to determine which aspects are working, which are not, and what challenges remain to be addressed. Since the *Land Use Act* vests the ownership and management powers of land with the State Governors, the reviews should be state-specific and recognize the dynamics of urbanization, population growth, and climate variability. Given that the challenges of farmer-herder conflict are often conflated with ethno-religious and political considerations, reviews of the current strategies and their effectiveness should be done in a transparent and consultative manner, with attention given to how monies appropriated for this purpose were utilized.

***The federal government should review the current program on nomadic education:*** The federal government should partner with the state and local governments to undertake a comprehensive review of the nomadic education program. The process should include extensive participation of representatives from the pastoralist community to ensure it reflects the expectation of the herders in terms of timing and the realization of the key objectives of providing the nomadic children with quality education, as well as training on modern herding. The review should also access existing financial, technical, and human resources with a view of strengthening the structures for service delivery.

***The federal government should move beyond the deployment of security agencies and exercise alternative community-based responses to farmer-herder conflicts:*** Military deployment in response to conflicts between farmers and herders has become the popular choice of action by the federal government in many locations. Though the military can play a key role in stabilization, the military is currently deployed in nearly every state and tends to respond to local conflict issues that are better served by the police or community-based mechanisms. The federal government should collaborate with the state and local governments to build up alternative responses that utilize dialogue and mediation as de-escalation techniques with the conflicting parties. Security agents need clear rules of engagement over their conduct, management of internal security, and respect to human rights and international humanitarian law. Above all, their focus should be on guaranteeing the safety of the citizens they were deployed to protect, by not deepening the animosity of the herders and farmers through unprofessional or criminal behaviors.

***The federal government should provide adequate funding for the Great Green Wall Initiative:*** The federal government developed the Great Green Wall Initiative to address desertification and environmental challenges affecting the northern states. However, due to lack of funds their activities have been slow. In addition, the climate and environmental issues are increasingly affecting more areas of Nigeria that are not currently provided for under the GGWA's mandate. In order to make it more proactive, the federal government should fully fund the GGWA and partner with the state and local governments, the private sector, and communities to build local buy-in and implement the initiative. The GGWA should also expand their mandate to include desertification and climate-affected states such as Kaduna, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau as part of the geographic scope for the implementation of the initiative.

***The federal, state, and local governments should address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons:*** In order to reduce the proliferation, access to, and use of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) by unauthorized persons, the federal government, in concert with state and local governments and civil society, should design and implement a community-centered program on disarmament that is focused on improving community security. This program should also target local manufacturers of SALWs with a view to ensuring that while they produce weapons that are allowable by law, their activities do not undermine the security of the country and its citizens. For persons involved in the manufacture and sale of SALWs, there should be a certification program to ensure such persons are properly registered, with specific reference to their identity and locations. The goal of the disarmament program should not just be to remove the arms but to reduce incentives for taking up arms and enhancing the sense of safety and security of farmers and herders. An effective disarmament program therefore should include the demobilization programs to manage the grievance of the young people serving as the foot soldiers as well as psychosocial support toward reintegrating them to embrace non-violence.

***Federal and state governments should support local structures of community security:*** Community protection structures that are deeply embedded in community policing should be established or strengthened, which can be modeled after the existing Neighbourhood Watch Group (NWGs) of the Operation Rainbow in Plateau State. This initiative by the Plateau State Government provided an opportunity for communities to collaborate with security agents in crime prevention and conflict management in the state. The success of this approach would be dependent on a strong collaboration and synergy between the police, other law enforcement agencies and the communities in line with the principles of community based security.

***All government actors should leverage on Information, Communication and Technology (ICT):*** Governments at all levels should partner with the civil society, the private sector, constituency-based groups such as MAC-BAN, and other stakeholders, in the use of ICT as a critical enabler in tracking and monitoring the movements of cattle. The strategy should be anchored on a real-time response system that enables local actors to engage on issues before or as they unfold. Establishing that the technology is accessible, affordable, and effective is a major incentive for the herders to invest and utilize the technology.

## Recommendations for Civil Society, Communities, and Other Non-State Actors

***Civil society should support local mechanisms for conflict management and resolution:*** Though traditional and community leaders do not have any constitutional role in governance, they are often influential in local governance issues and have been key pillars in establishing peace, security, and stability across communities in Nigeria. CSOs and NGOs can provide technical and financial assistance to traditional and community leaders to strengthen mediation and non-violent conflict management skills. Since traditional and community leaders are often the first line of support called upon in times of violence, enabling them with conflict management skills can help de-escalate conflicts when they emerge.

***Support community architectures for peace and security:*** In concert with governmental institutions, civil society and development partners should establish community architectures for peace and security. The architecture would include inclusive and participatory platforms for dialogue and conflict management, where community leaders can take responsibility to reach agreements, share land resources, and develop dispute resolution techniques and procedures in conjunction with local authorities. These platforms can be modeled after the existing *Peace Architecture Dialogues* already functioning in Adamawa, Borno, Nasarawa, Kaduna, and Plateau states that serve as interactive and solutions-oriented platforms for early warning and early response.

## CONCLUSION

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This policy brief serves to consolidate the responses to farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. Despite the protracted nature and character of the conflicts between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt, efforts have been made to address the rising tensions. Despite these efforts, challenges remain. In light of this review, there is a clear need to assess the effectiveness of these responses within the broader context of the state's responsibility to protect its citizens, as well as the ability of communities to build or strengthen their management of local conflicts. Farmers and herders have had relationships that were symbiotic and mutually beneficial for large periods of Nigeria's history. The current breakdown of social, economic, and political relations between the two groups has not gone so far that it cannot be reversed. With clear and targeted engagement on the drivers of conflict in the Middle Belt, with full support of state and non-state actors, violence between farmers and herders can be prevented.

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