

# Policyweekly

## | Prisoners of Climate Crises



### Policy Recommendations

- 1 There is a need to increase climate security dialogues at the local level.
- 2 Projects and programmes in locations prone to climate crisis should factor in climate change best practices and resilience in their design.
- 3 There is a need to identify and build the resilience of local communities affected by the climate crisis.
- 4 There is a need to strengthen humanitarian interventions through funding and other measures.
- 5 There is a need to tackle natural resource conflicts.
- 6 Agricultural interventions should align with climate change resilience.
- 7 There is a need to increase the push for reductions in greenhouse emissions, a major driver of climate change.
- 8 Building bridges between climate and security institutions is necessary for a more sustainable impact on climate security.

### Introduction

Climate change conversations are increasingly gaining traction globally. The climate change conference train has been chauffeured worldwide for twenty-seven years, where world leaders, environmental activists and other stakeholders meet to discuss commitments to reduce greenhouse emissions and achieve climate change adaptability. This year's COP28, as it is tagged, will be the twenty-eighth conference and will take place in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In Africa, the Africa Climate Week (ACW) is an annual occurrence, often to prepare for the global climate change conference. The event allows policymakers, practitioners and civil society to discuss climate solutions and identify barriers, challenges and opportunities for interventions in Africa. This edition of the Nextier SPD Policy Weekly highlights the increasing impact of climate change on poverty and violent conflicts in Nigeria.

Africa's involvement in climate change conversations is unsurprising. About [346 million](#) people in Africa are food insecure, according to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the African Union. According to the Global

Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023 released by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), about [534 million out of 1.1 billion poor people](#) live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Multidimensional poverty largely manifests as educational, financial, nutritional, medical, housing, hygienic and electrical deprivations. The climate crisis will further exacerbate millions of Africans' ability to grow their food, access social services and achieve overall self-sustenance. Although Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto [rightly said](#) climate action is not a global north or a global south issue but a collective challenge, African demographics are increasingly experiencing high levels of poverty and humanitarian deprivations that will be worsened by climate change. Also, some African societies suffer from weak state institutions to provide basic services and, by extension, climate change resilience interventions.

### Nigeria in Focus

Nigeria's poverty statistics are not distinct from that of the broader Africa. About 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor, according to the [2022 Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index](#). Although the spread of deprivations across regions is not even, high socio-economic deficiencies exist, especially in rural settings. Rising humanitarian needs are unmet, coupled with inflation, widespread insecurity and a budding population. Nigeria's population is expected to reach [400 million by 2050](#), further deepening dependence on inadequate socio-economic structures and shrinking natural resources. A World Bank [report](#) affirms climate change will push most people into poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The climate crisis and poverty will also deepen security challenges. Socio-economic challenges reinforce political instability and outright violence. The more population in poverty, the more people are predisposed to political grievances, stiffer competition over access to natural resources, and higher expectations of government support. In *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, Collier and Hoeffler argue that internal rebellion impedes development and hurts the world's poorest countries.<sup>1</sup> Both scholars used a grievance-rebellion model to explain how inter-group hatred, political exclusion, and vengeance trigger violent conflicts, particularly in multi-ethnic societies. Many Nigerian communities are experiencing violent conflicts connected and unconnected to climate change, grievances, socio-economic malaise and governance gaps.

Nigeria suffers from the violent conflicts, climate change and massive vulnerabilities that herald the Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) countries. The shrinking Lake Chad and violent extremism in the region are affecting the livelihoods of local communities, increasing humanitarian needs and forcing thousands of people, mainly pastoralists, southwards. In *"Climate Change and Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin: Key Issues and Way Forward"*, Frimpong (2017) affirms that the impact of climate change in the LCB is evidenced in the form of depleted ecosystems, water shortages, crop failures, livestock deaths, collapsed fisheries, soil infertility and food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> The climate and disputes-induced southward movement are increasing violent conflicts.

While the southward movement of Lake Chad Basin dwellers may contribute to farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria, that is not the entire story. Beyond the influx of pastoralists from the LCB, herding communities are also found within the Nigerian space, where they have existed alongside other socio-economic identities, especially crop farmers. Hence, stiff competition resulting in violent conflicts has characterised some of their interactions. Residents in the southern region of Nigeria are predominantly sedentary farmers who face crop failures and industrialisation and are likely unaware of grazing routes destroyed by urbanisation. With both socio-economic groups affected by the climate crisis, other security challenges, industrialisation and politicisation of the conflicts, fierce disputes over land access have increased. According to the Nextier Violent Conflict Database, about 279 incidents of farmer-herder clashes resulted in 1,371 deaths and 314 injuries between 2020 and 2023.

Beyond these known wars, socio-economic and security factors are increasing dependency on natural resources, which climate change affects. Also, annual flooding, droughts and other climate-induced realities aggravate livelihood insecurity, resulting in displacements, transhumance, and illegal migration, of which many victims face humanitarian emergencies. In Nigeria, the flooding crisis is an annual occurrence, resulting in displacements, loss of lives and livelihoods, and humanitarian needs. These realities create new social identities, such as refugees, returnees, host communities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It has also [altered](#) gendered roles, where women increasingly become heads of households due to the absence of male figures, according to a [study](#) of community resilience and peacebuilding initiatives in Northeast Nigeria conducted by Nextier in 2019.

In other locations where violent conflicts are not immediately tied to climate change, the continued climate crisis may weaken communities' self-sufficiency, shrink natural resources and create fierce resource competition. These scenarios will lead to massive instability and social disruptions and may undermine those locations' peace and security frameworks. In other words, climate crisis threatens existing socio-economic, peace and security structures if adequate adaptive mechanisms are not implemented.

Climate change and violent conflicts are arguably two reinforcing variables. On the one hand, climate change will lead to new levels of poverty and violence. On the other hand, increased poverty and violence connected or unconnected to climate change may undermine or ultimately destroy climate change resilience programmes and structures in the violent hotspots. For instance, it has been established that climate change deepens fierce resource competition and contributes to state fragility. Also, the manifestations of violence are evidenced by attacks on public infrastructure such as health facilities, markets, livelihood sources, schools and water projects, which are all linked to climate change resilience. Also, climate change resilience programmes will likely not be deployed in active conflict locations and hard-to-reach areas.

### Some Climate Resilience Interventions in Nigeria

While the climate crisis has continued, the Nigerian government have responded in some ways. In 2021,

<sup>1</sup>Collier, P., and Hoeffler, A. (2000). *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=630727>

<sup>2</sup>Osei Frimpong. (2017). *Climate Change and Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin: Key Issues and Way Forward*. Africa Program. Wilson Centre. Policy Brief.

the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the National Adaptation Plan to strengthen Nigeria's capacity to plan and budget for actions that build resilience to climate change. The then Minister of Environment, Sharon Ikeazor, had said the project would help the country reduce vulnerability to climate change's impacts by building adaptive capacity and resilience. If the Plan works well, the propensity of climate change's initial consequences in leading to violent conflicts will be minimal. This is because of the established link between climate crisis and violence. If the government effectively builds resilience around climate change, affected populations will respond better to its realities without resorting to violence.

Earlier in 2012, the [Nigeria Erosion and Water Shed Management Project \(NEWMAP\)](#) was launched. The ten-year project was aimed at disaster risk prevention and management and is said to have improved the lives and safety of more than 12 million people in 23 states in Nigeria. In addition, 185,000 local government officials and community members were reportedly trained in environmental management to boost their knowledge of land degradation, soil and water conservation, catchment management planning, sustainable farming, and waste management.

Nigeria is a [signatory](#) to the Pan African Great Green Wall (PAGGW), an African Union's Great Green Wall initiative to reduce desertification, reduce poverty and address the effects of climate change and desertification. In Nigeria, the frontline states of the project are Adamawa, Borno, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Yobe, Zamfara, Bauchi and Gombe. One of the project's intervention goals is to plant twenty-six million trees, provide solar and wind-powered boreholes, construct mini dams and skill acquisition centres, and distribute wooden stoves to discourage the cutting down of trees.

Nevertheless, Nigeria's House of Representatives, in August 2023, reportedly [berated](#) the Great Green Wall Agency for huge expenditures without commensurate results, particularly on spending ₦81 billion on planting trees in 11 states. This puts into perspective climate financing conversations and ensures that available funds are rightly used for the intended purpose and value for money achieved. While financial resources for climate security interventions may not be adequate, provided funds should be effectively used for their intended purpose. According to a [UNDP study](#), between 2014 and 2021, extremely fragile states received less multilateral climate finance compared to non-fragile states.

Furthermore, the Nigerian government created the National Council on Climate Change in 2022 to lead the nation's climate change response. The Council plays the lead collaborating and coordinating role among various government agencies, private sector players, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to mitigate climate change impact in the country. The Council's work revolves around Nigeria's National Policy on Climate Change, which focuses on rapid and sustainable socio-economic development and the goal of strengthening national initiatives to adapt to and mitigate climate change

by including all sectors in Nigeria. The National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy has focused on some key sectors for interventions, such as energy, agriculture, water, coastal areas, forestry and land use, transport, health and information communication technology.

These intervention areas, ideally, would mitigate climate change impacts on Nigeria's vulnerable populations and reduce the propensity of climate change-induced instability and fragility. However, more must be done to fortify communities, improve impact and achieve sustainability.

### Moving Forward

To discuss climate security in Nigeria and the broader African continent is to analyse existential issues and not in a futuristic sense. However, how these issues could get worse without adequate interventions is inevitable. There is a need to embark on some short- and long-term efforts to salvage the population suffering and threatened by climate security.

#### **Increase climate security conversations in Nigeria:**

Globally, climate crisis conversations are largely in futuristic senses. There is a need to increase climate security dialogues at the local level to build awareness and identify local resilience efforts and opportunities for support and scalability. In Nigeria, relevant institutions such as the National Council on Climate Change, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), development commissions, security organisations, international development agencies and civil society should push these conversations and engagements.

#### **Including Climate Change Components in Programmes and Projects:**

Projects and programmes in locations prone to climate crisis should factor in climate change best practices and resilience in their design. Although this exists in some projects and coupled with the increasing traction of climate change conversations, more must be done to factor in climate change impacts when designing development interventions.

#### **Build the Resilience of Affected Populations:**

There is a need to identify and build the resilience of communities affected by the climate crisis. This should also involve identifying homegrown mechanisms, especially in climate change hotspots, that have helped communities survive climate change's direct and indirect consequences. With increased competition over natural resources, communities must be trained in peacebuilding and conflict-resolution mechanisms. This will help build their capacity to manage the realities of the climate crisis.

#### **Reduce Vulnerabilities:**

Humanitarian interventions often suffer from limited funding and local buy-in. For instance, despite their proactiveness in warning communities of impending disasters, NEMA often fails to fully [evacuate](#) the potential victims due to funding, capacity and collaboration gaps. Therefore, funds are needed to relocate and resettle victims of climate crises in Nigeria, such as flooding. In cases

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where funding may not be the issue, community members may be reluctant to relocate for personal reasons.

**Tackle Natural Resource Conflicts:** Resource conflicts are more evident in countries with weak governance, high levels of corruption, ethno-religious divisions and rent-seeking. Resolving these structural problems will help mitigate the propensity to resource struggle and the government's inability to prevent or resolve them effectively.

**Agricultural Interventions Should Align with Climate Change Resilience:** Agricultural interventions, especially for livestock and farming communities, should increasingly factor in the evolving realities of climate change, such as longer drought, crop failure, inadequate rainfalls and other realities. Indeed, agricultural programmes in Nigeria should be revolutionised in line with best practices on climate change resilience.

**More Push for Greenhouse Reduction:** Despite dependence on fossil fuels, many countries are committing to ambitious climate mitigation. There is a need to increase the push for reductions in greenhouse emissions, a major driver of climate change.

**Building Multisectoral Bridges:** Given that climate security falls at the intersection of climate and security institutions, there is a need to build bridges between these actors for a more sustainable impact on climate security.

### Conclusion

With Nigeria experiencing population growth, shrinking natural resources, climate crisis, violent conflicts and socio-economic challenges, climate security conversations are timely and must-have. Furthermore, the Nigerian government must push for these conversations and interventions to mitigate climate change impacts and prevent further harm across the country's existing and potential hotspots.

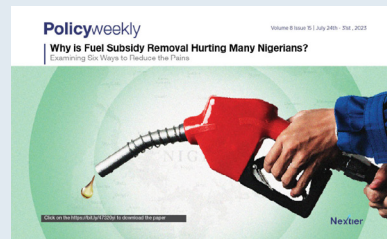
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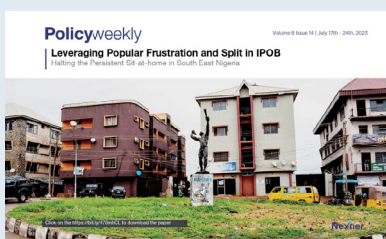
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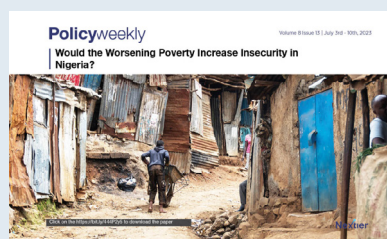
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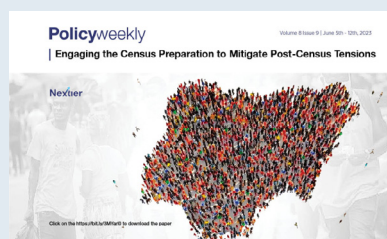
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