

# STRUCTURED SUMMARY

## ADAPTING THROUGH BRICOLAGE

### Building resilience in Northeast Nigeria

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#### Motivation

Herders and farmers in northeast Nigeria face overlapping climate, conflict and economic shocks. They, and especially women and youth, typically respond by creatively recombining available resources, skills and relationships – what we term bricolage.

#### Purpose

We explored how pastoralist and farming households in northeast Nigeria, particularly women and youth, adapt to climate, conflict and economic shocks. Specifically, we aimed to:

- identify and categorise the mechanisms, systems and processes pastoralists and farmers employ to respond to recurring shocks;
- identify the factors influencing pastoralists and farmers favoured responses to shocks; and
- investigate which approaches appear to be the most effective in building resilience in the eyes of local actors and their communities.

#### Approach and methods

In Adamawa and Yobe states of Northeast Nigeria, primary data were collected in 2025 through 14 focus group discussions (FGDs), 23 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 57 in-depth interviews with farmers, pastoralists and other local stakeholders. Analysis applied a thematic framework, triangulating insights across data sources to identify adaptive strategies, barriers and opportunities for strengthening resilience.

#### Findings

**Livelihood diversification is central to adaptation.** Households blend traditional and innovative practices across gender and age, increasingly irrigating with solar-powered pumps, carrying out petty trade and adding value to agricultural produce by processing.

**Informal networks fuel adaptation.** People draw on kinship ties, savings groups and intergenerational learning to adapt. Networks, in combination with formal support, contribute significantly to access to knowledge and resources.

**Women and youth have limited opportunities owing to barriers.** This is especially true in remote areas where land access is restricted, finance is limited, and strong social norms constrain mobility and decision-making.

**People are most resilient when individual effort, social networks and formal support align.** This combination mitigates recurrent shocks such as droughts, floods and economic hardship, enabling households to diversify and stabilise livelihoods.

## Policy implications

Policies should prioritise localised, inclusive and flexible adaptation strategies.

Governments and other development actors should strengthen informal resilience systems, support livelihoods of women and youth, and improve access to finance, land and climate information.

Interventions should be co-designed with communities to enhance their adaptive practices and to reduce structural social and economic inequalities, especially in conflict- and climate-affected areas.

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