Barriers to Building Resilience in and to Conflict in Nigeria

Recurrent humanitarian crises and disasters, pockets of armed conflict in the Niger Delta and North-East Nigeria continue to disrupt lives and livelihoods of rural Nigerians. Recurrent floods, landslides, sand-storms, locust attacks, and other man-made disasters in addition to a weak economy and insecurity increase people’s vulnerability to external shocks. A fragile security in particular poses a major threat to food security, poverty alleviation and development. Since 2009, the violent insurgency of Boko Haram has left more than 3.3 million Nigerians displaced and 17,000 dead. Building household and community resilience in times of crisis remain critical for preserving development gains and ensuring sustainable long-term growth. Mercy Corps’ research paper on Resilience and Conflict in Nigeria gives some insights how to contribute to successful programming in Nigeria by studying how household and community characteristics can be important sources of resilience when households deal with conflict and related shocks in fragile contexts.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
The research objectives were to assess the impact of armed conflict on key household welfare indicators, and to analyse what kind of household and community characteristics are important sources for resilience-building.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS
The stakeholders that were involved in this study were mainly community members and local government representatives.
APPROACH
Household resilience and community characteristics during conflict and fragile contexts were studied by first assessing the impact of shocks on key household welfare indicators (see World Bank’s Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS)).

Sources of resilience to conflict and other shocks were analysed as well as the role of capacities in mitigating the effects of armed conflict on household welfare:

a) Absorptive capacity include access to banking services, access/ use of insurance, risk aversion of the household head, and remittances;

b) Adaptive capacity implies livelihood diversification, social trust, and access to banking systems;

c) Transformative capacity refers to the presence of community groups, presence of basic community services and infrastructure, access to electricity for both household and community;

d) Wellbeing outcomes comprise child nutrition, economic status and food security.

A better understanding of conflict and other shock dynamics support an integrated approach to resilience-building and investments that are responsive to specific risks which affected populations in a complex environments face.

IMPACTS
The study suggests that programmes which build transformative capacities have the greatest potential to improve household resilience in the context of armed conflict and economic shocks.

Shocks have a major impact on household expenditures, also in the case study, affected communities referred to deteriorated household assets. Armed conflict also decreases household food security as indicated by a reduced food consumption score and household hunger scale. A significant impact on child nutrition, with significant increases in stunting and wasting rates, was further observed Limited access to health services, loss of property and other assets, and the overall lack of protection for persons with special needs further exacerbate the population’s vulnerabilities and capacities to build resilience.

LESSONS LEARNED
Food security and nutrition: The study revealed that 58% of the affected population were affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. Hence, improving household food security and nutrition is a key programmatic component.

Effects of conflict: Most households report that they have experienced one or more types of shocks, typically economic shocks combined with a health, climate, or asset-based shock.

Market access and infrastructure: Securing market access and infrastructure during times of conflict leads to reduced displacement, provides access to income-generating opportunities and assets for food security.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The study shows opportunities to invest in positive coping strategies to maintain a better enabling environment comprised of basic community services, like village institutions, markets, infrastructure, and access to energy sources to reduce the impact of armed conflict.

Programmes that facilitate absorptive (e.g. basic asset insurance for livestock) and adaptive capacities (e.g. diversifying livelihoods) contribute to resilience and peacebuilding during times of armed conflict.

For more information, go here or get in touch with Brad Sagara.