

Comprehensive Northern Nigeria Stabilization Strategy

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For privacy reasons, some names, locations, and dates may have been changed.
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Summary Highlights

1. Clarify the Conditions & Set Measurable Goals

Clearly outlining the on-ground realities will help establish realistic, measurable, and achievable goals. This strategy provides a roadmap to reduce mortality, decrease the number of IDP camps, boost school enrollment, and strengthen food security—each of which is a key factor contributing to instability in northern Nigeria.

2. Military & Police Security Initiatives

Dividing northern Nigeria into three subordinate theaters will enable more effective management of human, signal, and imagery intelligence. This structure will also support the efficient application of both kinetic and non-kinetic strategies.

3. Local Security & Rule of Law

Strengthening territorial presence and improving rapid response capabilities will help build local community structures that can sustain disarmament efforts through demobilization programs, amnesty initiatives, and reintegration support.

4. Farmer-Herder Conflict Transformation

Farmer-herder clashes have become one of the deadliest forms of conflict in Nigeria. Addressing land-use practices and grazing systems, along with developing local water-well infrastructure, tackles the underlying causes of many of these disputes. Establishing community-based mediation structures will help sustain long-term peace.

5. Economic Recovery & Livelihoods

Unemployment is a major driver of radicalization in northern Nigeria. Prioritizing youth employment initiatives and cash-for-work programs can significantly reduce the appeal of extremist groups. Creating employment hubs will help secure a sustainable and positive long-term economic path for the region.

6. Human Capital: Education, Health, & Social Protection

The strategy strengthens human capital by expanding access to education, improving school safety, integrating non-formal systems, and training youth in mediation and peacebuilding, while also enhancing health services through mobile clinics, mental-health support, and stronger disease surveillance. It further provides

targeted social protection through cash transfers linked to community participation to support vulnerable households and build social cohesion.

7. Community Cohesion, Narratives, & Peacebuilding

The strategy strengthens community cohesion by promoting inter-group dialogue, local mediation mechanisms, and joint projects that foster cooperation, while countering harmful narratives through media partnerships and conflict-sensitive reporting. It also empowers youth and women as peace actors through targeted training and the creation of ambassador and mediator networks.

8. Governance, Anti-Corruption, & Citizen Trust

Strengthening stabilization requires more accountable governance, including improved local government capacity, defined roles for traditional leaders, and stronger anti-corruption measures in security and aid delivery. Expanding civic participation through feedback mechanisms and protecting whistle-blowers ensures transparency, community trust, and more responsive institutions.

9. Monitoring, Learning, & Adapting

The monitoring framework uses both quantitative and perception-based indicators to track progress across conflict, justice, education, livelihoods, and social cohesion. By combining hard data with community trust measures, it provides a comprehensive picture of stabilization outcomes and evolving local conditions.

10. Across Nigeria Coordination & Roles

Across Nigeria's strengths lie in its deep community-level engagement, including establishing faith communities, supporting at-risk families, facilitating mediation structures, and operating early-warning and feedback systems. It also delivers essential services in hard-to-reach areas—such as education support and livelihood programs—while producing conflict research and advocating for evidence-based policies. Donors and international partners complement this work by funding DDR and stabilization efforts and providing technical support for justice reform, peacebuilding systems, and climate-smart data tools.

Implementation Timeline

To be adapted into a “log-frame” (logical framework) or workplan.

Phase 1 – First 12 Months

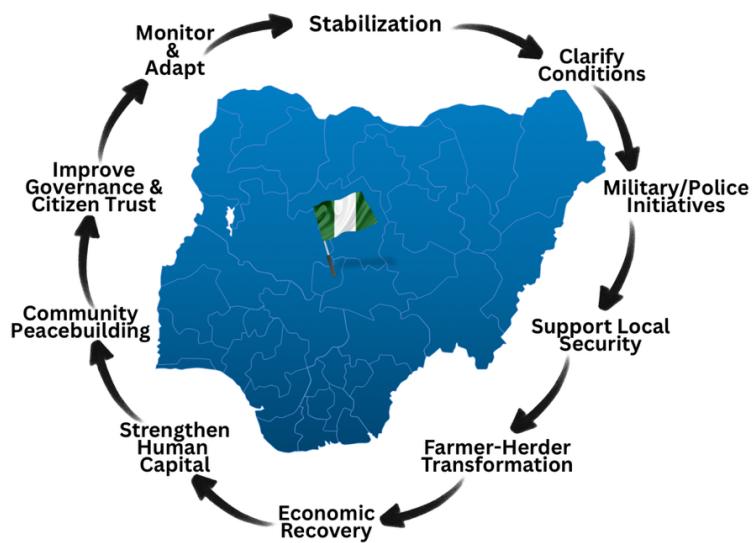
- Conduct conflict and needs assessments in priority states/LGAs.
- Set up/strengthen Peace Committees and early warning systems.
- Launch pilot livelihood and education projects in 3–5 hotspot LGAs.
- Begin mobile courts and fast-track prosecution in one state per zone.
- Start Across Nigeria-led dialogue and narrative change campaigns.

Phase 2 – Years 2–4

- Scale successful pilots to additional LGAs.
- Implement ranching/land-use pilots and climate-smart agriculture portfolios.
- Expand youth and women economic programs.
- Strengthen data and monitoring systems.

Phase 3 – Years 5–10

- Consolidate gains: integrate peace structures into formal governance.
- Transition from emergency relief to long-term development and resilience programming.
- Deepen institutional reforms in security, justice, and local governance.



1. Clarify the Conditions & Set Measurable Goals

Northern Nigeria faces overlapping crises: jihadist insurgency (Boko Haram/ISWAP), rural banditry and mass kidnapping, farmer–herder violence, criminality along highways, deep poverty, out-of-school children, and climate stress on land and water. Farmer–herder violence alone has killed thousands since 2005 and displaced millions across the Middle Belt and North, often exceeding Boko Haram fatalities in some periods.

10-year high-level goals (to localize further by state/LGA):

- Reduce conflict-related deaths by $\geq 70\%$.
- Cut number of IDPs by $\geq 50\%$ while ensuring safe, voluntary return or resettlement.
- Increase school enrollment (especially girls) by $\geq 30\%$.
- Reduce extreme poverty rate and food insecurity in target LGAs by $\geq 30\%$.
- Achieve visible improvement in trust indicators (police, courts, traditional and religious institutions).

2. Military & Police Security Initiatives

2.1 Establish a **Northern Joint Operations Command (NJOC)** with three subordinate **theatres**: (See Illustration Map 1a)

NE Theatre – Boko Haram / ISWAP, Lake Chad, Sambisa axis.

NW Theatre – banditry, kidnap-for-ransom, emerging jihadist-bandit hybrids.

NC Theatre – farmer–herder conflict, bandit spillover, terror cells along Middle Belt corridors.

2.2 Strengthen **Human Intelligence (HUMINT)** Networks:

- a) **Recruit and protect local informants** via vetted channels.
- b) Use communities (traders, transport unions, hunters, fishermen, herders) as **structured informant networks**, with confidentiality and benefits for accurate info.

2.3 Integrate **Signals & Imagery Intelligence (SIGINT/IMINT)**:

- a) Use drones and air surveillance more for **pattern-of-life and route scans**, especially against ambushes on troops and civilians; recent analysis shows high military casualties from ambushes.

2.4 Weaken Terrorist Controlled Strongholds:

- a) **Target specific terrorist strongholds** with kinetic and non-kinetic balance.
- b) **Strengthen border controls:** Particularly in the Northeast quadrant. (Niger, Chad, Cameroon)
- c) Coordinate with MNJTF and neighboring countries for **cross-border pursuits around Lake Chad** to prevent “hop across the border” safe havens.

3. Local Security & Rule of Law

3.1. Improve Territorial Presence and Rapid Response

- a) **Expand community-anchored policing**
 - Recruit and train local constables/auxiliary police from communities (with vetting and human rights training).
 - Co-locate police posts with civil services (schools/clinics) to avoid purely militarized presence.
- b) **Joint Operations Rooms per zone** (NE, NW, NC; See illustration map 1A):
 - Real-time coordination between military, police, DSS, NSCDC, and state vigilantes.
 - Use incident hotlines + WhatsApp/SMS reporting hubs run by trusted civil society.

3.2. Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) and Amnesty Windows

- a) Create **time-bound amnesty + DDR frameworks** for:
 - Low-level bandits and accomplices willing to disarm.
 - Defectors from violent extremist groups.
- b) **Package includes:** rehabilitation, psychosocial care, skills training, and monitored reinsertion into communities.

3.3. Justice and Accountability

- a) Establish **mobile courts** for rural crime hotspots (cattle rustling, kidnap cases, communal clashes).
- b) Fast-track **special prosecutorial units** on kidnapping, mass killings, and sexual violence during attacks.
- c) **Protect witnesses** via relocation stipends, anonymous testimony options, and community assurance by traditional leaders.

4. Farmer–Herder Conflict Transformation

Research and media reports show farmer–herder clashes are now among the deadliest conflict types in Nigeria, driven by seasonal climate patterns, shrinking grazing lands, and weak dispute systems.

4.1. Land Use and Grazing Systems

- a) **Map and gazette grazing corridors and ranching zones** where politically and socially feasible. (See Illustration map 1B)
- b) Support **transition to semi-nomadic/settled ranched systems**:
 - Create government-controlled ranch areas designated for semi-nomadic/settled cattle rearing.
 - Grants/credit for water points, fodder production, and basic veterinary services.
 - Incentives for private ranch investments aligned with the National Livestock Transformation Plan.

4.2. Strategic Local Well Systems in Key Grazing Areas

- a) Introduce **land use plans** at LGA level: clear boundaries, shared resource zones (water points), and dispute mechanisms.

4.3. Local Peace Infrastructure

- a) Establish or strengthen **Peace Committees** at ward/LGA levels: farmers, herders, youth, women, traditional and religious leaders. (See Illustration Map 2A)
- b) Formalize **rapid mediation procedures**:
 - SMS/phone alert when cattle stray or farms are damaged.
 - Response within 24–72 hours to assess damage and negotiate compensation.
- c) Institutionalize **compensation frameworks**: standardized rates for crop damage, killed animals, and lost assets.

4.4. Early Warning & Climate-Smart Planning

- a) Build community-based **early warning systems** (linked to civil defense and peace committees) for migration patterns and flashpoints.
- b) Use climate data to **predict stress periods** (droughts, pasture shortages) and plan fodder banks/water trucking.

5. Economic Recovery & Livelihoods

5.1. Rural Livelihoods and Jobs

- a) **Cash-for-work and food-for-work** programs rebuilding roads, irrigation canals, schools, and clinics in conflict-affected LGAs.
- b) Targeted **youth employment schemes**: mechanic work, solar installation, phone repairs, construction, agro-processing.
- c) Support **women's cooperatives** in processing (rice, grains, shea, groundnut oil), with micro-credit + market linkages.

5.2. Agriculture and Value Chains

- a) Expand **input support** (seeds, fertilizer, extension services) focusing on safe return areas.
- b) Promote **climate-smart agriculture** (drought-resistant crops, water-harvesting, conservation farming) already being piloted in northern Nigeria.
- c) Build/rehabilitate **storage and processing** (silos, cold chains) to reduce post-harvest losses and create off-farm jobs.

5.3. Urban and Peri-Urban Economy

- a) Leverage northern cities (Kano, Kaduna, Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Katsina, etc.) as **employment hubs**: (See Illustration Map 2B)
 - Industrial parks with tax incentives for firms hiring local youth.
 - Partnership with tech hubs for **digital skills, BPO, and remote work** opportunities.

6. Human Capital: Education, Health, & Social Protection

6.1. Education (Formal and Non-Formal)

- a) **Aggressive out-of-school children strategy**:
 - Incentivized enrollment (school feeding, stipends, uniforms) in high-risk LGAs.
 - Integrate **quality** basic education with numeracy, literacy, and life skills.
- b) **Safe schools**: fencing, community security committees, escorts where needed, trauma counselling for abducted/at-risk students.

c) **Educational emphasis**

- Educate youth in interest-based negotiation and mediation to help parties find common ground and resolve disputes through communication.
- Educate and train youth in mediation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding techniques.

6.2. Health and Psychosocial Support

- a) Deploy **mobile clinics** to IDP and returnee communities.
- b) Train local health workers and volunteers in **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** for survivors of violence and sexual abuse.
- c) Strengthen disease surveillance and vaccination campaigns, building on previous successful northern polio eradication work by engaging religious leaders.

6.3. Social Protection

- a) Use **targeted cash transfers** to the most vulnerable (widows, disabled, female-headed households, IDPs).
- b) Link cash to **participation in community projects** (where appropriate) to improve cohesion and avoid resentment.

7. Community Cohesion, Narratives, & Peacebuilding

7.1. Inter-Group Dialogue and Inclusion

- a) Promote interest-based negotiation and mediation to help parties find common ground and resolve disputes through communication.
- b) Regular **inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogues** at LGA and zonal levels, convened by neutral civil society, respected clerics, and traditional leaders.
- c) Promote **joint community projects** (markets, roads, water points) that require cooperation between groups.

7.2. Support Community-Based Resolution

- a) Establish and strengthen mediation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding mechanisms at the local community and government levels.

7.2. Counter-Narratives and Media

- a) Work with radio, Hausa-language media, and social media influencers to:

- Counter hate speech and dehumanizing stereotypes about “the other group”.
- Share success stories of cooperation and peaceful dispute resolution.

b) Train journalists in **conflict-sensitive reporting** to avoid inflammatory coverage.

7.3. Youth and Women as Peace Actors

a) Create **Youth Peace Ambassadors** and **Women Mediators Networks** with training in dialogue, mediation, digital literacy, and early warning.

8. Governance, Anti-Corruption, & Citizen Trust

Stabilization will fail without more accountable governance.

8.1. Local Government and Traditional Institutions

- a) Strengthen **LGA capacity** to deliver basic services (records, budgeting, grievance redress).
- b) Formalize roles for **traditional rulers and community leaders** in early warning, land dispute resolution, and DDR processes, while maintaining human rights safeguards.

8.2. Anti-Corruption in Security and Aid

- a) Public, quarterly **security and stabilization expenditure reports** at federal and state levels.
- b) Independent **community monitoring committees** (with religious and women’s groups) to track distribution of relief items, cash transfers, and project delivery.

8.3. Civic Participation and Feedback

- a) Set up **multi-channel feedback mechanisms**: SMS hotlines, town hall meetings, and citizen scorecards on security, justice, and service delivery.
- b) Protect **whistle-blowers and human rights defenders** from retaliation.

9. Monitoring, Learning, & Adapting

Track a mix of **hard indicators** and **trust/soft indicators**:

- Conflict: incidents, fatalities, kidnappings, displacement.
- Justice: number/time-to-completion of cases, perception of fairness.

- Education: enrollment/completion, gender parity.
- Livelihoods: income changes, employment rates, market access.
- Social cohesion: survey-based trust indices between groups, perception of safety.

10. Across Nigeria Coordination & Roles

10.1. Federal and State Governments

- a) Lead on security, DDR, land and livestock policy, large-scale infrastructure, and social protection.
- b) Provide enabling policy for ranching/corridors and climate-smart agriculture.

10.2. Across Nigeria and Civil Society

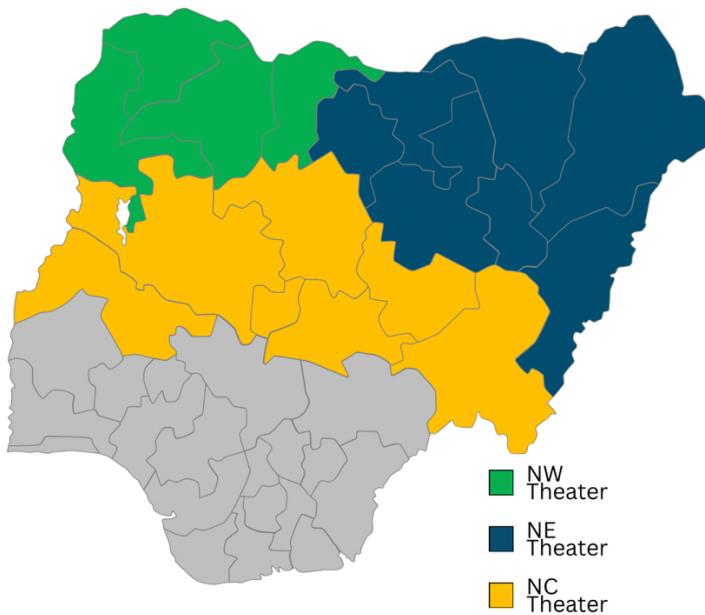
For Across Nigeria specifically, potential comparative advantages:

- a) **Community-level work:**
 - Establish faith communities in strategic locations within all three regional theaters (NE, NW, and NC)
 - Establish, support, and relocate at-risk individual and families
 - Facilitate peace committees, mediation training, and youth peace networks.
 - Run early warning systems and feedback mechanisms.
- b) **Service delivery in hard-to-reach areas:**
 - Education support (non-formal/formal learning, school reintegration).
 - Livelihood projects (coops, cash-for-work, mediation training).
- c) **Research and advocacy:**
 - Produce **LGA-level conflict and vulnerability maps** and “community voice” reports.
 - Advocate evidence-based livestock, land, and social protection policies at state and federal levels.

10.3. Donors and International Partners

- a) Fund DDR, stabilization in return areas, and large-scale climate and livelihood programs.
- b) Provide technical support for justice reform, peace architectures, and climate-smart data systems.

Regional Northern Theaters Illustration Map 1A:

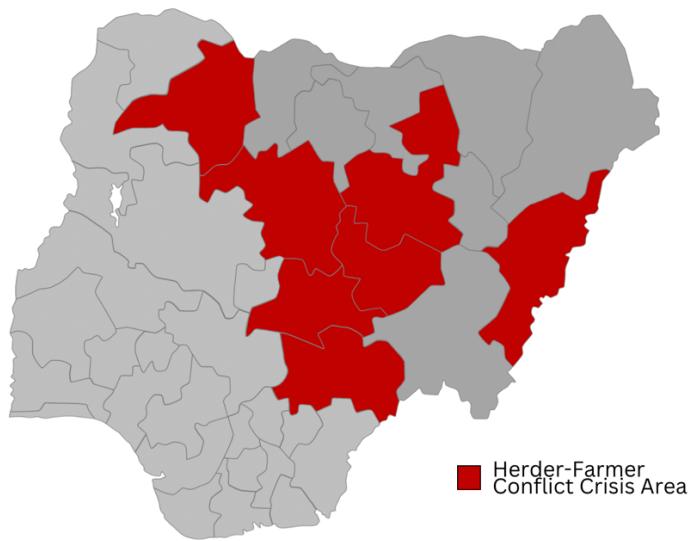


Former Livestock Trade Routes Illustration Map 1B:



Source: (Higazi and Yousuf 2017).

Herder-Farmer Conflict Crisis Areas Illustration Map 2A:



Employment Hub Centers Illustration Map 2B:

