

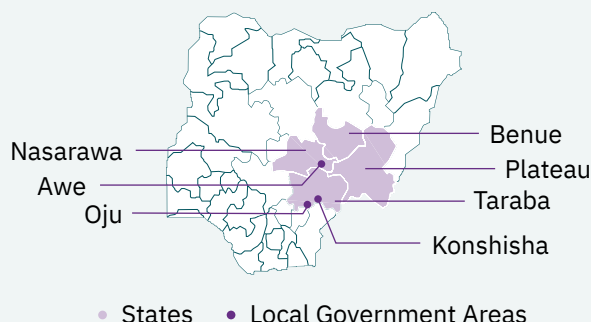
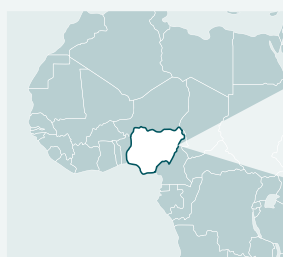
Impact Synthesis: Nigeria Project

Multi-Level Approaches to Sustainable Peace in Nigeria's Middle Belt

Updated October 2026 | Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue



Project locations:



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The signing of climate-sensitive 'natural resource peace agreements' in Nigeria's Middle Belt has led to **significant reductions in violence and strengthened inter-ethnic cooperation in sustainable resource management**.
- The deliberate integration of climate adaptation provisions into these agreements has prompted **locally led initiatives in climate-smart agriculture, land rehabilitation, afforestation and water conservation**. Over time, these efforts are expected to improve soil fertility, reduce erosion and increase water availability, contributing to more secure livelihoods.
- By strengthening locally led dispute resolution mechanisms and sustainable, collaborative management of shared resources, the agreements provide a foundation for **community resilience to both climate change and the risk of future conflict**.
- The inclusive dialogue processes underpinning the peace agreements offer a **successful, scalable and replicable model** for addressing resource-based conflicts, as demonstrated by HD-facilitated state-wide and cross-border dialogue processes.



Three 'natural resource peace agreements' signed in 2022 and 2023 **are benefiting over half a million people in Nigeria's Middle Belt region**. Around 80% of respondents in key informant interviews and focus group discussions reported a decline in violence.



Reduced violence has enabled the re-opening of one local market, the lifting of access restrictions to another and the clearing of roadblocks on five roads, **improving access to food and income opportunities**.



Nigeria's **first statewide natural resource peace agreement**, signed by 10 ethnic communities across Benue State in June 2026, establishes a framework for equitable, transparent and sustainable natural resource management to reduce conflict.



By convening traditional leaders from conflict-affected areas of different states in Nigeria, HD opened a **critical communication channel for confidence-building** across deeply divided communities.

Project Overview

Farmer-herder conflicts over natural resources have claimed thousands of lives across Nigeria in recent years. The impacts of climate change, such as prolonged droughts and irregular rainfall, are intensifying these conflicts by reducing the availability of essential resources and driving displacement. These challenges are particularly severe in the country's Middle Belt, where communities are vulnerable to both environmental and conflict-related pressures.

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's (HD) project *Multi-Level Approaches to Sustainable Peace in Nigeria's Middle Belt* works to prevent and resolve violent conflicts over natural resources exacerbated by climate change. Focusing on Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states, HD brings together stakeholders from conflicting groups and diverse ethnic communities in inclusive dialogue processes, including women, young people, traditional authorities and religious leaders, to foster resilience and contribute to sustainable peace. The project also supports local peace infrastructures and builds capacity among stakeholders to prevent resource-based conflicts. This approach has resulted in the development, adoption and implementation of community-level natural resource-sharing agreements that incorporate provisions on climate adaptation measures, as well as a statewide agreement to address resource conflicts.

Key Outcomes and Insights

An outcome evaluation of the project (2022–26) found that the natural resource peace agreements signed in the Awe Local Government Area (2022) and the Konshisha and Oju Local Government Areas (2023) benefited over half a million people in Nigeria's Middle Belt region through reduced violence, collaborative resource management and climate adaptation measures, and improved livelihoods.

The evaluation also highlighted that the Benue statewide dialogue process, culminating in the Benue Natural Resource Peace Agreement (2026) signed by ten ethnic communities. This has benefited over half a million people in Nigeria's Middle Belt region, provided an effective platform for intra-state engagement and confidence-building, establishing a shared foundation for addressing complex resource-based conflicts. By launching a cross-border dialogue process and convening traditional rulers from border areas of two Nigerian states for the first time, HD also demonstrated the potential for scaling up natural resource-related mediation beyond the local level.

REDUCED VIOLENCE AND ENHANCED COOPERATION

The three natural resource peace agreements have led to a significant reduction in violent clashes and a marked improvement in inter-communal relations, particularly between farmers and herders. Around 80% of respondents in key informant interviews and focus group discussions reported a decline in violence. Community members also noted greater inter-ethnic understanding and increased engagement in collaborative activities. For example, in the Konshisha and Oju Local Government Areas, farmers from two ethnic groups established a communal cassava farm. In 2025, the Tiv community of Konshisha attended the Igede community's New Yam Festival in Oju for the first time. The festival is a key harvest celebration and an important opportunity for reconciliation, which had previously been curtailed due to intercommunal tensions. Overall, the agreements have fostered a culture of dialogue, encouraging communities to resolve disputes peacefully rather than through confrontation. This reduction in violence has enhanced security and prompted many displaced people to return. The durability of these outcomes is reinforced through local peace committees and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, which continue to mediate disputes and monitor the implementation of agreements.

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After the peace agreement was signed, the fighting over land ceased and we now enjoy a period of peace, where disputes are settled through dialogue rather than violence.

– Community member from
Awe Local Government Area,
Nasarawa State

IMPROVED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The peace agreements have enabled collaborative governance of vital natural resources such as water, grazing lands and forests. Community members have formed locally led committees to regulate access to and use of resources, including through rotational systems for accessing grazing areas and water sources. For example, communities in the Konshisha Local Government Area have adopted new shared management arrangements for both the Akileimo water ponds and the Atumba forest. This cooperative approach has helped reduce disputes, and promoted more sustainable and equitable resource management, strengthening the long-term sustainability of the agreements.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROGRESS

Incorporating provisions on climate adaptation measures into the peace agreements has led communities to start adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, such as soil conservation, crop rotation and sustainable pasture management. Locally led, context-informed initiatives on land rehabilitation, afforestation and water conservation are also under way. For example, throughout 2025, the Konshisha-Oju Peace Committee developed sustainable forest management guidelines prohibiting bush burning and illegal logging. These initiatives have helped to build greater community resilience to climatic shocks and reduce the risk of future resource-based conflicts. Yet, communities recognise that more needs to be done to fully adapt to evolving climate challenges: measures promoting climate adaptation in line with the agreement provisions require additional technical expertise, local capacity-building and financial resources.

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We have a lake that we now share. During the crisis, access to it was completely cut off, leading to disputes and hardships. But after the peace agreement, we didn't just regain access – we took steps to manage it better. We even formed a committee to monitor water fetching and regulate tree felling so that resources are used sustainably.

– Resident from Konshisha and Oju
Local Government Areas,
Benue State

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Our resource-sharing agreement has laid the groundwork for joint climate action.

– Youth leader
from Awe Local
Government Area,
Nasarawa State

REVITALISED LIVELIHOODS

Community members reported that reduced conflict and the establishment of cooperative resource management have had a positive impact on livelihoods. With conflicts subsiding, community-imposed restrictions preventing certain ethnic groups from accessing one local market have been lifted, while another market, previously shut down due to violence and insecurity, has reopened. The Konshisha-Oju Peace Committee reports that “market activities now take place every day”. Five movement restrictions mentioned in the Konshisha-Oju Peace Agreement have also been lifted, in line with the agreement's call for the re-opening of roads and the removal of illegal checkpoints. Ten neighbouring villages across both Konshisha and Oju LGAs are reportedly accessible by road again. This has revitalised economic activity, enabling farmers, traders and livestock owners to resume the exchange of food and other goods.

STRENGTHENED INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

89% of participants in the Benue statewide peace process felt that the process strengthened connections, challenged stereotypes, reduced suspicion and promoted social cohesion. More than 85% also reported being “very willing” to continue interacting after the dialogue concluded, providing a strong foundation for implementing the statewide resource-sharing agreement. Yet, trust among ethnic groups remains cautious, underscoring the importance of follow-up dialogue. The long-term durability of the agreement depends on sustained implementation, institutional support and equitable follow-through.



Ukpute Market, Oju Local Government Area © Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

GROWING CONFIDENCE IN DIALOGUE ACROSS STATE BOUNDARIES

Following their first joint convening under HD's cross-border dialogue process, traditional leaders from Benue and Nasarawa states reported greater confidence in dialogue as a tool for resolving protracted resource conflict in a context of deep-rooted ethnic mistrust. For instance, confidence among Benue leaders rose from 38% before the first round of dialogue to 58% at the end of the two-day engagement, suggesting that familiarity with and a greater understanding of the process contributes to building confidence in it. Traditional rulers also expressed a strong readiness to engage across state borders and develop sustainable cooperation frameworks.

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Before, conflicts over land and water would bring everything to a halt. Farmers wouldn't sell their produce, and traders avoided certain routes for fear of violence. Now, we are beginning to see joint market activities again. People from different communities are coming together, selling their goods, and engaging in shared resource management. It's not perfect yet, but the difference is clear.

– Community leader from Konshisha and Oju Local Government Areas, Benue State

Lessons and Recommendations

HD's inclusive, climate-sensitive dialogue approach represents a scalable and adaptable model for addressing resource-based conflicts across Nigeria and other fragile settings. The outcome evaluation highlighted key lessons to guide progress, including recommendations for programming and donor support.

LESSON 1:

PROMOTING CROSS-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS IS KEY TO IMPLEMENTING PEACE AGREEMENT PROVISIONS ON SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION.

The effective implementation of peace agreement provisions on natural resource management and climate adaptation depends on strong partnerships between government, climate and environment experts, development actors, donors, and local communities. By pooling financial, technical and logistical support, these partnerships help ensure that climate adaptation and sustainable resource management measures are implemented successfully, reducing the risk of future resource-based conflicts.

Recommendations for programming and donor support

Peacemaking actors should prioritise facilitating cross-sectoral partnerships with government institutions, development actors and climate experts. Engaging these stakeholders from the outset will enhance the integration and sustainability of climate-smart resource management, livelihood support and economic development within dialogue processes and their outcomes.

Donors can play a crucial role in fostering cross-sectoral partnerships and supporting integrated approaches across funding streams, ensuring coordination and mutually reinforcing efforts.

LESSON 2:

SCALING UP LOCAL APPROACHES CAN HELP CREATE COHERENT REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR ADDRESSING FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS.

Climate-sensitive peace processes at the local level have effectively addressed protracted conflicts over natural resources. Expanding these approaches can enable stakeholders to develop broader, region-wide frameworks for managing resource-based conflicts, fostering more coordinated and comprehensive conflict resolution efforts. For example, building on local successes, HD has scaled up its approach in Nigeria by facilitating a dialogue process among 10 communities in Benue State seeking to reach a statewide agreement. Additionally, HD has launched a cross-border process aimed at establishing a framework for farmer-herder cooperation between traditional rulers from Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states.



Awe-Azara Emirate Natural Resource Peace Agreement Signing © Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Recommendations for programming and donor support

Peacemaking organisations and donors should prioritise inclusive approaches that integrate and link mediation efforts across different levels of government and society. Donors can also provide political support to such dialogues by engaging with higher levels of government and lobbying key decision-makers. Investing in scalable, multi-level peace processes that promote collaborative resource management and climate adaptation can have a catalytic effect, generating both sustainable peace and positive environmental outcomes.

As peace processes to address natural resource conflict increasingly expand from local-level to statewide and cross-border agreements, peacemaking actors need to continue refining implementation and monitoring frameworks to match the scale and complexity of these processes. This includes ensuring that implementation considerations are embedded during the drafting phase, with agreements clearly outlining roles and responsibilities, follow-up arrangements and appropriate mechanisms to track progress.

LESSON 3:

DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT WITH TRADITIONAL LEADERS WHILE MAINTAINING INCLUSIVE, GENDER-RESPONSIVE DIALOGUE PROVIDES A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR LASTING PEACE.

In Nigeria, traditional leaders have been instrumental in encouraging community acceptance and implementation of natural resource peace agreements. Their legitimacy, rooted in cultural and social authority, enables them to enforce agreement provisions and de-escalate tensions within their communities. Balancing support for traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with promoting inclusive, gender-responsive dialogue can foster social cohesion, ensure equitable participation in local governance and decision-making, and sustain lasting peace.

Recommendations for programming and donor support

Peacemaking actors and donors should engage with and support capacity-building for traditional leaders who hold legitimacy within their communities, equipping them with skills in mediation, conflict- and climate-sensitive governance, and inclusive decision-making. At the same time, maintaining a gender-responsive and inclusive dialogue approach, creating space for otherwise marginalised voices, is crucial to ensure that outcomes reflect the needs and perspectives of all social groups within communities.

Developing strategies that enable the perspectives and priorities of women, young men and women, and other community members to inform dialogue processes, for example through consultations and parallel dialogue engagements, is particularly important for regional approaches where engagement structures are centred on traditional authorities, as in the case of the cross-border process.

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SUPPORTED BY



PUBLISHED BY

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LAYOUT

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COPY EDITING

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DATE

October 2026

COVER PHOTO

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Hillert, L., Nyaga, C., Viehoff, A., Steinkraus, A., Whitaker, E. (2026). Outcome overview: Nigeria project: Multi-Level Approaches to Sustainable Peace in Nigeria's Middle Belt. Weathering Risk Peace Pillar. Berlin: adelphi research.