



## CPED Discussion Brief 2024

# Strengthening Local Resilience to Food Insecurity: Policy Actions to Support Vulnerable Households in Northeast Nigeria

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**SPARC**  
Supporting Pastoralism  
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## Executive Summary

Rising food costs have become a persistent threat to food security, nutrition, and health in rural communities across Adamawa, Bauchi, and Gombe states. This brief synthesizes evidence from community voices to illuminate how families are adapting to this crisis. While traditional coping mechanisms demonstrate resilience, they often come at a grave cost to nutritional quality, health, and child development.

This brief calls on local governments to prioritize integrated, gender-responsive, and culturally grounded strategies that address both immediate needs and long-term resilience. Specific recommendations include investment in nutrition programs, community cooperatives, water infrastructure, and support for women-led adaptation efforts.

## Background

Northeast Nigeria faces a compounded food security crisis driven by economic volatility, climate change, and policy shifts. Households in pastoral and agro-pastoral communities are adapting through reduced meal frequencies, income diversification, and reliance on deteriorating or unsafe food items. These responses, while innovative, are unsustainable and pose serious health risks—particularly for children and pregnant women.

## Key Findings

### 1. Economic Pressures are Redefining Food Habits

- Families have cut daily meals from three to one.
- Households prioritize quantity over quality, accepting food previously considered unacceptable.


### 2. Women Are Leading Adaptation

- Women negotiate prices more effectively and lead food procurement.
- Informal savings groups and bulk purchasing initiatives are spearheaded by women.

### 3. Traditional Support Systems Are Evolving

- Self-help groups and informal cooperatives provide emergency relief and savings mechanisms.
- Community gardens are growing, but water scarcity limits their scale.

### 4. Health Risks Are Escalating

- Many households' resort to consuming rotten vegetables, animal feed, or food cooked without essential ingredients.
  - Malnutrition and school dropout rates are rising.
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## Policy Recommendations for Local Governments Policy/Decision makers

### 1. Implement Emergency Nutritional Support Programs

- Launch school feeding schemes and maternal nutrition support in collaboration with primary health centers.
- These include micronutrient supplements and fortified staples in food aid packages.

### 2. Invest in Community Water Infrastructure

- Provide boreholes and water harvesting systems to support home gardens and small-scale farming.

### 3. Support Cooperative Formation and Training

- Formalize and support women-led savings groups with bookkeeping, cooperative management, and access to small loans.
- Provide grants or matching funds for bulk food purchasing initiatives.

### 4. Promote Low-Cost, High-Nutrition Alternatives

- Deploy agricultural extension workers to educate communities on using local, affordable protein sources like legumes and fortified cereals.

### 5. Support Livelihood Diversification Programs

- Provide micro-grants or toolkits for petty trading, artisanal work, and value-added agricultural processing.

### 6. Protect Schooling During Economic Shocks

- Launch conditional support schemes to keep children, especially girls, in school (e.g., food-for-education programs).

### 7. Mainstream Gender-Responsive and Culturally Sensitive Interventions

- Recognize women's roles in food security planning and ensure their access to agricultural resources.
- Work with religious and traditional leaders to deliver culturally acceptable and trusted interventions.

## Conclusion

Rural communities in Adamawa, Bauchi, and Gombe states are showing remarkable resilience in the face of rising food prices and economic hardship. However, their coping strategies—such as skipping meals, consuming unsafe food, and pulling children out of school—are not sustainable and have serious implications for health, education, and long-term development. While

traditional support systems and community innovations are helping families survive, these efforts are increasingly strained and require external support to be effective.

Local governments have a critical role to play in strengthening community resilience and protecting vulnerable populations. By investing in nutrition programs, water access, women-led cooperatives, and livelihood support, they can address immediate needs while also laying the foundation for long-term food sustainability

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## About SPARC-IDRC

Climate change, armed conflict, environmental fragility and weak governance, and the impact these have on natural resource-based livelihoods, are among the key drivers of both crisis and poverty for communities in some of the world's most vulnerable and conflict-affected countries.

Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) aims to generate evidence and address knowledge gaps to build the resilience of millions of pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers in these communities in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

We strive to create impact by using research and evidence to develop knowledge that improves how the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), donors, non-governmental organisations, local and national governments, and civil society can empower these communities in the context of climate change.

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