



CPED Discussion Paper March 2025

Addressing the Impact of Rising Food Prices in Nigeria's Northeast Region: Evidence from Adamawa, Bauchi, and Gombe States

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Policy Recommendations

- **Both States and Local Governments to Implement Immediate Food Security Interventions**
 - Support existing private storage facilities with necessary modern equipment and technology at the community levels such as provision of **Solar Powered Refrigerators**. This will help to reduce waste and preserve farm produce after harvest before sales. Government can also support building a centralized storage facility at community levels and maintained through Public- Private partnership arrangement where farmers pay a token to conserve/store their harvest, especially perishables produce.
 - *Implement targeted food subsidy programs for essential staples:* They can develop a beneficiary identification system using community-based target or existing database of vulnerable group. State and LGA government to create a voucher or electronic card system that works with local vendors and markets and Allows beneficiaries to purchase specific staple foods at subsidized prices. Update the existing database of vulnerable populations at the local levels to facilitate conditional cash transfers and other support to vulnerable population.
- **Agricultural Support (State and Local Government to Implement)**
 - *Provide subsidized agricultural inputs (fertilizers, seeds, tools):* This can be done through establishing a systematic distribution system by creating an electronic database of eligible farmers, issue farmer ID cards or digital vouchers and partner with legitimate input suppliers to prevent fraud. Develop input packages tailored to, local soil conditions, common crops in each region, farming seasons, and farm size categories
 - *Support Irrigation for year-round farming:* First conduct water resource surveys, if necessary, map suitable irrigation areas, assess environmental impact, and design appropriate irrigation systems. Ensure system is technology driven — stand-alone solar-powered pumps for sustainability, small-scale water harvesting systems and gravity-fed irrigation where possible. This support can be given to small holder farmers, large-scale farmers and cooperative farmers in their respective communities and farmlands to boost agricultural production.
- **Government at all levels to Implement Gender-Specific Support**

- *Establishing Skill Acquisition Centres:* Training programs focused on market-relevant skills, digital literacy, financial management, and value addition to agricultural products.
- *Supporting Children's Education in Female-headed Households:* Direct educational support through school fee subsidies, provision of learning materials, school uniforms, and transportation assistance where applicable to household headed by women.
- **States and Local Governments to Implement Market Systems Support**
 - Create direct farm-to-market linkages, such as food processors, supermarkets. This will facilitate quick purchases thereby reducing post-harvest losses.
 - *Support local food processing:* Establish processing centres with basic processing equipment (grinders, dryers, packaging tools), proper water and electricity supply, and waste management systems. - provide training on food processing techniques, food safety and hygiene, quality control measures, equipment maintenance, packaging and labelling, business management, and record keeping.

A Brief Background

Nigeria's Northeast faces a deepening food security crisis, characterized by increases in food and commodity prices since 2020. This crisis represents an emergency that threatens the livelihood, dignity and survival, of millions of Nigerians. According to the World Food Programme's 2023 analysis, about 4.3 million people in Northeast Nigeria are facing acute food insecurity, with conditions expected to deteriorate further without intervention.

This situation has been exacerbated by converging factors including:

economic pressures — in June 2023, the Central Bank allowed the Naira to fall by 36%, thereby raising the local cost of

imported goods; in May 2023, fuel subsidies that cost more than US\$6 billion a year were removed leading to fuel prices more than doubling; global supply chain disruptions which stemmed from multiple factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and regional security challenges affecting food availability and prices, and high inflation rates, reaching 28.92% by December 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics),

regional conflict and displacement — conflict continues to disrupt agriculture and markets according to the Cadre Harmonisé analysis (2023) forcing farmers to leave their lands and not being able to tend to their crops or livestock.

climate and agriculture — irregular rainfall reducing crop yields; reduced access to agricultural inputs due to price

increases of more than 300%; and limited adaptation capacity among smallholder farmers, etc.

Our Research

This discussion paper is derived from research carried out in Nigeria's Northeast, specifically in Adamawa, Gombe and Bauchi States by the **Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)** to investigate the impact of rising commodity prices since 2020 on farming and pastoral communities and on internally displaced persons (IDPs). Utilizing qualitative research methods (12 focus group

discussions), key informant interviews, and a quantitative questionnaire survey of 541 households with 65% female and 35% male respondents, the study provides insights into price increases, their impact on various demographic groups, coping strategies employed by communities, and the adequacy of support received from various stakeholders.

Key Findings

I. Magnitude of Price Increases

Food prices had increased greatly since 2020 across all three states. Essential food items saw increases of over 300%. Agricultural inputs like fertilizers experienced similar price escalations. Petroleum products saw increases of over 400%. Other affected items included cooking gas, detergents, firewood, soaps, clothes, and building materials.

These increases were keenly felt by local people:

"In the year 2020, a bag of maize was between six thousand (6,000) to eight thousand (8,000) naira. But now, a bag of

maize is between fifty-five thousand (55,000) naira and sixty thousand (60,000) naira... Sorghum was sold for six thousand (6,000) naira, but today, sorghum is being sold between N50,000 to 55,000." - **Gombe, Male, Married, Islamic Education, Farmer with livestock, 50 years)**

"Take for example, a bag of beans that was just N20,000 a few years ago is a lot higher, sold for over N125,000 now. A sachet of water was N5 few months ago. Today is N20." (**Adamawa, Female, Married, No education, Petty trader, 40 years)**

2. Household Impact

Household welfare fell as a result of higher prices.

Food Security and Nutrition: Over 90% of surveyed households reported reduced access to food. Breastfeeding mothers reported difficulties due to poor nutrition. For example:

"Now I cannot eat food anytime I feel like eating. When prices of food commodities were cheap, I eat food at least three times in a day. But now, I eat at the most twice a day. Even those two times are not to satisfaction" Gombe, **Male, Married, Islamic Education, Farmer, 40 years**).

"I usually mill one Mudu (small measure) of corn whose price has jumped from 250 naira to 750 naira, cook it, add little Maggi (seasoning cube) and feed the children with it, without ingredients. I don't use red oil or groundnut oil because, I cannot even afford it "(Bauchi, **Female, Married, Tertiary education(diploma), Petty trader, 30 years**)

Healthcare Access: most survey respondents in Adamawa said they could no longer afford essential medicines (85% of males and 92% of females); in Gombe most respondents reported inability to access healthcare (77% of males and 59% of females); and in Bauchi some respondents reported they could no longer buy needed medicines (48% of males and 61% of females).

Family Dynamics and Psychological Impact:

tension between spouses increased; male providers avoided difficult questions, with men leaving homes to avoid being asked for money for food; people reported breakdowns in communication, and depression and anxiety. For example:

"Every little thing I say to my husband, he gets offended. He usually goes out of the house once it's almost time for cooking food to avoid being asked money for anything" – **Bauchi, Female, Married, Primary Education, Petty trader, 53 Years**)

"Any man who cannot provide for his family sees himself as a failure. This is the root of the problem and stress" (**Adamawa, Male, Married, Tertiary Education, Businessman, 42 years**)

Education: Some parents were forced to withdraw children from school either because they were unable to afford schooling costs or because they needed the child to work; instances of child labour and begging increased.

3. Coping

Among the study population 91% of households reduced their meal frequency, 42% switched to cheaper foods of lower quality, 34% resorted to borrowing money, and 32% sought additional income-generating activities. Migration for work was reported by 63% of males and 51% of females, and asset selling was reported by 80% of males and 72% of females to cope with price

increases of food and other commodities.

The impacts have been particularly severe for vulnerable groups — widows and single mothers, children experiencing malnutrition and stunted growth.

4. Support

Limited amount support was provided by government and other public agencies. Only 35% of male and 38% of female respondents reported receiving any form of support. Of those supported, 63% received food assistance, 42% received cash transfers, 23% received subsidized inputs, while 16% received training/skills development.

Respondents were dissatisfied with the level and effectiveness of support received from the government and other stakeholders. For example:

"The government has done nothing that we know. We only heard that palliative food items were given to every state but in this community, we have not received anything from the government." **(Bauchi, Female, Married,**

Secondary school, Farmer and trader, 55 years)

"Well, governments said they did something but it's not what you can see. They gathered us in one place and gave us a measure of rice each. There was a time they came and collected our names for only God knows what, but till now, we haven't heard anything from them again. They promised to come back and help us with relief package and even give capital to those of us who are into business to grow our businesses, but till now we haven't seen anything" **(Gombe, Female, Married, Islamic education, Petty trader, 45 years)**

"We only hear that the government and NGOs are providing aids to people, but we do not get to benefit from it **(IDP, Gombe, Male, Married, Islamic education, Businessman, 45 years).**

Delivery of promised aid to the people was inconsistent; coordination between supporting agencies was poor; follow-through on initiatives was limited: any support provided was insufficient; and sustainable support across the three States was lacking.

Key Conclusions

I. Crisis Severity: The current situation represents a severe economic emergency requiring immediate intervention. While the crisis may be temporary, its effects may be felt in the Nigerian economy for generations. For example, in the

absence of a stable and nutritious food supply, children may suffer from acute malnutrition, leading to stunted growth, weakened immune systems, and developmental delays. On the other hand, if children do not receive an education and

women cannot contribute to the economy due to economic or social constraints, the entire community's workforce will be weakened, slowing down long-term economic recovery for the region and the broader Nigerian economy.

2. **Insufficient Support:** Existing support mechanisms are insufficient and ineffective, reaching only a small portion of affected populations. Increased coordination between development partners could have a multiplying effect by increasing efficiency, improving resource allocation, and enhancing the impact of intervention. For example, one partner may focus on education while another provides healthcare,

creating a stronger safety net for communities. A coordinated approach ensures no vulnerable group is left out, from women and children to persons with disabilities and marginalized communities.

3. **Gender Inequality:** The crisis is exacerbating gender inequalities, with women bearing a disproportionate burden.
4. **Community Resilience:** Despite hardship and suffering, communities have developed innovative coping strategies such as cooperative formation, bulk buying and backyard gardening initiatives that can be further strengthened through public support.

Acknowledgement

“This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), awarded in partnership with the Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) programme, which is funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).”

We also wish to appreciate the following SPARC team members (**Melanie Aube, Steve Wiggins** and **Rajeshree Sisodia**) for their contributions to the development of this discussion paper.

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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.

Funded by



This work was carried out as part of a partnership with the Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) Programme, with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada, and by UK aid from the UK government. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of SPARC, IDRC or its Board of Governors, or the official policies of the Canadian or UK governments.