House Foreign Affairs Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing
on
Conflict and Killings in Nigeria's Middle Belt

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Statement of Mike Jobbins
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Co-Chairmen McGovern and Smith, Members of the Lantos Commission, I thank you for holding this hearing to draw urgent attention to the terrible violence affecting rural Nigeria, and for your work and the work of this Commission in ensuring a focus on human rights around the world.

My name is Mike Jobbins, Vice President of Global Affairs and Partnerships at Search for Common Ground.[1] Search for Common Ground (Search) has worked in Nigeria since 2004 and currently has six offices across the country. Search works to transform violent extremism by promoting reconciliation across dividing lines, strengthening community-led security, and bolstering democratic governance. We often work in close cooperation with, and with support from, USAID and the State Department as well as many other Nigerian and international actors.[2] Through this work, we have engaged religious leaders and worked closely communities and security actors to transform conflict and strengthen human security in many states across Nigeria.

While this testimony is informed by my work with Search for Common Ground, the opinions and recommendations expressed are my own. After a brief introduction, I will present three dynamics driving conflict and violence in the Middle Belt, cite some promising Nigerian-led efforts, and recommend a set of actions for Congress and U.S. policymakers.

INTRODUCTION

Violence and insecurity have had a profound impact on the Nigerian people. Most Nigerians (65%) do not feel the country is secure, and this percentage jumps to approximately 83%[3] when only considering respondents in northern Nigeria. Violence across rural Nigeria in the communities where we work – from Port Harcourt to Maiduguri – has claimed thousands of lives.[4] Armed non-state actors like Boko Haram, communal militias, criminal bands, and cultist groups are responsible for 98% of those fatalities.[5] There is little trust in public security or accountability apparatuses.[6] At the same time, tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of Nigerians – religious leaders, community leaders, youth, women, government officials – are working often at great personal risk and sacrifice to bring an end to this suffering. International support to these Nigerian-led efforts can help take them to scale.

Action by the United States to support Nigerian peacebuilding and atrocity prevention efforts is both the right thing to do and in America's national interest:

- Politically, Nigeria and the United States share deep historic ties and are two of the world's largest democracies.
- Economically, Nigeria is Africa's biggest economy, and U.S. trade with Nigeria reached an estimated $10.4 billion last year.[7] The importance of the U.S.-Nigeria relationship will only grow with time. Experts say that Nigeria will be more populous than China by the end of the century.[8]
- Morally, the suffering of those killed, and those left behind, is a shock to the conscience and an offense to human dignity. The numbers of deaths alone are a poor marker for the sheer scale of the violence; more telling are the horrific consequences of rape, looting, torture, and destruction being wreaked on communities across Nigeria, as well as the horror of violence – burnings, beheadings – done to inflict psychological harm as well as physical.

The causes of violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt are complex, and the effects are tragic. But this is a moment not simply for admiring the complexity or tragedy of the problem, but for the U.S. and the wider international community to take urgent action to support Nigeria and Nigerians working to prevent these atrocities.

In the following sections, I will touch briefly on the nature of violence that we are seeing and the structural causes; several promising avenues in how we are responding; and finally, recommend actions that the U.S. Congress and Administration might take.

1. DRIVERS OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Three Overlapping Conflict Dynamics. The violence we are examining today is not the result of a singular conflict, but several different conflicts intertwining and overlapping. Search for Common Ground coordinates the Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN), which brings together over three dozen leading academics, practitioners, and policymakers from across the country to share analysis, conduct joint research, and identify collective priorities for action on farmer-herder relations. In 2018, the FFARN analyzed the conflict as it manifests in Nigeria and identified a complex nexus of factors with three main categories of violence:
- *Resource competition & disputes.* Disputes over land and water resources that are mis/unmanaged by formal or traditional justice or dispute resolution.
- *Criminal enterprises and banditry.* Armed bands are operating with increasing sophistication, fueled by rising cattle prices and the proliferation of small arms in the recent decade.
- *Ethno-religious violence*. Conflicts are often stoked for political motives, or in a cycle of attack-reprisal attack, some of which can be properly called terrorism and mass atrocities under U.S. definitions.

Unfortunately, the inability to apprehend and hold perpetrators accountable in many cases blurs the lines between these different dynamics, which are often referred to in a catch-all as "farmer-herder" violence. To some extent they are interrelated: banditry shifts herding routes; armed groups destroy entire villages as collective punishment for cattle theft; an "ordinary" dispute over trampled crops escalates, and armed groups get involved, etc. While each incident has some unique

causes, there are three common features that explain the recent increase in violence, including in the Middle Belt:

A Market for Violence has Emerged. Climate change, desertification, food insecurity and urban growth have radically transformed the rural economy, stressed farmers and herders alike.[9] There is an increasing supply of desperate people and affordable weapons.[10] More than half of Nigerians (56%)[11] experienced moderate or high levels of lived poverty in 2020, and this number has risen by 18% since 2017.[12] Nearly two in three Nigerians (65%)[13] gave up food or medical care last year, and almost half 48% of AfroBarometer's survey respondents said they "rarely" or "inconsistently" had enough food to eat.[14] At the same time, both farmers and pastoralists are under intense pressure. The increasing value of cattle, the existential stakes of natural resources conflicts, and the cyclical nature of intercommunal attacks and reprisal attacks have created a demand for violence, whether in the form of militias, bandits, "security," or vigilantes.

In recent years, the cattle economy has begun to transform from a Bedouin-style smallholder economy to a "cowboy" economy. Today, Nigerian cattle are be sold between 100,000 to 200,000 Naira (USD $300-650) a head and are thus attractive, liquid assets whose value has steadily appreciated as urban demand has grown. This has attracted the attention of both sophisticated thieves and elite investors. A typical smallholder herd in the Middle Belt has perhaps 100 cows[15] on which a family relies for its life and livelihood existence. This might translate into about $50,000 in cash – an attractive target to individual rustlers, bandits, and insurgents. A rustler who steals a dozen cows could make as much in one night as a comfortable middle-class household would make in an entire year.[16] At the same time, insecurity and resource scarcity encourage a shift from smallholders to elite-owned large herds. The result is a trend of increased herd sizes, herding done by paid employees rather than cattle owners, weaponization for self-defense and herd protection, and escalating "range wars."

The context of poverty and vulnerability raises the stakes considerably for farming communities too, particularly for subsistence agriculturists. The number of cattle has increased dramatically from 6 million to 66 million between 1961 and 2006[17] and farmland has expanded, leading to increased cases of cattle damaging and destroying fields. This can mean the difference between life or death. For example, cassava – one of the most fundamental crops in the Nigerian diet – harvests can take 18 months or more.[18] Where they are destroyed, families risk falling into desperation.[19] While there are organized and communal elements to the violence in many cases, it is impossible to understand without understanding the way the rural economy has transformed and, for many, become more dangerous.

An Outmoded Security Paradigm. The current security architecture has been unsuccessful in containing the violence. The Nigerian Government has relied heavily on security force deployments supplementing police in order to contain violence in the Middle Belt, as elsewhere. Today, 28 out of 36 states have active Nigerian military operations. In recent years, major military operations under the Special Task Force (STF)[20] have tried to end the violence we are discussing today: Operation Safe Haven (OSH), Operation Harbin Kunama (Scorpion Sting) I, Operation Harbin Kunama II, Operation Ayem Akpatuma (Cat Race), Operation Whirl Stroke (OWS), etc.[21]

The status quo is financially unsustainable. Between 2014 and 2018, the expenditures of the Nigerian Government to deal with domestic insecurity increased over 200%.[22] At the same time,

Nigerians do not trust the military or police to provide them security. In 2019, only one in ten Nigerians sought police assistance for their problems and of those who did, 77% said they paid bribes in order to get assistance. [23] The most recent manifestation of this frustration has been the #EndSARS Movement.

Security deployments in the Middle Belt have emphasized the need for training security forces – pushing soldiers into mediation, community engagement, investigating cattle raids – outside of their traditional mandate of warfighting. The role of the various security forces within the STF has been poorly communicated to the civilian population and poorly coordinated with local authorities. Some of these deployments were also marred by accusations of corruption and poor coordination within the operations between the different security forces deployed. More structurally, these deployments blur the lines and push the Nigerian military more deeply into law enforcement, community mediation, and conflict management roles that are normally reserved for the police and civilian agencies.

A Legacy of Grave Impunity. Prior to the current crisis, the Middle Belt already had a history of serious violence including atrocities and killings along religious lines, notably the series of urban riots and mob violence in Jos and Kaduna that claimed thousands of lives and stoked deep divides along religious lines. Over the past decade, communities, religious leaders and civil society actors – with financial support from USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM)[24] and the State Department's Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor (DRL) – have led a series of community-level peace and reconciliation processes that have begun to reduce the urban violence.[25] However, the lack of criminal charges or accountability for those events has left a serious scar upon victims and their families. The long memory of crimes unpunished incentivizes mob justice, vigilantism, and undermines relations between religious and ethnic groups to this day.

The lack of criminal investigations, Truth and Reconciliation, or other justice processes is an offense to the victims, perpetrates cycles of violence, encourages reprisal attacks in the name of "collective responsibility," and leads to future criminality. The lack of investigations and clear reporting have also led to misreporting of the current crisis. For example, in Nasarawa State in the last three months there have been two cases in which gunmen have attacked a community of their own ethnic group while promoting it to be a "Fulani herdsmen" attack. [26] This group was apprehended by a local vigilante group and brought to the police, but more often perpetrators of attacks are unidentified and unsubstantiated allowing criminal activity to be lumped under the header of "farmer-herder conflict."[27] Western researchers are not immune to misreporting on these dynamics. For example, the University of Maryland's START database and the Global Terrorism Index report are among the most-cited sources for statistics on "Fulani Extremist" violence, but only able to document motives and actors in less than 1% of the terror attacks they report.[28]

2. SUPPORTING A PEACE ARCHITECTURE

While the underlying drivers of conflict are complex, the violence we are seeing today is neither acceptable nor inevitable, and there are hundreds of efforts underway – by Nigerian and international civil society, community leaders, religious leaders, scholars, and local officials to prevent violence and mitigate conflict. This is popular: 71% of Nigerians want action to reduce conflicts between farmers and herders in the country. [29] As I speak to my colleagues and partners across Nigeria, I see a few promising interventions that are making real change: 75% of the

programs implemented by Search and its partners in Plateau State over the past decade have contributed to a reduction in violence in those communities.[30] In this section, I will point to the promising "Peace Architecture" approach to atrocity prevention and security, efforts to address the economic drivers of violence, and opportunities to improve justice and accountability.

Scaling a "Peace Architecture" Approach to Prevent Violence and Improve Security. The concept of a "Peace Architecture" or "Community Security Architecture" as articulated in Nigeria refers to how all of the actors within a particular community (Local Government [LGA] leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders, civil society actors, community representatives, women and youth, various civilian and uniformed government agents) interact to improve security and peace. This multi-stakeholder approach, rather than relying on security forces alone, has prevented future conflicts, improved security outcomes, and increased accountability. A "Peace Architecture" approach brings civil society, government, and security forces together to use each group's unique position and skills to identify and respond to emerging security threats. These groups meet regularly to identify security threats and agree on appropriate responses. They were most successful when combining training, dialogue, and media components to include communities in their own security.[31]

Peacebuilding Responses. Through Search's work, we have seen that community platforms for conflict mitigation have reduced trigger events for resource management related conflicts.[32] In Nasarawa, they assigned community groups to patrol and inspect destroyed farmland and created 'safe corridors' for moving herds through the state. In Plateau, dialogues have secured agreements that reduce the risk of conflict with acceptance from all communities, such as prohibiting the use of children as herdsmen and banned night grazing of cattle, which are highly associated with trampled crops. But they have also reduced conflict events and fatalities. In Plateau State, community members said that both crime and security force abuses decreased and that conflict management across religious and tribal lines improved. Moreover, conflict events reduced by half in Local Government Areas that had platforms for community conflict mitigation.[33]

Early Warning, Early Response. We have also supported civilian and community-led Early Warning and Early Response mechanisms (EWER), which seek to harness the shared intelligence between communities, security actors, and governments to identify and address imminent threats to ensure civilian protection. These have proven to be very effective. When implemented correctly, EWER systems can amplify community members' agency to create proactive solutions to prevent violence and improve state response. Increasingly sophisticated communication and data analytics help detect and share early warning signs of violence, but local people-to-people engagement to transform conflicts and support preventive actions. Where community leaders were deeply engaged in these processes, both community and security force actions were more effective.[34]

Improving Accountability. Victims of abuses often have few opportunities to make their voices heard, and the justice system is under-resourced and lacks the constellation of external constituencies – media, civil society, community leaders – to advocate for and ensure justice. That is particularly the case in which government officials, security forces or powerful actors are involved. Yet, we have seen that improved local collaboration between civil society organizations, judicial actors, and religious actors have better allowed the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to identify and receive reports of human rights abuses. Where we have seen media campaigns that explain to citizens how to press their rights, we have also seen increases in the

number of complaints submitted and achievement of some desired results (for example, shifting security deployments and replacing troops accused of human rights violations).[35] At the same time, very significant progress remains to be achieved on criminal accountability.

Investing in Better Policies. In recent years, we have witnessed growing Nigerian and international scholarly communities emerge focused on this component of the issue. Multi-stakeholder research efforts, such as the FFARN, link Nigerian researchers across disciplines with peacebuilders and government policymakers to propose practical reforms to State and Federal Governments and inform key processes like the National Livestock Transformation Plan. The FFARN is supporting the next generation of researchers, commissioning Nigerian graduate students to develop new research on topics ranging from evaluating the application and quality of border controls on livestock to using GIS mapping software to identify shifting grazing routes and potential conflict dynamics.[36] Here in the United States, Search for Common Ground is partnering with the State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations and researchers to develop a toolkit for diplomats and policymakers across Africa's Sahel region on "what works" in terms of policies and programming approaches to address farmer-herder conflict. That toolkit will launch in early 2021, and I will look forward to sharing it with you and members of your staff.[37]

3. AVENUES FOR U.S. ACTION

While the primary responsibility for improving peace, security, and rights falls upon the Nigerian State, and the responsibility of building peace and preventing these atrocities is being shouldered first and foremost by the Nigerian people, there are five key actions that the United States Government can and should do to support these efforts:

1. ***"First of All, Do No Harm."*** In the context of escalated violence and incomplete information, there is a risk that policy, program responses, and public statements can do harm by intensifying, rather than de-escalating the conflict. Given the amount of erroneous reporting in local media or mischaracterization for political purposes, there is a danger that public statements and actions fuel, rather than de-escalate, the conflict. U.S. leaders in Congress, Administration and civil society should use their platforms and tools to drive attention and rally support to efforts to end the violence, while ensuring that analysis is informed by accurate and complete information, in consultation with Nigerians networks like the FFARN, and oriented toward helping bring an end to the crisis.

2. ***Dedicate Resources & Strategy to Peacebuilding and Atrocity Prevention.*** Despite the scale of the conflict and its toll, the United States systematically under-invests in peacebuilding. Only 3% of U.S. foreign assistance in Nigeria went to peace and security programs in the country.[38] This problem is not unique to Nigeria. In the upcoming appropriations cycle, Congress should consult with the two main networks working on this issue in DC: (1) the Prevention and Protection Working Group and (2) the Alliance for Peacebuilding and accept their recommendations to:
    a. Fully fund the Human Rights and Democracy Fund at USAID and the State Department, the parent account for Religious Freedom, good governance and other human rights issues;
    b. Support the flexible accounts (Complex Crisis Fund and Atrocity Prevention) that enable USAID and the State Department to respond to crises like this one;

c. Expand USAID's People-to-People Reconciliation program, which supports the long-term peace and reconciliation programs that have been shown to be effective in reducing ethno-religious violence in the Middle Belt and elsewhere.

d. The Global Fragility Act, which Congress passed this year was designed to deal with issues such as these unfolding in Nigeria. The U.S. Congress should fully fund the Prevention and Stabilization fund and deploy long-term and flexible resources to ending chronic crises such as the ones we are seeing in Nigeria.

Finally, while many of the underlying factors may be addressed through broad development assistance, Congress and the Administration should embrace the new and proposed tools that bring a robust focus on the threats to religious freedom and risk of atrocities. That includes proposed Atrocities Prevention language in the National Defense Authorization Act, which builds on the bipartisan Elie Wiesel Act Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act and includes mainstreaming atrocities prevention into USAID's Country Development Strategies and by prioritizing robust support for Nigeria in line with the Executive Order on Religious Freedom.

3. ***Take a Whole-of-Government Problem-Solving Approach.*** There is no silver bullet to addressing the intertwined drivers of conflict and violence in the Middle Belt in particular, or Nigeria more broadly. However, there are achievable solutions sector-by-sector (agriculture and livestock policy, security cooperation, justice, educational cooperation, etc.). State Department can coordinate across the range of U.S. equities in this space, spanning from USDA's Agricultural Cooperation to U.S. DFC's underwriting of investments, to climate and conservation sectors, to the resources at USAID and the State Department to ensure that all assistance and cooperation contributes to ending this chronic crisis. The toolkit referenced previously is one interesting effort.[39] Another promising response is the informal "Africa Pastoralism Working Group" led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service linking people following this issue across interagency lines as well as in American civil society and academia.

4. ***Bring Cultural Heritage and Public Diplomacy Resources.*** Use the cultural heritage and diplomacy tools of the U.S. Government to implement "conflict-smart" approach to sensitive topics, for example by supporting efforts that: investing in the implementation of the Universal Code of Conduct on the Protection of Holy Sites in Nigeria; increasing Embassy engagement beyond the high-level religious actors to celebrate and support grassroots and influential faith and opinion leaders; and expanding intercultural virtual exchange programs such as the Stevens Initiative to include Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries.

5. ***Take Conflict Geography Approach and Coordinate with Others.*** Many of the conflict dynamics in Nigeria are transboundary, from cross-border movement of weapons and cross-border criminal gangs and extremist organizations to the regional effects of climate change. At the same time, coordinating policy and programs between Nigeria and the French-speaking Sahel countries can run into bureaucratic and cultural hurdles. Congress can facilitate a regional or "conflict geography"[40] approach by expanding authorities for cross-border conflict resolution programs as it has in other parts of the world. At the same time, the U.S. can rally a wider group of actors, including allies like the European Union, the United Kingdom, and European governments to take a concerted effort towards this problem, and encourage and support action led by the United Nations, African Union, and ECOWAS.

[1] More information about Search for Common Ground's mission and history are available at : https://www.sfcg.org/

[2] Search's work in Nigeria is supported by charitable contributions, as well as grant support from USAID and the State Department, the governments of France, the Netherlands and Germany, cooperation agreements with a number of UN Agencies and the European Union, as well as support from foundations and the private sector. Search's annual Impact Report and financial information is available at: https://www.sfcg.org/impact-report/.

[3] "A Call for Improved Security as Majority of Nigerians Feel Unsafe," NOIPolls, November 7, 2018, https://noi-polls.com/a-call-for-improved-security-as-majority-of-nigerians-feel-unsafe/.

[4] "Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence," International Crisis Group, July 26, 2018, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.

[5] "Data Export Tool." ACLED. Accessed December 16, 2020. https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/.

[6] To read more about the absence of trust in security forces and lack of accountability measures, please refer to the following report: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

[7] "Nigeria," Office of the United State Trade Representative, accessed December 16, 2020, https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/nigeria#:~:text=U.S.-Nigeria%20Trade%20Facts&text=U.S.%20goods%20and%20services%20trade,billion%3B%20imports%20were%20%245.1%20billion.

[8] Stein Emil Vollset et al., "Fertility, Mortality, Migration, and Population Scenarios for 195 Countries and Territories from 2017 to 2100: A Forecasting Analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study," *The Lancet* 396, no. 10258 (2020), doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30677-2.

[9] For additional consideration of these points, a recent in-depth review of 300 academic and scientific articles on this topic, consult: Brottem, Leif and Andrew McDonnell. "Pastoralism and Conflict in the Sudano-Sahel: A Review of the Literature, 1st ed." Washington DC: Search for Common Ground (2020)

[10] The average cost of a Kalashnikov AK-47 rifle, the popular weapon often used to carry out violent attacks, costs about $1,292 in Nigeria – cheaper than an Apple laptop or several cows. https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2017/03/30/the-cost-of-an-ak-47-on-the-black-market-across-the-world-infographic/?sh=7a4fbf767442.

[11] Sunday Joseph Duntoye, "With Lived Poverty on the Rise, Nigerians Rate Government Performance as Poor," October 8, 2020, https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ad395-lived_poverty_on_the_rise_in_nigeria-afrobarometer_dispatch-8oct20.pdf.

[12] Only 25% of Nigerians believe the government is improving living standards for the poor; approximately 18% believe the government has been successful in creating jobs, and only 17% believe the government is doing well in narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. Read more at: https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ad395-lived_poverty_on_the_rise_in_nigeria-afrobarometer_dispatch-8oct20.pdf.

[13] Duntoye, "With Lived Poverty on the Rise, Nigerians Rate Government Performance as Poor."

[14] Ibid.

[15] Marie Julie Ducrotoy et al. "Fulani Cattle Productivity and Management in the Kachia Grazing Reserve, Nigeria," *Pastoralism* 6, no. 25 (2016), doi: https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-016-0072-y.

[16] Femi Adewunmi, "Nigeria's Middle-Class: How We Live, and What We Want from Life," October 2, 2011, https://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/nigerias-middle-class-how-we-live-and-what-we-want-from-life/12563/.

[17] Chom Bagu and Katie Smith. "Past is Prologue: Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria's Middle Belt." Search for Common Ground (2018), https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

[18] "Cassava," U.S. Department of Agriculture Plant Guide, accessed December 16, 2020, https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_maes.pdf.

[19] Please refer to the following report for more information on rural food insecurity and poverty in Nigeria: https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ad395-lived_poverty_on_the_rise_in_nigeria-afrobarometer_dispatch-8oct20.pdf.

[20] Established in 2010, the STF is the primary unit deployed alongside the police. It represents a coordinated response by the military, bringing together the different services within the armed forces, including the Army, Navy, and Airforce, as well as other security agencies such as the Nigerian Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), and the DSS. Within the framework of their involvement in internal security operations, the goal is to harness their different resources and expertise in tackling the problem under a unified command structure led by the Defense Headquarters.

[21] For an in depth discussion of successes, shortcomings and results of these efforts, see Chris M.A. Kwaja and Olubukola I. Ademola-Adelehin, "Seeking Security and Stability: An Analysis of Security Responses to Farmer-Herder Conflict in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria," Search for Common Ground (2018), https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Seeking-Security-and-Stability_Nigeria_-Search-for-Common-Ground.pdf.

[22] Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin. "Seeking Security and Stability: An Analysis of Security Responses to Farmer-Herder Conflict in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria."

[23] "A Call for Improved Security as Majority of Nigerians Feel Unsafe."

[24] This has been reorganized earlier in 2020 now as the Office of Conflict and Violence Prevention.

[25] Carolyne Ashton, "Preventing Inter-Religious Violence in Plateau State Nigeria: Final Evaluation," Search for Common Ground (2013)

[26] "Early Warning / Early Response" Data (2020), Search for Common Ground

[27] "Early Warning / Early Response" Data (October 2020), Search for Common Ground

[28] START identifies a motive in less than 1% of violence it attributes to "terror" by Fulani extremists, and adds "speculation" in another 9%. Many of the cited motives are criminal rather than terroristic, and prominent attacks highlighted in these indices, including killings at Zaki Biom in Benue State or last years' massacre in Kaduna State are publicly contradicted by on the ground reporting by Nigerian Police, as well as Nigerian and international press on the scene.

[29] "Nigeria," AfroBarometer, accessed December 16, 2020, http://afrobarometer.org/countries/nigeria-0.

[30] Horacio R. Trujillo, "Expanding Initiatives to Reduce Human Rights Abuses in Northern Nigeria," Search for Common Ground (2018), https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-Evaluation-Expanding-Initiatives-to-Reduce-Human-Rights-Abuses-in-Northern-Nigeria-May-2018.pdf.

[31] Search's work in Nigeria has often involved relationship-building tactics, like dialogue facilitation, to mitigate conflict. These social cohesion projects have most recently involved community platforms created to facilitate dialogue between pastoralists and farmers. These platforms have endured beyond the funding and coordination of Search; they convene regularly to identify early signs of conflict and how to discuss how to de-escalate the situation. Search's activities catalyzed the passions of individuals to continue to build cohesion in their communities, equipped with skills and renewed passion to carry forward long-term change.

[32] Olubukola Ademola-Adelehin, Testimony for Hearing on "Nigeria: Conflict in the Middle Belt," September 2017, https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/sites/humanrightscommission.house.gov/files/documents/Ademola%20AdelehinTestimony-%20SFCG.pdf.

[33] Horacio R. Trujillo, "Expanding Initiatives to Reduce Human Rights Abuses in Northern Nigeria."

[34] To read more on Early Warning and Early Response systems, as well as Search's specific projects utilizing them, please refer to the following policy brief: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Early_Warning_Early_Response_Policy_Brief.pdf.

[35] Horacio R. Trujillo, "Expanding Initiatives to Reduce Human Rights Abuses in Northern Nigeria."

[36] More detail on this program and their research is available from Senior Program Officer Andrew McDonnell at amcdonnell@sfcg.org

[37] This research and an accompanying web interactive will be published and launched in the U.S., Europe and West Africa in the first quarter of 2021. Additional information on launch plans will be shared on Search for Common Ground's website or by contacting Senior Program Officer Andrew McDonnell at amcdonnell@sfcg.org

[38] "Nigeria Foreign Assistance," ForeignAssistance.gov, accessed December 17, 2020, https://www.foreignassistance.gov/explore/country/Nigeria.

[39] The toolkit considers best practices in policy and programming responses to the farmer-herder dimensions of the crisis, including particular modules on (1) Food Security & Rural Development (2) Environment & Conservation (3) Democracy & Governance (4) Regional Integration (5) Gender & Women's Empowerment (6) Conflict Management (7) Law Enforcement & Counter Terrorism.

[40] Because conflicts and their effects are rarely isolated to one single country, utilizing an approach that defines engagement by the borders of conflict (i.e. a "conflict geography"), not country boundaries, allows for greater flexibility and accuracy when examining the causes, characteristics and consequences of conflict. After examining over 100 different conflicts and various methods of categorization, Search ultimately decided that a "conflict geography" approach that focused on acute manifestations of violence, spillover and resonating effects, and proxy factors best represented the holistic nature of conflict. Search identified 10 consequential conflict geographies that undermine global security and development goals: the Horn of Africa; Central and South Asia; the Sahel; the Levant; Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin; the Bay of Bengal; Central Africa; the Arabian Peninsula; the Sudans; and the Northern Triangle.