



FRAGILITY AND CLIMATE RISKS NIGERIA

OVERVIEW

Nigeria faces among the highest compound fragility-climate risks globally. It suffers from ongoing fragility and conflict that severely limit the state's ability to respond to the country's considerable climate risks. At the same time, environmental stress may be increasing the severity of land conflicts and food shortages in the country.

Nigeria's ongoing crises highlight how compound fragility-climate risks can heighten populations' insecurity by increasing their vulnerability to humanitarian emergencies and conflict. Nigeria's crisis in the North, for example, reflects emergency conditions and famine risks that are not caused by climate factors alone but also by longstanding environmental stress coupled with poor national management of the security, economic, and social conditions in that region. Likewise, the escalating security situation in the Middle Belt involves a highly climate-exposed region where the state has provided only limited response to growing food insecurity and ongoing tensions between Fulani herders and non-Fulani farmers over the use of land and water resources. Similarly, rising tensions in the climate-exposed Niger Delta reflect a long-standing secessionist movement driven in large part by disputes over state management of oil revenues, deteriorating environmental conditions and economic development challenges.



Source: Africa Health Workforce Observatory (AHWO)

This brief summarizes findings from a broader USAID case study of fragility and climate risks in Nigeria (Moran et al. 2018b) and a USAID report on *The Intersection of Global Fragility and Climate Risks* (Moran et al. 2018a). Key findings from the global report are summarized in the box on the next page.

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KEY FINDINGS

Fragility Risks: Nigeria experiences the highest fragility in West Africa and among the highest of all countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria has high fragility in all four spheres of state-society interactions—political, security, economic and social—struggling to deliver services, prevent corruption, ensure political pluralism and maintain security.

Climate Risks: Nigeria has more than 41 million people—24 percent of its population—living in high climate exposure areas. Its population faces diverse and extensive climate risks from storm surges along the entire coast, inland flooding and wildfires in the Niger Delta region, decreased rainfall in the southeast and Middle Belt, droughts and floods in the north, and flooding across the country along the Niger, Benue, Sokoto and Komadugu rivers.

Compound Fragility-Climate Risks: While Nigeria faces extensive climate risks, the severity of fragility and conflict in the country has hindered its response to these climate challenges. This is a critical connection since environmental stress—coupled with government mismanagement of environmental and other stressors—contributes to instability the country now faces from food crises and land conflicts, risking a dangerous feedback loop between fragility and climate risks. Nigeria's ongoing crises—conflict and famine risk in the North, rising violence between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt, and simmering tensions over management of natural resources in the Niger Delta—each show interactions between fragility and climate risks. Nigeria must reduce fragility in all four spheres, as addressing its climate challenges will require 1) resilience initiatives in the social and economic spheres, 2) effective political processes to serve as a conduit between public needs and state responses, and 3) a stable security environment in which to operate.

FRAGILITY AND CLIMATE RISKS: KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Fragility is an important dimension in understanding the indirect pathways between climate risks and potential conflict outcomes. Considering state-society relations and the dynamics of legitimacy and effectiveness enhances our ability to identify and understand indirect pathways through which vulnerability is compounded and, conversely, where resilience efforts can have co-benefits for climate, environment and conflict prevention goals.
2. Compound fragility-climate risks can heighten insecurity but conflict is context-specific. Fragility and climate risks generally interact by increasing vulnerability to humanitarian crises and/or political instability. However, even states with similarly high compound fragility-climate risks and similar rates of violence can host very different types of conflict. This reality underscores the central role that governance plays in the development of conflict.
3. State legitimacy is poor across nearly all states with high compound fragility-climate risks. Poor state legitimacy contributes more than poor state effectiveness to the overall fragility of these states, on average. Improving state legitimacy can thus be an essential element to increasing stability and reinforcing government-led efforts to address climate risks.
4. Many people around the world face high compound fragility-climate risks. The majority of highly fragile states have a large number of people or a large proportion of the population living in high exposure areas. Further, several moderately fragile states have among the highest numbers of people living in high exposure areas, posing grave risks to large numbers of people if fragility worsens and government response capacity declines in these countries.
5. Multiple climate risks often affect the same populations and institutions in highly fragile states. Populations in very high climate exposure areas generally face several overlapping climate stressors, which can heighten overall vulnerability and can place repeated stress on a range of institutions and social and economic systems.
6. Yet in a few highly fragile states, single climate stressors can be just as damaging as multiple hazards. Some highly fragile states face high exposure to a single climate stressor to a degree that risks exceeding their capacity to address it.

Source: Moran et al. 2018a. Access the full report [here](#).

FRAGILITY RISKS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is in the highest category of fragility compared to other countries globally; it experiences the highest fragility of all countries in West Africa and among the highest fragility of all countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Fragility in Nigeria stems from poor state effectiveness (i.e., low capacity of public sector institutions) and even more so from poor and dwindling state legitimacy (i.e., low public support for government arrangements, officials and practices). The table below summarizes trends in political, security, economic and social dimensions of state legitimacy and effectiveness in Nigeria.

Key Areas of Concern and Improvement in Nigeria (2000-2014)

KEY AREAS OF CONCERN

- Sharp declines in security legitimacy due to increasing state violence, armed groups contesting the state and the growth of communal militias—all signs of reduced state control and assumption of security duties by non-state actors
- Poor and worsening political legitimacy stemming from low citizen participation in selecting the government, limited opportunities for alternative policy and leadership preferences and an increased number of asylum requests
- Worsening economic legitimacy resulting from high corruption, limited and declining rule of law and private property protections, and barriers to joining the formal economy
- Poor social effectiveness reflecting exceedingly poor social service provision, with among the highest infant mortality rates, lowest child immunization rates, and lowest rates of access to improved water sources and sanitation in the world
- Poor political effectiveness stemming from large and worsening deficits in the quality of public service and state capacity for tax revenue generation, especially from 2002–2012
- Poor security effectiveness demonstrated by the growing proportion of state territory impacted by ethnic conflict in recent years

KEY AREA OF IMPROVEMENT

- Modest gains in economic effectiveness due to rising gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, tempered by continued high poverty rates and high dependence on oil exports

Overall, despite modest gains in economic effectiveness over the 15-year study period, Nigeria's persistently troubled management of the security, political and social spheres, and its stagnant or declining legitimacy across all spheres—security, political, economic and social—reflect that effective policy implementation has been lacking in each of these spheres and will be difficult in the years ahead.

MEASURING FRAGILITY

The global fragility measure developed for this study is similar in composition and outcome to USAID's internal methods and framework for analyzing fragility (USAID 2005, ARD Consortium 2005).

Total fragility reflects both state effectiveness and legitimacy. *Effectiveness* indicators assess the capacity of public sector institutions and practices. *Legitimacy* indicators assess the degree of public support for government arrangements, officials and practices. These two sets of indicators are subdivided into political, security, economic and social indicators.

For this study's cross-national fragility scores and raw data for the 15-year study period (2000-2014), see Kishi and Linke 2016. For the rationale for each indicator and the process used to create the fragility measure, see Moran et al. 2018a.

KEY SOURCES OF FRAGILITY

Nigeria is embroiled in multiple long-term conflicts that both reflect and contribute to deep weaknesses in state capacity. The existence of very high, sustained violence indicates that state institutions from the national to the local level are continually pressured and challenged. The state's inability to prevent violence suggests that at least some national institutions may be weakened to the point of being presently unable to reform to address the key political, economic and social issues that lead to violence. Such conflict patterns also indicate that the state is likely hosting varied motivations for and responses to these multiple ongoing conflicts, as the politics that give rise to competition in one region of a state are unlikely to be the same as those in another region, and both may be unrelated to larger national tensions.

Boko Haram in the North

Boko Haram is West Africa's most active and lethal conflict actor. Beginning in late 2014, Boko Haram's ability to take and hold territory led to increasing attacks across Nigeria. Most of these incidents have occurred in Borno, Adamawa, Gombe and Yobe States—states also hard-hit by multiple climate hazards. The battle against Boko Haram turned decisively in the state's favor in 2016, as the state killed or captured a large number of Boko Haram fighters. This paved the way for it to secure significant amounts of territory from the insurgent group and ultimately translated into a clear reduction in recorded conflict-related fatalities. By the end of 2016, conflict-related fatalities were at their lowest levels since early 2013, prompting Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari to declare victory against the group.

Despite the considerable territorial and military losses Boko Haram suffered in Nigeria from 2016 to 2018, the group is believed to still possess bases in the territories of Nigeria's neighbors across the Lake Chad basin, and it has retained the ability to successfully attack soft targets in Nigeria. Its attacks against civilians and attacks involving remote violent have continued in Nigeria, particularly in Borno and Adamawa States. Boko Haram renewed ceasefire talks with the Nigerian military in 2018, though these negotiations are complicated by the group's continued violence against civilians in Nigeria, increasing conflict activity outside of Nigeria, and competing leadership factions in its ranks (Kishi and Vannice 2018). The group's continued activity in Nigeria, however, conveys that its actual defeat has proved elusive.

BAGA: A TURNING POINT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BOKO HARAM

Boko Haram's single most dramatic attack was the January 2015 Baga massacre, which is believed to have resulted in as many as 2,000 fatalities. Besides the large number of fatalities, the attack was particularly audacious as Baga is the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force made up of troops from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

The attack played a major role in catalyzing a joint offensive that Nigeria agreed to and that included intervention by Chadian and Nigerien, and later Cameroonian, troops in the conflict. The successful multinational offensive took back a considerable amount of territory from Boko Haram, successfully isolating the group and eventually, in December 2016, pushing it out of its primary stronghold in the Sambisa Forest. This signaled an important strategic and symbolic victory for Nigeria.

Rural Violence in the Middle Belt

The Middle Belt is located along the traditional migration route for Muslim Hausa-Fulani herders in northern Nigeria and neighboring countries. These herders have typically sought grazable land farther south, which has brought them into conflict with Christian Yorubas, who tend to be settled farmers. Ongoing conflict between largely Fulani herders and non-Fulani farmers, as well as opportunistic criminal activity related to banditry and cattle rustling, in Benue, Kaduna and Taraba States has resulted in large displacements of people and razing of homes and villages. The disputes behind the violence allegedly focus on the use of farmland, grazing areas and water, with both sides claiming grievances against the other. With Nigerian government capacity stretched thin in recent years by Boko Haram, the government has had limited response to the violence stemming from these climate-related grievances in the high-exposure Middle Belt.

Violence against civilians has been steadily rising. In the first half of 2018, the rate of Fulani attacks against civilians was nearly 50 percent higher than that of Boko Haram. In mid-2018, the Nigerian government redirected troops to challenge the increasing number of attacks in the Middle Belt. The impact of this strategy remains to be seen, however, both in terms of combating rural violence in the Middle Belt and potentially creating a window for Boko Haram to regroup in the North (Vannice 2018).

Diffuse Instabilities in the South

Communal violence perpetrated by disparate groups and political militias is widespread outside the Middle Belt and particularly in the south of the country, but generally elicits limited state response. With limited state management of diffuse local conflicts in the south and minimal progress addressing underlying conditions that have stoked past instability in the Niger Delta, the long-brewing secessionist movement has continued to simmer in the Niger Delta.

A report by the International Crisis Group notes that the “government has largely failed to carry out ... recommendations that addressed the insurgency’s root causes, including inadequate infrastructure, environmental pollution, local demands for a bigger share of oil revenues, widespread poverty, and youth unemployment” (Ibekwe 2015). If violence continues to escalate in the Niger Delta, this would put considerable additional pressure on the state both militarily and financially as infrastructure continues to be targeted in that region.

Overall, since 2017, Nigeria has been the second most violent state in Africa, accounting for approximately 10 percent of all weekly political conflicts across the continent. Since violence against civilians makes up a large part of this political violence, the risk to civilians in Nigeria is severe (ACLED 2018).

With violence against civilians being a key barrier to development in conflict-affected countries, tracking the patterns in Boko Haram and Fulani attacks against civilians will be key to implementing resilience initiatives and broader development efforts in Nigeria.

The risks that conflict poses to state security are also high, but gradually reducing with key military victories in recent years (ACLED 2018). These dynamics will remain fragile, however, if the government does not take further action to bolster resilience and address the underlying issues stoking the country’s range of conflicts.

THREE ONGOING CRISES: THE ROLE OF STATE MISMANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS

Nigeria’s ongoing crises in the North, Middle Belt and Niger Delta each show evidence of high climate stress and limited state capacity to adequately respond to interrelated environmental, social, economic and security dynamics.

As is noted in the debate on climate security, conflict patterns do show that poor management of environmental factors can contribute to already unstable and unequal conditions that in turn contribute to organized violence.

Such environmental factors can include management of water access, land use, resource wealth and migration routes—all of which have been cited by conflict actors as grounds for ongoing disputes in Nigeria.

The potential for significant resource competition and internal displacement due to drought and famine in the northern and central areas, as well as conflict over unaddressed grievances in the south, could lead to greater instability across Nigeria. This could in turn put greater pressure on Nigerian security services and offer new opportunities for groups engaged in conflict to press over-extended state forces (Reuters 2017), while also providing new recruitment opportunities among disaffected populations (Mercy Corps 2016).

CLIMATE RISKS IN NIGERIA






Nigeria faces a confluence of climate hazards, including floods, storms, ocean surges, droughts and wildfires.¹ These are likely to increase in frequency and intensity due to projected climate changes (USAID 2012).

Coastal states in Nigeria face extensive risks from storm surges along the entire coast, inland flooding and wildfires in the Niger Delta region, and decreased rainfall in the southeast. This includes the densely populated cities of Lagos and Port Harcourt. USAID has estimated that 27 to 53 million people may need to be relocated if sea levels rise by 0.5 meters, which Nigeria is expected to see by the end of this century (USAID 2012). Northern Nigeria faces chronic aridity across the northern states and riverine flooding along the Sokoto and Komadugu river systems.

While analysts frequently worry about the chronically arid North, the Middle Belt shows particularly high exposure to reduced rainfall and flooding and experiences land use tensions between pastoralists and farmers over grazing rights and water access. High-exposure areas here include the eastern and central parts of the Middle Belt—from Adamawa State and southern Borno State in the east to Gombe, Plateau, Kaduna, Nassarawa and the Federal Capital Territory, where the capital Abuja (home to more than 2 million people) is located.

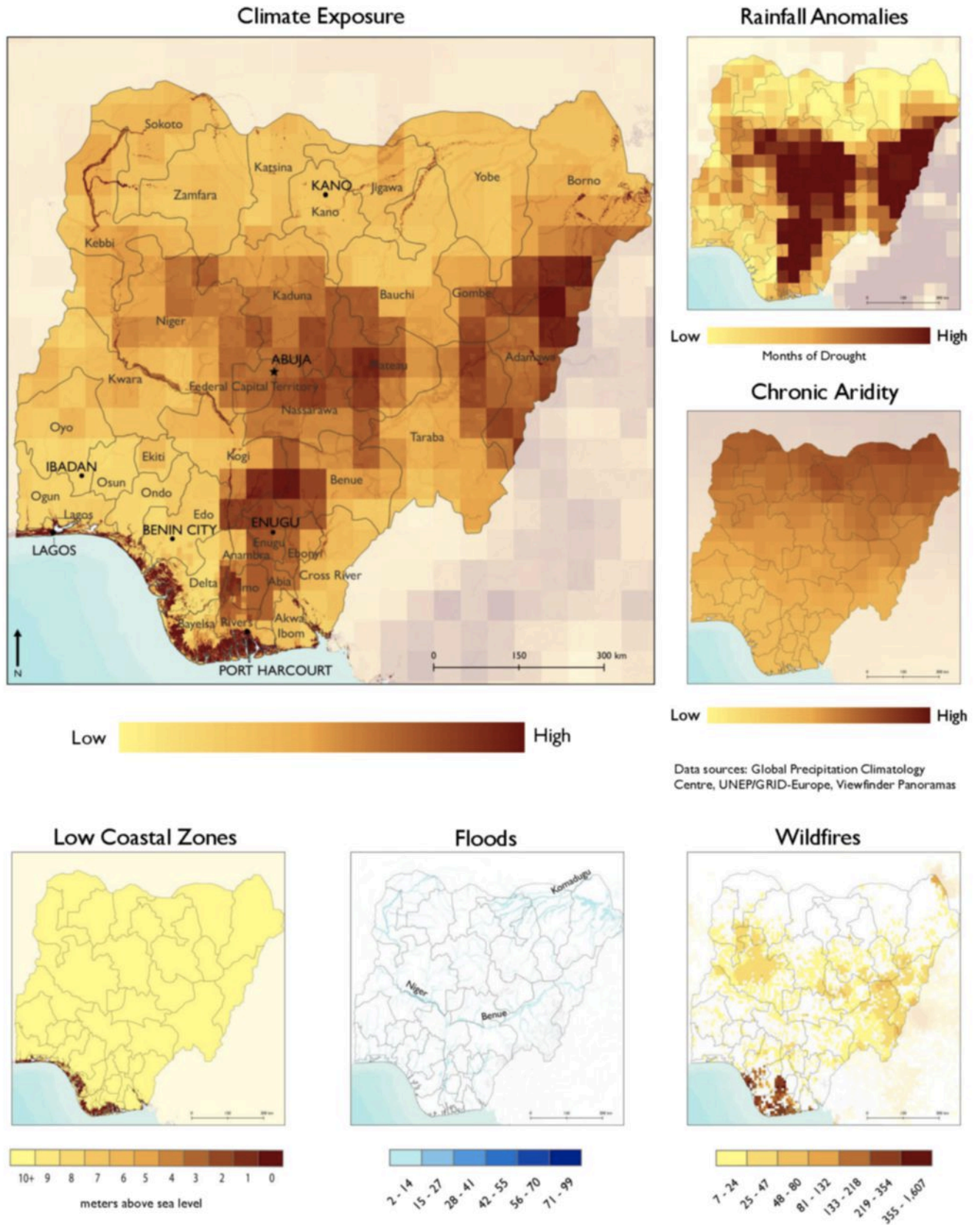
CLIMATE EXPOSURE IN NIGERIA AT A GLANCE

- 41 million people (24 percent of the population) live in high exposure areas.
- 4.5 million people face very high climate exposure.
- Nigeria faced more than 40 climate-related disasters from 2000 to 2016. (Guha-Sapir, Below and Hoyois 2017).
- Floods in 2012 affected 7 million people, mostly along the Niger and Benue rivers and in the Niger Delta (Guha-Sapir, Below and Hoyois 2017; OCHA 2012).

Climate Hazards and Exposure in Nigeria	
HAZARD	EXPOSURE IN NIGERIA
Rainfall Anomalies 	The areas with large reductions in rainfall are primarily along the eastern edge and the central to southern parts of the country. Along the east, this includes Adamawa State, the southern part of Borno State, Gombe State and Taraba State. In the central part of Nigeria, the states with dry rainfall anomalies include Imo, Abia, Enugu, Kogi, Nassarawa, Federal Capital Territory, Plateau, Kaduna and Niger.
Chronic Aridity 	The northern part of the country is chronically arid. The northeastern states of Borno and Yobe are the most arid, followed by Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto States.
Floods 	Flood-prone areas along Nigeria's rivers include the Sokoto River in the northwest. The Sokoto feeds into the Niger River, which itself is flood-prone in Niger and Kogi States in the center of the country and in Anambra and Imo States in the south. The Benue River that extends from central-eastern Nigeria before meeting the Niger River is also subject to flooding. The other major flooding areas are in the complex of rivers in the northeast, including the Hadejia, Komadugu Gana, Yedseram and Gongola rivers.
Sea-Level Rise 	Several coastal states face high exposure to future coastal flooding due to low elevation. These include Lagos State, home to the city of Lagos and its more than 11 million people; Rivers State, home to the city of Port Harcourt with its population of nearly 2 million; and Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo and, to a lesser extent, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States.
Wildfires 	The most wildfire-prone states are in the southern part of the country near the coast: Rivers, Imo, Delta and Bayelsa States. The northernmost tip of Borno State is also prone to fires.

¹ For this study's population- and territory-based metrics of climate exposure worldwide, see Smith, Krishnan and Busby 2016 and Krishnan, Busby and Smith 2016.

Figure 1. Sources of Climate Exposure



Note: Low coastal zones are measured in meters above sea level. Floods are measured as the number of flood events per 100 years. Wildfires are measured as the number of wildfire events per year. Chronic aridity is measured as the coefficient of variation (CV) based on monthly variation, with low CV reflecting consistent rainfall and high CV reflecting long periods of very little rain punctuated by short periods of high rainfall. Rainfall anomalies are measured as months of drought. More information on how these climate indicators are measured and produced is available in Appendix A of Moran et al. 2018a.

COMPOUND FRAGILITY-CLIMATE RISKS

Nigeria is a highly fragile state with extensive climate hazards that place extreme stress on the state in terms of both the population and land area exposed. Multiple exposure risks dispersed over a sizable portion of territory narrow livelihood choices and create broad additional requirements for the state, yet the severity of fragility and conflict in Nigeria has reduced its capacity to respond to climate challenges. This is a critical connection since environmental stress—coupled with government mismanagement of environmental and other stressors—contributes to the instability the country now faces from food crises and land conflicts, risking a dangerous feedback loop between fragility and climate risks in Nigeria.

Nigeria's current crises have both climate- and fragility-related components. In 2017, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) identified severe food insecurity and emergency conditions in northeastern Nigeria and projected food stress across all of the northern states, as well as Nassarawa, Taraba and Adamawa States in the Middle Belt (FEWS NET 2017). Nigeria's current crisis in the North, however, reflects emergency conditions and famine risks caused not by climate factors alone, but by longstanding environmental stress coupled with poor national management of the security, economic and social conditions in that region. While the North endures chronic aridity and high overall exposure, its exposure levels are not the highest in the country,² and this famine risk appears to be primarily driven instead by political violence disrupting harvests and aid supplies rather than by climate factors alone (Greenwood 2016). The environmental context could be an increasing source of tension, however, if scarcity persists over the longer term.

Likewise, the escalating security situation in the Middle Belt involves a highly climate-stressed region where the state has provided only limited response to growing food insecurity and has not sufficiently addressed ongoing tensions between Fulani herders and non-Fulani farmers over the use of land and water resources. Particularly given the state's limited response to such communal conflict in the past, it has not demonstrated the capacity to manage the increased communal conflict or humanitarian crisis that could emerge from circumstances of increased food and water stress in this region. Similarly, rising tensions in the climate-stressed Niger Delta reflect a longstanding secessionist movement driven in large part by disputes over state management of oil revenues, deteriorating environmental conditions and economic development challenges.

On the bright side, the experience of Nigeria underscores how examining compound fragility-climate risks may present new information about vulnerability and resilience and therefore offer a broadened set of strategies for reducing fragility and mitigating climate risk. Similar to most states with compound fragility-climate risks, in Nigeria, poor state legitimacy—reflecting public perceptions that the state is unwilling or unable to meet public needs—contributes significantly to overall fragility. Thus, state actions that respond to public needs to reduce climate vulnerabilities could simultaneously reduce both climate risks and the legitimacy deficits that contribute to fragility in Nigeria. Conversely, the state's inability to reduce public insecurities related to climate risks could further erode state legitimacy and social capital in Nigeria. This scenario underscores the opportunity for a coordinated approach in a state with high compound risks to focus on addressing interrelated fragility and climate risks simultaneously.

² See maps in Climate Risks in Nigeria section of this brief.

CONCLUSION

While Nigeria is pursuing climate actions through international frameworks for national adaptation planning, Nigeria's ability to address its widespread, diverse climate risks depends greatly on its state capacity and societal resilience. However, the country's fragility has increased considerably in recent years, and the state faces challenges to functioning effectively in all four spheres—political, security, economic and social.

The ongoing long-term crises across Nigeria, which all exhibit evidence of high climate stress, both reflect and contribute to deep weaknesses in state capacity. The existence of sustained conflict signals the inability of the state to control its territory or advance reforms to address the political, economic and social issues that lead to violence. The severity of fragility across all spheres in Nigeria thus presents substantial challenges to state implementation of policies to address the country's climate challenges, as this would require 1) reforms to advance adaptation and resilience initiatives in the social and economic spheres, 2) effective political processes to serve as a conduit between public needs and state responses, and 3) a stable security environment in which to operate. Nigeria's persistently troubled management of each of these spheres, however, reflects that effective policy implementation has been lacking and will be difficult in the years ahead. Nigeria's ongoing crises also highlight that opportunities to change the country's trajectory do exist, particularly at the institutional level, and may sometimes be best leveraged in nontraditional ways that can yield co-benefits for both peace and climate adaptation.

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