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# Building Resilience and Social Protection in Nigeria's North-East

## Empowering Communities through Gender-Transformative Development in Borno and Adamawa

### The challenge

With over 200 million people, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, yet poverty, food insecurity, and gender inequality are critical challenges, particularly in Northeast Nigeria. Since 2009, Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies have caused over 36,000 deaths and displaced more than 2.1 million people. Borno State alone hosts approximately 1.8 million IDPs and 1.9 million returnees, while Adamawa State is home to about 210,000 IDPs and 830,000 returnees, overwhelming local resources and straining already limited social protection systems.

Women are disproportionately affected, confined by socio-cultural norms to domestic roles and excluded from decision-making and income-generating opportunities. The crisis has heightened their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, and abduction. Instability has deepened mistrust in government and eroded social cohesion, leaving marginalized groups such as women, children, and minorities at additional risk.

In the face of these challenges, strengthening social protection systems is vital to rebuilding trust, addressing vulnerabilities, and fostering resilience in Northeast Nigeria. Effective social safety nets can help mitigate the impacts of displacement, provide support for vulnerable groups, and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic recovery. However, achieving this requires participatory approaches that include marginalized groups and address their specific needs.

Project name	Supporting Sustainable Social Protection, Participation and Economic Resilience in Northeast Nigeria (SEPIN-SUSI)
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Implementing Partners	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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## Our approach

Our programme adopts a two-pronged approach: enhancing state institutions' capacity to establish inclusive social protection systems while simultaneously implementing practical social safety net programmes. By addressing the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and vulnerable host community members, the programme fosters social cohesion and builds sustainable livelihoods. Gender equality is central to this approach, ensuring women's active participation in planning and decision-making while challenging restrictive socio-cultural norms.

The programme emphasizes capacity development at individual, organisational, and societal levels. For individuals, it enhances technical skills, provides access to finance, and supports climate-smart agricultural practices, enabling sustainable livelihoods and resilience to shocks. At the organisational level, it strengthens community-based organisations, cooperatives, and women's groups, empowering them to advocate for their rights, engage in participatory planning, and provide better services. Communities are further supported in implementing flagship projects that address local challenges, such as improving infrastructure, facilitating market access, and launching social cohesion initiatives.

State institutions receive targeted support to develop and implement inclusive social protection policies. This includes training, expert advice, and assistance in creating monitoring frameworks. Innovative pilots, such as poverty graduation programmes and shock-responsive social protection mechanisms, address the most vulnerable groups and provide scalable solutions. These efforts also incorporate extensive stakeholder consultations to ensure alignment with community priorities and long-term sustainability. By bridging the gap between government and communities, the programme not only addresses immediate needs but also creates a foundation for trust and resilience that can withstand future challenges.



Participants in the nutrition and home-garden activities.

## Our results

The programme achieved significant milestones in social participation, economic empowerment, and gender equality. Over 2,600 individuals, including women, IDPs, and marginalised groups, took part in inclusive community planning, leading to 175 self-help projects such as infrastructure rehabilitation, tree planting, and support for persons with disabilities. Advocacy efforts resulted in the inclusion of community projects in the 2024 Federal Budget and key infrastructure improvements, such as solar-powered telecommunication masts, benefiting thousands. These efforts strengthened trust between communities and authorities, fostering social cohesion.

In economic participation, 4,305 farmers were trained in climate-smart practices, boosting yields by 32%. Nearly 2,800 women earned income from surplus vegetables, and NGN 27,000,000 in cooperative savings was reinvested into livelihoods. Youth were actively involved as community extension agents, providing services that improved agricultural practices and resilience across 2,270 hectares of farmland.

Gender dialogues and advocacy increased awareness of women's rights, resulting in 11 gender desk officers and expanded roles for women in decision-making, including leadership positions in Adamawa's LGAs. Capacity-building efforts equipped local governments, women's groups, and communities with tools for inclusive planning, ensuring sustainable development and gender-responsive governance. The programme's initiatives have laid a strong foundation for long-term resilience and empowerment.

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