

# Northeast Nigeria Rural Resilience Study Recurrent Monitoring Survey (RMS)

## Round 4 Findings: Summary Brief

February 2024



This brief presents preliminary findings from four rounds of the Recurrent Monitoring Survey (RMS) of the Northeast Nigeria Resilience Study, carried out from August 2022 to September 2023.<sup>1,2</sup> The study aims to understand if a portfolio of resilience interventions can mitigate the negative impacts of shocks and stresses, protect and promote resilience capacities, and improve well-being in the context of protracted crises, including economic and climate shocks and high levels of internal displacement and conflict. The focal activity, Rural Resilience Activity (RRA), includes market-systems strengthening interventions layered with peacebuilding and short-term humanitarian assistance, primarily in the form of unconditional cash transfers, in response to the impacts of COVID-19, the Ukraine crisis, and severe flooding.<sup>3</sup>

### Key Learning from the RMS

#### How has household food security changed over the course of the RMS in relation to shock exposure?

During the study period, households in the Northeast experienced an extreme and highly volatile shock context, marked by high inflation, illness, severe flooding, persistent insecurity, and displacement. An increase in food insecurity in Round 4 (R4) reflected worsening conditions, with nearly all households reporting increased food, fuel, and input prices.<sup>4</sup>

#### Quick Facts

**Focal Activity:** Rural Resilience Activity (RRA)

**Implementation Period:** 5 Years 2019–2024

**Funding Source:** USAID Feed the Future, \$30 million, plus \$15 million COVID-19 response and \$4 million Ukraine response

**Aim:** To facilitate and protect economic recovery and growth in vulnerable, conflict-affected areas and sustainably move people out of chronic vulnerability and poverty by expanding access to market services

**Implementors:** Mercy Corps in partnership with Save the Children International and the International Fertilizer Development Center

**Intervention Area:** Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, and Gombe

<sup>1</sup> The study is conducted by TANGO International in partnership with Binomial Optimus, Ltd and commissioned by USAID's Bureau of Resilience, Environment, and Food Security and Center for Resilience, in collaboration with the USAID Nigeria Mission, under the Resilience Evaluation, Analysis, and Learning (REAL) Award.

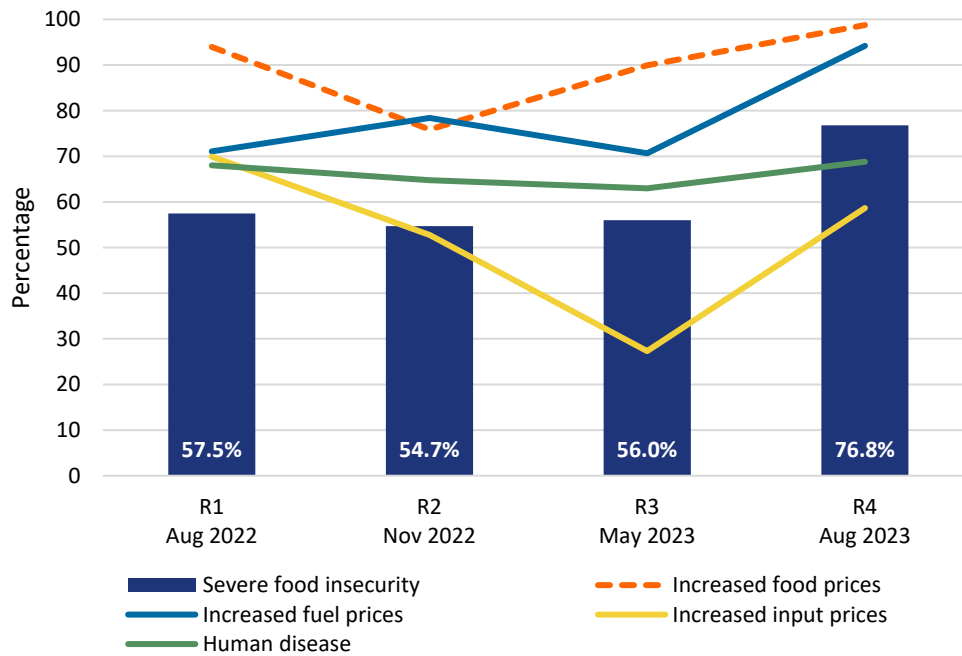
<sup>2</sup> RRA implements market-systems development activities in four states in Northeast Nigeria: Borno, Adamawa, Gombe, and Yobe.

<sup>3</sup> In July 2021, RRA received an additional USD 15 million in funding to provide humanitarian assistance to households particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and an additional USD 4 million in November 2022 to respond to the effects of the Ukraine crisis and extreme flooding. With these additional resources, RRA aimed to reach 590,000 individual participants by October 2024. The timing of the cash distribution overlapped somewhat with Round 4 data collection, thus limiting the extent to which the RMS captured the effects of the transfer.

<https://dldocs.mercycorps.org/LayeringCashIntoMarketSystemsNigeriaRRA.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The analysis of food insecurity is based on the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS).

Figure 1. Household food insecurity and shock exposure, RRA areas



### What interventions enhance or protect resilience capacities?

For some households, particularly those using a mix of complementary market services, resilience capacities remained about the same or improved from R1 to R4.

The preliminary analyses of the four rounds of data indicate that using some of RRA’s core market services and improved production practices at any round of the RMS contributed to enhanced absorptive resilience capacities in R4. Participation in community, producer, and marketing groups; farmer cooperatives; and community-based saving and loan groups and microfinance groups (VSLAs) was critical to strengthening or maintaining resilience capacities in the face of extreme shocks experienced by households and communities.

### How do targeted market services and production practices enhance resilience capacities?

Households that belonged to producer groups or VSLAs at any round of the RMS had higher livelihood diversification in R4 that enabled households to manage their risk portfolio. This suggests that participating in these community groups bolsters resilience by supporting livelihood diversification. Livelihood diversification in R3 was associated with higher asset ownership and likelihood of saving in R4, which are key components of resilience capacities. VSLAs provided entry points for training, market and financial services access, and social and psychosocial support among members.

The use of financial services and improved storage practices at any point during the RMS was associated with higher social capital in R4, which is also vital to households’ resilience. These households had increased capacity to diversify and expand livelihoods, enabling them to share and exchange essential support (e.g., cash, food) in times of need or distress. Stored

“WE DIDN’T JUST BENEFIT FROM THE GRANTS, THE TRAININGS OR THE SEEDS INTRODUCED; WE SAW THE INTERVENTIONS EVIDENT IN OUR YIELD. ONE CAN NOW BOAST OF HARVESTING OVER 10–15 BAGS FROM THE SAME PIECE OF LAND WHERE HE NORMALLY CULTIVATES AND GETS ONLY FIVE BAGS BEFORE...”

- MALE FGD, ADAMAWA

grains provided a critical buffer during a period of high inflation and enabled the sharing of food among households.



A farmer taking grains to market in Borno.  
Photo Credit: Binomial Optimus Ltd

### **Does layering of RRA-supported services and practices strengthen resilience capacities?**

Households that used a combination of RRA-targeted market services and production practices over the course of the RMS cycle had higher resilience in R4.

Using a combination of five or more RRA-targeted services and practices at any point in the RMS resulted in significant improvements in absorptive capacity,<sup>5</sup> ranging from 13% higher when households employed five types of services to a 31% increase in absorptive capacity when using seven categories of services and practices.

Among households in study sample, the most common project-supported services and practices in which they participated included:

- Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)
- Crop producer and marketing groups or farmer coops
- Improved post-harvest storage
- Veterinary/livestock services (Vaccination, antibiotics, animal health advice)
- Activities, such as market fairs, that increased the number of types of linkages with multiple output market actors (Aggregators, off-takers, seed providers)

This finding suggests that combining or “layering” different categories of interventions is key to enhancing resilience capacities.

### **Do strengthened resilience capacities enable households to better mitigate or recover from the negative effects of shocks and stresses?**

Households that saved cash, owned productive- and household-assets, and used improved practices were more likely to be food secure, confident about their ability to cope, and able to meet food needs post-shock.

### **What factors enable households to participate in resilience programming?**

Data confirm that households with greater assets at the outset of the study were more likely to participate in market-systems strengthening activities and adopt improved practices.

### **Does the integration of humanitarian assistance with resilience programming strengthen household well-being?**

While formal support was limited overall, households that received any cash assistance were less likely to be food insecure than households that did not receive cash assistance, which is particularly important considering

<sup>5</sup> Compared to households using four categories (the mean number of categories used by households) and holding all other factors at mean values.

the findings on food insecurity.<sup>6</sup> Qualitative findings highlight the extent to which unconditional cash transfers supported households' investments in scaling-up and diversifying livelihood strategies; enabling people to cultivate new types of crops and inputs; shifting into food processing, market sales, and transport; and purchasing livestock. In some cases, and notably in R4, cash enabled households to meet basic needs and pay down debt.

“PRESENTLY IN THE COMMUNITY, MOST WOMEN ARE SAYING THAT IT IS THE ANIMALS THAT THEY ARE KEEPING THAT ARE HELPING THEM BECAUSE WHEN THEY NEED TO BUY FOODSTUFF, THEY SELL ONE LIVESTOCK IN THE MARKET AND USE THE MONEY ... TO BUY WHAT TO EAT.”

- LIVESTOCK INPUT SUPPLIER, BORNO



A cash transfer in Borno. Photo Credit: Binomial Optimus Ltd

## Topline Findings and Program Implications

The findings of the study highlight four key insights for resilience programming:

1. Integrated, complementary programming of market-systems development interventions strengthens resilience capacities: Rather than a single intervention, use of multiple program-supported activities helps households cope with and manage the effects of an array of financial, weather-related and conflict shocks.
2. Community groups that support collective action (e.g., VSLAs and producer groups) provide entry points for complementary programming: In the RRA program areas, group participation strengthened access to financial services and linkages with multiple output market actors, provided training for improved production and storage practices, and fostered critical social capital.
3. Interventions that enhance livelihood diversification and protect social capital as pathways to supporting resilience and household well-being are critical: In RRA areas characterized by ongoing insecurity, displacement, nascent or stressed markets, and little formal assistance, households fared better when they employed a risk-sensitive portfolio of livelihood activities and had access to social support.
4. Targeted cash assistance can promote inclusive participation in longer-term market-systems development activities during periods of extreme shock exposure.

<sup>6</sup> The percentage of households that received assistance from the government or non-governmental organizations declined from 9% in R1 to 0.4% in R2. Findings indicate some increase in assistance in R4, to 4.7%.

- Cash assistance has greater benefits when layered with training and improved access to financial services and market networks than when provided as stand-alone aid.
- Temporary assistance in response to severe shocks can stimulate demand for and availability of productivity-enhancing services. In the current context of Northeast Nigeria, veterinary/livestock services (e.g., vaccination, antibiotics, and animal health advice) and improved post-harvest storage (e.g., air-tight containers) proved particularly important.

## Methodology

The study used multivariate panel analyses and statistical comparisons of key indicators over time to assess trends and describe the context. Researchers used qualitative findings to triangulate and contextualize results. Qualitative findings also helped identify additional emergent themes that affected household well-being and the key drivers of household resilience.

Table I. RMS Data Collection, August 2022–2023

Survey Round	Timing	Sample Size (Completed HH Interviews)	KII	FDG
<b>R1</b>	August 2022	1,012	32	24
<b>R2</b>	November 2022	1,004	56	12
<b>R3</b>	May 2023	985	56	12
<b>R4</b>	August 2023	972	32	24



A Lead Farmer group in Borno. Photo Credit: Binomial Optimus Ltd

### ABOUT THE REAL AWARD

The Resilience Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (REAL) Associate Award is a consortium-led effort funded by the USAID Center for Resilience. It was established to respond to growing demand among USAID Missions, host governments, implementing organizations, and other key stakeholders for rigorous, yet practical, monitoring, evaluation, strategic analysis, and capacity building support. Led by Save the Children, REAL draws on the expertise of its partners: Mercy Corps and TANGO International.

[REAL@savechildren.org](mailto:REAL@savechildren.org) • [fsnetwork.com/REAL](https://fsnetwork.com/REAL)

### DISCLAIMER

This brief is made possible by the generous support and contribution of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of the materials produced through the REAL Award do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.