

Violent Conflict and Smallholder Agriculture in Nigeria:

Mapping available data and remaining gaps

Highlights

- **A rich but fragmented data landscape:** Nigeria benefits from extensive, high-quality datasets on both violent conflict and agriculture, yet differences in scope, coding, and accessibility can hinder integration and cross-sector analysis.
- **Opportunities for deeper insight:** Better linking household, plot-level, and community agricultural data with georeferenced conflict datasets could reveal how violence affects livelihoods, markets, and food security across regions and value chains.
- **Clear priorities for future work:** Improving interoperability, expanding coverage beyond producers to incorporate different components of the food system, diversifying data sources, and addressing gendered impacts would strengthen evidence for policy and programming in conflict-affected agriculture.

Introduction

Conflict poses a significant threat to smallholder agriculture globally, undermining food security, livelihoods, and rural development. Recent advances in the availability, granularity and coverage of micro-level data on both violent conflict, and agricultural activity, have the potential to unlock new understandings and insights. These, in turn, may point to effective policies and practices to ultimately support and enhance more sustainable and equitable agricultural activity in conflict-affected contexts.

However, with a proliferation of potential data sources, mapping available evidence, and persistent gaps, is critical to i) ensure a comprehensive understanding of the existing data landscape; ii) reduce duplication and unnecessary use of resources in recreating data already available; iii) facilitate effective leveraging of under-utilised opportunities for data integration; and iv) reliably identify persistent gaps and prioritise for future data generation.

For this reason, this brief sets out to map available evidence and remaining gaps in relation to violent conflict and smallholder agriculture in contemporary Nigeria.

Main findings

A wide range of data sources capture incidents of violent conflict in Nigeria. These include global datasets, such as the **Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED)**, the **Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)**, and the **Heidelberg Conflict Barometer Dataset (HIIK)**. Several datasets also document violence in Nigeria specifically, such as **Nigeria Watch**, a project monitoring lethal violence hosted by the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria). Differences in the aims and scope of these datasets determine their coverage: Nigeria Watch includes incidents of lethal violence only, including lethal criminal violence; while ACLED and UCDP focus on organised political violence at the level of the event; and HIIK captures meta-data at the level of the conflict itself. While these datasets have high methodological rigour and detailed reporting, this variation in coding schemes, geographic precision, and event definitions, complicates cross-dataset integration. Nevertheless, overlapping coverage creates strong potential for triangulation and complementary use.

There are relatively fewer initiatives publishing accessible survey or perception data on self-reported exposure to violence. **Afrobarometer** has undertaken nationally representative surveys in Nigeria periodically for over two decades. However, the inclusion of questions on political violence varies, as does phrasing, over survey rounds, and direct questions on exposure to or experience of conflict are limited. Elsewhere, data sources on phenomena related to the impact of political violence – such as displacement – are captured relatively frequently by both the UN's Data Portal and the **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)**, although interoperability and integration with other data sources can be challenging.

In relation to agricultural activity, Nigeria has rich coverage of nationally representative household surveys. Nationally, **the General Household Survey** produced by the Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics has been deployed in five ways since 2010, and is complemented by two rounds of the **National Living Standards Survey** and extremely granular data on agricultural activities, labour, outputs and beyond in multiple rounds of the **National Agricultural Sample Census**. Data on crops and productivity by the Food and Agricultural Organisation alongside broader food security data contribute to a very detailed portfolio of data on agriculture in the country.

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Nigeria has some of the richest conflict and agricultural datasets in Africa, but differences in coverage, coding, and format mean interoperability is possible, but far from seamless.

These sources contain data at multiple units of analysis: household, individual, plot, and community data; seasonal agricultural data; and commodity-specific statistics. The panel design of the GHS enables longitudinal analysis, and integration with World Bank's **Living Standards Measurement Study** protocols strengthens methodological quality. However, coverage gaps remain in insecure areas and for certain agricultural sub-sectors. Finally, although these datasets are methodologically rigorous, they are dispersed across different organisations and platforms, with varied metadata formats. Registration requirements and variable definitions can constrain integration, meaning interoperability is possible but not seamless.

Recommendations

While Nigeria has a relatively rich data ecosystem in relation to both conflict and agricultural data, several gaps and under-utilised opportunities remain.

01 IMPROVE INTEROPERABILITY ACROSS DATASETS

Leverage complementarities between household socio-economic surveys (e.g., GHS, NLSS) and specialized agricultural production data (e.g., FAOSTAT, NASC) by developing interoperable identifiers and harmonised definitions and measures for key variables. Interoperability and integration with conflict datasets could be further enhanced through integration across datasets of common spatial references and/or naming conventions. This would allow integrated analyses linking demographic, livelihood, and production data to conflict exposure.

03 DIVERSIFY AND TRIANGULATE DATA SOURCES

Conflict datasets rely heavily on open-source media and civil society reports, while agricultural datasets are largely based on self-reported surveys. Combining these with alternative sources - such as measures of self-reported conflict exposure in household surveys, remotely sensed agricultural indicators, or administrative market data - would strengthen validity and enable cross-verification. While remote sensing data has been employed in analyses of conflict in Nigeria, high barriers to accessing and using these data present barriers to wider uptake.

02 EXPAND THE CONFLICT-AGRICULTURE EVIDENCE BASE BEYOND PRODUCERS

Current datasets and studies focus primarily on smallholder producers. Future data collection should include greater data collection efforts documenting diverse value chain actors such as processors, traders, transporters, and input suppliers, to better understand the full system-wide effects of conflict on food systems from production to consumption and disposal.

04 ADDRESS THEMATIC AND METHODOLOGICAL GAPS ON INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES

Despite ample evidence that conflict's impacts are highly gendered, relatively few studies to date have leveraged availability of granular household data to investigate gendered dimensions of conflict's impacts on smallholder agricultural activities, labour, commercialisation and coping strategies in times of crisis. Greater attention to diversity within smallholder households to better understand conflict's unequal effects would deepen knowledge and enhance policy and practitioner responses.

References and further reading

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About the Network on Conflict-Affected Agriculture in Nigeria (ConAg)

The ConAg project brings together partners from the **Centre for Peace and Conflict Research at University College Dublin** and the **Innovation Lab for Policy Leadership in Agriculture and Food Security (PiLAF)** at the **University of Ibadan**. The network seeks to identify research gaps and priorities for future collaboration, with the ultimate aim of developing and pilot innovative solutions to address, mitigate, and prevent conflict's negative impacts on smallholder agriculture in Nigeria and beyond.

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