



POLICY BRIEF

**COLLABORATION AND RECONCILIATION: A PATHWAY
TO ABATE DEEP-ROOTED GRIEVANCES AND VIOLENT
CONFLICT IN RIYOM LGA, PLATEAU STATE**

UNDER PROMOTING AGROPASTORAL RECONCILIATION
AND RESILIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
AND PEACE (PARSULP) PROJECT



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Acronym

CPRP	Community Peace and Resilience Plan
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth Development Organization
GPD	Global Peace Development
LGA	Local Government Area
PARSULP	Promoting Agropastoral Reconciliation Resilience for Sustainable Peace and Livelihood Project
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal

Executive Summary

The high-level policy dialogue held under the “Promoting Agropastoral Reconciliation and Resilience for Sustainable Livelihood and Peace (PARSULP) Project seek to address the persistent farmer-herder conflict in Riyom LGA, Plateau State through structured reconciliation and the implementation of a mutual agropastoral and agroforestry initiatives.

The high-level policy dialogue brought together diverse stakeholders-traditional and religious leaders, women and youth groups, persons with disabilities, farmer and herder groups, community peace actors, and state and local government officials to develop practicable and evidence-based actions that is capable to abate the conflict over access to land and water resources that has polarized herders and farmers conflict along ethnic divide.

Participants at the policy dialogue highlighted key drivers of conflict which is centered around competition for natural resources-land and water that was exacerbated by climate change stressors and herders migration, weak enforcement of farming and grazing regulations, land and animal encroachment, declining intergroup trust, and poor coordination between customary and government institutions with consequence resulting in devastated violence, fatalities, destruction of livelihood income sources, and entrenched food insecurity. Importantly, gaps in early-warning and early-response mechanism and the absence of inclusive dialogue platforms across the local government continue to make conflict referral and response as reactionary instead of been proactive.

The policy dialogue reinforced PARSULP's objectives of promoting climate-smart agriculture, strengthening agropastoral livelihoods, empowering women and youth, and improving local conflict-prevention structures. Stakeholders emphasized the need for stronger natural resource governance, improved trust-building mechanisms, institutionalized mediation platforms, and more inclusive decision-making processes. Equally, the policy dialogue utilized people-centered interactions and feedback as strategy to give participants sense of ownership.

The recommendations aimed to reduce tension, enhance livelihood security, and promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders through coordinated, community-driven, and multisectoral approaches that proactive rather than reactionary.

Introduction and Context

The Promoting Agropastoralism Reconciliation and Resilience for Sustainable Livelihood and Peace (PARSULP) project in Plateau State is being implemented by Global Peace Development with funding from Tetrattech-SPRING, and FCDO. The project implemented in the ten political wards in Riyom Local Government Area (LGA): Attakar, Bum, Danto, Jol/Kwi, Ra-Hoss, Rim, Riyom, Sharubutu, Sopp, and Ta-Hoss. It aimed to tackle ongoing farmer-herder conflicts caused by competition over land, water, and grazing routes; weak local conflict-resolution systems; low community resilience; and limited livelihood opportunities, particularly for women and youth. These underlying issues continued to increase the people vulnerability, worsen poverty, and undermine coordination among community structures, traditional authorities, security agencies, and other government functionaries.

Over the past two decade, conflicts between farmers and herders in Plateau State have greatly intensified. According to the Nigeria Conflict Security Tracker, Plateau State recorded over 4,000 deaths related to conflict between 2011 and 2024, with Riyom and Barkin Ladi LGAs experiencing some of the highest casualties in the state. Independent assessments by UN OCHA reported that the recurrent clashes have displaced thousands of households across Plateau, with many communities enduring repeated cycles of violence, property loss, and disruption to farming and pastoral activities.

Riyom LGA, a vital center for agriculture and pastoralism, has been among the most severely affected areas. Studies on natural resource pressure in Plateau State revealed that over 65 percent of households in Riyom rely directly on land for farming, while pastoralists depend on seasonal grazing routes that have increasingly narrowed due to population growth, land fragmentation, and environmental degradation. Climate data from the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) also indicates a consistent pattern of rainfall variability and extended dry spells in Plateau State, leading to decreasing pasture availability and heightened competition for water sources and farmland.

Youth unemployment and weak governance structures have further worsened the situation. Plateau State's youth unemployment rate remains above 30 percent (NBS, 2023), restricting livelihood options and increasing vulnerability to recruitment into violent activities. Local conflict-resolution systems, once rooted in strong traditional institutions, have deteriorated due to eroded trust, politicization of disputes, and lack of coordination among stakeholders- citizenry and security agents.

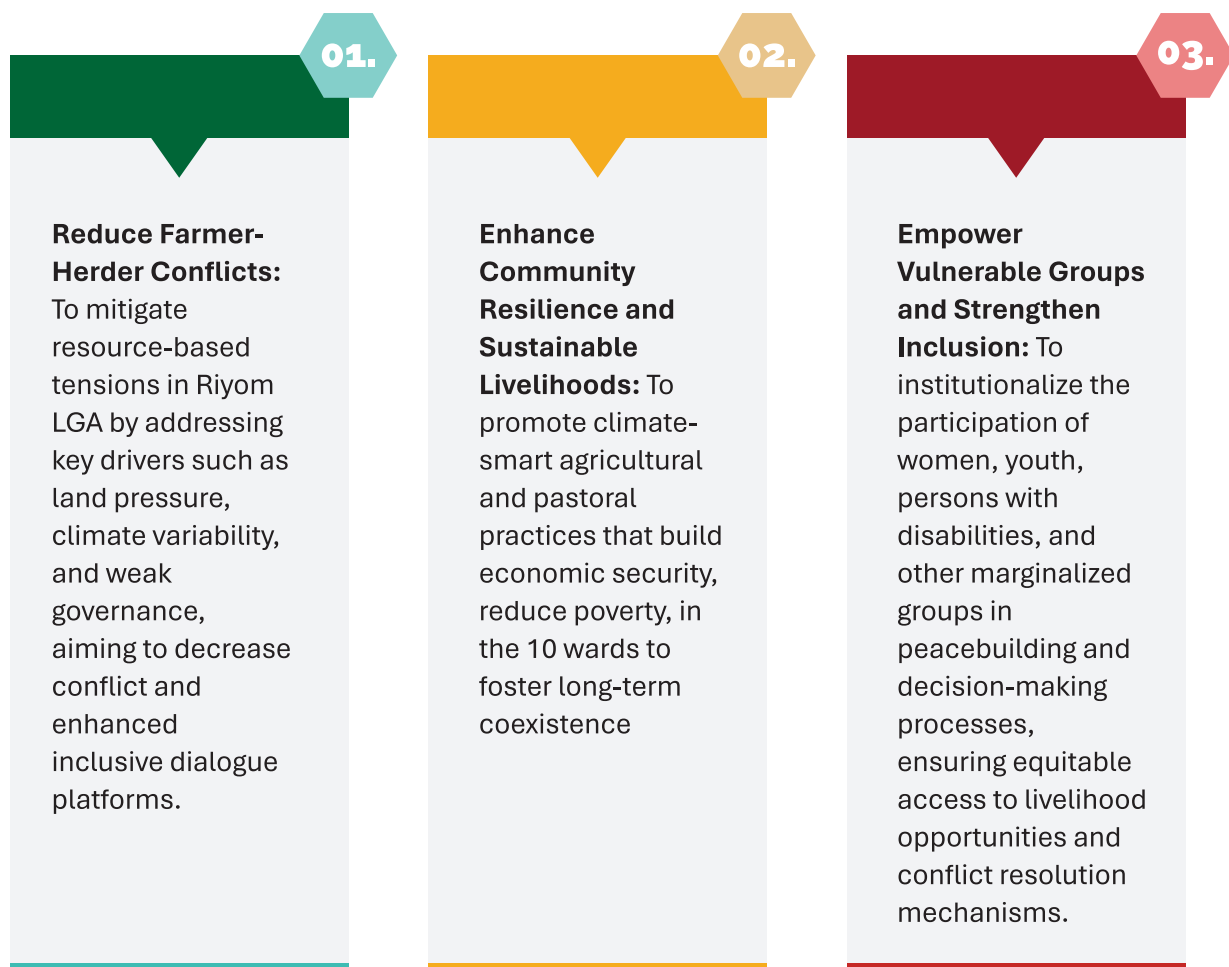
In response to these challenges, the PARSULP Project organized a high-level policy dialogue in Plateau State with traditional rulers, religious leaders, women and youth groups, persons with disabilities, farmer and herder associations, local authorities, and security actors. The policy dialogue offered a platform to examine key drivers of conflict and propose practical, collaborative solutions that abate the protracted conflict and violence in Riyom LGA.

The high-level policy dialogue emphasized that the recurring conflicts in Riyom are also connected to the absence of early-warning and early-response mechanisms, limited access to climate-smart livelihood opportunities, and a lack of platforms for shared resource management. Participants stressed that rebuilding trust and strengthening inclusive, community-based governance remained crucial for sustainable peace.

The PARSULP Project offers a strategic pathway for tackling these issues. Based on community involvement across the ten wards of Riyom LGA, and other state government stakeholders, this policy document presents evidence-based approaches to prevent farmer-herder conflict and foster peaceful coexistence. It aligns with state and national peacebuilding frameworks and details institutional reforms and practical actions for government agencies, civil society organizations, community peace structures, and traditional authorities.

The policy brief aims to support coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable interventions that address the underlying structural drivers of conflict, enhance the governance of natural resources, build and strengthen community resilience, and ultimately secure long-term peace and stability in Riyom Local Government Area. These initiatives are designed to foster collaboration among various stakeholders, ensure that diverse community voices are heard and integrated, and promote practices that are environmentally sustainable and socially equitable, contributing to a stable and prosperous future for the region.

Objectives



Methodology

The policy brief adopted a multi-sectoral, community-driven strategy aligned with PARSULP's goals, integrating evidence from the high-level policy dialogue. Interactive discussions, presentations, and plenary was utilized at the dialogue meeting.

Key Findings of the High-Level Policy Dialogue

The high-level policy dialogue conducted under the PARSULP Project generated the following key findings based on stakeholder deliberations, community evidence, and contextual analysis in Riyom LGA:

01. Persistent farmer-herder conflict is primarily driven by increasing pressure on land, water, and grazing resources, worsened by population growth, climate variability, and environmental degradation. Shrinking grazing routes and encroachment on farmlands were identified as major flashpoints.

02. Weak enforcement of existing laws, regulations, and community by-laws on land use, grazing, and natural resource management has contributed significantly to recurring conflicts. Participants noted that agreed rules are often ignored due to limited political will, unclear institutional responsibilities, and lack of accountability by duty bearers.

03. Coordination gaps between traditional institutions, community peace structures, and formal government authorities undermine effective conflict prevention and response. Overlapping mandates and poor information sharing reduce the effectiveness of local conflict-resolution mechanisms.

04. Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) systems in Riyom LGA remained underdeveloped. Communities lack structured reporting channels, trained monitors, and timely linkages with security agencies, leading to delayed responses and escalation of disputes.

05. Declining trust and social cohesion between farmers and herders were identified as critical conflict drivers. Longstanding grievances, cycles of reprisal attacks, misinformation, and limited dialogue platforms have weakened intergroup relationships.

06. Women, youth, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by conflict but remained underrepresented in decision-making and peacebuilding structures. Stakeholders emphasized that exclusion of these groups limits the sustainability and legitimacy of peace efforts.

07. Limited access to climate-smart agricultural and agropastoral livelihood opportunities increases economic vulnerability and competition over resources. Low adoption of sustainable farming, grazing, and water management practices heightens tensions, especially during dry seasons.

08. Community members and local leaders demonstrated strong willingness to engage in dialogue and jointly manage resources when inclusive, well-facilitated platforms are provided. The dialogue confirmed that community-driven and participatory approaches are essential for sustainable peace.

Policy Implications of the Findings for Safety, Security and Peace

The findings from the high-level policy dialogue have significant implications for policy and institutional development in Riyom LGA:

01.

Strengthened Natural Resource Governance: Effective land-use planning, regulated grazing routes, and enforcement of anti-grazing law, and agreed community by-laws are essential to reduce resource-based conflicts. Conversely, without strengthening the natural resource governance would continue to undermine the safety, security, and peace of the LGA because it will entrench culture of impunity.

02.

Institutionalizing Dialogue Platforms: Establishing durable mediation committees enables continuous communication between farmers and herders, and would contribute to de-escalate the conflict, but without strong dialogue platforms, the safety and security of the people would remain a mirage.

03.

Enhanced EWER Systems: Improved channels for information sharing between peace committees, security agencies, and local authorities will ensure timely interventions.

04.

Gender and Inclusion Mainstreaming: Participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities must be institutionalized in conflict prevention frameworks so that conflict are mitigated promptly.

05.

Climate Smart Livelihood Transformation: Adoption of agroforestry, rotational grazing, and sustainable farming techniques reduces competition over scarce resources and will contribute to the peace and security of the LGA.

06.

Strengthened Traditional–Government Coordination: Customary authorities and formal institutions need clearer roles, joint monitoring mechanisms, and shared accountability to enhance the peace and security in the LGA.

These implications form the basis for targeted interventions aimed at preventing future conflicts and fostering sustainable peace.

Conclusion and Recommendation

CONCLUSION

This Policy Document offers a comprehensive framework to address farmer-herder conflicts and foster sustainable peace, governance, and resilience in Riyom LGA. It embodies the collective aspirations and recommendations of stakeholders at the high-level policy dialogue and aligns with PARSULP's strategic objectives. Mitigating and resolving farmer-herder conflict in Riyom requires a comprehensive, multi-layered peace structures, improved natural resource governance, climate-smart livelihood strategies, and inclusive policy frameworks. Riyom LGA can shift from a conflict-prone environment to a resilient and peaceful community. This policy provides a framework for government agencies, traditional authorities, and civil society actors to collaborate on implementing long-term strategies that foster trust, promote coexistence, and ensure sustainable livelihoods for both farmers and herders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the farmer-herder conflict in Riyom, the following strategic solutions are recommended:

1. Establish and Strengthen Conflict Prevention Structures

- Operationalize community peace committees in all the 10 wards in the local government area.
- Institutionalize joint farmer-herder mediation forums, to reduce and ameliorate existing tension between farmers and herders in the local government area.
- Enforce anti-grazing laws, and community by-laws on grazing, farming, and natural resource use, to strengthen collaboration and community-driven peace process in redesigning and equitable sharing of resources between the farmers, herders and other resource user groups.

2. Enhance Early Warning and Early Response (EWER)

- Train community monitors on conflict indicators and reporting to reduce the incidence of conflict.
- Provide communication tools for rapid alerts to security agencies, to enhance communication and reporting of the early warning mechanism.
- Conduct quarterly stakeholder review meetings to assess emerging threats and proffer durable solutions to the issues identified.

3. Promote Climate-Smart Agriculture and Agropastoralism

- Introduce drought-tolerant crops, water harvesting techniques, and soil conservation practices to improve opportunities for communities.

- Establish designated grazing zones, water points, and dry-season fodder reserves to address underlying conflict issues in the communities.
- Promote agroforestry and integrated crop-livestock systems to reduce pressure on land.

4. Strengthen Natural Resource Governance

- Conduct participatory mapping of farmlands, grazing areas, and conflict hotspots.
- Train local leaders on resource management, mediation, and dispute resolution.
- Implement community-sanctioned penalties for violations.

5. Build Trust and Social Cohesion

- Organize intergroup cultural exchanges, sports activities, and joint community projects to improve the social fabric among the communities.
- Support trauma recovery programmes for affected households through structured reconciliation
- Promote narratives of coexistence through religious and traditional channels.

6. Empower Women, Youth, Person with Disabilities and Vulnerable Groups

- Provide livelihood support, vocational skills, and income-generating opportunities.
- Involve women in peace committees and resource-management bodies.
- Ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities in all conflict-prevention processes.

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