



# The Review By GENDERISE

Sept, 2024 Issue 5

---

## Advancing Women Economic Empowerment in Politically Unstable Contexts

Climate change and environmental security challenges are compounding the existing governance and economic issues across Nigeria, particularly in Northern, mid-western, south-eastern, and south-western regions. These challenges exacerbate poverty, disrupt livelihoods, and increase competition for resources, all of which have direct impacts on women's economic empowerment and the country's overall stability. This section explores how climate-related issues intensify governance challenges and further marginalize women economically, deepening the cycle of inequality and fragility.

### Northern Nigeria: Desertification and Resource Conflicts

Northern Nigeria is one of the regions most affected by climate change, with rising temperatures, desertification, and diminishing water resources creating severe environmental stress. The Sahel region, which stretches across northern Nigeria, has been particularly impacted by desert encroachment and erratic rainfall, leading to reduced agricultural productivity<sup>1</sup>. Agriculture is the main livelihood for many families in this region, and as arable land shrinks, competition for remaining resources intensifies. This competition often leads to violent clashes between farmers and pastoralists over land and water rights<sup>2</sup>.

These environmental stressors have direct consequences for women, who are heavily involved in subsistence farming and small-scale agriculture. As farmland becomes less productive and water sources dry up, women's ability to provide for their families is severely compromised. Moreover, women in rural areas are often responsible for gathering water and fuelwood, tasks that become more difficult and time-consuming as resources become scarcer<sup>3</sup>. This not only reduces their economic opportunities but also places them at greater risk of gender-based violence during resource-related conflicts.

Furthermore, the worsening environmental conditions have fueled the rise of insurgent groups like Boko Haram, which exploit local grievances over

---

<sup>1</sup> Gates, S., Hegre, H., Nygård, H. M., & Strand, H. (2010). Consequences of civil conflict. ResearchGate.

<sup>2</sup> Nyadera, I. N., Kisaka, M. O., & Agwanda, B. (2020). Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria: A nexus of just war and fragile state. *The Round Table*, 109(4), 411-426.

<sup>3</sup> Goemans, C., Koester, D., & Loudon, S. (2021). Gender equality and fragility. OECD.

resource scarcity to recruit fighters<sup>4</sup>. The instability created by these conflicts further marginalizes women, limiting their access to markets, education, and economic opportunities. The combination of environmental degradation, resource conflicts, and insurgency creates a vicious cycle that perpetuates poverty and weakens governance systems in northern Nigeria.

### **Mid-Western Nigeria: Flooding and Coastal Erosion**

In mid-western Nigeria, particularly in states like Delta and Edo, the impacts of climate change manifest in the form of flooding and coastal erosion. The Niger Delta, a region rich in oil but plagued by environmental degradation, faces recurring floods that disrupt agricultural activities and displace communities<sup>5</sup>. Coastal erosion, driven by rising sea levels, further exacerbates the loss of land and livelihoods, particularly for fishing communities that depend on the coast for their economic survival.

The oil industry, while a major source of revenue for the Nigerian economy, has also contributed to environmental degradation through oil spills and gas flaring<sup>6</sup>. These environmental issues disproportionately affect women, who often engage in fishing and small-scale farming as their primary means of income. Oil pollution destroys farmlands and contaminates water sources, reducing women's agricultural productivity and forcing them to travel longer distances to find clean water and arable land<sup>7</sup>.

Flooding disrupts local economies and leads to the displacement of entire communities. Displacement disproportionately affects women, who are often forced to take on the role of primary caregivers in the absence of stable income sources. The lack of social protections in displaced communities further exacerbates the economic vulnerabilities of women, pushing them deeper into poverty<sup>8</sup>. As climate change intensifies flooding in the Niger Delta, the economic marginalization of women will likely worsen, contributing to broader governance challenges in the region.

### **South-Eastern Nigeria: Erosion and Land Degradation**

South-eastern Nigeria faces significant environmental challenges related to land degradation and erosion. States like Anambra and Imo are particularly prone to gully erosion, a problem that has worsened due to deforestation

---

<sup>4</sup> Nyadera et al. (2020).

<sup>5</sup> Ikpe, E. (2017). Counting the development costs of the conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria: The economic impact of the Boko Haram-led insurgency. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 17(4), 305-326.

<sup>6</sup> Gates et al. (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Egharevba, M. E., & Iruonagbe, C. T. (2015). Ethnic/religious insurgencies and nation-building in Nigeria. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*.

<sup>8</sup> Ikpe (2017).

and unsustainable land use practices<sup>9</sup>. Gully erosion destroys farmlands, roads, and homes, displacing thousands of people and disrupting local economies.

For women in south-eastern Nigeria, the loss of farmland due to erosion is devastating, as agriculture is a key source of income for many rural women<sup>10</sup>. When farmlands are lost to erosion, women are left without the means to support their families, leading to increased poverty and food insecurity. Furthermore, the destruction of infrastructure, such as roads, limits women's access to markets, education, and healthcare, further marginalizing them from economic and social opportunities<sup>11</sup>.

Government efforts to address erosion in the region have been slow and inadequate, leaving many communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Without effective environmental management policies, the region's governance challenges will continue to worsen, as land degradation erodes the economic base of communities and contributes to social discontent<sup>12</sup>. Women, who are already economically disadvantaged, bear the brunt of these challenges, as they are often excluded from decision-making processes related to land use and environmental management.

## **South-Western Nigeria: Urbanization and Flooding**

South-western Nigeria, home to major cities like Lagos and Ibadan, faces distinct environmental challenges related to rapid urbanization and flooding. As cities expand, inadequate urban planning and drainage systems have made urban areas increasingly vulnerable to flooding during heavy rainfall. Lagos, in particular, experiences regular flooding, which disrupts economic activities, damages property, and displaces residents<sup>13</sup>.

Women in urban areas are particularly affected by flooding, as many work in the informal economy, running small businesses or street vending. Flooding not only destroys their goods and stalls but also limits their ability to move around the city and access markets<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, women

---

<sup>9</sup> Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Makokha, R., & Otieno, M. (2021). Women organising in fragility and conflict: Lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls movement. *Gender & Development*, 29(1), 53-69.

<sup>10</sup> Gates et al. (2010).

<sup>11</sup> Lahai, J. I., & Koomson, I. (2020). State fragility and resilience in sub-Saharan Africa: Indicators and interventions.

<sup>12</sup> Lahai & Koomson (2020).

<sup>13</sup> Central Bank of Nigeria. (2018). National Financial Inclusion Strategy (Revised).

<sup>14</sup> Melander, E. (2015). Gender equality and intrastate armed conflict. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49(4), 695-715.

living in informal settlements are at greater risk of displacement and loss of livelihood due to flooding, as these areas are often the most vulnerable to environmental hazards.

The lack of affordable housing and inadequate social protections further complicates the situation for women in south-western Nigeria. Without secure housing, women are more likely to be displaced by flooding and are less able to recover economically after environmental disasters<sup>15</sup>. As climate change continues to increase the frequency and intensity of floods in the region, women's economic vulnerability will likely deepen, complicating efforts to address governance and stability issues.

### **Intersection of Climate Change, Environmental Security, and Governance**

Climate change and environmental security challenges in Nigeria not only exacerbate existing economic inequalities but also strain governance systems. The impacts of climate change—whether through desertification in the north, flooding in the mid-west and south-west, or erosion in the south-east—disproportionately affect women, further marginalizing them from economic opportunities and decision-making processes. This deepens the cycle of poverty and inequality, contributing to social unrest and undermining efforts to stabilize governance in the country.

Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policies that integrate climate resilience, gender equality, and economic empowerment. For example, the Nigerian government must invest in sustainable agricultural practices, such as agroforestry and climate-smart farming, to mitigate the impacts of desertification and land degradation. Additionally, policies aimed at improving water management and infrastructure can reduce the risk of flooding and protect vulnerable communities.

Moreover, environmental policies must prioritize the inclusion of women in decision-making processes related to land use, resource management, and climate adaptation strategies. Women's participation in these processes is essential for ensuring that their unique needs and perspectives are considered in policy formulation and implementation. By empowering women economically and integrating gender-sensitive approaches into environmental management, Nigeria can address both its environmental and governance challenges more effectively.

---

<sup>15</sup> Goemans et al. (2021).

## **Conclusion**

Climate change and environmental security challenges complicate the efforts to empower women economically and improve governance in Nigeria. In regions like northern Nigeria, where desertification and resource conflicts drive instability, and in the Niger Delta, where flooding and pollution devastate livelihoods, women are particularly vulnerable. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that combines environmental sustainability with gender equality. By investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and ensuring women's participation in environmental decision-making, Nigeria can mitigate the impacts of climate change and build more inclusive, stable governance systems.

## References

1. Gates, S., Hegre, H., Nygård, H. M., & Strand, H. (2010). Consequences of civil conflict. ResearchGate.
2. Nyadera, I. N., Kisaka, M. O., & Agwanda, B. (2020). Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria: A nexus of just war and fragile state. *The Round Table*, 109(4), 411-426.
3. Goemans, C., Koester, D., & Loudon, S. (2021). Gender equality and fragility. OECD.
4. Nyadera et al. (2020).
5. Ikpe, E. (2017). Counting the development costs of the conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria: The economic impact of the Boko Haram-led insurgency. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 17(4), 305-326.
6. Gates et al. (2010).
7. Egharevba, M. E., & Iruonagbe, C. T. (2015). Ethnic/religious insurgencies and nation-building in Nigeria. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*.
8. Ikpe (2017).
9. Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Makokha, R., & Otieno, M. (2021). Women organising in fragility and conflict: Lessons from the #BringBackOurGirls movement. *Gender & Development*, 29(1), 53-69.
10. Gates et al. (2010).
11. Lahai, J. I., & Koomson, I. (2020). State fragility and resilience in sub-Saharan Africa: Indicators and interventions.
12. Lahai & Koomson (2020).
13. Central Bank of Nigeria. (2018). National Financial Inclusion Strategy (Revised).
14. Melander, E. (2015). Gender equality and intrastate armed conflict. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49(4), 695-715.
15. Goemans et al. (2021).

Citation: Obado-Joel, J. (2024). *Advancing Women Economic Empowerment in Politically Unstable Contexts*. The Review by GENDERISE, September, 2024, Issue (5). <https://www.genderise.org>.