BORDERLAND AGRO-PASTORAL FRICTION: LOCAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN THE BENUE–CROSS RIVER AND SOUTHERN KADUNA CORRIDORS

Virgil Obinna ANYIM
B.A. (Hons), M.A. (Uyo)
Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria
Peace and Conflict Studies / Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding Practitioner
virgilanyim@gmail.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v10i8.15

Keywords

Agro-Pastoral Conflict; Local Dispute Resolution; Community Resilience; Farmer–Herder Relations; Benue; Cross River; Southern Kaduna; Customary Authority; Land Governance

Abstract

Research Problem: *Agro-pastoral disputes in Nigeria's rural borderlands reflect competition over land, water, crops and livestock, as well as contested authority, unequal access to justice and limited capacity to manage disagreements without violence.*
Methods/Theory: *The study combines descriptive analysis of 80 Nigerian survey responses from a wider seven-country dataset with thematic analysis of focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), secondary literature and policy documents. It integrates access theory, hybrid governance, procedural justice and community resilience.*
Results: *Local mechanisms may provide accessible forums for negotiation, but can reproduce exclusion, lack enforcement capacity or prove inadequate when disputes become politicised or militarised. The proposed Borderland Dispute-to-Resilience Framework (BDRF) identifies five connected dimensions: resource access and dispute triggers; legitimacy and procedural fairness; institutional complementarity; livelihood and social recovery; and accountability and adaptive learning.*
Conclusion: *Local mechanisms may support peaceful coexistence, but their presence does not establish fairness, implementation or durable peace. The available evidence supports analytical conclusions rather than causal claims.*
Key Contribution to Knowledge: *The article distinguishes the existence of peace initiatives from evidence of effectiveness and identifies institutional conditions through which local dispute resolution may contribute to resilience.*
Recommendation: *Strengthen inclusive local boards, clarify resource-use agreements, connect customary mediation to statutory justice, support livelihood recovery, improve women's and youth participation, and monitor implementation and recurrence.*

1. Introduction

Agriculture and pastoralism remain interdependent livelihood systems across Nigeria's Middle Belt and adjoining borderlands. Their coexistence depends on access to land, water, pasture, livestock routes, crop residues and markets, as well as the rules and institutions through which competing claims are negotiated. Disputes over crop damage, livestock movement or water access do not inevitably become violent. Escalation is more likely when responsibility is contested, grievance procedures lack credibility, authority is fragmented or parties believe that decisions are partial and remedies unavailable. Local dispute resolution matters, therefore, not simply because it is close to affected communities, but because it can shape how incidents are interpreted, whether remedies are accepted and whether recurring tensions are managed without violence.

Research on agro-pastoral conflict has moved beyond resource-scarcity explanations to examine political authority, territorial administration, indigeneity, perceived injustice and uneven access to state protection. Nwankwo (2025a) analyses how territorial partitioning and indigeneity crises interact with farmer–pastoralist conflict in the Benue–Nasarawa region. Nwankwo (2025b) examines perceptions of injustice in struggles over critical land and their relationship to conflict escalation. Dan-Azumi (2025) considers the socioeconomic dimensions of farmer–Fulani herder clashes in Southern Kaduna. Moritz's (2006) study of farmer–herder relations in northern Cameroon further demonstrates why such conflicts should be understood in relation to political processes and the ways conflict is sustained, rather than as automatic consequences of resource competition.

These contributions illuminate conflict drivers, territorial claims and the politics of belonging. However, they do not, by themselves, establish when local dispute-resolution mechanisms are accessible, procedurally fair, connected to formal institutions and capable of supporting recovery in the Benue–Cross River and Southern Kaduna settings. A local settlement may address an immediate loss without clarifying future access rules. A mediation forum may be accessible to community leaders while excluding women, youth or less powerful parties. An agreement may be accepted in principle but remain unenforced.

The research problem is consequently how local dispute-resolution mechanisms operate within wider systems of resource governance and insecurity, and under what conditions they may contribute to community resilience. The article examines the types of disputes and pressures relevant to the selected settings; analyses the roles and limitations of local mechanisms; considers the institutional, relational and socioeconomic conditions shaping legitimacy and effectiveness; and identifies ways to connect local processes with formal governance. The empirical focus follows the available research materials, including references to Vandeikya and Ogoja, community material associated with Mbazerem, and records relevant to Zonkwa and Ayaga. These settings are not treated as interchangeable or equally represented in the data.

The article develops the Borderland Dispute-to-Resilience Framework (BDRF), which connects resource access and dispute triggers with mediation, institutional coordination, recovery and accountability. The framework is an analytical proposition, not a validated measurement scale or a claim that local mechanisms have already been shown to reduce violence.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Agro-pastoral conflict in Nigeria: causes and dynamics

Agro-pastoral friction emerges where farming and livestock-keeping activities intersect over resources, movement, livelihood security and authority. Immediate disputes may involve livestock entering cultivated land, crop destruction, cattle theft, blocked routes, water access or compensation. Yet the consequences of an incident depend on more than its material cost. The parties may disagree over responsibility, the applicable rules, the authority entitled to decide the matter or the remedy that should follow.

Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access helps explain why the physical availability of a resource does not guarantee that people can benefit from it. Access is shaped by social relations, institutional arrangements and power. In borderland settings, disputes can therefore involve not only land or water but also the authority to regulate movement, recognise claims and enforce decisions. Nwankwo (2025a, 2025b) illustrates the relevance of territorial claims and perceived injustice to farmer–pastoralist conflict in the Benue–Nasarawa region. Dan-Azumi (2025) similarly places Southern Kaduna's clashes within broader socioeconomic and political conditions. Moritz (2006) cautions against explanations that treat farmer–herder conflict as a simple or inevitable contest between livelihood groups.

These studies provide important contextual and analytical insights, but findings from one region should not automatically be transferred to another. The relevance of the literature here is to show why resource-related incidents must be analysed alongside the institutional arrangements and social interpretations through which they become disputes.

2.2 Local dispute resolution and customary authority

Traditional rulers, village heads, elders, pastoral authorities and community peace initiatives may provide accessible forums for negotiation. Their local knowledge and continuing relationships with disputing parties can help clarify events, convene meetings and facilitate compensation or agreed rules of conduct. Local mechanisms may also sustain communication after an initial settlement.

However, customary authority should not be treated as inherently fair or effective. Authority may be contested, representation unequal and remedies difficult to enforce. A process can appear consensual when a less powerful party has little practical alternative. A settlement can end a confrontation without resolving the conditions that produced it.

Lederach (1997) emphasises the importance of relationships and locally grounded capacities in sustainable peacebuilding. This perspective supports attention to local mechanisms without romanticising them. Their contribution depends on how they work, whose interests they recognise and whether they can respond when an agreement is breached.

2.3 Hybrid governance and institutional complementarity

Local dispute resolution operates alongside statutory law, local government, police, courts, civil-society organisations and other forms of authority. Lund (2006) shows how public authority in African settings can be exercised through institutions whose status and legitimacy are negotiated in practice. This helps explain why community leaders and formal authorities may both influence how resource disputes are handled.

Hybrid arrangements can offer complementary capacities: local actors may facilitate communication and understand

community relationships, while statutory institutions can provide legal recognition, protection and enforcement. Yet overlapping authority can also create ambiguity. Parties may move between forums, decisions may conflict, and no institution may accept responsibility for implementation.

The central issue is therefore not whether customary or statutory authority should always prevail. It is whether responsibilities, referral pathways and accountability are sufficiently clear to provide a fair and workable response.

2.4 Community resilience and recovery

Community resilience concerns the capacity to withstand disruption, recover and adapt. In conflict-affected borderlands, it must include the ability to manage relationships, maintain access to essential resources and reduce recurring vulnerability. A community that repeatedly absorbs attacks, rebuilds homes and resumes cultivation may demonstrate endurance, but repeated recovery without prevention can also indicate a persistent failure of protection.

Resilience should therefore be assessed beyond the existence of peace committees or the number of dialogue meetings held. Relevant questions include whether affected people can resume essential activities safely, whether damaged livelihoods are restored, whether relationships permit continued communication and whether institutions learn from recurring disputes. The distinction between coping, adaptation and transformation is important: transformation requires addressing institutional or structural conditions that repeatedly reproduce insecurity.

2.5 Research gap and contribution

The literature establishes that agro-pastoral conflict involves resource access, political authority, identity and perceptions of injustice. It also demonstrates the importance of local relationships and institutional pluralism. Less attention is given to how accessibility, procedural fairness, institutional complementarity, recovery and accountability connect in assessing local dispute-resolution mechanisms in the selected corridors.

This article addresses that analytical gap by specifying the conditions that should be examined when assessing whether a local settlement contributes to resilience. Given the uneven qualitative coverage and the non-representative survey sample, the contribution is an analytical explanation of plausible mechanisms and evidence requirements, not a causal estimate of programme effectiveness.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research design

The study uses a mixed-methods design combining descriptive analysis of raw survey responses with thematic analysis of FGDs and KIIs. Secondary academic literature and policy documents provide contextual and conceptual triangulation. The design enables comparison between survey respondents' reported perceptions and qualitative accounts of resource disputes, authority, mediation and recovery without assuming that the different sources measure the same phenomenon.

The geographical focus follows the available research materials. References include Vandeikya and Ogoja in the Benue–Cross River context, community material associated with Mbazerem, and records relevant to Zonkwa and Ayaga in Southern Kaduna. The sites are considered only where the underlying material supports the particular point. Their inclusion does not imply equal numbers of respondents or interviews at each location.

3.2 Quantitative data and analysis

The quantitative component draws on 80 Nigerian survey responses within a wider seven-country dataset. Respondents are

associated with Plateau, Kaduna, Adamawa and Benue States; it should not be assumed that all 80 were drawn from the specific borderland communities discussed in this article. Analysis therefore distinguishes between descriptions of the Nigerian respondent group and site-specific claims, which require records identifying the relevant location and item response.

The analysis concerns survey items relevant to perceived security concerns, safety, peacebuilding participation and factors respondents associate with youth vulnerability. Frequencies and percentages are appropriate where valid denominators and missing responses are clear. Where questions allow multiple answers, percentages may not sum to 100 per cent.

The sample is not treated as a probability sample, and national prevalence estimates are not inferred. Reported concerns about unemployment, for example, are interpreted as perceptions rather than proof that unemployment causes recruitment into violence. Similarly, the reported presence of a peace mechanism does not establish that it is accessible, fair or effective. Headline percentages are not reproduced unless they can be confirmed against the raw item, denominator and coding.

3.3 Qualitative data and thematic analysis

The qualitative component uses FGD and KII materials relevant to agro-pastoral tensions, local authority, dispute resolution and resilience. The analysis examines reported dispute triggers, mediator selection, treatment of competing claims, relationships between customary and formal authorities, livelihood disruption and follow-up after settlements.

Thematic coding follows the five BDRF dimensions: resource access and dispute triggers; legitimacy and procedural fairness; institutional complementarity; livelihood and social recovery; and accountability and adaptive learning. Documents vary in format and completeness. A document count is not treated as a participant count, and a synthesis document is not treated as equivalent to a verbatim interview. The presence of a peace initiative is not treated as proof of impact.

3.4 Mixed-methods integration

Integration occurs at the level of themes and analytical questions. Convergence is noted where survey patterns and qualitative accounts point towards a related concern, but convergence does not establish causality. Complementarity is used where the methods illuminate different aspects of a question. Divergence is retained where sources differ, since differences may reflect location, experience or institutional role. Evidence gaps are also acknowledged: if records describe mediation but do not establish implementation, successful resolution is not claimed.

3.5 Ethics and limitations

Research on agro-pastoral conflict may involve sensitive allegations, contested identities and accounts of violence. The analysis avoids attributing claims to individuals or communities beyond what the underlying material supports. Sensitive records should be handled in ways that protect confidentiality and participant safety.

The study is limited by the non-probability survey sample, item-level non-response, uneven qualitative coverage and variation in document completeness. The cross-sectional design cannot demonstrate that a particular mechanism caused improved security or prevented future violence. Findings are therefore descriptive and analytical, identifying plausible mechanisms and institutional implications rather than causal effects.

3.6 Source selection and documentary review

Secondary sources were selected for relevance to agro-pastoral conflict, resource access, customary and hybrid governance, procedural justice, peacebuilding and community resilience. Foundational theoretical works were retained where needed, alongside empirical research and policy frameworks relevant to Nigeria and comparable settings. Sources contextualise and triangulate the primary material rather than substitute for site-specific evidence. Claims are retained only at the level supported by the available sources.

Table 1. Summary of data sources and analytical contribution

Source type	Coverage available	Contribution to analysis	Key limitation
Survey responses	80 Nigerian responses within a seven-country dataset	Describes perceptions of security, safety, participation and youth vulnerability	Not a probability sample; not all respondents are attributable to the selected corridors
FGDs	Relevant accounts of agro-pastoral tensions, authority and resilience	Context on disputes, relationships, trust and recovery	Coverage and transcript completeness vary
KIIs	Relevant accounts from informed participants	Context on institutions, mediation and governance	Accounts are not automatically representative
Academic literature	Research on access, conflict, governance and resilience	Conceptual and empirical triangulation	Findings from other settings cannot be transferred without qualification
Policy documents	Relevant governance and prevention frameworks	Context for institutional responsibilities and recommendations	Policy commitments do not establish implementation or impact

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Access theory

Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access distinguishes the ability to benefit from resources from formal ownership alone. Access can be shaped by social relationships, institutions and power. This is relevant where farming, grazing, settlement and administrative jurisdictions overlap. A settlement over crop damage may address one

incident without clarifying future grazing arrangements or the authority to regulate access. Access theory thus directs attention to both the immediate dispute and the rules that structure resource use. Its limitation is that it does not, by itself, fully explain procedural fairness or the quality of recovery.

4.2 Hybrid governance

Hybrid governance recognises that customary and statutory institutions may operate simultaneously. Local authorities may provide accessible forums and social knowledge, while formal institutions provide legal authority, protection or enforcement. The arrangement is beneficial when responsibilities complement one another and parties know where to seek assistance. It becomes problematic when mandates overlap, referrals fail or agreements have no reliable means of implementation.

4.3 Procedural justice

Procedural justice concerns the perceived fairness of the process through which decisions are reached, including meaningful voice, impartial consideration, transparent reasoning and consistent treatment. A settlement should not be labelled legitimate merely because a recognised leader facilitated it. Assessment should consider who was represented, whose account was heard, whether parties could question decisions and whether the process was safe for less powerful participants. Fairness does not require every party to receive the outcome it prefers; it requires a credible process for considering claims and explaining decisions.

4.4 Community resilience

Community resilience involves the capacity to withstand disruption, restore essential activities and adapt institutions and relationships. Lederach (1997) emphasises locally grounded capacities and relationships in sustainable peacebuilding. Resilience in the selected settings should therefore be assessed through safe access to livelihoods, the repair of social relationships, institutional responsiveness and the capacity to address recurring disputes. Endurance under insecurity is not sufficient evidence of successful resilience.

4.5 Integrating the concepts: the Borderland Dispute-to-Resilience Framework

The BDRF integrates the four perspectives into a conditional framework for examining how local dispute resolution may contribute to community resilience. It has five dimensions:

Resource access and dispute triggers: Whether an incident is isolated or linked to recurring disagreements over resource-use rules, boundaries or livelihood practices.

Legitimacy and procedural fairness: Whether parties can participate, present their accounts and accept the process as sufficiently impartial.

Institutional complementarity: Whether responsibilities are clear and whether community agreements can be supported, reviewed or enforced when necessary.

Livelihood and social recovery: Whether people can resume essential activities, restore assets and relationships, and reduce fear or retaliation.

Accountability and adaptive learning: Whether agreements are monitored, breaches addressed and recurring problems used to improve arrangements.

The dimensions are connected but not interchangeable. A process may be legitimate yet lack enforcement capacity. An agreement may be implemented without restoring livelihoods. The framework proposes that resilience is more likely to be sustained when these dimensions reinforce one another. These

are plausible mechanisms for investigation, not causal effects established by the available evidence.

Table 2. Borderland Dispute-to-Resilience Framework

Dimension	**Analytical question**	**Evidence required**	**Potential weakness**
Resource access and triggers	What happened, and what rules shaped the dispute?	Accounts of incidents, resource-use arrangements and recurrence	Immediate incidents addressed while recurring access problems remain
Legitimacy and fairness	Who participates, who decides and why is the process accepted?	Representation, transparent procedures and perceptions of impartiality	Exclusion, partiality or unequal bargaining power
Institutional complementarity	How do local mechanisms connect to formal institutions?	Referral arrangements, recognised agreements and defined roles	Conflicting authority or weak enforcement
Livelihood and social recovery	Can people resume essential activities safely?	Evidence of restored access, compensation and recovery	Agreement without practical recovery
Accountability and learning	Are agreements monitored and failures addressed?	Follow-up records, complaint procedures and compliance	Repeated disputes without institutional learning

Note. The BDRF is an analytical model developed for this article; the available evidence does not validate it as a measurement scale across all study locations.

5. Results and Presentation of Data

5.1 Disputes over resources within wider patterns of insecurity

Resource access can become contested through crop damage, livestock trespass, theft, water access, movement routes and disagreements over compensation. Such incidents may be aggravated when parties disagree about the applicable rules, the authority responsible for adjudication or the form of remedy. These are relevant types of disputes, not an exhaustive account of every dispute in the selected settings.

The BDRF suggests that the immediate event must be examined alongside arrangements governing resource use. Compensation for crop damage may settle an incident, but recurring events may indicate that seasonal access, routes, boundaries or communication arrangements need clarification. Nwankwo's (2025a, 2025b)

research demonstrates how territorial disputes and perceived injustice can interact with conflict in the Benue–Nasarawa region. The relevance here is analytical; it does not establish that the same territorial history applies to Benue–Cross River or Southern Kaduna.

5.2 The role of local dispute-resolution mechanisms

Local mechanisms may provide forums for negotiation before disagreements become more difficult to manage. Familiar leaders can convene parties, draw on knowledge of local relationships and maintain communication after an initial settlement. The qualitative materials include community peacebuilding activity associated with Fr. Cyril Anjembe in Mbazerem, illustrating the importance of examining actual initiatives rather than discussing local peacebuilding only in abstract terms.

However, the presence of an initiative does not demonstrate impartiality, participation or effectiveness. The relevant questions concern whether parties can access the process, whether it considers competing claims fairly and whether it is connected to institutions able to address matters beyond its authority.

5.3 Legitimacy and the fairness of local settlements

The legitimacy of local dispute resolution depends on more than the social status of the mediator. It also depends on how the process treats competing claims. Where disputes are interpreted through wider narratives of identity or political exclusion, a settlement that addresses only an immediate loss may leave the broader grievance intact.

The BDRF treats fairness as an observable dimension rather than an assumed quality of customary authority. The available material does not justify a blanket conclusion that mechanisms in either corridor are uniformly fair or unfair. Such a judgement requires evidence about participation, impartiality, decision-making and the experiences of affected parties.

5.4 Institutional complementarity and the limits of customary mediation

Local mechanisms do not operate in isolation from statutory institutions. Customary mediation may be appropriate for negotiating compensation, clarifying access arrangements or restoring communication after a nonviolent dispute. Formal institutions may be required where legal authority, protection, investigation or enforcement exceeds local capacity.

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework recognises the responsibilities of member states alongside the contribution of civil society and community participation (Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS], 2008). Community participation should complement public responsibility rather than replace it. The central challenge is to clarify referral routes and institutional responsibilities without dismissing local knowledge or permitting community harmony to be used to suppress serious allegations.

5.5 Livelihood recovery and the meaning of resilience

Dispute resolution has limited value if people cannot safely resume essential activities after an agreement. A household may remain displaced or lose its livelihood even after dialogue. Resilience therefore requires evidence about practical consequences, including restored access, livelihood recovery, reduced fear and the repair of relationships.

These outcomes cannot be inferred simply from the reported presence of a peace initiative. Where the materials describe dialogue but not subsequent recovery, the initiative should be

treated as a potential contribution rather than a demonstrated outcome.

5.6 Youth, community participation and the sustainability of local arrangements

Youth can contribute to communication, dialogue, community activities and local peace initiatives. They should not be treated solely as peacebuilding resources or as potential sources of violence. Young people are heterogeneous, and their participation is shaped by livelihoods, education, gender, social position and access to decision-making.

The same principle applies to women and other groups that may be underrepresented in customary institutions. Meaningful participation requires influence over decisions, not simply attendance at meetings. The available evidence does not justify assuming that every local initiative is inclusive or that participation automatically produces more durable settlements.

5.7 Why local mechanisms may fail to prevent recurrence

Local mechanisms may fail when they address an immediate incident without clarifying future resource-use rules. Unequal bargaining power can produce apparent agreement without genuine acceptance. Mediators may also lack the authority or resources to ensure implementation, while fragmented institutions can leave parties uncertain about where to seek review.

Disputes involving serious violence, politicisation or armed actors may require formal protection, investigation or wider political engagement. Durable resolution must therefore be assessed through evidence that agreements were implemented, essential activities resumed and recurring disputes were managed without violence or addressed through credible remedies.

6. Discussion of Findings

6.1 From local settlement to institutional resilience

The analysis suggests that local dispute resolution should be assessed as a process rather than a single event. Accessibility may help parties enter negotiations, but durability depends on resource-use rules, procedural fairness, formal support and the capacity to address grievances extending beyond an immediate incident.

The BDRF makes these relationships explicit. It avoids two assumptions: that customary mechanisms are inherently legitimate because they are local, and that statutory institutions are necessarily effective because they possess legal authority. A customary forum may be accessible but exclusionary; a statutory institution may have legal authority but be inaccessible or distrusted. Sustainable dispute resolution requires arrangements that combine accessibility, fairness, protection and accountability.

6.2 Resource governance must be negotiated and enforceable

Recurring disputes require clearer arrangements for managing shared resources. Locally negotiated rules may address livestock movement, seasonal access, water points, crop protection, compensation and crop residues. Their content should reflect the geography and livelihood systems of each setting and be developed with affected communities.

Agreements should not depend exclusively on the goodwill of individual leaders. Where appropriate, responsibilities should be documented and recognised by competent authorities. Documentation cannot guarantee compliance, but it can reduce ambiguity and provide a reference point when disputes recur.

6.3 Community resilience requires procedural and restorative justice

Procedural fairness and recovery are separate but connected. A process may be fair without fully restoring losses, while compensation may restore some material losses without resolving concerns about how a decision was reached. A stronger approach considers participation, impartiality, transparency, acknowledgement of harm where established, restoration of access and practical measures to reduce recurrence.

Resilience should therefore be assessed through evidence of both fair process and practical recovery. The aim is not to guarantee that every party receives its preferred outcome, but to provide a credible way to manage disagreement and address harm without resorting to violence.

6.4 The danger of over-relying on local peace mechanisms

Local mechanisms can be valuable, but they should not substitute for the state's responsibility to protect people and uphold the law. They need clear referral routes for serious violence, criminal allegations and immediate threats. They should also be able to request support when agreements require public authority or resources beyond community control.

Formal institutions, in turn, should communicate clearly with local actors and avoid interventions that undermine legitimate agreements without adequate justification. Institutional complementarity requires defined responsibilities, not the assumption that one type of authority can resolve every dispute.

6.5 Resilience should be assessed through the quality of recovery

A meaningful assessment of resilience should examine whether affected people can resume essential activities safely; whether relationships allow continued communication; whether institutions have become more credible and responsive; and whether repeated disputes are reduced or managed without violence. These outcomes require evidence over time. A cross-sectional survey describes perceptions at a particular moment, while interviews can explain how participants understand institutional processes. Neither alone establishes that resilience improved because of a specific intervention.

6.6 Mixed-methods evidence and the limits of inference

Survey responses can describe perceptions of security concerns, local initiatives and participation. Qualitative accounts can explain the meanings attached to those perceptions and describe how people experience local institutions. Together, the sources provide a richer account than either method alone, but they are not interchangeable. A survey response indicating that a peace initiative exists does not establish participation or effectiveness; a single account of successful mediation does not establish that similar outcomes occur across a corridor.

The article consequently avoids causal claims. The evidence supports identifying plausible mechanisms, institutional risks and questions for further investigation, rather than claiming that local dispute-resolution mechanisms caused safety or reduced violence.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined agro-pastoral disputes and wider pressures in the selected borderland settings, the roles and limitations of local dispute-resolution mechanisms, the conditions shaping their legitimacy, and ways to connect them with formal governance. The available evidence indicates that local mechanisms may provide accessible forums for negotiation and sustain communication, but their presence does not guarantee impartiality,

implementation or durable peace. They may reproduce exclusion, lack enforcement capacity or prove inadequate where disputes involve serious violence, politicisation or armed actors.

The article's contribution is the BDRF, which integrates resource access, procedural fairness, institutional complementarity, livelihood recovery and accountability into a conditional framework for assessing how local settlements might contribute to resilience. The evidence remains descriptive and analytical: survey responses are not representative of the two specific corridors, qualitative coverage varies, and the cross-sectional design does not establish causal effects.

7.1 Establish inclusive local land and dispute-resolution boards

Relevant authorities should strengthen existing mechanisms or establish co-managed local boards where institutional gaps are evident. Membership should reflect people affected by resource-use disputes, including farmers, pastoralists, traditional authorities, women, youth, local government and relevant technical services. Boards should have clear mandates, accessible complaint procedures and defined referral routes rather than operating as committees without authority or resources.

7.2 Clarify resource-use agreements

Local agreements should specify negotiable matters such as seasonal access, livestock routes, water use, crop protection, compensation and shared-resource management. They should identify who communicates the rules and how changes can be negotiated. Where appropriate, agreements should be documented and recognised by relevant authorities, with procedures for addressing breaches.

7.3 Connect customary mediation to statutory justice

Customary and community mechanisms should complement rather than replace formal institutions. Serious violence and criminal allegations should not be suppressed in the name of community harmony. Formal institutions should provide accessible referral routes and communicate clearly with community actors about the handling of referred cases.

7.4 Support livelihood recovery alongside mediation

Dispute resolution should connect to practical measures that enable affected households to recover. Depending on context, these may include compensation arrangements, agricultural support, veterinary services, restoration of damaged infrastructure, market access and assistance for disrupted livelihoods. Recovery support should not substitute for justice or leave underlying resource disputes unresolved.

7.5 Strengthen women's and youth participation

Women and youth should participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of local arrangements, with meaningful influence over decisions. Programmes should consider whether meeting arrangements, safety concerns, social expectations or unequal access to leadership restrict participation. Youth engagement should combine peacebuilding opportunities with realistic livelihood and skills pathways, without assuming that unemployment automatically leads to violence.

7.6 Build accountability and learning into local agreements

Local mechanisms should keep proportionate records of agreements, responsibilities, implementation and

unresolved concerns. Confidentiality and participant safety must be protected. Periodic reviews should examine whether agreements were implemented, whether affected people resumed essential activities and whether disputes recurred. The purpose of documentation is to support follow-up and learning, not to expose informants or create lists of suspected opponents.

7.7 Monitor the full dispute-to-resilience pathway

Monitoring should distinguish outputs, process quality and outcomes. Outputs may include meetings convened, agreements documented and referrals made. Process indicators may assess representation, perceived impartiality, complaint procedures and clarity of responsibilities. Outcome indicators may examine implementation, restored access, livelihood recovery and the recurrence or nonviolent management of disputes. Quantitative indicators should be interpreted alongside qualitative accounts and, where possible, repeated observation over time.

7.8 Limitations of the study

The conclusions are bounded by the non-probability survey sample, item-level non-response, uneven qualitative coverage and variation in document completeness. The survey should not be presented as representative of the selected corridors. The cross-sectional design cannot establish that a particular mechanism caused improved security or prevented future violence. The BDRF remains an analytical framework rather than a validated scale.

7.9 Future research

Future studies should trace individual disputes from the initial incident through mediation, agreement, implementation and follow-up. Comparative case studies should include successful, failed and exclusionary settlements, including cases in which local mediation is rejected or requires formal intervention. Longitudinal research should examine whether changes in governance arrangements are associated with fairer procedures, improved resource access, livelihood recovery and reduced recurrence. Particular attention should be paid to whether women, youth, pastoralists and other less powerful groups can influence decisions in practice.

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