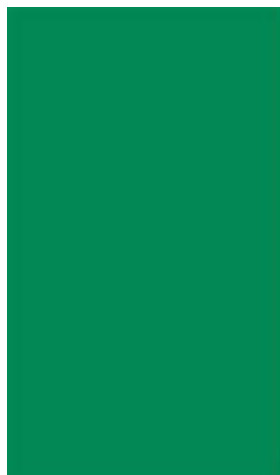




**CASSANDRA**

**CASSANDRA LOCAL CLIMATE FORUM FACTSHEET**

**NIGERIA**





## **CASSANDRA TOPICS IN NIGERIA: HEALTH, GENDER, MIGRATION AND CONFLICT**

### **HEALTH**

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, faces a complex web of health challenges, including high rates of infectious diseases, inadequate access to healthcare, widespread malnutrition, and an overburdened healthcare infrastructure. Climate change, with its unpredictable weather patterns, intensifying heat, and increasingly frequent extreme events, is magnifying these health issues, threatening to push Nigeria's healthcare system beyond its limits.

Infectious diseases remain a significant burden on Nigeria's healthcare system, and climate change is making them harder to control. Malaria, one of the deadliest diseases in Nigeria, has a staggering prevalence. Rising temperatures, one of the most direct impacts of climate change, expand the habitat range for mosquitoes, allowing them to thrive in previously unaffected areas. With changing rainfall patterns leading to more standing water, mosquito breeding grounds have expanded, increasing malaria transmission. Similarly, cholera and other waterborne diseases are on the rise, exacerbated by poor sanitation and limited access to clean water. Climate change worsens these conditions by increasing the frequency and severity of heavy rainfall and flooding, especially in urban and low-income areas. These extreme weather events contaminate water sources, leading to outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, and other diseases linked to water pollution.

Climate change has a particularly destructive impact on food security in Nigeria, as extreme weather disrupts agricultural production. In northern Nigeria, for example, droughts have become more frequent and prolonged, reducing crop yields and threatening the food supply. This is driving up rates of malnutrition, especially among children and other vulnerable populations. Extreme weather events disrupt transportation networks and damage healthcare facilities, particularly in rural regions where access is already limited. Roads become impassable during the rainy season, and clinics and hospitals suffer from structural damage or water contamination, interrupting the provision of essential services and medical supplies. This severely limits the ability of rural communities to receive timely healthcare and increases the logistical burden on healthcare workers.

While physical health challenges are often the focus of climate discussions, the mental health toll of climate change is equally concerning. For Nigerians already dealing with poverty, insecurity, and other stressors, the added burden of climate-related mental health issues presents a serious concern that is yet to be adequately addressed by the healthcare system. The health impact of climate change in Nigeria also extends to air quality, with severe consequences for respiratory health. Rising temperatures contribute to air pollution, especially in urban areas with high emissions from vehicles and industries. Poor air quality aggravates respiratory illnesses, such as asthma. Additionally, rising temperatures and prolonged dry seasons increase the risk of wildfires, which can blanket communities in smoke and harmful particulates, further endangering those with preexisting respiratory conditions.



Despite the magnitude of these challenges, Nigeria's response to climate-related health issues has been limited. While there have been some national policies aimed at sustainable agricultural practices and water management, more comprehensive public health adaptation strategies are urgently needed. These strategies could include building climate-resilient healthcare facilities, improving disease surveillance systems, investing in clean water infrastructure, and enhancing emergency preparedness in response to climate-related events.

## **MIGRATION**

Migration is a defining feature of Nigeria's social and economic landscape. Driven by a blend of economic, environmental, and security factors, migration in Nigeria encompasses significant patterns of internal displacement, international emigration, and an influx of displaced people. With a rapidly growing population, the task of managing migration is being made increasingly complex due to the effects of climate change.

Internal migration in Nigeria is largely shaped by a rural-to-urban movement, environmental pressures, and security concerns. As Nigeria continues to urbanise, millions have left rural areas seeking better economic opportunities, educational prospects, and improved living standards in cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Kano. This urban migration, however, has created a set of new challenges. The rapid influx of people has led to overcrowding, housing shortages, and increased pressure on urban infrastructure. Basic amenities such as water, sanitation, and transportation are often inadequate, whilst the proliferation of informal settlement and slums lack access to essential basic services. In the northern regions, increasing desertification and drought have made agriculture difficult, forcing many to migrate to more fertile areas in the south. Likewise, low-lying areas, especially the Niger Delta, are frequently affected by flooding, which displaces thousands of people each year. This climate-driven displacement underscores how environmental factors are reshaping





Nigeria's migration patterns, pushing vulnerable populations to migrate within the country in search of viable livelihoods.



Security issues further exacerbate internal migration. The rise of insurgency in Nigeria, particularly in the northeast due to the Boko Haram crisis, has displaced millions of people. As a result, Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa. Many of these displaced individuals live in temporary camps or shelters, often with limited access to healthcare, education, and employment. This displacement creates significant social and economic challenges, especially for host communities and regions that must bear the additional burden of supporting IDP populations.

International emigration from Nigeria has grown in recent years, with many Nigerians seeking opportunities abroad. Economic factors play a significant role in this trend, as high unemployment, poverty, and limited job prospects at home drive skilled and unskilled workers alike to pursue employment in Europe, North America, and the Middle East. This economic migration is particularly pronounced among Nigeria's educated professionals. Many Nigerian doctors, nurses, and engineers relocate to countries where their skills are in high demand, especially in the healthcare, technology, and engineering sectors. The consequences of this brain drain are profound, Nigeria's healthcare system, for example, faces a shortage of qualified personnel, making it difficult to provide adequate services to a rapidly growing population. For those who emigrate abroad, remittances provide a crucial source of income for families and communities back home. Nigeria is the largest recipient of remittances in sub-Saharan Africa, and these funds contribute significantly to the



national economy, supporting families and boosting local businesses. However, a dependence on remittances also creates vulnerabilities, as families become reliant on funds from relatives abroad and may face financial instability if these flows are interrupted. Socially, migration disrupts family structures, often leaving children or elderly relatives behind. For internally displaced persons, prolonged stays in camps or temporary shelters can result in disrupted education, limited healthcare access, and psychological trauma, especially for children.

Irregular migration is also a significant issue. Many Nigerians attempt dangerous journeys through the Sahara Desert and across the Mediterranean Sea in hopes of reaching Europe. These migrants often face significant risks, including exploitation by human trafficking networks that target vulnerable individuals, particularly young women, for forced labour and sex work.

Nigeria hosts refugees and asylum seekers from neighbouring countries, primarily from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Conflicts in these regions, have driven thousands of refugees across Nigeria's borders, particularly into southeastern Nigeria. These refugees often reside in camps or with host communities, adding pressure to already strained local resources and infrastructure.

## **GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender equality remains a pressing issue in Nigeria, where social norms, economic disparities, cultural practices, and legal frameworks all play influential roles in determining the rights and opportunities available to women and girls. Despite gradual progress, Nigeria still faces considerable challenges in advancing gender equality across multiple domains, including education, economic empowerment, political participation, healthcare, and social attitudes.

Education is one of the most critical areas where gender inequality in Nigeria persists. While school enrolment rates have improved in recent years, significant gender disparities remain, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Cultural norms, financial constraints, and early marriage contribute to high dropout rates among girls, particularly in rural and northern regions. In many cases, families prioritise boys' education over girls', either due to financial limitations or social expectations that the primary roles of girls lie in marriage and homemaking. Early marriage is particularly prevalent in rural and northern regions, where young girls are often married off before completing basic education, leading to limited literacy and skill acquisition. The ongoing conflict and insecurity in Nigeria have also exacerbated the gender gap in education. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast has targeted schools, further deterring families from sending girls to school out of concern for their safety.

Although women constitute nearly half of the Nigerian population, their participation in the labour force remains lower than that of men. Many women work in informal, low-wage jobs with little job security or benefits, such as domestic work, street vending, and small-scale farming. Limited access to education, financial resources, and professional opportunities restrict women's ability to engage in formal employment or entrepreneurial ventures.





Access to finance represents a substantial obstacle for Nigerian women seeking economic empowerment. Limited property ownership rights contribute to difficulties in securing loans or credit for starting or expanding businesses. While microfinance programmes and government initiatives, such as the Bank of Industry's Gender Fund, have provided some financial resources for women entrepreneurs, systemic changes are still required needed to create an environment that allows women to achieve economic independence.



Political representation of women remains exceptionally low in Nigeria, both at the national and local levels. Cultural biases, traditional gender roles, and a lack of supportive structures discourage women from participating in politics. The high cost of political campaigns, alongside security concerns and internal biases within political parties, further hinder women's opportunities to run for office.

Healthcare access in Nigeria highlights another dimension of gender inequality, particularly in reproductive health and maternal care. Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, with many women dying from preventable complications during pregnancy and childbirth. The limited availability of reproductive health services and family planning options further exacerbates the healthcare challenges. Social and cultural barriers, including stigma around contraception, often restrict women's access to reproductive health services and autonomy in making health-related decisions. In some regions, women lack the authority to make health decisions without their husband's consent.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread in Nigeria, with many women experiencing physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Domestic violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation (FGM), and child marriage are all forms of gender-based violence that continue to affect different parts of the country. Despite the illegality of FGM, it is still



practiced in some regions. Many cases of gender-based violence go unreported due to fear of social stigma, retaliation, or distrust in the legal system. In 2015, Nigeria passed the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, which criminalises various forms of GBV, but its enforcement has been inconsistent across states.

## CONFLICT

Nigeria's conflict issues are complex and vary by region, with notable conflict hotspots including the northeast, the Middle Belt, the southeast, and the Niger Delta.

Since 2009, the Islamist group Boko Haram has waged a violent insurgency, seeking to establish an Islamic state in the country's northeast. The movement has fragmented, with a significant faction now operating as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Together, these groups have terrorised civilians causing over 350,000 deaths and displacing more than two million people. The impact on communities has been profound, with significant disruptions to education, agriculture, and health services, resulting in widespread poverty and hunger.



In Nigeria's Middle Belt, predominantly Muslim Fulani herders and largely Christian farming communities frequently clash over land and water resources. These conflicts, which carry both ethnic and religious overtones, have intensified in recent years as growing populations and environmental degradation place greater strain on arable land. Violent encounters have become increasingly common in states like Benue, Plateau, and Kaduna, leading to the loss of lives and livelihoods and fostering deep-rooted mistrust between communities.

In the southeast, groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have reignited calls for the creation of an independent state of Biafra, a movement dating back to the Nigerian



Civil War of the late 1960s. IPOB's campaigns have often resulted in violent confrontations with Nigerian security forces, leading to loss of life and a tightening of military control in the region.

Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta has experienced cycles of militancy since the early 2000s, largely driven by resentment toward oil companies for environmental degradation and economic neglect of the region. Although a government amnesty programme in 2009 helped to reduce large-scale violence, tensions persist, and local groups continue to engage in illegal oil bunkering, theft, and occasional attacks on infrastructures. Together, these conflicts represent a highly complex web of grievances, socioeconomic challenges, and longstanding mistrust. Nigeria's security forces often struggle to respond adequately, and the government's efforts are hindered by limited resources and accusations of bias and corruption. This fragile situation is increasingly vulnerable to the accelerating impacts of climate change.

Climate change is a serious concern for Nigeria, as rising temperatures, desertification, irregular rainfall, and extreme weather events disrupt livelihoods and heighten competition for essential resources. In a society already strained by poverty and inequality, climate change acts as a powerful threat multiplier, amplifying underlying tensions and sparking new forms of conflict. With Nigeria's agriculture heavily dependent on seasonal rains, climate variability and erratic rainfall patterns are a direct threat to food production. Droughts reduce crop yields, while flooding from intensified rainy seasons has led to widespread crop destruction in recent years. These pressures on agriculture exacerbate the farmer-herder conflicts in the Middle Belt, as herders, who are traditionally nomadic, are forced to migrate further southward due to desertification in northern grazing lands. These movements have brought them into increased competition with farmers over shrinking arable land and water resources, fuelling violent clashes over who has the right to these vital resources.

Nigeria's young population, already faced with high unemployment rates, is especially vulnerable to the economic impacts of climate change on agriculture and fishing. With more than half of Nigeria's population under the age of 30, this youth bulge is at risk of becoming a destabilising force if these young people lack access to sustainable employment. Economic disenfranchisement and limited prospects may push frustrated youths to join insurgent or criminal groups as a means of economic survival or to voice their discontent. This trend is particularly visible in the northeast, where Boko Haram and ISWAP have recruited disenfranchised youth from economically marginalized communities.

In 2022, widespread flooding displaced hundreds of thousands of Nigerians, devastating communities and adding to the growing humanitarian crisis in conflict-affected regions. Government resources are limited, and response efforts are often slow, exacerbating public disillusionment with the state. As communities feel neglected or inadequately protected, their grievances against the government grow, further eroding trust and providing fertile ground for armed groups to exploit.





## CASSANDRA PILOT LOCAL CLIMATE FORUMS IN SUDAN

### AIYETORO

The Aiyetoro community, located in Ondo State, Nigeria, is a coastal settlement facing severe impacts from climate change and coastal erosion. As a low-lying community, Aiyetoro is particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather events, threatening its very existence. Amid these pressing challenges, community members, including high school students, local women, and elders, alongside environmental scientists and cultural conservation partners, are collaborating on the Conservation of Coastal Ecology and Cultural Heritage of Aiyetoro Community project. This initiative serves as a CASSANDRA Local Climate Forum Pilot Site, addressing the critical intersections of climate change, migration, gender equality, and cultural preservation.

The project represents a unique effort to document environmental changes and safeguard the community's rich cultural heritage. A key component of this initiative is the involvement of diverse community members who play vital roles in addressing the multifaceted impacts of climate change. High school students are actively engaged in documenting environmental changes and recording oral histories, allowing them to understand the pressing realities of their environment and community heritage. This youth involvement is not only educational but empowers the younger generation to advocate for environmental resilience.



Local women and girls, particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to their dependence on fishing and agriculture, play a central role in sharing their lived experiences. As climate change disrupts traditional livelihoods, these women and girls face heightened socioeconomic challenges, including increased poverty, health risks, and limited access to resources. Their accounts reveal the deep-seated impacts of environmental changes on



daily life, especially as they bear the brunt of reduced income and scarce food sources. Community elders contribute insights drawn from generations of traditional ecological knowledge, adding a historical perspective to the narrative of change in Aiyetoro. This collective documentation, spearheaded by teachers and environmental facilitators, preserves essential knowledge for future generations and raises awareness of the challenges facing this vulnerable coastal community.

The involvement of environmental scientists and climate researchers ensures that the project not only documents local experiences but also contextualises them within the broader framework of climate science. These experts provide technical support, helping to interpret environmental data and assess long-term impacts. Partnering with the Nigerian National Library, the project team is archiving the collected data to secure it for educational and advocacy purposes, offering a lasting record of Aiyetoro's struggles and resilience in the face of climate adversity. Through their roles, each participant contributes to a holistic understanding of Aiyetoro's ecological, social, and cultural transformations, creating a living record that serves both the community and a global audience.

At the heart of the project are urgent community issues that impact livelihoods, culture, and quality of life. A major challenge is coastal erosion, which is steadily eroding the community's land and infrastructure, endangering homes and businesses. This phenomenon not only disrupts day-to-day life but also fuels fears of climate-induced migration. Many residents may be forced to leave Aiyetoro if the erosion continues unabated, marking a devastating loss for the community's cultural heritage. Such migration is especially concerning for women and girls, who face additional social and economic hardships in adapting to new environments, potentially losing their livelihoods and social support systems. Indeed, the project underscores the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls, who rely heavily on fishing and agriculture. With these sectors in decline due to environmental degradation, women are experiencing heightened poverty and health impacts, and access to resources has become more restricted. Education for girls also suffers as families face reduced income and instability, highlighting the educational challenges linked to environmental degradation.

As the project progresses, it provides valuable insights into two key CASSANDRA issues: Climate Change and Gender Equality, and Climate Change and Migration. By documenting the specific ways in which women and girls in Aiyetoro are affected, the project emphasises the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to climate resilience. Recognising the critical role that women play in sustaining both livelihoods and cultural heritage, the project advocates for increased support for women's empowerment and adaptation initiatives. Additionally, the looming threat of migration as coastal erosion continues to erode homes and infrastructure reflects the urgent need for climate policies that address displacement risks and support communities like Aiyetoro in preserving their way of life.

## **UGIRI**

Ugiri, located in Imo State, Nigeria, serves as a vibrant example of local commitment to community development, sustainability, and cultural preservation and is the second CASSANDRA Local Climate Forum Pilot Site in Nigeria. In recent years, Ugiri has initiated several projects and activities aimed at addressing environmental, health, and



infrastructural needs within the community which align closely with the goals of CASSANDRA.

Several ongoing activities in Ugiri demonstrate the aims of CASSANDRA. For example, the Ugiri Environmental Sanitation Community Project is a weekly initiative aimed at promoting cleanliness and addressing pressing environmental concerns. Every week, members of the community participate in a sanitation exercise to maintain a clean environment and mitigate issues such as waste accumulation and pollution. Another significant activity in Ugiri is the communal cleaning of the Mbaa Stream, which occurs on traditional Nkwo days. This event unites community members in maintaining a clean water source, thereby preserving their cultural heritage while ensuring a safe water supply. By integrating CASSANDRA's health and cultural sustainability objectives, this action will promote public health and environmental stewardship through traditional practices, providing an ideal setting to implement health-related CASSANDRA initiatives.

Led by the Yagazie Foundation, the End-of-the-Year Menstrual Hygiene Programme supplies adolescent girls and women with essential hygiene products, including sanitary pads, soap, and toiletries, enough for a year's use whilst the Ugiri Youth Empowerment Initiative, aims



to enhance health practices and offer skill acquisition opportunities for the youth. Infrastructure development in Ugiri has been an ongoing focus, especially regarding community facilities such as the school, health centre, and multipurpose hall. Despite the





tremendous dedication of a broad range of key participants, the community faces significant challenges in achieving its development goals. The community's school, health centre, and multipurpose hall need construction and renovation, limiting access to essential services. Economic constraints have led to food insecurity, affecting the community's health and well-being and there exists an urgent need for renewable energy solutions and a reliable water supply to reduce environmental impact and enhance resilience.

The ongoing activities in Ugiri connect directly with two primary issues identified by CASSANDRA, Climate Change and Health, focusing on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and Gender Equality. Through sanitation projects, waterway cleanups, and menstrual hygiene programmes, Ugiri's community initiatives actively address public health and environmental stewardship, crucial components of climate resilience. Additionally, gender equality is a cornerstone of the community's efforts as it seeks to support women's health and autonomy.

## **CASSANDRA LEADERS IN NIGERIA**

### **AIYETORO**

The Green Institute

Adenike Akinsemolu

### **UGIRI**

The Yagazie Foundation

Ezirim Chinedu Kennedy - Team Lead Coordinator.

The Traditional Ruler - Provides guidance and represents the community's cultural values.

Adaeze Onuoha - Director

Nkechi Monica - Leader of Volunteers

Innocent Ijeoma - Hygiene Specialist.

Princewill Chimzurum - Safety Specialist.

## **NEW PILOT SITE CURRENTLY BEING PREPARED**

Opeyemi Lana

## **IF YOU WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN CASSANDRA**

1: Cassandra extends an invitation to all interested parties, be they governmental agencies, NGOs, research entities, cultural actors, interest groups or concerned members of the public to participate in the establishment of Local Climate Forums and /or become involved in the initial observation and monitoring of the progress of the actions of the programme.



2. Cassandra invites any interested stakeholder to attend and actively participate in the online forums organised by Eurecat which will take place in December 2024 and June 2025.

3. Cassandra invites participation in the third Cassandra Conference coordinated by Eurecat which will be held in November 2025.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For a detailed explanation of CASSANDRA see:

[https://cdn.eurecat.org/PDF/Cassandra2023/Cassandra\\_conclusions.pdf](https://cdn.eurecat.org/PDF/Cassandra2023/Cassandra_conclusions.pdf)

All sessions of the Cassandra Conference 2021 and 2023 are available on YOUTUBE and can be accessed at the following link: <https://cassandraconference.org/>

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