# GAZELLE

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## Local Government



**Hope Raised and Hope Dashed: The Unending Drama on Financial Autonomy for Local Governments in Nigeria**

**Zauren Sulhu and Local Vigilante Groups: Community-Based Initiatives for Peace and Security in Nigeria**

**Climate Change and Its Impact on Agriculture in Northern Nigeria**

**Youth Unemployment in Northern Nigeria: A Growing Crisis**

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# EDITORIAL

## A stitch in time could save lives and Properties

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The rainy season of 2014 was a season that many communities in Bauchi State, who had survived the devastation of the rains, will never forget. Towns and villages, wards and hamlets were almost entirely wiped out in Gawawa and Katagum Local Governments in particular, but generally in most of northern Bauchi.

Houses, farmlands, roads, and pathways leading to these affected areas were also washed away or flooded for days or weeks, making rescue efforts and evacuation by surviving communities extremely difficult. Many households were separated for weeks and months in makeshift evacuation centres, unable to rebuild their ruined homes and unable to feed their families because the rains destroyed both their grain stores and farmlands. Some of the displaced families are still in separate temporary accommodations, while some, who could not feed their families, left them to their own devices and moved to the southern part of the country to look for 'means of survival'. It was a really pathetic situation, and the rains are back, and all efforts at rebuilding ruined homes had to stop.

Initially, there were state and local government promises of humanitarian assistance. But actually, the Emir of Katagum, Alhaji Dr Umar Faruk II, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a few individual philanthropists, and some lawmakers representing the affected constituencies provided token assistance to some of the affected communities. The majority of those affected remain displaced and unable to restart their lives. The state and local governments have a responsibility to the people.

As a permanent and durable solution to the recurring incidents of flooding in his local government area, the Chairman of Gamawa Local Government, Hon Madaki Ahmad Gololo, called on the state government to construct flood ways to evacuate excess water in the areas prone to flooding, just like it did in Darazo and Disina. Reports from Gamawa indicate that this has been done in Abuja Ward. Such timely intervention is commendable. But residents of the area complained that the channel was narrow and that it did not traverse the whole area. This year's rains are still falling, and so far, there hasn't been any flooding in that area. We can assume that the spillway is serving its purpose. It is our fervent hope that the state government extends this intervention to all the areas vulnerable to flooding in the state.

# SISDev Activities in Pictures

**Reports compiled by Yusuf Abdullahi**



Members of SISDev and students of the Government Comprehensive Day Secondary School (GCDSS) Bauchi after a programme to sensitise the students on the negative effects of drug abuse and the role of education as a key tool to combat drug abuse; in commemoration of The International Day of Education 2024




Volunteers from SISDev during The Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) Nigeria 2024, organized by Community Advocates for Rural Development (CARD) in Bauchi. The theme of the conference was "Building Bridges for Climate Action: Uniting Youth's Voices Across Nigeria" which sought to advance youth involvement in local and global climate policies



Some members of SISDev and pupils of Annor International Academy Bauchi preparing to plant trees to mark The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, 2024. The event was aimed at educating children about environmental conservation and sustainability



SISDev ED and some women's interest groups after a meeting on the creation of orchard at ACReSAL Bauchi

# SISDev Activities in Pictures




SISDev in partnership with the Bauchi State Project Management Unit (SPMU) of ACReSAL, planting 400 economic trees across eight wards in Ibrahim Bako community Bauchi, Bauchi State.



SISDev participants at the Bauchi State's annual tree planting campaign, held at Saadu Zungur University Bauchi, Yuli campus





SISDev celebrated The International Women's Day 2025 with a health talk on menstrual hygiene for secondary school girls at Government Girls Day Secondary School, Bauchi



SISDev with the Fallan Sarkin Yamman Yamrat village in Bauchi LGA to explore areas of collaboration on environmental conservation

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## GUEST INTERVIEW

**By**
**Muazu Hardawa**

# Hope Raised and Hope Dashed: The Unending Drama on Financial Autonomy for Local Governments in Nigeria



**For so long, state governments in Nigeria have exerted a relentless financial overreach on local governments, using the instrumentality of the State Joint Local Government Account to the detriment of the country's socio-economic development. In the past, attempts were made to wean the local councils from the fetters of state control without success. In yet another trial in May 2024, the Attorney General of the Federation, Lateef Fagbemi, filed a suit against the states on behalf of the Federal Government before judges of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. And on 11 July 2024, the apex court agreed to his plea and granted financial autonomy to the 774 local governments in the country. The ruling demanded the immediate and direct payment of allocations to the local governments from the Federation Account. Across the country, Nigerians applauded the Supreme Court decision as a significant development in the history of the local government system and democratic governance in Nigeria. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, while expressing his support for the Supreme Court judgment, affirmed that it would engender effective governance and administration at the grassroots level. State governors, ALGON, other NGOs, and corporate bodies, as well as individual Nigerians, all rose in tandem to commend the Supreme Court ruling. It was indeed a moment of overwhelming excitement and triumph and high expectations that financial autonomy would engender infrastructural development, security, and improvement in education and health, as well as the local economy. However, one year after the Supreme Court ruling, it has yet to be implemented. The financial status of the LGs remains precarious and deplorable; they still receive less than optimal funds, which limits their capacity to provide essential services and develop infrastructure. And truly, the developmental needs are huge. We can gain insight into this from excerpts of the interview with Honourable Madaki Ahmad Gololo, Chairman of Gamawa Local Government Area of Bauchi State. The interview was conducted not long after a devastating flood in some areas of the local government in 2024.**

***QUESTION: Can we start with your full name, please?***

My name is Hon Madaki Ahmad Gololo, Chairman of Gamawa Local Government Area. We are really grateful that you found it worthwhile to come to Gamawa to see the condition of things. We thank Allah for bringing you safely. By the will of Almighty Allah, Gamawa, Gadiya and Kafiromi experienced a disastrous flood this year. However, Gamawa, Gadiya, and Kafiromi are not on any riverbank. In Gadiya many people took shelter in the primary school, hospital, and mosques. This is the pathetic condition of the people since the incident of the flood disaster.

We intervened in Abuja ward of Gamawa town, where more than 600 houses were destroyed. The water came through a seasonal channel, ravaging the entire village. Apart from the palace, almost all the houses in the village were destroyed by the flood, thereby displacing the inhabitants to the primary school and the upper lands, where they erected tents for shelter. Unfortunately, further downpours damaged the tents, forcing those affected to seek shelter elsewhere.

Before we came into power, there had never been any official report on such a natural disaster. We, therefore, had to prepare an interim report on the incident for the state government. Hence, we set up a committee to come up with a report on the causes of such recurring disasters. The committee concluded its work, and the report confirmed that the flooding normally results from the heavy downpour during the rainy season. Consequently, we set up three different committees. One committee was at the local government level; it was headed by the local government chairman, while two committees were in the districts of Gamawa and Udubo, each headed by the district head. The committees visited households in their respective areas of responsibility to establish the losses recorded. Of particular note were the losses incurred by farmers. The committees' findings revealed huge losses in farm produce, which raised the fear of food shortages and the attendant possibility of hunger and starvation. As such, we took certain measures. In the short-term, we addressed the immediate needs of the flood victims: food, shelter, medicine, and clean drinking water. Some of the flood victims had already resorted to drinking water from the ponds and the river. As a way to go we drilled hand pump boreholes in places like Tonde.

Approximately 7,000 houses were destroyed across all areas affected by flooding, presenting a significant challenge for us. Consequently, we reached out to the state government, NEMA, and prominent local leaders for assistance. However, a more urgent issue was the need to relocate communities like Kafiromi to higher ground. We needed to take proactive measures to prevent future flooding. Gamawa, Gololo, and Udubo are particularly vulnerable to flooding, which exceeds our capacity to manage. Therefore, we requested the state government to construct drainage systems within the towns to ensure the free flow of water and protect the settlements from flooding. The state government had previously implemented similar projects in Disina and Darazo to tackle persistent flooding there.

In Gamawa town, a large dam could be constructed to capture runoff from the town during the rainy season, which could also be used for dry-season farming.

***QUESTION: How many people can you say have lost their lives due to this disaster?***

The recorded number of deaths was nine. We established an emergency hospital in every camp where a local NGO, Gamawa Solution, intervened with volunteers, primarily health personnel.

***QUESTION: What are your expectations from other humanitarian organizations and philanthropies concerning this situation?***

We urge all NGOs to assist us in the short, medium, and long term. Our esteemed sons and daughters should rise to the occasion and provide the necessary support and assistance to alleviate the suffering of the victims, as the government cannot do it alone.

***QUESTION: Now that the local government has been granted financial autonomy, what impact do you foresee this will have on the quality of health, education, and the environment?***

It is indeed a welcome development, but the local government cannot fulfill its role in isolation from the state government, just as the state government will always require the federal government. Even during the election campaign, we made our position clear to the electorate that we would be collaborating with the state government on issues related to health, education, security, and infrastructure development. These are the key areas prioritized by the state government, and we at the local government level have resolved to align with that. Following this commitment, we developed a 6-point agenda that we aim to pursue.

Security. The primary concern of any leader is the protection of the lives and property of the people they lead. A lack of security is often linked to poverty. We have experienced incidents of theft in our communities, so upon taking office, I convened a meeting with all the security agencies, and from that, we learned that the high level of poverty among the people is a significant factor contributing to the rising cases of theft in our societies. Therefore, we have designed a poverty alleviation program to alleviate the hardships of poverty and provide a means of livelihood for the people.

The provision of potable drinking water is crucial. This local government is situated in the Sahel zone, where the water table is low. Most of the boreholes have ceased functioning. However, we have resolved to repair them and drill new ones.

Agriculture is vital here. This local government area is predominantly agrarian, and thus, we have committed ourselves to supporting our farmers. We are fortunate to be one of the regions in the state where dry-season farming activities occur, even in areas where irrigation is challenging. The primary cash crop is Guna, also known as bitter melon, a crop that is easily cultivated and from which edible oil can be extracted. Areas like Udubo have gained recognition for cultivating this crop. We aim to encourage other communities to emulate the Guna farmers of Udubo. Other crops grown during the dry season include sweet potatoes and cassava, which provide a means of livelihood for the people. A challenge we face is the threat posed by marauding herders, Udawa, from the Niger Republic. These herders destroy our crops on the farmlands. We have taken measures to protect our farmlands from being ravaged by these herders.

Education. Regarding education, we have decided to encourage parents to send their children to school. Additionally, we discovered a shortage of teachers, so we will collaborate with the State Primary School Board to explore how it can assist us in acquiring more teachers. We also plan to establish a program for gifted children and support them in pursuing higher education.

***QUESTION: Lastly, what is your call to the people on how they could support your effort?***

All we need is their prayers. The people should pray for peace in our country and for God to guide us in this leadership responsibility. Success in leadership is only achieved with the support of the followers, so we need the people's backing. If at any time we make decisions that are not popular, they are welcome to approach us and offer their advice accordingly.

# Zauren Sulhu and Local Vigilante Groups: Community-Based Initiatives for Peace and Security in Nigeria

**By**
**Sadiq Saidu**

## Reconciliation forums (Zauren Sulhu)

Insecurity remains one of the most pressing challenges in Nigeria today, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities. Banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, cattle rustling, ethno-religious crises, and other forms of communal clashes continuously threaten the peace and security of our communities. As these incidents persist, and the presence of state security agencies is either limited or, in some cases, non-existent, states and local communities have increasingly turned to self-help solutions. This underscores the importance of community-based peace and security initiatives, particularly reconciliation forums (Zauren Sulhu) and local vigilante groups. While these initiatives differ from one another, they all share a common goal of fostering safety and peaceful coexistence in communities across the country. Traditional reconciliation forums such as Zauren Sulhu and vigilante groups are grounded in trust, tradition, and collective responsibility.

Reconciliation forums have existed in northern Nigeria since pre-colonial times. Historically, they were a vital component of the emirate justice system, used to resolve disputes without resorting to formal courts. However, colonial rule diminished their role as formal civil courts emerged to adjudicate disputes between individuals and groups. In post-independent Nigeria, civil courts continued to dominate. Following the return to democratic rule in 1999, there was widespread clamour for strict adherence to Sharia, the Islamic legal code, in most states of northern Nigeria. Consequently, the involved states established relevant institutions: the Sharia Commission, Zakat Commission, Hisbah vigilante groups, and Zauren Sulhu.

In Bauchi, Zauren Sulhu was inaugurated by Governor Muazu on 6 September 2001 as a unit of the state Sharia Commission. After a probationary period, units were opened in all local government headquarters and wards throughout the state. Members of Zauren Sulhu, including religious leaders, ward heads, elders, community leaders, and other respected individuals, typically come from within the community itself. They serve voluntarily, often motivated by a deep sense of devotion to the community. All units of Zauren Sulhu across the state fall under the purview of the state Sharia Commission, specifically regarding technical and procedural matters.

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Zauren Sulhu is a platform for the administration of restorative justice, focusing particularly on family and marital issues, neighborhood relationships, and trade transactions. Mediation and reconciliation are its primary tools. Members convene as often as necessary based on the complaints presented to them. A matter may be brought forward by an aggrieved individual or any community member for the consideration of the group. However, issues that could be better addressed through restorative justice may also arise from the police, Sharia Commission, and civil courts. During sessions, members strive to reach a mutually acceptable resolution through mediation and reconciliation. If a successful outcome is achieved, and the offender acknowledges their actions, understands the consequences, and makes amends for the harm caused, the matter is deemed to have been amicably resolved. Otherwise, the case may be referred to the Sharia Commission, a civil court, or the police for appropriate handling. In addition to conflict resolution, the units of Zauren Sulhu also address certain ethical issues, such as dress code, respect for elders, and drug addiction, among others. Here, they enforce compliance with Islamic cultural norms and traditions.

**Vigilante Groups**

Vigilante justice evolved from traditional community-based policing in pre-colonial Nigeria. It was an effective system that maintained peace and safety within communities. Later, colonial rule introduced its police force to uphold law and order, yet it tolerated the existence of vigilante groups, particularly in remote areas. In post-independent Nigeria, this minimal commitment persisted. However, from the year 2000, rising insecurity and the corresponding shortcomings in the formal policing duties of the Nigeria Police and other security agencies led to a rapid increase in the formation of vigilante groups across the country. This period saw the emergence of the Bakassi Boys, Odua Peoples' Congress in the South East and South West respectively, as well as Hisbah vigilante groups in several northern states. Today, widespread incidents of kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, terrorism, and other forms of violent crime ensure that virtually every state has a vigilante group.

Such groups are established by law and thus function as formal state institutions. They may operate to tackle specific security challenges, similar to the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State or the Amotekun Corps, and often collaborate with law enforcement agencies and the military. The CJTF was established in 2013 to assist the military in response to the Boko Haram insurgency. It aids in gathering intelligence, protects IDP camps, and provides security to communities, among other related roles and responsibilities. There are also vigilante groups at the community level. These are voluntary organizations formed by the community to help the police protect local areas from criminals.

In Bauchi State, the current set of vigilante groups (commonly referred to as Yan Committee) was inaugurated by Governor MA Abubakar at the Government House in Bauchi. Present at the event were the Commissioner of Police, traditional rulers, and ward heads. The Nigerian Police subsequently organized a workshop for the vigilante groups on the fundamentals of law enforcement: arrest, interrogation, and the use of minimum force.




Today, these groups engage in intelligence gathering on criminals, conduct minor investigations, patrol, and make arrests in support of the civil police. They do not have the authority to prosecute offenders. Therefore, whenever they make an arrest, they transfer the suspect to the appropriate police station or Area Command. The vigilante groups collaborate as they patrol neighborhoods, respond to alarms, and carry out arrests of suspects. Their strengths lie in their extensive knowledge of the local environment, rapid response time, and the trust and presence they maintain within the community.

Public opinion regarding these local security mechanisms is generally positive—especially in areas where state security is weak. Zauren Sulhu is often favored for its accessibility, cultural relevance, and conciliatory nature. Many perceive it as a quicker, less intimidating alternative to courts.

Zauren Sulhu continues to be widely utilized to resolve family conflicts, land disputes, inheritance issues, and minor offenses. Its strength lies in its restorative approach to justice, prioritizing forgiveness, dialogue, and social harmony. Consequently, it alleviates the burden on formal institutions while maintaining order at the grassroots level. Vigilante groups are similarly valued for their visibility and responsiveness.

Communities frequently provide logistical support in the form of stipends, food, or transportation. In some areas, they are regarded as the first line of defense against criminal elements. However, criticisms persist. The absence of formal recognition and standardized procedures means their effectiveness varies. Concerns regarding bias, lack of gender inclusion, and susceptibility to local power dynamics have emerged over time. Vigilantes have occasionally been accused of extortion and human rights violations. These issues underscore the need for regulation and professionalization.

These community initiatives cannot deliver optimal services to the people. They are hindered by the lack of legal recognition, regulation, and standardized procedures, which only fosters uncertainty. As such abuses are prevalent. They also struggle with insufficient tools and training, as well as poor funding. At times, tensions arise between vigilante groups and police over jurisdiction and responsibilities. In some instances, politicians manipulate these groups, undermining their neutrality and credibility. Occasionally, members of vigilante groups are targeted by criminals or insurgents and increasingly face litigation from parents of accused children, all against a backdrop of no insurance coverage, legal protection, or support structures.

Zauren Sulhu and local vigilante groups are essential elements of grassroots security in Nigeria. They embody the principles of local ownership, cultural relevance, and proactive problem-solving. While differing in structure and origin, their synergy creates a powerful model for tackling insecurity in areas with limited state presence. However, to transition from informal stopgaps to sustainable solutions, these systems must be formalized, supported, and regulated. Legal frameworks, training, funding, and oversight are crucial to ensuring they align with constitutional values and human rights standards. Ultimately, Nigeria's path toward lasting peace and security relies not only on expanding the reach of formal law enforcement but also on empowering communities to take responsibility for their own safety, where traditional wisdom complements modern governance in a shared pursuit of stability and justice.

# Climate Change and Its Impact on Agriculture in Northern Nigeria

**By**
**Khadija Mustapha Mu'azu**

Climate change is increasingly threatening the agricultural sector in northern Nigeria, a region heavily reliant on farming for food and income. Rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and desertification have disrupted traditional farming practices, resulting in reduced crop yields and a threat to food security.

For a region already grappling with poverty and insecurity, the consequences of climate change are devastating and demand urgent attention. Northern Nigeria is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to its arid and semi-arid climate.



Over the past few decades, the region has experienced a steady rise in average temperatures and a decline in annual rainfall. These changes have resulted in longer dry seasons and shorter growing periods, making it difficult for farmers to cultivate staple crops such as millet, sorghum, and maize.

Desertification is another significant challenge. The encroachment of the Sahara Desert into northern Nigeria has degraded farmland, reducing the availability of arable land. This has forced many farmers to abandon their traditional lands and migrate in search of more fertile areas, leading to increased competition for resources and tensions among communities.



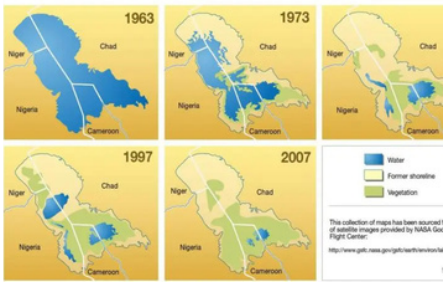
The impact of climate change on agriculture has far-reaching socio-economic implications. Reduced crop yields have led to higher food prices, making it difficult for low-income families to afford basic staples. The loss of income from farming has also increased poverty and unemployment, particularly among rural populations who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

In some cases, this economic hardship has fueled conflicts over land and water resources, further destabilizing the region.

Livestock farming, another critical aspect of northern Nigeria's economy, has also been affected. Prolonged droughts and dwindling water sources have made it challenging to sustain livestock, leading to significant losses for pastoralists. This has exacerbated tensions between farmers and herders, often resulting in violent clashes over grazing lands and water points. Efforts to address the impact of climate change on agriculture in northern Nigeria are underway, but remain insufficient.



The Nigerian government, in collaboration with international organizations, has launched initiatives such as the Great Green Wall project, which aims to combat desertification through reforestation. Programs promoting climate-smart agriculture, such as the use of drought-resistant crops and efficient irrigation systems, have also been introduced. Still, their adoption has been slow due to limited awareness and resources.




To mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture, a holistic approach is required. Investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, such as dams and irrigation systems, can help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns. Community-based natural resource management programs can reduce conflicts and promote sustainable farming practices. Additionally, providing access to affordable agricultural inputs and credit can support farmers in adopting innovative techniques to improve productivity. Climate change poses a significant threat to agriculture and livelihoods in northern Nigeria.

Addressing this challenge requires a coordinated effort from the government, international partners, and local communities. By prioritizing sustainable practices and building resilience, northern Nigeria can safeguard its agricultural sector and ensure food security for future generations.

**Copied from timesreporters.com**

# Youth Unemployment in Northern Nigeria: A Growing Crisis

**By**
**Anna Christopher Dantoro**

Youth unemployment in northern Nigeria has become one of the most pressing socio-economic issues facing the region. With a high population of young people, many of whom are educated but lack job opportunities, the crisis has led to widespread frustration, insecurity, and social instability. The lack of employment opportunities for the youth has profound implications for the future of the region, as disillusioned young people turn to alternative and often destructive means to make ends meet. The rate of youth unemployment in northern Nigeria is alarmingly high, with some estimates suggesting that over 60% of young people are either unemployed or underemployed.

A combination of factors contributes to this crisis, including a rapidly growing population, inadequate education and skills training, and a lack of job-creating industries in the region. Furthermore, the structure of the economy in northern Nigeria, which is largely dependent on agriculture and small-scale businesses, has limited the availability of formal employment opportunities. In addition to a lack of jobs, there is a mismatch between the skills of young people and the demands of the job market. Many graduates from universities and vocational schools in northern Nigeria are ill-prepared for the modern workforce, with outdated curricula and a lack of practical skills. As a result, they struggle to find employment in sectors such as technology, finance, and manufacturing, where growth opportunities are available.

The consequences of youth unemployment are dire. Disillusioned young people, unable to find decent work, often turn to informal sectors, including street trading or involvement in illegal activities. Some become vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups like Boko Haram, who prey on the frustrations of unemployed youth. The rise in violent crime, including armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom, can also be attributed to the growing number of young people who feel excluded from the formal economy.

In northern Nigeria, unemployment also disproportionately affects women, who face additional barriers to entering the workforce due to cultural norms and gender inequalities. Many young women are restricted to domestic roles or excluded from education altogether, further limiting their opportunities for economic participation. The gender gap in employment is a significant challenge, as women are often left behind in the region's struggle for development.

Government efforts to address youth unemployment in northern Nigeria have included various initiatives, such as the National Social Investment Program (NSIP), which aims to provide skills training, entrepreneurship programs, and access to microfinance for young people.

However, these programs have not been widely successful due to insufficient funding, poor implementation, and a lack of long-term support. To tackle the youth unemployment crisis, northern Nigeria requires a comprehensive strategy that addresses both the supply and demand sides. Improving access to quality education, including vocational training and entrepreneurship skills, is crucial for equipping young people with the necessary tools to succeed. Additionally, fostering the growth of industries, such as manufacturing and technology, can create more job opportunities. Investments in infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, can also make the region more attractive to investors, generating employment opportunities.

Youth unemployment is one of the most urgent challenges facing northern Nigeria today. To ensure a peaceful and prosperous future, the region must invest in its youth by providing them with the education, skills, and opportunities needed to thrive in the modern economy. The future of northern Nigeria depends on its ability to empower its young people and create a more inclusive and dynamic workforce.

**Copied from timesreporters.com**

