

A CLASH OF CONTAGIONS

Appendix: Detailed Methodology and Analysis

This document is a methodological appendix for the Mercy Corps research report *A Clash of Contagions: The Impact of COVID-19 on Conflict in Nigeria, Colombia, and Afghanistan*, which was released in June 2020. It is meant to supplement the evidence and arguments presented in the full report, which is available to download [here](#)

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Appendix A: Detailed Research Design and Methodology

Research Objectives

1. To identify the diversity of ways in which drivers of conflict are being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic within and across contexts.
2. To develop policy and program-oriented recommendations regarding why and how to proactively respond to COVID-related conflict impacts and seize windows of opportunity to help prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflict and violence during the pandemic.

Research Questions

1. How have COVID-19 and associated pandemic response measures changed factors that contribute to conflict?
 - a. What is different within the case study conflict systems now as compared to pre-pandemic?
 - b. Which types of conflict factors are being primarily impacted (e.g. root causes, drivers, proximate causes; consequences of violence; factors for peace vs. factors against peace)?
 - c. Are there any evident patterns in terms of how impacts are manifesting within different types of conflicts?
2. What implications might the above have for the trajectories of conflict (e.g., in intensity, duration, complexity, scope) and prospects for peace over time?

Methodological approach

This research project was designed to engage in cross-case and within-case analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict. This research drew from [conflict systems analysis](#) and [theory-building](#) process tracing as methodological approaches. With process tracing, we sought to understand which causal mechanisms (if any) connected the COVID-19 pandemic and society's response to conflict outcomes.¹ This within-case analysis was then complemented with cross-case comparisons to further define limiting factors and scope conditions of the identified mechanisms.

We used conflict systems analysis because it captures dynamism and interconnectedness between conflict factors and stakeholders (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2017). When examining the impacts of COVID-19, a systems analysis helped to reveal how the pandemic and response measures became part of the broader conflict system, and helped to identify how combinations of variables combined to have effects over time as dynamics shifted. A systems approach has several benefits. First, it enables a more holistic understanding of conflict, including how COVID-19 may be impacting less obvious or less visible factors within the conflict system. Second, it can easily be deployed within participatory and collaborative

¹ We understand causal mechanisms to be hypothesized causal accounts of the decisions, behaviors, and interactions of actors that connect a cause to an outcome (Kaidesoja 2019; Beach & Pedersen 2019)

community mapping workshops, which makes it possible to identify local knowledge about the complex array of causes and effects of conflict dynamics. Third, systems analysis is useful for identifying leverage points for change. On the negative side, this helps in identifying the most concerning factors to watch out for that are playing an important role in driving dynamics and negative feedback loops. On the positive side, a focus on leverage points lends itself to forward-looking advocacy and programming recommendations.

Research design: case selection, geographic targeting and participant identification

This research project draws on three in-depth case studies: Afghanistan, Colombia, and Nigeria. We used a combination of methodological, substantive, and operational considerations to select these cases. The three countries featured in this research were selected from among a universe of 39 countries in which Mercy Corps operates globally. Through a process of internal consultation and initial analysis of open source quantitative data and secondary literature, Nigeria, Colombia, and Afghanistan were selected from a list of 18 shortlisted countries.²

The underlying logic for selecting the set of cases was to ensure diversity. A diverse set of cases was the most appropriate choice for several reasons. We chose to conduct this research inductively, with broad exploratory research questions, given the lack of existing theory and evidence about how the COVID-19 pandemic would shape conflict. The initial analysis of potential case studies and literature review demonstrated that the impact of the pandemic on key outcomes of conflict (violent events or deaths) was mixed. We had the reasonable intuition that the impact of the pandemic, if any, would be on the underlying processes and mechanisms that reproduce violence over time rather than on the immediate observed level of violence. As such, rather than test theoretically informed hypotheses, we opted for an inductive, theory-building approach -- focused on middle-range theory. We aimed to identify the causal mechanisms that might connect the shock of the pandemic to conflict and violence. Given the novelty of the subject and the fact that the crisis is still unfolding, we chose a set of cases with contrasting characteristics. With diverse cases, we had a higher chance of identifying the full breadth of mechanisms in operation, along with their scope conditions and limiting factors. For these reasons, we selected our cases to ensure variation on: the type and intensity of conflict, geography, state-society relations, displacement dynamics; and on the intensity of virus spread and governmental responses. The criteria that informed the choice of cases included:

Conflict criteria

- Type of conflict (armed conflict, intercommunal conflict, prevalent organized gang/criminal violence)
- Intensity of conflict (highly active, moderately active, latent)
- Scope of conflict (subnational, national, regional)
- Fragility of state/society relations (stable, moderate, fragile)
- Presence of IDPs/refugees (none, small, moderate, large)

² Ethiopia was also initially selected as a case study, but was dropped in January 2021, due to operational and personnel challenges and the limited time available to conduct data collection.

Criteria for COVID-19 Spread and Response

- Virus intensity (high/moderate/low caseload, mortality)
- Government response intensity (aggressive mitigation measures, moderate/mixed mitigation measures, limited mitigation measures)

Operational criteria

- Regional spread (Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America)
- Existing Mercy Corps capacity in conflict and insecurity analysis
- Operational capacity and expertise of the country team
- Feasibility of data collection given access constraints (related to insecurity, conflict sensitivity, and the pandemic's evolution itself)
- Avoiding overlap with pre-existing or planned Mercy Corps research on conflict and/or COVID-19 impacts

For all three of the cases, we also used diversity as a targeting logic to enable rich within-case comparison and to be able to refine our understanding of scope conditions for the causal mechanisms identified through the analysis. This diversity was sought both for the participants in the study and for the communities from which to identify them. We sought to research in areas of each country which offered diverse combinations of the criteria listed below:

General geographic spread

- Are different areas potentially experiencing the pandemic differently (spread and/or responses)
- Are different areas experiencing conflict differently (drivers, actors, state responses, intensity)?
- Does the set of target areas represent different population characteristics (e.g. rural vs. urban, localities with specific demographic or socio-cultural characteristics)?
- Is Mercy Corps conducting activities in those areas that make them strategic to research (but not duplicative of other processes)?

Identity and vulnerability

- Are groups impacted differently by conflict and/or the pandemic by virtue of their religious, ethnic, kinship or other identity group? Are we able to capture the diverse range of perspectives on the conflict and the pandemic from these different groups?
- Are there different groups impacted differently by conflict and/or the pandemic by virtue of their vulnerability level (e.g. IDPs/refugees, communities otherwise impacted by conflict or violence, groups experiencing more repressive state responses or more at risk of violent extremist recruitment, female-headed households, specific marginalized identity groups, etc.)?

Economic status

- Are there groups with different economic status (e.g. income level) and industry (e.g. farmers, herders, informal workers, business owners, etc.) that have been impacted differently by the conflict and/or pandemic?

Age and gender

- Would we be able to capture the range of specific impacts of the conflict and/or pandemic on men, women, boys and girls in these local communities?

Within each of the selected areas in each country, we then proceeded to identify respondents who could represent the diversity of their communities. In general, we actively sought a balanced participation of male and female participants, and substantial representation of both youth and adults. Depending on the demographic makeup of each community, we also sought a sample of participants which included the range of identity and population groups present (different religious groups, ethnicities; diverse socio-economic status; community members, local civil society or informal leaders, government officials, experts). In Nigeria, in addition to the demographic criteria listed, we also purposefully sought out respondents who could speak to the social unrest episodes that unfolded during the period of the pandemic (mostly the looting of COVID-19 relief (palliatives) warehouses and the EndSARS protests). For this, we conducted additional workshops and interviews in areas where protests and looting had happened (in our case, in Abuja and in urban areas in Kaduna, Plateau, and Adamawa States), targeting activists, young people, and civil society leaders.

Data collection and analysis process

Following the approach to theory-building process tracing recommended by Beach and Pedersen (2019), we began by identifying key candidate causal mechanisms connecting COVID-19 and conflict. We initially aimed to “theorize causes and outcomes in ways that are compatible with mechanistic explanations” and to “look at existing theorization for a source of inspiration for processes for which to search” (Beach and Pedersen 2019, 271). We began our research with a review of existing academic literature on the impacts on conflict of pandemics and other exogenous shocks (e.g. climate, natural disasters). We also reviewed existing academic and grey literature on COVID-19 and its impact on conflict and violence globally (which was mostly forecasts and very preliminary, given the time lapsed since the pandemic began at the inception of this project in Summer/Fall 2020). Finally, we reviewed literature on conflict drivers for each of the case studies. To complement the inputs from the literature, we conducted a set of preliminary expert interviews in each case study (two in Afghanistan, two in Colombia, and three in Nigeria). We also facilitated a participatory mapping workshop in each country (three in total) with Mercy Corps practitioners and conducted consultation sessions with the local data collection teams, all of whom have deep contextual knowledge and experience analyzing security and conflict dynamics.

As an output of this initial phase of our research design, we were able to build a detailed baseline (pre-COVID-19) conflict system map for each of the case studies and a hypothesized COVID-19 system map. Having a detailed and holistic system map allowed us to formulate theoretically and empirically informed hunches about subtle pathways through which COVID-19 might have entered and altered the conflict system. Based on the baseline and hypothesized map, we were also able to identify factors which merited deeper exploration in each case studies. The identification of these factors was tailored to each country’s context, and the aim in formulating the list of key factors was to be contextually specific rather than to aim for theoretical abstraction. We also made subnational adaptations to our key factors list, given within-case

variations in conflict dynamics. The pre-identified factors that we incorporated into our research tools in each of the research areas is included in annex 3 below.

We did not, then, formulate testable propositions to entirely determine our lines of enquiry and to systematically evaluate them with confirming and disconfirming evidence (Beach and Pedersen 2019). Through this process, we leveraged the important advantage of a methodology like theory-building process-tracing to probe and delineate crucial causal mechanisms, and the ability of conflict systems analysis to unveil unexpected, subtle or hidden conflict drivers. While each case study engaged with this logic during the process of data collection, analysis, and write-up, the lead author for each case adapted the approach as appropriate given the nature of data from that context and their own methodological expertise. See Appendix D below for a detailed description of the explicit application of Bayesian Theory-Building Process Tracing in the Nigeria case study.

The makeup of data collection teams varied in each case study. In Afghanistan, a consultancy firm was hired to collect data, and they hired enumerators from each of the target areas. In Colombia, two independent researchers were engaged and collected data in the field themselves. In Nigeria, Mercy Corps set up its own research team directly, with enumerators who were from the target areas and with prior experience with research. Mercy Corps' central research team designed the overall methodological approach, the research tools, and conducted the analysis of the data. The central team also trained all field researchers to ensure a common understanding of the aims of the research, systems analysis, the use of research tools, and ensuring conflict sensitivity and participant's rights throughout the process.

When designing our data collection tools, we had to respond to two potentially competing priorities. First, we aimed to ensure that changes in conflict drivers that we had pre-identified as key were captured systematically with both interviewees and workshop participants. Second, we needed to enable findings to emerge and for less obvious and more subtle changes to be captured. Relatedly, given the participatory nature of our approach, we wanted to provide sufficient space for diverse experiences and understandings of conflict to emerge. We prepared scripts for semi-structured interviews and semi-structured participatory mapping workshops with these two priorities in mind. In these scripts (included in annexes 1 and 2), questions about pre-identified key factors were combined with open-ended questions about what other dynamics or actors may have emerged or changed during the pandemic.

During workshops, participants were not only asked about conflict factors and changes, but they were encouraged to collaboratively analyse their community's conflict systems, engaging in an analysis of causes and consequences through participatory mapping exercises. Both the notes/transcripts of these workshops and the diagrams produced by respondents were used as data. For participatory workshops, given the need to limit our demand for participants' time, we provided space in the initial segment of the workshop for respondents to prioritise which factors to focus on and map in depth and in what order (regardless of whether they had been pre-identified by the research team or proposed during the workshop).

Given the context of the pandemic itself, and the cross-country nature of the study, we took several steps to adapt the research tools to local contexts yet maintain cross-case comparability. The data collection instruments were designed centrally by the Mercy Corps research team. All instruments were then refined and adapted to be culturally appropriate and accessible to participants in collaboration with local researchers. The adaptation of tools sought to make the language conflict-sensitive and understandable to respondents with a wide-range of education, literacy, and professional backgrounds.

In addition to diverse understandings of conflict, we also had to contend with and address wide variations in understandings of COVID-19 and the pandemic themselves. Not only were divergent understandings of what COVID-19 is an issue, but in several of the research areas the very existence of the virus was in question. In cases where knowledge of and stance towards COVID-19 might have posed a challenge to data quality, we opted for making reference to timeframes (e.g. “since March”, rather than “since the pandemic started”) to enquire about changes and new dynamics. The research tools, once fully adapted to each case study, were piloted by local researchers with community members from comparable local contexts prior to data collection. The pilot data was evaluated jointly by the Mercy Corps research team and local researchers to make any necessary adaptation and provide feedback on interview and workshop facilitation techniques.

All interviews and workshops began with local researchers reading out a statement that explained the terms of the research and then asking for the participant’s informed consent. All respondents received an oral explanation of the research aims, what would be expected from them (in terms of time commitment and contribution), and guarantees of anonymity in any published documents. Participants were also given a chance to ask about the research project and their involvement. Interviews and workshops were audio recorded only when all participants agreed in advance. Informed consent was obtained orally, to further allay any fears over anonymity and confidentiality. COVID-19 safety protocols were followed in accordance with each research area’s local public health guidance, and generally following the principles of ensuring social distance, good air ventilation, and mask wearing.

We sought to be conflict-sensitive on multiple levels. As detailed above, we were careful with framings of conflict issues in our questions. We were purposefully inclusive and diverse in our range of respondents, to capture the plethora of conflict perspectives and narratives. We also hired teams that were diverse in terms of identity and sex, to further navigate each local area’s idiosyncracies and make respondents comfortable. Where necessary, we segregated participants to avoid workshop flaring up tensions, or to ensure asymmetrical power relations did not prevent respondents from speaking freely. For instance, in Afghanistan all workshops were sex-segregated and those with female respondents were led by female researchers. In addition to confidentiality and anonymity guarantees, we conducted interviews and workshops in locations seen to be safe by both researchers and respondents. We followed contextually appropriate processes to gain acceptance for the research (consulting local leaders, or government officials). Finally, where the risks of conducting research in a given area were too great, we covered the cost for participants to engage in workshops or interviews in safer areas.

Given that remote management was necessary for this research, we also took measures to quality check data in each of the case studies. In Colombia and Nigeria, data were reviewed directly by Mercy Corps staff to check the quality and depth, and provide any interim feedback and course-corrections on the use of the tools. In Afghanistan, given that instances of data fraud are not uncommon, the research consultancy firm used its in-house quality control team, who called participants back to verify the veracity of data. Mercy Corps reviewed all translated data and also provided interim feedback or requests for follow up where necessary.

The analysis of the data was conducted entirely by the Mercy Corps central research team. Once finalized and translated (where necessary), lead researchers were assigned to each of the case studies and to the comparative piece. Data was coded using an emergent codebook using Dedoose. Rather than design a codebook to apply to the data, we allowed categories to emerge from the data and grouped these codes into more generic themes during analysis. The local research teams were consulted iteratively on emergent findings, to be able to capture their impressions and contextual nuance they had gained informally

throughout the fieldwork. Each of the lead researchers drafted the case studies independently, using the data obtained from the field, but also the most relevant secondary sources and literature to triangulate findings. Throughout the process, the central team conducted sessions of comparative analysis, to probe limiting factors and scope conditions of the causal mechanisms identified. Colleagues with technical and contextual expertise from across Mercy Corps reviewed and provided invaluable comments on each of the chapters of this volume.

Interview Tool

Pre-interview script

(* Enumerator instructions: as needed, substitute another event to explain the time frame we are interested in, if it is not appropriate to mention COVID-19).

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Before we begin, I'll explain the aims of this research project and leave some time for any questions you might have. We expect this conversation to take approximately one hour, if that is acceptable to you.

We are conducting research into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the dynamics of conflict. This is a comparative study across 3 countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, and Nigeria.

In the case of [country], we are focusing especially on [regions targeted]. We are currently conducting interviews and community mapping sessions in your [province/state/department], so most of our questions will focus on your knowledge and perception of conflict dynamics in your local context.

The objective of this research project is to contribute to a better understanding of the crisis across diverse stakeholders, to anticipate potential consequences of the crisis for conflict over time, and to inform peacebuilding programming.

We will use the information gathered in these responses to publish reports for each of the separate countries and a comparative report. These reports will be freely available through our website and social media and will be disseminated widely.

We will not make public a list of respondents, so your participation will be confidential. Any of your responses that we quote will refer to your general role, so please indicate how we can refer to you if we quote any of your responses (e.g. "local leader" / "religious leader" / "CSO practitioner").

For convenience and to be able to focus fully on our conversation, I would like to record our conversation. This is completely optional, and any audio would be used purely for transcription and analysis and will **not** be made public at any point.

- Would you prefer not to be recorded, or is audio recording acceptable to you?

Additionally, we will take notes during the session. The notes will only be capturing the general discussion, and will not include any details about the people participating or any other sensitive information. The notes are completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of our research team.

- Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin the interview?

Interview script

(* Enumerator instructions: as needed, substitute another event to explain the time frame we are interested in, if it is not appropriate to mention COVID-19).

1. **Could you list what were key factors driving conflict in and around this local area in the first three months of 2020?**
(*Enumerator instructions: This is getting at the period immediately before the pandemic)

2. **Have there been any shifts in prior conflict dynamics in this local since March of 2020? 35 Minutes**
(*Enumerator instructions: This is getting at the period at any point since the pandemic started up until now)
 - a. Allow interviewee to provide their own responses first. - For any factor they mention, ask if it is directly or indirectly related to the pandemic/or responses by state- or non-state authorities to the pandemic..
 - b. If any of the below are not mentioned by the interviewee initially, ask specifically whether any of these factors have shifted at any point during the pandemic, and whether that shift is directly or indirectly related to the pandemic.

[PRE-IDENTIFIED KEY FACTORS FOR THAT AREA - (see annex 3)]

3. **Have any completely new conflict dynamics emerged in and around this [LGA/municipality/district] since the pandemic began? If so, how are these directly or indirectly linked to the pandemic? 10-15 Minutes**
 - a. Probes (If any of these are not clearly mentioned in responses)
 - i. Have new actors emerged?
 - ii. Have major actors become less important?
 - iii. Have significant crises or conflict incidents happened since March?

4. **Do you know of any efforts in and around this [LGA/municipality/district] that may have been effective in addressing/mitigating some of these new conflict dynamics? 10 Minutes**
 - a. Are there any activities that have not yet been tried, but which you think could be effective?

Participatory mapping workshop facilitation guide

Introductory Script (10 minutes)

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this discussion with us today. My name is _____; it's a pleasure to meet you.

About this research

(*Enumerator instructions: as needed, substitute another event to explain the time frame we are interested in, if it is not appropriate to mention COVID-19).

Before we begin, I'll explain the aims of this research project and leave some time for any questions you might have. We are conducting research into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the dynamics of conflict. This is a comparative study across 3 countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, and Nigeria. In the case of **[country]**, we are focusing on: **[regions targeted]**.

The objective of this research project is to contribute to a better understanding of the crisis across diverse stakeholders, to anticipate potential consequences of the crisis for conflict over time, and to inform peacebuilding programming.

We will use the information gathered in these responses to publish reports for each of the separate countries and a comparative report.

Confidentiality and informed consent

We will not make public a list of respondents, so your participation will be fully anonymous and confidential. For convenience and to be able to focus fully on our conversation, it can be helpful for us to voice record our conversation. This is completely optional, and any audio would be used purely for transcription and analysis and will **not** be made public at any point.

- Would you prefer not to be recorded, or is audio recording acceptable to you? Our priority is that you feel comfortable speaking freely and openly, so please feel free to opt out of the audio recording if you are in any way uncomfortable with this.

Additionally, we will take notes during the session. The notes will only be capturing the general discussion, and will not include any details about the people participating or any other sensitive information. The notes are completely confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of our research team.

- Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

What will this workshop entail?

This workshop will take a maximum of 2 hours. We will discuss as a group what the causes and dynamics of conflict are in your area and how they have changed since March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit **[country]** (*Enumerator instructions: as needed, substitute another event to explain the time frame we are interested in, if it is not appropriate to mention COVID-19).

We are interested in different forms of conflict, depending on what is most relevant in your area; for example, armed conflict; gang/criminal violence; tensions between communities; social unrest. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise, we are interested in hearing a variety of perspectives, so we encourage you to participate actively and to debate (respectfully) with one another.

Throughout the session I'll ask questions to guide the conversation and together we will also generate a map to visualise how these conflict dynamics are related to one another.

Conducting the session

Part I: Validating key factors (20 minutes)

Script: To start, I'd like to ask a couple of general questions for open discussion. As a reminder, we are interested in different forms of conflict and violence, depending on what is most relevant in your area; some examples include , armed conflict; gang/criminal violence; tensions between communities; social unrest, but there may be other types that you can think of as well.

**Enumerator instructions: Limit this free-form discussion from Question 1 to around 10 minutes, as you will be able to get into more detailed discussion in the next session. Take detailed notes of this discussion. For each factor the community brings up, take note of whether this validates a factor from our list, or whether this is a new factor that was not covered from our list.*

1. What have been the most important conflict factors in this area (local or regional level) since March of this year?

Enumerator instructions: Once it seems the participants have finished, ask about any factors that have **not been mentioned from the list below. Limit this discussion to 10 minutes, as you will get into more detail in the next session.*

2. Have any of these (below) factors been important in driving conflict in your community? Which are the most important, and which are not relevant?

[PRE-IDENTIFIED KEY FACTORS FOR THAT AREA - (see annex 3)]

**Before moving to session II, finalise the list of key factors which will be used to create the key factor maps. Add any important new factors mentioned by the community and, if they think any of our pre-identified factors are not important, remove those factors from the list.*

For the next section, prioritize factors which (a) the community has newly identified; and (b) factors from our pre-identified list that the community notes are important. Aim to have around 5-6 prioritized factors.

Part II: Systems mapping [Duration agreed in that country, generally 45-90 minutes]

*(*Enumerator instructions: as needed, substitute another event to explain the time frame we are interested in, if it is not appropriate to mention COVID-19).*

We have now established some of the key conflict factors you've observed in this area since March 2020. We will now try to analyze in further detail the linkages among different factors related to conflict and the pandemic. To do this we will gather each group's feedback/input by using a participatory approach which will allow us to uncover the cause and effect linkages between the different factors influencing conflict and the pandemic's impact on conflict. This process should help us brainstorm not only factors and connections that are very obvious and direct, but also those that are less obvious and less direct.

For this discussion, we will focus not on discussing the history of conflict or general social issues, but specifically on how the conflict has changed in this area since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. I'll start by putting a single factor on the map, and together we will draw out and discuss the causes and consequences of that factor. Then we can gradually expand and move on to discuss and map other factors.

**Enumerator instructions: List of Factors-- Add any new factors that the communities mention which are not on the list below. Remove any factors from the list that they previously mentioned as not very important in their area. Prioritize factors which (a) the community has newly identified; and (b) factors from our pre-identified list that the community notes are more relevant and important.*

Create one map for each Factor, each on a separate flip chart paper. Make sure to carefully manage the time, allowing only 10-15 minutes mapping and discussion for each Factor, so that there is time to get through most of the list. If you are running low on time towards the end, you can ask the participants to select which of the remaining factors are the most important in their area, and focus on those.

Use the Guiding Questions below, and the accompanying instructions, to complete the mapping process for each Factor map.

Prioritized Factors from our Pre-Identified List of Factors [(see annex 3)]:

**Enumerator instructions: List here the prioritized factors from our pre-identified list based on Part I.*

Factor :

Factor :

Factor :

Factor :

New factors raised by the community raised during Part I

Factor :

Factor :

Factor :

Guiding questions (for each Factor):

1. What are the causes of this factor? Do any of these not directly cause this factor, but indirectly? For any indirect causes, what are the factors and connections in between?
(Draw these onto the map with appropriate arrows.)
2. Which of these causes are new, or have changed in strength/level of influence, since the start of the pandemic?
(Highlight or circle new factors in GREEN, and highlight/circle factors that have changed in strength in BLUE. Don't highlight/circle factors that have stayed the same. If you need to use different colors, make sure to note down what each color represents.)
3. What are the consequences or effects of this factor? Are any of these not direct consequences of this factor, but indirect consequences? For any indirect consequences, what are the factors and connections in between?
(Draw these onto the map with appropriate arrows.)
4. Which of these consequences are new, or have changed in strength, since the start of the pandemic?
(Highlight or circle new factors in GREEN, and highlight/circle factors that have changed in strength in BLUE. Don't highlight/circle factors that have stayed the same. If you need to use different colors, make sure to note down what each color represents.)
5. Has the pandemic directly or indirectly caused any of the factors now shown on this map? Be specific - what about the pandemic, or the pandemic response is responsible? How would you draw this on the map?
(Draw on the map with the appropriate arrows, or invite an insightful community member to draw new pandemic-related factors and connections onto the map)
6. Let's take a look at what we've mapped so far. What are other important causes or consequences linked to any of the factors on this map?

**Enumerator instructions: After completing each of the Factor maps, ask the following questions:*

1. We've now mapped out some of the causes and consequences of a range of factors related to changing conflict dynamics and the pandemic. Looking at all of these small maps side by side, do you see any connections between factors on different maps? Are these direct connections, or are there other factors in between?

*(Lay out the maps next to each other. There is **no need** to draw across the maps between related factors, as long as the notes are carefully capturing this.)*

2. Is there anything else important about changes in conflict dynamics since the start of the pandemic that we have not yet discussed? Are there any impacts of the pandemic specifically on conflict that we haven't yet discussed?

(Draw on the map as needed).

3. What in your opinion are the most important factors with the most influence over the conflict overall, since the pandemic started? Why?

(Put a star next to these key factors on the maps).

Pre-identified key conflict factors, by context

Country	Region	Factors
Afghanistan	Kandahar (Urban)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Loss of income/livelihood opportunities since the pandemic started 4. Government mishandling of and corruption in COVID-19 aid distribution 5. Change in presence of returnees since the pandemic started 6. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 7. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 8. Changes in conflicts over natural resources since the pandemic started 9. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started 10. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 11. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 12. Changes in tribal or sectarian conflict since the pandemic started 13. Changes in tensions over support/aid from international community since the pandemic started 14. Changes in tensions over traditional versus. modern values since the pandemic started 15. Changes in tensions around IDP presence since the pandemic started
	Kandahar (Rural)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Change in presence of returnees since the pandemic started 4. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 5. Border closures due to the pandemic 6. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 7. Changes in conflicts over natural resources since the pandemic started 8. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started 9. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 10. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 11. Changes in armed group income-generation tactics (checkpoints, taxes, illicit economic activity) 12. Changes in tensions over traditional versus. modern values since the pandemic started
	Takhar (Urban)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Loss of income/livelihood opportunities since the pandemic started 4. Government mishandling of and corruption in COVID-19 aid distribution 5. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 6. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 7. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started 8. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 9. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 10. Changes in tensions over support/aid from international community since the pandemic started 11. Changes in conflicts over natural resources since the pandemic started

	Takhar (Rural)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 4. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 5. Changes in conflicts over natural resources since the pandemic started 6. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started 7. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 8. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID
	Kabul (Urban)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Loss of income/livelihood opportunities since the pandemic started 4. Government mishandling of and corruption in COVID-19 aid distribution 5. Change in presence of returnees since the pandemic started 6. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 7. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 8. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 9. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 10. Changes in tribal or sectarian conflict since the pandemic started 11. Changes in tensions over support/aid from international community since the pandemic started 12. Challenges to peace process due to the pandemic 13. Changes in linguistic/ethnic prejudice since the pandemic started 14. Changes in tensions over traditional versus. modern values since the pandemic started
	Kabul (Rural)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Loss of income/livelihood opportunities since the pandemic started 4. Government mishandling of and corruption in COVID-19 aid distribution 5. Change in presence of returnees since the pandemic started 6. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 7. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 8. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started 9. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 10. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 11. Changes in tensions over traditional versus. modern values since the pandemic started
	Herat (Urban)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Loss of income/livelihood opportunities since the pandemic started 4. Government mishandling of and corruption in COVID-19 aid distribution 5. Change in presence of returnees since the pandemic started 6. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 7. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 8. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 10. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 11. Changes in tribal or sectarian conflict since the pandemic started 12. Changes in tensions over support/aid from international community since the pandemic started 13. Changes in tensions over traditional versus. modern values since the pandemic started 14. Changes in tensions around IDP presence since the pandemic started
	Herat (Rural)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in criminality due to economic hardship since the pandemic started 2. COVID-19 rumours undermining trust in government 3. Change in presence of returnees since the pandemic started 4. Changes in armed group tactics and influence since the pandemic started 5. Border closures due to the pandemic 6. Changes in justice and service provision by the government since the pandemic started 7. Changes in conflicts over natural resources since the pandemic started 8. Changes in conflict over Shura/CDC elections and actions since the pandemic started 9. Changes in political relationships (within gov, between gov and non-state groups, warlords/strongmen, among non-state groups) related to the pandemic 10. Reduced social cohesion due to COVID-19 stigmatization/different religious beliefs about COVID 11. Changes in tribal or sectarian conflict since the pandemic started 12. Changes in tensions over traditional versus. modern values since the pandemic started 13. Changes in tensions around IDP presence since the pandemic started
Colombia	Catatumbo and Cauca	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Control exerted by illegal armed groups 2. Deficiencies with State social assistance 3. Absence of state security 4. Recruitment of minors into illegal armed groups 5. Weakened social organizations and leaders 6. Challenges to report or verify human rights violations 7. Loss of income 8. Increases in illicit crops and economies 9. Delays with peace process programs
Nigeria	Plateau, Katsina, Kaduna, Adamawa	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Border closures due to pandemic 2. Changes in feelings of insecurity during the pandemic 3. Government mishandling of palliative distributions during the pandemic 4. Changes in access to weapons and ammunition during the pandemic 5. Changes in gender-based violence activities by conflict actors 6. Changes in AOG tactics and recruitment during the pandemic 7. Changes in Government Security Force and vigilante group tactics during the pandemic 8. Changes in crime due to economic hardship 9. Changes in movement patterns for nomadic livelihoods during the pandemic 10. Changes in citizen awareness of rights and activism against the Government during the pandemic 11. Shifts in divisions and relationships between settlers and indigenes in the area during the pandemic 12. (Katsina only) Return of youth from urban to rural areas

	<p>Social Unrest participants (Abuja, Plateau)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes in crime due to economic hardship 2. Government mishandling of palliative distributions during the pandemic 3. Changes in feelings of insecurity during the pandemic 4. Changes in citizen awareness of rights and activism against the Government during the pandemic 5. Youth cohesion to fight for a common cause 6. Increase in use of social media during and after the pandemic 7. Changes in Government Security Force and Vigilante group tactics during and after the lockdown 8. Increase in female participation in activism
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Appendix B: Nigeria Case Study- Glossary of Key Actors and Terms

Term	Working Definition	Related references in interviews
Bandit Groups/ Bandit Gangs	<p><i>Semi-organized</i> criminal organizations with some degree of institutionalization as evidenced by hierarchy and leadership. Active primarily in North West Nigeria. Within our sample, these were found in Katsina State.</p> <p>Bandit groups are considered <i>armed groups</i> in our study and carry out violence as an organization. In a handful of cases, they were described as exerting control over territory.</p> <p>Respondents described these groups as undertaking a wide array of criminal activity, much of which required coordination, such as relatively complex kidnapping schemes, attacks and retribution against communities, leadership changes, inter-bandit group negotiations, and smuggling operations.</p>	Bandits, Kidnappers
Jamā'at Ahl al-Sunnah li Da'wah wa-l-Jihād (JAS) and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)	<p>Formal names for the Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) active in North East Nigeria. Within our sample, these groups were active in Adamawa State.</p> <p>Our data does not differentiate between JAS and ISWAP, as they were typically referred to in general terms (such as AOGs, Boko Haram, insurgents, or militants) in interviews.</p>	Boko Haram, Militants, Insurgents, AOGs
Other criminal groups	Gangs, cults, and criminal youth groups. Unlike the bandits, these groups were not seemingly institutionalized or well armed in the areas within our study, nor were there references to leadership structures. These groups carried out smaller crimes, and tended to be in urban areas.	Gangs, Cults, Robbers, Kidnappers
Vigilantes	<p>Community supported armed actors which provide security over space as a public good. There was no standard procedure for establishing a vigilante group, and there was a wide range of relationships with government security forces—some vigilantes cooperated closely while others competed.</p> <p>Sometimes vigilantes were accused of <i>extorting</i> the community and/or abusing their power (which puts them close to a bandit group or gang), but if this seemed to be a deviation from their core mandate, we do not change their designation.</p> <p>In some cases, vigilantes received support from the government directly, but this was a transfer of goods and payment, not a formal incorporation into the government forces. As such, we retain their separate designation.</p>	Community Police, Yan Sakai, Hunters
Government Security Forces	<p>Any security force directly affiliated with the government.</p> <p>Our data does not differentiate between military and police, as they were typically referred to in general terms in interviews.</p>	Police, SARS, Military, Security Forces, Security Actors
Instability	We use the standard definition of instability, as “the propensity of government collapse... by ‘constitutional’ or ‘unconstitutional’	Social Unrest, Insecurity

	<p>means.” and consider public expressions of anti-government and/or anti-regime sentiment to be related to instability (Alesina et al. 1996)</p> <p>Evidenced by social unrest and/or strong indications that the current government regime is losing legitimacy and trust.</p>	
Activism/Protest	<p>Activities meant to express a political opinion publically in the hopes of generating social change, but which <i>are not</i> excessively deviant, violent, unlawful, or subversive to the current regime.</p>	<p>Peaceful Protests, Mass Protest, Online Organizing, Formation of Civic Groups, Civic Engagement</p>
Social Unrest	<p>The dividing line between activism/protest and social unrest is characterized by a greater degree of social deviance, subversion, and violence. This includes a lack of willingness to work within current political structures, willingness to use violence and destroy property, and generally volatile expressions of anger at the existing systems.</p>	<p>Looting, Riots, Clashes, Mob, Thugs, Skirmishes with Security Forces, Blocking Roads, Violent Protest, Property Damage</p>

Appendix C: Nigeria and Colombia Case Studies- Anonymized Overview of Interviews and Workshops

Nigeria

The table below summarizes the qualitative data for this study, which includes 41 participatory systems analysis workshops, 17 community interviews, 3 expert interviews, and 2 internal workshops with Mercy Corps Nigeria team members. Each row contains information on a single data source and includes an anonymized description for the source which is used in citations throughout the report. Each row also includes some other basic geographic and demographic descriptors for each data source, which are kept broad enough to maintain the anonymity of individual participants.

Cited as	Interview Date	Data Type	Province/State	Urban-Rural	Social Position
Male Workshop 1- Abuja	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Abuja	Urban	Community Members
Female Youth Workshop 1-Abuja	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Abuja	Urban	Community Members
Male Youth Workshop 3- Abuja	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Abuja	Urban	Community Members
Community Tribal Leader-Abuja	Jan-21	KII	Abuja	Urban	Local Leader
Male Workshop 4-Abuja	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Abuja	Urban	Community Members
Security Analyst/Practitioner	Dec-20	KII	Adamawa	N/A	Expert
Female Youth Workshop 1-Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Urban	Community Members
Male Youth Workshop 2-Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Urban	Community Members
Religious Leader 1- Adamawa	Jan-21	KII	Adamawa	Rural	Religious Leader

Male Youth Workshop 3- Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Rural	Community Members
Female Workshop 4-Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Rural	Community Members
Male Workshop 5-Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Rural	Community Members
Female Workshop 6- Michika	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Rural	Community Members
Male Workshop 7 Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Urban	Community Members
Female Workshop 9-Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Rural	Community Members
CSO Leader-Adamawa	Jan-21	KII	Adamawa	Rural	Civil Society Leader
Male Workshop 8-Adamawa	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Adamawa	Rural	Community Members
Village Head- Kaduna	Jan-21	KII	Kaduna	Rural	Local Leader
Male Herder Workshop 1- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Rural	Community Members
Male CSO Leaders- Kaduna	Jan-21	KII	Kaduna	Rural	Civil Society Leader
Female Workshop 2- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Rural	Community Members
Religious Leader- Kaduna	Jan-21	KII	Kaduna	Urban	Religious Leader
Male Herder Workshop 3- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Urban	Community Members
Male Youth Workshop 1- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Urban	Community Members

Female Youth Workshop 2- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Urban	Community Members
Male Workshop 3- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Urban	Community Members
Female Youth Workshop 4- Kaduna	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Kaduna	Urban	Community Members
Community Youth Leader	Jan-21	KII	Kaduna	Urban	Civil Society Leader
Male Youth Civil Society Leader- Kaduna	Jan-21	KII	Kaduna	Urban	Civil Society Leader
Researcher	Dec-20	KII	Katsina	N/A	Expert
Male Workshop #1- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Female Workshop 2- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Civil Society Leader-Katsina	Jan-21	KII	Katsina	Rural	Civil Society Leader
Male Youth Workshop 3- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Female Youth Workshop 4-Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Female Civil Society Leader- Katsina	Jan-21	KII	Katsina	Urban	Civil Society Leader
Male Youth Workshop 5- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Urban	Community Members
Female Youth Workshop 6- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Urban	Community Members
Fulani Chief- Katsina	Jan-21	KII	Katsina	Rural	Local Leader

Male Workshop #7 Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Female Workshop 10- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Male Workshop 9- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Female Youth Workshop 11- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Urban	Community Members
Female Workshop 8- Katsina	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Katsina	Rural	Community Members
Mercy Corps Nigeria Internal Workshop 1	Dec-20	Workshop Notes	National	N/A	Civil society staff
Mercy Corps Nigeria Internal Workshop 2	Apr-21	Workshop Notes	National	N/A	Civil Society Staff
Academic Researcher	Dec-20	KII	Plateau	N/A	Expert
Male Civil Society Leader- Plateau	Jan-21	KII	Plateau	Rural	Civil Society Leader
Male Herders Workshop 1-Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Rural	Community Members
Female Workshop 2- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Rural	Community Members
Female Civil Society Leader- Plateau	Jan-21	KII	Plateau	Rural	Civil Society Leader
Male Farmer Workshop 1- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Rural	Community Members
Female Workshop 2 - Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Rural	Community Members
Male Youth Leader 1- Plateau	Jan-21	KII	Plateau	Urban	Civil Society Leader

Male Youth Workshop 2- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Urban	Community Members
Male Youth Leader 2- Plateau	Jan-21	KII	Plateau	Urban	Civil Society Leader
Female Workshop 3- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Urban	Community Members
Community Leader-Urban-Plateau	Jan-21	KII	Plateau	Urban	Local Leader
Youth Urban Workshop- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Urban	Community Members
Youth Urban Male Workshop 3- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Urban	Community Members
Male Youth Urban Workshop 1- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Urban	Community Members
Female Youth Urban Workshop 1- Plateau	Jan-21	Workshop Notes	Plateau	Urban	Community Members
Female Urban Civil Society Leader- Plateau	Jan-21	KII	Plateau	Urban	Civil Society Leader

COLOMBIA

The table below summarizes the qualitative data for Colombia, which includes 22 participatory systems analysis workshops, 25 interviews, and 1 internal workshop with Mercy Corps Colombia team members. Each row contains information on a single data source and includes an anonymized description for the source which is used in citations throughout the report. Each row also includes some other basic descriptors for each data source, which are kept broad enough to maintain the anonymity of individual participants.

Cited As	Date	Data Type	Region	Urban-Rural
I1 - Female government official, Catatumbo	22/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Urban
I2 - Female civil society leader, Catatumbo	23/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Rural
I3 - Female civil society leader, Catatumbo	20/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
I4 - Female civil society leader, Cauca	02/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I5 - Female civil society leader, Cauca	29/01/2021	Interview	Cauca	Rural
I6 - Female expert, Cauca	04/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Rural
I7 - Female civil society leader, Cauca	04/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Rural
I8 - Female civil society leader, Cauca	05/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I9 - Female Afro-Colombian leader, Cauca	02/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I10 - Female expert, recruitment of minors	15/12/2020	Interview	National	Urban
I11 - Male municipal official, Catatumbo	28/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Rural
I12 - Female expert, Catatumbo	21/12/2020	Interview	Catatumbo	Urban
I13 - Male youth civil society leader, Catatumbo	28/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Rural

I14 - Female civil society leader, Cauca	12/01/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I15 - Male civil society leader, Cauca	03/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I16 - Male civil society leader, Cauca	05/02/2021	Interview	Cauca	Rural
I17 - Male expert, peace and conflict	14/12/2020	Interview	National	Urban
I18 - Male municipal official, Catatumbo	30/12/2020	Interview	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
I19 - Male government official, Catatumbo	03/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Urban
I20 - Male expert, Cauca	05/01/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I21 - Male expert, Cauca	06/01/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I22 - Male civil society leader, Cauca	12/01/2021	Interview	Cauca	Urban
I23 - Male civil society leader, Catatumbo	21/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Urban
I24 - Male youth civil society leader, Catatumbo	21/01/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Rural
I25 - Male municipal official, Catatumbo	19/02/2021	Interview	Catatumbo	Rural
Not cited	23/11/2020	Mercy Corps Workshop	National	Urban
W1 - Female, Catatumbo	13/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Rural
W2 - Mixed, Cauca	26/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Peri-urban
W3 - Female Afro-Colombian youth, Cauca	25/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural

W4 - Female civil society leaders, Cauca	27/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural
W5 - Female indigenous, Cauca	27/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural
W6 - Mixed, farmers, Cauca	26/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural
W7 - Mixed, Catatumbo	06/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
W8 - Mixed, Catatumbo	16/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
W9 - Mixed, Cauca	26/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Peri-urban
W10 - Mixed, Catatumbo	13/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
W11 - Mixed, Catatumbo	13/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
W12 - Mixed, Catatumbo	06/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Peri-urban
W13 - Mixed, Catatumbo	12/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Rural
W14 - Mixed, Catatumbo	12/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Rural
W15 - Mixed, Catatumbo	13/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Rural
W16 - Mixed, youth, Catatumbo	13/02/2021	Participatory Workshop	Catatumbo	Rural
W17 - Female, Cauca	25/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Peri-urban
W18 - Mixed, Cauca	25/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural
W19 - Mixed, Cauca	26/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural

W20 - Mixed, Cauca	26/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Urban
W21 - Mixed, Cauca	27/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Rural
W22 - Mixed, Cauca	25/01/2021	Participatory Workshop	Cauca	Peri-urban

Appendix D: Nigeria Case Study- Detailed Assessment of Findings and Level of Evidence

Introduction-Analytic Approach

We approach the claims about strength of evidence made in this case study (Chapter 2 of the full report) through Bayesian reasoning, following current practice in qualitative and mixed-methods research in political science and other disciplines (Beach and Pedersen 2019). As our study is qualitative, our current level of abstraction, in which we are examining a large number of nested sub-cases within the larger country-case, and examining the interplay of 11 categories, each with underlying complexity (i.e. having cross-current effects and at times inter-related), we have tended towards an informal incorporation of Bayesian reasoning in our analysis. Our approach is a hybrid between process tracing, comparative case study analysis, and qualitative systems analysis (Homer and Oliva 2001, Beach and Pedersen 2019). The published account of the three pathways connecting COVID-19 and conflict in this study and the companion reports in this series should be thought of as a nascent middle-range theory (Cartwright 2020).

In contrast to pure process tracing (which solely uses within-case logic), our study also leverages a comparative sub-case approach to uncover the mediating factors which tended to block, abet, or transform different causal pathways described. This is accomplished by combining close intra-case readings and process-tracing using the different communities we engaged in data collection. This 'comparativist logic of elimination', uses similarities or differences between cases to explain variations in outcomes, alongside direct accounts from respondents for why certain processes did not take place (e.g. certain interviewees in Katsina Town explain why EndSARS protests did not take place in their urban area.).³

While we avoid formally stating our priors for each causal link or exhaustively laying out the theoretical and empirical certainty and uniqueness of evidence, we do attempt to address these in summary form in a way intended to make understandable and transparent the process by which we weighed evidence and incorporated it into the causal mapping that we present in the published case study. For each causal link, the discussion in this appendix includes: 1) a description of the evidence found for each linkage (by necessity of space this will be a summary of evidence and a description of *how* the linkage operates), and 2) the determination of the 'strength of evidence' based on a three tier system (limited evidence, moderate evidence, and strong evidence) which is mirrored in the summary graphics. This system is meant to provide guidance for readers to rationally update their own beliefs based on the relative strength of the data provided.

Given our non-random sampling, our analysis is conservative with regard to quantification and avoids providing direct counts or statistics based on qualitative coding. Instead, we provide estimates of the magnitude of causal linkages, operating sub-mechanisms, and guidance on mediating co-variables which lead to the presence or absence of the effect in specific cases (based on both frequency of being found and causal connections embedded in the data). This decision explicitly avoids quantification of qualitative coding (e.g. this or that pattern was found in 17 of the 58 responses, etc.) and relies instead on a more holistic

³ This deductive logic is not possible using process tracing alone.

analysis by the researchers, which incorporates triangulation by corroboration and commonality of patterns between cases with direct interpretation of narrative embedded in the coded excerpts of the raw data. We pursue this approach due to the semi-standardized nature of the interviews and focus groups, which yielded sometimes quite distinctive interview patterns depending on the ways in which the interviewers allowed the respondent(s) to bring up topics not directly associated with the prompting question and allowed different levels of depth and lengths of interviews.

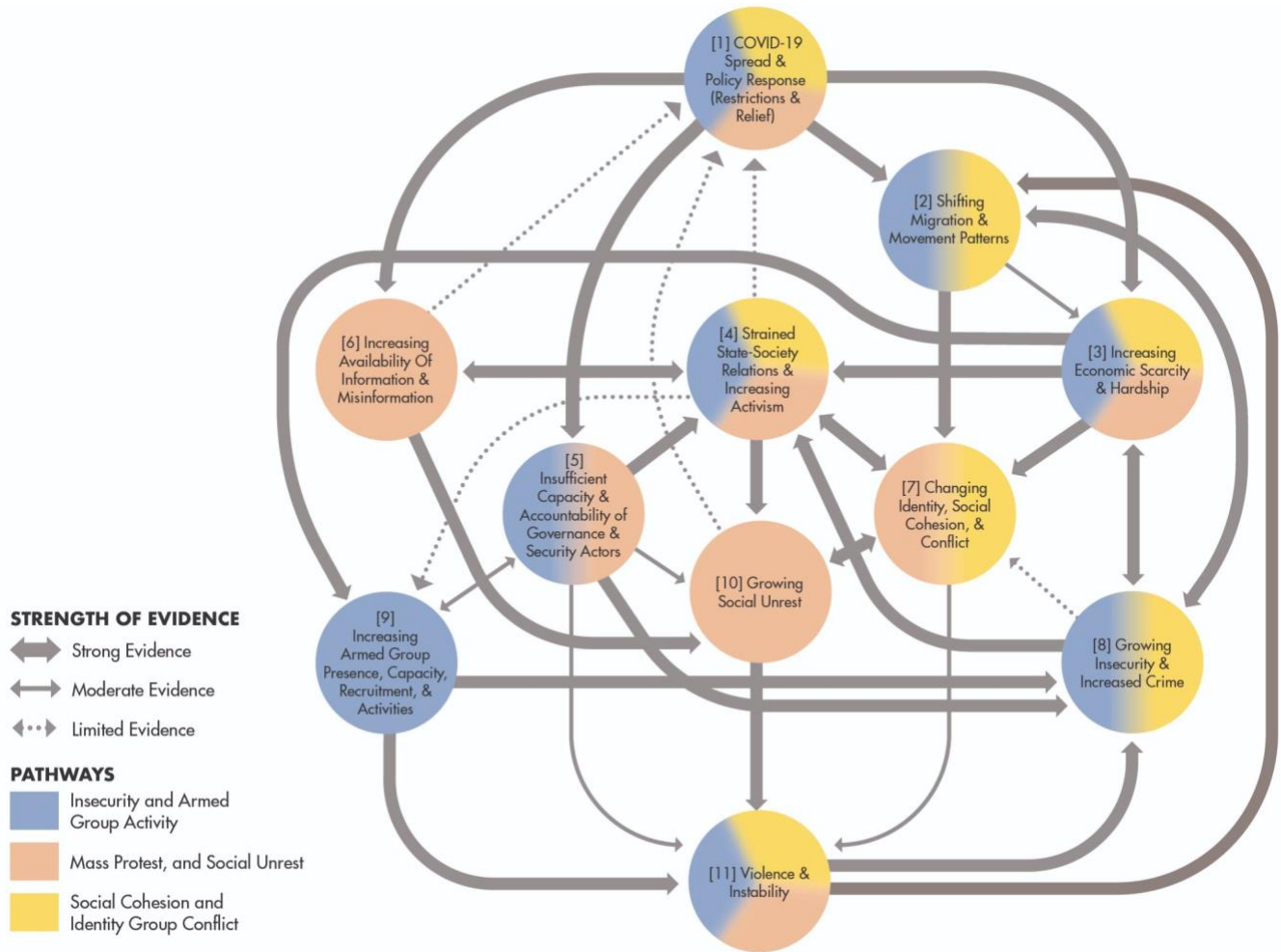
Additionally, while sampling was fairly balanced between states (ranging from 12-17 KIIs or FGDs for the four states respectively—excluding the FCT region, which had 5 KIIs or FGDs), the co-variable characteristics within each state are not balanced (ranging from 18% urban in Adamawa to 67% urban in Kaduna). Given this lack of balance and the quite small interview sample per state, even using normalized statistics averaged across descriptors would be quite sensitive to small variances.

Given this, the researchers take into account aggregated coding frequency and other descriptive statistics between states to identify ‘hotspots’ of variation between geographic or other moderating variables (such as urban/rural, gender, and age). This then served as a weak signal for further investigation during analysis. If, in exploring the interviews directly and more carefully comparing the underlying sampling, the relationship was substantiated through repetition of the phenomena and/or mechanism, it has been included in the main report and the detailed analysis (below). However, we often dropped or changed initial impressions from a quantitative measure after exploring the narrative patterns in the data further. Even still, we caution that our approach is best suited for uncovering (or confirming) the operation of mechanisms in the country and regions and also detailing how these mechanisms function. While we also include findings about the magnitude of effect and generalizability outside of our non-random sample, these should be considered suggestive and preliminary until broader and more representative data collection and analysis can be conducted.

As a caveat, the assessment of the strength of evidence underlying each of the findings in this study will inevitably include biases from the researchers embedded in their own theoretical priors, limitations of contextual knowledge and triangulation, and weaknesses in the data’s trustworthiness and relationship with the hypothesized causal mechanisms. Our aim is that by providing an open account of our thinking, we will welcome challenges and updates to our inferences and hypotheses, which will allow for the evolution of these arguments and future accumulation of theory and evidence through engagement with other sources of data and competing explanations.

Assessment and Justification of Level of Evidence by Causal Link

The structure of the following matches directly to the nomenclature and design of the causal map displayed in Figure 2 of Chapter 2 in the report text (page 37- reprinted below for reference). Given no natural, ordinal ordering for connections across multiple pathways, and the non-linearity of loops within the causal map, we rely on a convention of prioritizing top-to-bottom, right to left for the ordering. Additionally, we signify the direction of causal linkages as either uni-directional (>) or flowing both directions (<>). We do not break out the explanation by direction, but both directions are addressed in the discussion.



Summary of Categories Explaining Connections between COVID-19 and Conflict in Nigeria

Causal Link:

[1] COVID-19 Spread & Policy Response (Restrictions and Relief) > [2] Shifting Migration & Movement Patterns

Causal Link 1 > 2: Description of Evidence

Migration/movement shifts directly due to COVID-19 Spread & Response was largely observed through 1) restrictions on nomadic group movement and 2) limited movement over both domestic state borders and international borders.

Nomadic herders were reportedly given some allowances from the government for movement during lockdown, but even so, they often had to adjust their routes—rather than totally cease movement—to comply with government ordinances or increased fear from communities. In some cases, this hindered their ability to find adequate grazing area and water for their herds and to access markets along their normal routes. The shift in movement of pastoralist groups was almost entirely observed in rural areas, in the states Kaduna, Katsina, Plateau, and Adamawa—in those areas in which Fulani pastoralists are active. Pastoralists often were required to limit their movement and/or change their migration route, which had a number of consequences in later causal links.

Respondents noted that both internal state borders and international borders were consistently closed for long stretches of the pandemic, leading to a number of issues in later causal links. This was most keenly felt in communities alongside major borders, when the movement of goods and people over the border was a part of regular economic life.

The data also demonstrated a conspicuous absence of widespread urban to rural migration, or international returnees, which was expected prior.⁴ As discussed below, this is likely due to the perception of rural areas as becoming increasingly insecure during the pandemic. Regarding few international economic returnees, respondents did not specify why this was largely absent, but potentially it is due to a lack of strong economies in the neighboring states to Nigeria, which would attract workers from Nigeria and then force their return.^{5,6}

Causal Link 1 > 2: Strength of Evidence

We find well-substantiated evidence that this linkage does operate in at least three manners (changing herder movement patterns, daily movement shifts, and border closure). This effect is well corroborated and

⁴ There were only a handful of instances of urban to rural migration due to COVID-19 lockdown in urban areas. This was due to a transition to rural farming during urban lockdowns, general job loss, and a perception that rural areas offered more freedoms from unpleasant COVID-19 measures (such as stay-at-home orders, etc.).

⁵ This pattern of returnees from nearby states with higher work opportunities was a common pattern found in the Afghanistan data (with reported returnees largely from Iran and Pakistan) from this study, and from an unpublished Myanmar study (with reported returnees largely from Thailand and somewhat from China) on COVID-19's effects on local governance conducted by Mercy Corps.

⁶ Nigeria borders Benin, Niger, and Cameroon. Despite a sharp economic decline from 2014-2017, Nigeria's GDP per capita remains far larger than those neighboring states. (World Bank 2021)

consistently stated across all three types. *However*, we found a conspicuous absence of migration driven by COVID-19 directives, a marked shift from our expectation.

Taken together, we hold this linkage with strong confidence, with the clarification that this was largely about restricting the movement of people who otherwise would have travelled, but there was no a large amount of migration generated (unlike in other countries, where returnees from other states and/or countries were common due to COVID-19 restrictions).

Though we find **strong evidence** that movement of populations was affected by COVID-19 spread and response, we do change our understanding of the *type* of migration and movement patterns shifted. Whereas before the study, we anticipated there being international returnees and urban-to-rural flight due to lockdown affecting wage earners in urban areas, we did not find strong evidence of either international returnees or urban to rural movement (besides a small handful of accounts in Katsina).

Causal Link: **[2] Shifting Migration & Movement Patterns >** **[7] Changing Identity, Social Cohesion, and Conflict**

Causal Link 2 > 7: Description of Evidence

There are three underlying causes of migration which later led changes in cohesion and conflict levels between identity groups. The first is the COVID-19 lockdown effects, which limited and/or changed the movement of pastoralists.⁷ The second is an increase in insecurity and crime, especially in rural areas, leading to a movement towards safer, urban areas.⁸ Finally, the third are IDP groups from violent conflicts.⁹ In all these cases, we find that ethnic identity is the most fundamental cleavage along which conflict between identity groups is activated—co-ethnics were rarely able to mobilize coherent conflicts at the community-level along secondary identity cleavages— however, this ethnic identity typically overlaps with some other cleavage such as religious, herder-farmer, or settler-indigene. Thus, a Hausa-Fulani conflict would be between co-religionists, but also herder-farmer, while Atyap-Hausa would be across religion, ethnicity, and settler-indigene. The most common *intra-ethnic* effect was a lack of cohesion and social capital within the group, as migrants leveraged their identity-based ties through requests for generosity, both at the family and wider community level, generating resentment when it was refused or reluctantly provided.

Starting with the first type of movement, there are multiple accounts from both Katsina and Plateau State that Fulani pastoralists shifted their movement patterns due to COVID, and this led to related conflict along identity cleavages in many (though not all) cases. One aspect of this was herder-farmer conflict over cattle eating crops, especially while farmers were on lockdown and had poor access to their land the Fulani and farmers reported instances of cattle straying and eating crops. While accounts agreed that crop eating occurred, both the extent of this intrusion and the responsibility to pay damages (and how much) were typically contested. In many cases, there were cycles of grievance including increased tension, and sometimes violence. Besides being destructive to farmland, Fulani herders were very often perceived by respondents from farming communities as being prone to violence, banditry, and being aggressively armed.

⁷ As discussed in causal link [1] > [2]

⁸ As discussed in causal link [3] <> [8]

⁹ As discussed in causal link [11] > [2]

Especially in Katsina, Fulani (and specifically Bororo Fulani) were accused of smuggling light weapons into Nigeria, as their routes cross international borders. Fulani accounts themselves did not dispute that *some* of their co-ethnics did participate in these criminal activities, but felt that broad stereotypes about Fulanis were unfounded and unfair.

In many communities, Fulani interviewees felt they were being discriminated against for the action of some of their co-ethnics. In Batsari, Katsina State for instance, a local vigilante group reportedly refused to allow Fulani to participate in the market, viewing their ethnicity as predisposing them to criminality. On the other hand, in a few instances, movement changes induced by pandemic restrictions led to increased social cohesion, such as between the Irigwe and Fulani in Bassa Maraban Dare Plateau State. In this case, the lockdown opened grazing pastures for the Fulani, allowing them to stay longer without needing to pass by farmland, and this also increased the amount of interaction and trading between the ethnic Irigwe community and Fulani herders.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the ‘on-net’ effect of this was portrayed as negative for inter-group cohesion.

The second type of movement, rural to urban migration due to insecurity and perceived threat in rural areas, was seen most prominently in Katsina. However, Kaduna and Adamawa also had multiple incidents of urban migration due to increased crime and banditry in rural areas, often attributed to the economic desperation of actors driven to these activities. This movement was often of family members seeking refuge with their urban relatives or friends, and had less of clear identity cleavage. Instead, the newcomers were perceived as contributing to overpopulation, driving up the price of goods, and leading to increased crime due to their lack of economic prospects. The degradation of social cohesion, then, mostly took place within families, identity groups, and also at the general community level, in which people felt less trusting of others and perceived higher risk of theft and other crimes.¹¹

Finally, the third type of movement was IDPs, usually from violence initially driven by identity-based conflicts (typically set-off by competition for resources or farmer-herder conflicts). This is a movement of populations who have faced direct attacks (rather than more distributed insecurity due to bandits). Likely due to the overlap of violence and insecurity from the previous movement type, the pattern is again a very high rate in Katsina due to organized bandit attacks on rural areas and multiple instances of ethnic conflicts between Hausa, Fulani, and Atyap ethnic groups, all leading to an influx of IDPs into towns. In Kaduna, an Atyap-Fulani conflict drove displacement in 2020 alongside a broader influx of IDPs in Laduga, due to unspecified conflicts.¹² In contrast to migration due to insecurity, IDPs tended to be from out-groups, and they relied on the generosity of the community, rather than specific social ties. Nonetheless, the grievances are very similar, with accusations of increased economic and land strain in the community and perceived increases in crime. These out-group IDPs are sometimes seen as ‘settlers’ and are negatively associated with bringing in outside customs and cultures. In other cases, IDP groups are sometimes accused of being disguised AG

¹⁰ **Female Workshop 2- Plateau**

¹¹ *Members of the rural areas that were ransacked from their homes, came with the hope to find succor and support from family members in the urban locations in the same dire and maybe even in a difficult condition, leaving both rural and urban populations at risk of crime and violence to survive. You know, once you have a hungry man, then you also have an angry man. Civil Society Leader-Katsina*

¹² **Male Herder Workshop 1- Kaduna**

bandits, looking to gain information and recruit, leading to an increase in distrust between host and IDP communities.¹³

Causal Link 2 > 7: Strength of Evidence

Though the combination of causes leading to migration varied by state, all states reported high rates of at least one of the above migration and identity-group dynamics. Additionally—while the facts of each conflict are contested—the increase in conflict itself and decreases in social cohesion itself are widely corroborated across multiple accounts, states, and communities. These findings strengthen our belief in the effect of movement on identity groups, social cohesion, and conflict, and show that it operates in a variety of circumstances in Nigeria.

We find strong **strong evidence** for this linkage, which confirms our prior belief that the movement of populations increases tension between and within identity groups.¹⁴

Additionally, we update our understanding of identity conflicts by noting that within our sample, ethnic identity seems to be the most fundamental group-level identity, and religious, farmer-herder, and settler/IDP-indigene cleavages typically map onto this fundamental cleavage. We also confirm that movement of populations which share identity (i.e. intra-group identity) can increase tension and decrease cohesion if those populations are competing for limited resources or migrants are seen as a drain on community resources and generosity.

Causal Link: [2] Shifting Migration & Movement Patterns <> [8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime

Causal Link 8 <> 2: Description of Evidence

We find corroborated and consistent evidence that bandits, armed groups, and other criminal groups in rural areas of Nigeria are increasing their activities. This is driving an exodus from highly rural areas, where security forces and vigilantes struggle to penetrate, and where other armed actors most freely operate. This contribution of criminal violence to migration connection is most strongly found in Katsina State, while moderately less in Adamawa and Kaduna State, and none at all in Plateau State.¹⁵

Perceptions of an increase in criminality were ubiquitous in the data collected, this included both non-violent property crimes and violent crime. Only the latter type was responsible for this connection however: widespread increase in violent bandit and AG activity which threatened farmers and villages in rural areas. These crimes were most common in rural areas because formal security forces and vigilantes often failed to provide adequate security to villagers and farmers. Though respondents were not clear about the ‘tipping point’ which determined the decision to migrate due to these threats, it seemed due to a general increase in

¹³ *There are also cases of bandit recruitment of Hausa youths who disguise as IDPs to source for information and provide the bandits with the information. Female Workshop 10- Katsina*

¹⁴ (Sloan and Sheely 2020), (Lichtenheld 2021)

¹⁵ Adamawa was the only state which reported significant AOG activity, and in this pathway, they were largely attributed to the changes in movement.

violent threat perception. Kidnapping and violent crimes were certainly occurring prior to COVID, but decidedly worsened as the pandemic dragged on. Though there were multiple corroborating accounts in *rural* areas across all states, these accounts were most intense— as judged by the number of references, qualitatively describing magnitude, and brutality of action—in Katsina State. In Katsina, a complex array of poorly organized bandit groups were consistently referred to as terrorizing the areas. Due to this intensity, Katsina also reported the highest rural to urban migration due to insecurity at the highest rates.

This activity itself was reportedly driven by economic deprivation and a decrease in the security force's ability to control rural areas, sometimes attributed to security forces being stretched due to COVID-19 enforcement. Though economic deprivation drove people into banditry and armed groups, the motivation for the actions once joined seemed to be both economic and about exerting power—often these groups would burn property and terrorize populations in addition to theft, kidnapping, and extortion. Security forces in rural areas are widely seen (across all states) as being under-resourced both in manpower and weaponry in comparison to the AGs. Vigilante groups, again across all states, formed and outfitted to combat this, but there are limitations for vigilantes attempting to protect rural areas compared to denser, urban ones. Because of this, populations moved to more densely populated towns and cities to avail themselves of these protections. In contrast, while Plateau State *did* report an increase in violent crime and kidnapping, the level of terrorization and brutality was notably less, and respondents were less despairing about the ability of security and vigilante groups to respond.

In Katsina and Adamawa states especially, these violent acts were often described as targeting women and children, notably sexual violence or claiming of females for forced marriage¹⁶. This led to some households deciding to send only their female members away for safety, while males remained to watch over farmland. Another commonly described threat was kidnapping with requests for ransom to the family, and the fear that current community members were willing to act as informants for armed groups. Due to these threats, villages and farmers described being afraid to move freely and having to be constantly vigilant of potential attacks and kidnapping by these groups—often self-limiting travel to farms or not leaving their home at night. As the security situation worsened, certain households decided to migrate.

In Katsina, the legal system is widely seen as unable to control violence in rural areas and even when perpetrators are successfully arrested, respondents strongly criticized police for corruptly letting perpetrators free in short order, further emboldening criminal actors. Given the self-reported nature of these repeated accounts, we cannot confirm whether actual corruption or negligence led to releases (or something less nefarious, such as lack of evidence or some other procedural reason). Regardless of the reason, this pattern further diminishes community members' trust in the formal justice system. This lack of trust in both the security and legal systems drove families (in whole or part) to migrate to areas with better protection.

Finally, we note that communities and the government were not idle in this situation, and both actors attempted to provide general security to populations, with mixed effect. In Katsina, these efforts were largely reported to have failed in rural areas, with security forces and vigilantes alike being outgunned and overwhelmed. However, in Kaduna, security forces were reportedly more present and active in communities such as Laduga, leading to better security outcomes, and less migration. Similarly in Adamawa, a village town recently attacked by AOGs (referenced as Boko Haram in our dataset) (Madagali) received additional

¹⁶ This [kidnapping] resulted in more women leaving their local communities as they're the most affected targets. Many have fled their homes to safer communities. **Male Workshop #1- Katsina**

security personnel, who seemed to successfully coordinate with local informants and government supported vigilantes to prevent future attacks¹⁷.

*Turning to the opposite causal direction, flowing from migration to increased crime, we uncover a very distinctive pattern.*¹⁸ Here, migration to urban areas does reportedly increase crime, but this is by-and-large petty crime in urban areas, driven by desperation. As discussed above in causal link [2] > [7], some of these migrants (which could be considered IDPs depending on circumstance) were also accused of operating as informants for armed groups and kidnappers. Separately, the Fulani groups described at length above, were reportedly responsible for certain property and violent crimes in rural areas. Yet, in both accounts of migrants driving petty crime, and nomadic groups driving both violent and petty crime, the veracity and magnitude of these claims are difficult to judge. Property crime especially is relatively less observable than migration, and out-groups and poor populations are very commonly scapegoated for increased crime. Thus, we cannot take the corroborating accounts of migrants driving crime at full face value, likewise reports of migrants serving as informants. In no interviews did any group identify as migrants *and* state that they (or migrants they personally knew) were involved in these crimes. We also recognize that these migrant patterns are co-occurring with COVID-19's impact as an economic shock, potentially allowing respondents to conflate—in whole or in part—crime due to increased economic desperation generally with the arrival of groups. In the end, we find that the repeated logic behind this connection (that migrant populations with diminished earning potential may lead to increased crime) likely has validity in certain circumstances, though triangulation with outside data sources would be needed to make a strong causal claim about the circumstances in which this occurs and the magnitude of effect.

Causal Link 8 <> 2: Strength of Evidence

These findings strongly corroborate the expected existence of migration due to increased insecurity, and we note this connection as **strong evidence**. However, we also clarify the pattern of what type of criminality and insecurity is driving this movement: typically, it is insecurity due to violence by organized armed groups, and movement primarily occurs when trust in the government and community's ability to manage the violence decreases. We also note that this pathway is largely driven by rural to urban migration in Katsina State, with smaller effects in Kaduna and Adamawa.

As noted above, the key mediators of this were the ability for security actors to credible control space and provide families with a sense of security from violence. Best results were found when government security forces collaborated with local actors.

*Turning to the opposite causal direction, flowing from migration to increased crime, we find corroborating claims about economically vulnerable migrants fleeing from violence and nomadic groups leading to increase in criminality. Besides the repetition of these accusations across states, there is little detailed evidence about this, danger of conflation with alternate explanations, and there is significant danger that out-groups are potentially being scapegoated. Thus, we hold this causal pathway as **weak evidence**.*

¹⁷ As will be discussed later, these vigilante groups and security forces themselves abused power and were predatory in some cases, but this did not lead to the type of displacement which uncontrolled banditry and AG attacks seemed to.

¹⁸ Note that here, migrants include both the groups displaced by violence and the nomadic groups which shifted movement patterns due to COVID-19 restrictions, in causal link [1] > [2].

Causal Link: [2] Shifting Migration & Movement Patterns > [3] Increased Economic Scarcity & Hardship

Causal Link 2 > 3: Description of Evidence

We find two main types of shifting populations related to increased economic scarcity and hardship: first, shifts to nomadic group migration patterns discussed in causal link [1] > [2] and second populations which are fleeing insecurity and violence, as described in causal link [8] <> [2] and causal link [11] > [2]. Nomadic groups affected by the COVID-19 restrictions directly were somewhat negatively affected economically, but this was situational, depending on the grazing available on their new route, and the extent to which their access to markets was changed. However, IDPs and those fleeing insecurity typically had a negative economic impact on their host communities—at least reportedly and in the short term—as they put pressure on natural resources, local markets, and represented a drain on assets for families and co-ethnics who were appealed to for generosity. These negative patterns were found in Adamawa, Katsina, and Kaduna, with very little in Plateau, as this area had minimal IDP movement, as described in causal link [8] <> [2].

In the case of nomadic groups, Fulani nomads were *sometimes* economically harmed, both because they were not able to move along their normal cattle routes to access pastures and water and, in other instances, because they were not able to reach markets to sell their goods, such as dairy products. However, this effect was quite situational and depended on the geography and communities the herders encountered. For instance, in Plateau State, the lockdown benefited the herder groups near Bassa Maraban Dare, as they were given access to new fertile grazing land, allowing them to avoid the need to travel. Staying longer in this area also allowed them to better penetrate the local market, increasing their trade.

Groups fleeing violence were described as having a more monotonously negative impact on economic activity in the areas they arrive. The most common pattern, occurring in corroborated accounts in Adamawa, Katsina, and Kaduna were Fulani herders fleeing ethnic violence in Adamawa were re-situated on an inadequate area of infertile land, forcing them to break restrictions and risk infringement on private farmland for grazing. In Katsina and Kaduna, the urban areas *to which* rural populations fled, very commonly complained of both the drain on assets represented by co-ethnics and/or IDP groups, which were typically afforded generosity by the local population, but this process was becoming unsustainable for communities and families—for instance, Kachia Laduga, the allocation of land for farming and herding to IDPs was becoming difficult owing to the high number of applicants. More generally, communities complained of overcrowding and strain on local resources as a result of these newcomers.¹⁹

¹⁹ While we had an expectation that economic returnees and/or migrants would result from the COVID-19 lockdowns, creating both urban to rural migration and international returnees, this was largely absent in the data. Thus we did not include it in the map. There were very few international, economic returnees from neighboring countries (due to expulsion of Nigerian nationals working in those countries or their due to diminished work opportunity). Likewise, there were much fewer than expected domestic economic migrants/returnees, such as flight from urban areas (with strict lockdowns and large job loss) to rural hometown areas. There were only a few reports in Katsina of youth returnees from urban areas to their village homes, but this was rare. A reason given was that rural areas were viewed as unsafe (even more so during COVID-driven banditry and insecurity), so returnees were unlikely to flee to their

Causal Link 2 > 3: Strength of Evidence

Here, again, we more clarify and sharpen our understanding of causal dynamics, rather than strongly shift our prior. There was a prior belief that COVID-related migration would disrupt economic patterns and cause hardship and/or scarcity, and this is the pattern we found. We find **moderate evidence** that migration increases economic hardship and scarcity. Moreover, we now posit that disruption of economic systems due to migration was largely felt through lack of access to markets or herder movement, which had mixed but overall negative effects. We also found strong evidence that vulnerable populations moving due to insecurity and/or violence—often ultimately driven by COVID-19 related effects—were serious strains on host communities, increasing widespread perceptions of scarcity.

Causal Link:

[1] COVID-19 Spread & Policy Response (Restrictions and Relief) > [3] Increased Economic Scarcity & Hardship

Causal Link 1 > 3: Description of Evidence

It is difficult to overstate the economic damage of the COVID-19 response to Nigeria's economy. The COVID-19 response included substantial periods of complete lockdown—often re-occurring in response to increasing rates of infections—and other restrictions such as curfew and travel restrictions. These restrictions were most strictly enacted in denser, urban areas, which were also the areas with the largest wage-earning (and therefore vulnerable) populations, which had lower access to subsistence farming. Rural areas suffered significant economic setbacks as well, due to the closure of markets, bans on movement (and trade) across national and state borders, and an inability to travel to farms. Moreover, COVID-19 represented both a demand and supply shock at all levels of the economy. The collapse in wage earning led to less capital to purchase from sellers, and simultaneously, sellers were less able to produce goods, making them more scarce (and therefore more valuable).

Compounding these demand/supply effects, COVID-19 movement restrictions limited the movement of goods across both internal and international borders, further driving scarcity and price increases for both perishable and durable goods. This especially affected communities located close to state or national borders, which typically relied on cross border trade. More complex, specialty goods—such as veterinary medicine—were also exceptionally vulnerable to price increases, assumedly because they needed to be imported from further afield.

Unfortunately, the government's palliative initiative was reportedly unable to assuage this widespread suffering. The reason for this is unclear in the data. Some simply noted that it was insufficient, others felt that the government unfairly targeted only specific groups, widows and the 'less privileged', leaving out large swaths of the population. This especially upset youth, who argued that all are 'feeling hungry too'.²⁰ In other cases, there were widespread accusations of corruption, favoritism, and/or mismanagement by politicians and bureaucrats. Based on the lack of specificity, it did not seem that most respondents had first-hand

home villages. Additionally, interstate travel was largely blocked during the lockdown from later March-July 1, limiting the ability of returnees from large metropolitan areas such as Abuja and Lagos.

²⁰ Female Workshop 3- Plateau

knowledge about the distribution process, but it was also clear that the palliative program had not reached the vast majority of respondents or their direct networks.

All five states and regions in Nigeria, including both rural and urban areas of each, interviewees described COVID-19 as a catastrophic event for a substantial number of households, and none more so than the working poor, who had very few assets. Petty traders and small businesses often also could not weather the economic shock of COVID-19 lockdown and other restrictions. In these cases, small-business entrepreneurs found themselves without the ability to earn a living. A constant refrain from the data—again, from all states—was having ‘no viable options or alternatives’ for livelihood, and widespread desperation to provide for one’s self and one’s family. This narrative of desperation was the basis for sometimes anti-social survival tactics during COVID, as crime was seen as the economic activity of last resort, including various crimes (kidnapping, bandit informants, theft, etc.), relying on household children for labor, begging, and in the case of women, prostitution.²¹

With regard to gender, both men and women were described as losing the ability to provide for themselves and their families. Women especially often lost their ability to sell goods (e.g. handmade goods such as soaps and weaving, dairy products, or other agriculture), whereas men were more likely to lose access to positions involving hard labor. In some instances, men were framed as the family ‘breadwinner’ and this put particular pressure on them to provide for the household, incentivizing extreme strategies such as theft or other crimes.

Causal Link 1 > 3: Strength of Evidence

Based on global and Nigeria-specific accounts regarding the economic effects of the COVID-19 lockdown, international trade disruption, and ongoing efforts to control COVID-19 (ban on inter-state travel, etc.), we began this study with a strong prior that COVID-19 was having a substantial economic impact, and not finding this in our interviews would have substantially updated our priors. Unfortunately, the data from all four states and the FTC region confirmed that COVID-19 was, indeed, a serious and often disastrous event due to the public health measures implemented to control its spread. Thus we consider this linkage to be **strongly evidenced**.

Moreover, we confirm many of the expected specific manifestations of this, including enormous rates of job loss, especially for daily wage workers, resulting in widespread and substantial deprivation for individuals and families. While communities with access to subsistence farming had a small advantage in being better able to avoid food insecurity, the economic toll was still intense. This deprivation, and lack of ability to provide basic sustenance is a key driver—likely the key driver—of the desperation which drove crime, despair, and antisocial behavior throughout downstream linkages.

Causal Link: [3] Increased Economic Scarcity & Hardship > [7] Changing Identity, Social Cohesion, and Conflict

²¹ Connection further discussed in causal link [3] <> [8].

Causal Link 3 > 7: Description of Evidence

As noted, economic scarcity and hardship—both due to insecurity and pandemic-related restrictions—was pervasive in our data. This economic hardship was a major factor damaging social cohesion between *and* within identity groups. However, this effect was dependent on the nature of resources in the community and how they mapped onto identity cleavages.

Overall, we find that *scarcity had mixed effects on inter-group cohesion*, creating conflict and tension on the condition that there is a divisible resource (most commonly land) or the palliatives program, which was often perceived as being distributed based on identity groups or connections (ethnic, tribal, familial, etc.). A recurring pattern in these cases would be general tension over a scarce resource, followed by a violent or sparking event (a single killing, accusation of theft, etc.), which then resulted in the mobilization of identity groups in escalating the conflict along ethnic dimensions. As noted, farmland became an increasingly scarce and important resource during COVID, so land disputes were especially likely to result in conflict along identity cleavages (e.g. exacerbating Hausa-Atyap competition and conflict over farmland during lockdown in urban areas of Kaduna).

Somewhat surprisingly, when there was no contestable good involved, we find that the economic impact of COVID-19 tended to decrease inter-identity tensions. This effect occurred along multiple cleavages (e.g. religion, ethnic, herder-farmer), and was found in multiple states and across urban/rural. This solidarity effect was also due to the increased salience of COVID-19 as an existential and mysterious threat, which took precedence over certain mundane and ongoing feuds (on the condition that the resource being contested was not itself made more scarce by COVID, in which case conflict often escalated.). This positive effect was compounded when COVID-19 allowed for *increased* economic activity between identity groups, such as when Irigwe-Fulani groups in Plateau State were forced to utilize one another as trading partners.

In contrast, *scarcity and hardship had a more monotonously negative effect on intra-group cohesion*. This was through a number of factors:²²

- There was widespread reference to domestic tension and violence, especially when men were unable to provide for their family and were idle at home, not allowing them to fulfill a key societal role. This violence heavily impacted women and children.
- There were widespread reports of increased begging in communities and requests within the extended family for support. This heavily strained community solidarity, as many families had to navigate requests for support from extended family or neighbors, while they themselves had less income and/or increased economic uncertainty. This decreased social capital, both when assistance was begrudgingly given and—even more so—when requests were refused. Additionally, increased begging was seen as a general problem and breakdown of norms within the community.

Causal Link 3 > 7: Strength of Evidence

This effect was expected, as economic scarcity is a well documented driver of inter-group conflict and domestic tension. Additionally, Mercy Corps has recently conducted research looking at religion and identity conflict specifically, finding that identity (and religion specifically) is often used to mobilize populations due to an underlying economic issue. Thus, we consider this **strong evidence** of this linkage, that economic hardship damages inter-group and intra-group cohesion and increases conflict.

²² Note that this does *not* include instances where economic scarcity led to increased crime, then leading to decreased cohesion and identity-based conflicts. That is discussed in causal link [3] <> [8]

However, we also note that COVID-19 also presented an opportunity for creating cohesion around a universally experienced economic shock, in which all people are suffering (relatively) similarly. This opportunity for building cohesion was largely underutilized.

Causal Link:

[3] Increased Economic Scarcity & Hardship >

[4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increased Activism

Causal Link 3 > 4: Description of Evidence

Like many countries, Nigeria instituted a country-wide transfer program designed to cushion the widespread economic downturn brought on by the COVID-19 lockdown and other regulations, which took the form of food aid, termed ‘palliatives’²³. Yet, there was a ubiquitous perception that the palliative program was being manipulated and captured by various politicians for serving patronage networks or personal gain. Politicians were accused of ‘hoarding’ the palliatives to distribute them to political supporters, capturing them to sell for profit, or simply distributing them to their co-ethnics or religious group. While none of the respondents in our study had first-hand information regarding palliatives, nor were any officials responsible for distribution interviewed, the perception of Nigerian bureaucracy as corrupt in many instances has a long legacy, as discussed in the Background section above. Thus, it is reasonable to believe at least some of these allegations are true, though we have no conclusive evidence.

More importantly, given the severe economic need for the assistance, these (perceived) missteps by politicians and bureaucrats ultimately damaged the relationship between the state and society, decreasing trust and increasing anger towards politicians and the current government. This anger spread throughout diverse and widespread communities rapidly due to increased idle time during lockdown and increasing usage of social media to discuss and document various governance grievances, including heavy-handed enforcement, rent-seeking, or the absence of restraint/constraint on behavior by government officials or security forces. This outpouring of grievances were corroborated and reinforced due to these new communication channels, and eventually spilled into physical demonstrations and actions, both activism and peaceful protests, and eventually some violent and criminal activity, fueled by a deep sense of systemic injustice against the government institutions. This was due to anger at perceived palliative mismanagement being combined with multiple pre-existing grievances. This accumulation of grievances led to activism and, eventually, social unrest.²⁴ In addition to economic suffering and palliative mismanagement, core grievances includes:

- Complaints of police brutality, and specifically by the SARS unit²⁵
- Increasing community-level domestic violence, rape, and GBV²⁶
- Worsening insecurity and breakdown of rule of law, especially in rural areas²⁷

²³ Economic downturn and palliative program described in causal link [1] > [3].

²⁴ Subsequent activism and social unrest discussed in [4] <> [10]

²⁵ Relationship to COVID-19 discussed in causal link [1] > [4]

²⁶ Relationship to COVID-19 discussed in causal link [3] > [7]

²⁷ Relationship to COVID-19 discussed in causal link [3] <> [8] and causal link [5] <> [8]

This dynamic was observed across all states and regions, and was corroborated multiple times within each. The dominant grievance, however, was distinct between states and areas—even if palliative distribution contributed towards tension in each. Urban areas more commonly focused on complaints of police brutality alongside palliatives, whereas issues of insecurity were more dominant in rural areas.

In all cases, the nationwide economic pain, followed by anger at the palliative programs catalyzed online organizing around this array of issues, resulting in widespread discontent. As this discontent spread, there was a reported increase of ‘awareness of rights’, which seemed to be an awareness of the population that they could voice discontent around these governance grievances.²⁸

Causal Link 3 > 4: Strength of Evidence

Documentations of the EndSARS movement were widespread prior to our research, so our belief in this connection was well established. Our findings provide further **strong evidence** in this and clarify that the palliative distribution played a major role in the widespread nature of this discontent. Yet, we note that palliative mismanagement was often a ‘last straw’ or catalyst for generating anger because it was combined with other factors related to the pandemic and existing mistrust of government.

Causal Link:

[3] Increased Economic Scarcity & Hardship >

[9] Increasing Armed Group Presence, Capacity, Recruitment, and Activities

Causal Link 3 > 9: Description of Evidence

The increased economic hardship related to the pandemic restrictions was reportedly a strong driver of recruitment for armed groups, as they represented alternate and increasingly attractive economic opportunities as the economic impact of COVID-19 increased rates of destitution and hunger. However, this pattern was only widely apparent in Katsina State, and the majority of the armed group activity took place in rural areas, even if recruitment happened in both rural and urban areas. This recruitment was for different tasks, such as assistance with smuggling, acting as informants, or active participation in kidnapping and other illicit economic activity.

Investigating the reasons only Katsina experiencing this increase in AG activity (in the form of organized bandit groups) is beyond the scope of our research, but it seems that prior to the pandemic, only Adamawa State and Katsina State were experiencing high rates of AG activity, but Adamawa had recently experienced a high profile attacks on rural villages by AOGs, such as in Madagali village. This seemed to have galvanized a significant security response throughout the area, and the influx of ‘security personnel’ seemed to block this dynamic from playing out in Adamawa state. There were few accounts of increased recruitment there, and most respondents felt AG activity in their community area had lessened. Regarding Plateau state, Kaduna, and Abuja, these areas reported increasing rates of crime during COVID, but these criminal activities were less organized into coherent bandit groups, which were not described as having meaningful organization structures.

²⁸ Further discussed in [4] <> [10]

Katsina was very different. There, communities reported that security actors had been distracted away from security matters to enforce COVID-19 regulations, and therefore organized bandit groups were able to operate with increasing impunity. This was especially true in rural areas, which were harder for vigilantes and security forces to control.²⁹ This allowed bandit groups to further represent economic alternatives for vulnerable, unemployed youth and others in the community. Armed bandit groups in Katsina themselves were cognizant of this dynamic, and there were multiple reports of armed groups purposely destroying assets of farmers to increase their dependence on the armed group, who would then offer to ‘strike a deal’, in which the armed group helped the farmer condition that the farmers cooperated with them by not informing security about their presence or activity. This is interpreted as extremely strong evidence, because the bandit AG itself is recognizing the importance of economic vulnerability for their operation, *and then actively creating that vulnerability*. It is then a logical extension of this that the pandemic’s pattern would more generally encourage this dynamic.

Causal Link 3 > 9: Strength of Evidence

Prior to this research, we had moderate confidence that AG groups would be assisted by the economic downturn of COVID. Mercy Corps has previously found mixed evidence, showing that recruitment into extremist organizations was *not* necessarily due to economic insecurity (but rather experiences of injustice), while another study suggested that unmet material needs *could* lead to greater recruitment (Mercy Corps 2015; Mercy Corps 2016). Beginning with this weak expectation, we do find well corroborated and **strong evidence** from Katsina State that AG recruitment and activity does increase under conditions of economic desperation and in the perceived absence of adequate security provision.

Causal Link:

[3] Increased Economic Scarcity & Hardship <>
[8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime

Causal Link 3 <> 8: Description of Evidence

As referenced in causal link [1] > [3], the economic damage caused by COVID-19 regulations led to widespread desperation among the population, which in turn legitimated (or at least rationalized) a large number of crimes within communities. This was especially common when parents or household breadwinners were not able to provide for their families. In addition, unemployment and idleness were thought to generally increase the rates of crime, as youth were increasingly bored and unoccupied, began to fall into drugs or other habits, and eventually committed crimes either out of restlessness or need to fund addiction.

The types of crimes which economic hardship led to varied by community and individual. Most common was simple property theft (such as phone snatching) and burglary (breaking into shops or homes). However, criminality was often more organized than just desperate individuals. Economic scarcity seemed to generate

²⁹ Their usual complaint is that the landmass where the bandits operate is too vast, and too few security officials to respond on time **Male Workshop #1- Katsina**

entire predatory economies, such as kidnapping rings, increased willingness to smuggle drugs and weapons, and other illicit pursuits via semi-organized criminal gangs.³⁰

This increase in criminality and insecurity itself had negative impacts on economic scarcity and hardship; thus, this link is directly mutually reinforcing. Property crimes and extortion directly deplete community assets, by forcibly transferring or destroying them. Kidnapping especially was reported to be exorbitantly expensive for the victim’s family, leading to impoverishment and/or loans. Beyond the direct economic loss due to crimes, the increase in insecurity decreased *future* economic activity in a number of ways. 1) in certain instances, it siphoned community resources for increased vigilante protection, 2) it decreased the ability of farmers and traders to travel freely and safely, damaging their ability to cultivate land and reach markets respectively. 3) The decrease in rule of law very likely lowered incentives for new investments or entrepreneurship within the community, as *de facto* property rights became increasingly tenuous.³¹

The presence of this linkage operated strongly in practically all of the communities we collected data in—with the exception of rural communities in Plateau State, in which respondents felt that crime was somewhat increased, but it was due to existing (not new) criminals. Aligning with the importance of this linkage, rural areas of Plateau were also relatively less likely to report economic desperation and extreme poverty within their communities due to COVID-19 restrictions. In all remaining states (and urban areas of Plateau state), including rural and urban areas, respondents noted increased criminality was driven by economic hardship and hunger throughout their community.

Causal Link 3 <> 8: Strength of Evidence

A potential weakness with this evidence is that the data is self-reported and none of the reportee themselves admitted to personally being involved with these criminal activities. Yet, the consistency of this finding in all areas and regions (except rural Plateau state), between both rural and urban settings, and crime being reported both between and within identity groups, strongly suggests that economic hardship is a driving factor for increased criminality. While there may be other factors, it is very unlikely that economic hardship and crime are unrelated. Thus we consider this **strong evidence**.

Causal Link: [4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increased Activism > [10] Growing Social Unrest

Causal Link 4 > 10: Description of Evidence

This connection was strongly anticipated, given that civic activism and social unrest are two major outlets for citizens expressing their views about the government and/or as reactions to current political and social issues—of which COVID-19 and related issues were the most salient. Our causal map finds that at least four

³⁰ Though we are not including crimes committed by well institutionalized/organized bandit groups in this linkage—which we consider armed groups)—the difference between a semi-organized gang and an organized bandit is a relatively arbitrary cut-off by level of organization, rather than type. See causal linkage [9] > [8] for the connection between armed group activity and crime.

³¹ Note: points 1 and 2 are directly supported by multiple respondent accounts, whereas point 3 is an extrapolation based on economic principles based on when there is a perceived breakdown of rule of law and property rights.

factors led to strained state-society relations.³² The source of this stress is itself important for understanding the resulting *content* of the activism and grievance. These factors are as follows. For each, we briefly discuss the type of activism and social generated. Based on received data, it is difficult to fully disentangle the various grievances which eventually erupted into months of activism, anti-government protests, looting, and sometimes, violence. However, some respondents themselves describe connections between specific grievances and activism/unrest, while certain patterns were extracted from the data.

1. [3] Increasing Economic Scarcity & Hardship: The mismanagement of the palliative program was, arguably, the flashpoint which drove massive looting of palliative storehouses around the country and mass mobilization both online and in-person. While the corruption and lack of accountability are discussed below, the lack of payment and the immense economic hardship buffeting the country's population during lockdown was itself a core stressor on the government-society relationship, and served as underlying fuel for the protests, riots, and looting.
2. [8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime: The displacement of security forces, combined with the economic pain led to widespread increases in crime and violence. The inability of the government to adequately provide public safety increased tension with society and motivated public demands by activists that the government protect society's property rights and physical safety.
3. [5] Insufficient Capacity and Accountability of Governance and Security Actors : The government's COVID-19 response was characterized by research participants as an over-response of security forces in some areas and under-policing in others. This somewhat fell along rural/urban lines, as rural areas were low priority for COVID-19 restriction enforcement, resulting in under-policing, while urban areas saw an influx of police meant to clamp down on risky behavior. However, this led to abuses by security forces and deputized vigilantes, which did not have strong constraining institutions, such as formal or community accountability mechanisms. The numerous new regulations also allowed for new rent-seeking behavior, in which security forces extorted civilians with threats of fines over mask usages or breaking lockdown, while others participated in new smuggling opportunities as the movement of goods was restricted. In both rural and urban areas, there was a sense that common crimes were being ignored as security forces were focused on COVID-19 regulations. These patterns generated anger at both the presence (and abuse) of government actors, and likewise at their inaction and lack of presence in other areas.
4. [6] Increased Availability of Information and Misinformation: COVID-19 generated substantial new demand for information across all states in the country. However, the magnitude of this effect seemed to be felt most strongly in urban areas, with much smaller effects in rural areas. Respondents in urban areas invested in new phones and increasingly used online media to track COVID-19 cases. There were a handful of reports about increased communication and awareness in rural areas, but online activism and social unrest were much more rare. Urban populations especially reported being bored during lockdown and dramatically increasing social media usage. As consumption of online media increased, urban populations also began sharing information about various grievances against perceived government abuses and corruption. The most prominent of this was publicity of brutality by security forces, most prominently exhibited in the #EndSARS movement. However, each of the grievances listed in causal link [3] > [4] also generated widespread sharing and awareness, including economic suffering (e.g. stories of starvation and deprivation during lockdown—especially in rural areas), narratives about political corruption and hoarding of palliatives (e.g. location of palliatives and efforts to loot/distribute them), gender based violence (e.g. instances of domestic or sexual violence), and increasing insecurity (e.g. instances of theft, kidnapping, and other violence). More broadly, respondents reported being more 'aware of their rights' vis a vis the government, and (perhaps more importantly), they saw

³² Increased economic hardship in causal link [3] > [4]; growing insecurity and increased crime in causal link [8] > [4]

examples of activism around the country and in their own region, which signaled that citizens were able to communicate their grievances through activism and unrest, including organizing, protests, and palliative looting.

Turning to civic activism and social unrest, as noted, COVID-related news and lockdown generated a broad shift towards social media, which fomented broad civic activism online and acting as a sharing and organizing platform for previously unconnected people around urban areas and the country. The respondents use very strong and evocative terms describing activism during this time, describing the ability to air grievances and organize online via social media as an ‘epiphany’ or stating that this movement online spread ‘like wildfire’ from Lagos and Abuja to other states of the country. This organizing was local and national simultaneously. This online activism resulted regularly in *physical* protests and demonstrations, which were typically direct outgrowths of organizing across social media and messaging platforms.

There was no evidence that these protests were led by a centralized structure, nor limited to certain identities or groups. There were clear social movements around many national grievances such as: gender and GBV; ‘bad governance’ (perceived corruption and lack of accountability); lack of security, violence, and crime; SARS and security force abuses; and food insecurity and destitution. Yet, smaller issues also were swept up in this general anti-government wave, for instance, such as a protest about the border closure in Jibya, Katsina State. Moreover, a consistent refrain across urban areas in Abuja, Plateau State, Kaduna, and Adamawa was that women’s involvement in this movement was a marked increase compared to previous activism and protests. Universally, women were reported to be remarkably involved in online organizing and activism. Yet there were mixed reports about the extent to which women participated in physical events.

There were two major, moderating factors regarding the connection between state-society tension, activism, and social unrest. The first is based on variation by urban-rural, in which rural areas exhibited very little social unrest, and the second is Katsina State’s urban area (Katsina Town) as a major outlier, with practically no unrest.

The urban-rural divide is relatively easily explained by a lack of reported media usage in rural areas and significantly lower access to internet and mobile phones, which has been documented in previous research, and corroborated by much rarer reporting of social media usage in rural compared to urban areas (Oluwatayo and Ojo 2017). This lack of connectivity may have also blunted the expectation of populations to receive palliatives, or awareness of mismanagement. In fact, multiple rural respondents were only generally aware of the specifics of the palliative program and reported believing it was for urban areas only. This lack of connectivity also did not allow for significant online organizing or the penetration of the ‘protest movement’ to rural areas. Finally, in the handful of instances where rural areas did report *wanting* to loot palliatives, they were often stymied by a lack of information about where the palliatives were. This information in urban areas was spread online through the active investigation of populations, and once identified, was quickly transmitted via social media for looting—with at least a veneer of public distribution to wider society.

The absolute lack of protest movements and looting in Katsina Town (urban, capital city of Katsina State) poses a slightly trickier problem, as the city and state had deep grievances, including very high rates of insecurity, AG activity, violence, and crime—which might have erupted into mass activism and protest but did not. There are at least three explanations for this. 1) Respondents in both rural and urban Katsina Stated that their culture and religion (Islam) had respect for authority and therefore was unlikely to protest, both before and after COVID. 2) Katsina is a stronghold of the current government, with the president winning 79% of the vote within the state (BBC News 2019). Given this, there may be more political loyalty (both of the masses and local elites), leading to less appetite for and organization around protests. 3) In the few mentioned instances of protests, police were quickly deployed to forcefully and violently disperse the protests. Two people were reportedly killed by security forces in Batasari,³³ while protestors were arrested in

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Jibya.³⁴ In Katsina Town , no protests were reported, but a respondent noted that people were afraid of the government response to any protest, a reasonable belief given the response to small protests outside of the city.

Causal Link 4 > 10: Strength of Evidence

We find **strong evidence** for this linkage, building on our prior expectation that state-society relations would lead to activism and social unrest. We note that there are a very wide variety of issues which played into this unrest, though EndSARS (police brutality) and economic issues (palliative mismanagement, anger at lockdown) were the flashpoints which led to the most extreme forms of looting and riots. These contributing factors included gender based violence and persistent insecurity and crime.

Causal Link: [4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increasing Activism > [1] COVID-19 Spread & Policy Response (Restrictions and Relief)

Causal Link 4 > 1: Description of Evidence

Throughout our dataset of interviews and group discussions, the actual spread of COVID-19 was of remarkably low salience, instead most discussion focused on the *response* to COVID-19, and its security and economic implications. As such, our data does not allow us to directly triangulate the impact of decreasing trust *in government* on COVID-19 compliance and COVID-19 spread. That said, there is extremely strong evidence that trust in government was lowered due to 1) reported excessive use of force and rent-seeking by security actors (vigilante and government security forces) that were mobilized to enforce COVID-19 restrictions, and 2) near universal perception among research participants that the government had mismanaged the palliatives program, due to self-interested manipulation by political groups.

Given that *trust* in the government was lowered, we draw on outside research to infer that this likely had an effect on the willingness of citizens to abide by COVID-19 restrictions. At least two reviews have specifically found that trust in government is an important mediator for public health behavior (Bargain and Aminjonov 2020; Devine et al. 2020). More broadly, there is evidence that citizens limit their participation and willingness to cooperate when the government is unaccountable and unresponsive (Sjoberg et al. 2017). Thus, we can hold that the decreased trust and strained relationship between society and the government very likely had an effect on COVID-19 related behavior, which is supported by survey evidence on perceptions of insecurity and compliance with COVID-19 guidelines in Nigeria (Verjee 2020).

Causal Link 4 > 1: Strength of Evidence

Given that we are inferring the impact of decreased trust (which is well evidenced) on COVID-19 spread (which was not generally discussed) based on external research, we consider this **weak evidence**. However, we note that there was no indication that people found local COVID-19 spread to be particularly salient, which likely explains the lack of discussion around spread and compliance with restrictions.

³⁴ Male Workshop #7 Katsina

Causal Link: [4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increasing Activism > [9] Increasing Armed Group Presence, Capacity, Recruitment, and Activities

Causal Link 4 > 9: Description of Evidence

Similar to the linkage described in [4] > [1], this linkage relies on clear evidence for lowered legitimacy and trust in the government, from which we infer increased AG activity based on previous research. Our data shows clearly that the legitimacy and trust in the government was damaged during the COVID-19 response due to the widespread belief in excessive use of force and rent-seeking by security actors and the perceived mismanagement and political self-interest surrounding the palliative program.

Our interviews were not able to parse what effect this had on armed groups recruitment directly, however there is strong pre-existing evidence that AG recruitment is driven by signals of government competence and trustworthiness, and when the government is perceived as illegitimate, self-interested, and unable to provide youth with dignity, they are more likely to turn to AGs (Lyall et al. 2020; Mercy Corps 2015; Mercy Corps 2016).

Our findings do not directly draw this connection, but we do find that lowered government legitimacy and banditry activity seemed to go hand-in-hand (in rural Katsina State in particular). Likewise, in areas where the government *did* competently provide security (rural Adamawa State), AG activity seemed to drop significantly, and trust in government did not decrease as dramatically (though, abuses by security actors did create a backlash, it was not as sizeable as in Katsina, where the government was perceived to be absent). This is purely correlational however.

Finally, we note that there was *absolutely no references to upstanding or trustworthy* national-level politicians. Instead political groups were discussed with undifferentiated disdain. There is some evidence that this lack of legitimate political party representation (engendering a sense of 'political alienation') may itself be a compounding driver of willingness to take up arms (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008).

Causal Link 4 > 9: Strength of Evidence

Because our data only strongly supports the deterioration of trust and legitimacy, resulting in anger at the political establishment, we therefore deduce the connection to AG activity based on prior evidence of causal relation. We find this relation to be highly plausible (and even likely), and find no disconfirming evidence in our data. It is likely omitted due to a lack of questioning about the effect of legitimacy and trust on AG recruitment, which instead focused on economic drivers. Given this, we posit this connection as being **weakly evidenced**.

Causal Link:

[1] COVID-19 Spread and Policy Response (Restrictions and Relief) > [5] Insufficient Capacity and Accountability of Governance and Security Actors

Causal Link 1 > 5: Description of Evidence

As prefaced briefly above, COVID-19 prompted a massive response from the government, most notably nationwide enforcement of public health restriction (lockdown, travel bans, and various other restrictions) and an economic transfer (the palliatives program), yet Nigeria's government increased presence of government outstripped its capacity and accountability. This manifested itself in respondent reports of serious abuses and rent-seeking by security tasked with enforcing COVID-19 directives, while the shifting of these security actors simultaneously left many communities under-policed in the face of rising crime and violence. In both cases, the government provided no nationwide recourse for reporting abusive police behavior, and, in the case of under-policing, were unable to match increasing banditry and violent crimes. The palliative program was riddled with issues of delays, shortages, and opaque processes, which led to widespread accusations of corruption, which had no outlet due to a seeming lack of accountability structures.

The lockdown and travel restrictions created new dynamics with security actors, where urban areas and travel routes received new security actors, meant to enforce COVID-19 restrictions. This influx of security forces alongside new regulations, created widespread rent-seeking and other abusive behavior among security forces and vigilantes, yet accountability structures were unable to match new opportunities for abuse and increased state security (or sanctioned vigilante) presence, resulting in increased strain. However, the weak accountability structures in place were not able to respond to this behavior, leading to anti-government and anti-security force sentiments.

A somewhat paradoxical and opposite dynamic played out in security presence *focused on crime*—especially in rural areas. Most rural and urban areas (excluding Adamawa) reported a *lack* of security focused on addressing the increase of crime in their areas. Much of this was blamed on the transfer of security forces to COVID-19 enforcement, rather than criminal activity. Communities around the country felt that the government had abandoned them to their own devices, and was not doing enough to protect both property and human life, even as the economic downturn increased the relative incentives for crime and violence. Though there were a few notable instances where the government did adequately respond to increased crime, in most cases they failed to do so.

A very similar pattern played out with regard to the palliative program, which represented a sizable expansion of government across the country, in the form of a substantial entitlement to offset the economic damage of COVID. However, just like security forces, there was a distinct lack of accountability. So, while government activities expanded, the ability to constrain political actors did not, leading to an uneven balance between government power and constraint of power, and creating a potential for corruption/mismanagement. Across all states and regions, the government was accused of directing the palliatives to a small elite class and/or a set of 'clients' based on ethnic or other prejudices. There were vanishingly few accounts of palliatives being received through fair and open processes, and high levels of anger towards what was described as a corrupt and unaccountable response in all interviews.

For both the issues of policing (under- and over-policing) and the perceived corruption within the palliatives, none of the respondents reported any *national-level* institutional recourse by which they could report not receiving the palliative or demand accountability for rent-seeking behavior. The only outlets described were small instances of positive deviance, such as when an army major created a reporting structure for abusive behavior, or there were community-level interventions. But these were poorly institutionalized and the vast majority of respondents reported relative impunity of security actors and political officials.

Causal Link 1 > 5: Strength of Evidence

As discussed in the *Background* of the main report, Nigeria's bureaucracy has long suffered from reports of nepotism and corruption. Likewise, issues of unrestrained police force, especially regarding SARS, were well documented. Thus, this largely aligns without expectations of government expansion during COVID, in which this expansion was not matched with adequate and dependable accountability systems (since they did not even exist before COVID). Unfortunately, we find **strong evidence** of this linkage for both the deployment of security forces (largely urban areas + rural Adamawa) and palliative programs in all areas. Determined strong based on multiple corroborating reports and essentially a complete lack of contradicting narrative or reports.

Causal Link:

[5] Insufficient Capacity and Accountability of Governance and Security Actors >

[4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increased Activism AND

[10] Growing Social Unrest

Causal Link 5 > 4 AND 10: Description of Evidence

This uneven response described in the preceding section (reports of predatory policing and corruption; under-policing in the face of crimes; and challenges implementing the palliative program) put enormous strain on the state-society relationship. This strain was universal within our sample. All of the states and regions, both rural and urban, reported resenting the opaque rollout of the palliative program, and expressed deep misgivings about the integrity of politicians in the country. An increase in criminality and violence, alongside the abuse of security actors in areas with an increased police presence only further damaged the opinion of the government.

The increase of online activism and physical protest, and ultimately to social unrest targeting perceived 'bad governance' and a lack of accountability, expressed through protests, looting, and other expressions of dismay.³⁵ Distinctly, *the mismanagement of the COVID-19 palliative program* was a flashpoint which combined with the EndSARs movement, and ignited multiple, long standing sentiments that government politicians were corrupt and unaccountable to the public.

³⁵ See causal link [4] > [10] for description of how state-society tension and activism translated into social unrest.

Again, this strained government-society relationship existed in *all* regions and states. However, only urban areas, in which increased internet access and social media usage combined with density, did this strain result in broad organizing and activism—and ultimately social unrest. This is suggestive that online connectivity and density acted as moderators for broad activism. This surge in urban organizing and awareness among the population was observed in Abuja and *urban areas* of Kaduna, Adamawa, and Plateau State. There were small parallels in rural areas, Madagali and Mayo Belwa in Adamawa, however NGOs were directly supporting community advocacy in these cases, and thus we do not attribute this activism directly to state-society tension. In both rural and urban areas, the strongest exception (again) is Katsina State, which had little-to-no activism for the reasons discussed above in causal link [4] > [10].

Causal Link 5 > 4 AND 10: Strength of Evidence

That the perception of weak governance accountability and management leads to a strained state-society relationship is unsurprising, and the negative effect on trust and legitimacy with regard to governance actors was universal. We especially find **strong evidence** that perceptions of palliative mismanagement and excessive force usage by security, presaged activism.

Turning to the effects of weak governance on social unrest, we note that this was only likely to appear under certain conditions: social media usage combined with density. In rural areas without high social media usage, both activism and unrest were remarkably absent. Katsina State was an outlier in this regard, as respondents reported high levels of grievances about governance outcomes (especially high insecurity), yet there were very limited examples of activism or social unrest. Taking this exception into account, we hold this connection as being **moderately evidenced**.

Causal Link: [5] Insufficient Capacity and Accountability of Governance and Security Actors > [8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime

Causal Link 5 > 8: Description of Evidence

This linkage represents the two types of insecurity due to uneven presence and accountability of security actors. Following the pattern of uneven-ness described in causal link [1] > [4], in which rural areas saw underpolicing, while urban areas and rural Adamawa state saw an influx of security actors, due to enforcement of COVID-19 regulations and counteracting AOG activity, respectively.

This connection is the logical outgrowth of that pattern, where we note the crimes and insecurity caused by non-state criminal actors in under-policed areas, and the crimes and insecurity carried out by unconstrained state security forces and vigilantes in areas which experienced a surge.

Turning to crimes unrelated to security, the perceived inability of the Nigerian bureaucracy to constrain administrators from manipulation and expropriation of the palliatives or security actors from rent-seeking related to COVID-19 regulations constitutes another category of crime related to COVID-19

While the insecurity incidents referenced were often local, public knowledge and observable (and therefore highly credible), we note that accusations of corruption in the data are potentially less reliable, as we did not interview anyone who took part in corruption or seemed to have firsthand information of it.

Causal Link 5 > 8: Strength of Evidence

There are multiple, corroborating accounts of insecurity and crime by both state and non-state actors, according to the dynamics briefly described above. As noted, corruption is less observable, and we were not able to confirm it with firsthand accounts. Nonetheless, we judge there to be *overall strong evidence* for the connection between *perceived corruption and governance challenges* and crime, but we cannot confirm the quality of actual governance.

Causal Link: [5] Insufficient Capacity and Accountability of Governance and Security Actors <> [9] Increasing Armed Group Presence, Capacity, Recruitment, and Activities

Causal Link 5 <> 9: Description of Evidence

This linkage is largely driven by Adamawa State and Katsina State, which represent each direction of this linkage respectively. Rural Adamawa shows the causal flow from [9] to [5], as a case where the government surged security to block the rise of AOGs during the pandemic. The surge was successful in its main objective (alongside strong local and vigilante support), but according to community members, the influx of poorly constrained and unaccountable security forces generated reportedly generated large amounts of rent-seeking behavior, instances of abuse, and/or the use of excessive force by security actors against the population. In the second case, Katsina's rural area shows the causal flow from [5] to [9]. Rural Katsina saw the presence of security forces diminish, reportedly displaced to enforce COVID-19 regulations in other areas of the country and to focus on travel restrictions. This led to a power vacuum, in which organized bandit groups (which we consider AGs) to expand their activities, enacting theft and extortion across the rural area.

This connection largely occurred in areas vulnerable to AG activity, specifically urban areas with previously existing AG structures and activity. Our research did not directly address why Katsina State and Adamawa State were vulnerable to AG activity, while all urban areas and rural Kaduna State and Plateau State did not see a comparable increase.

This connection also stresses the mutual relationship between AG activity and the need for an accountable and well balanced security response. Rural Adamawa's case shows an adequate security response to AG activity but the perils of not introducing matching accountability structures, whereas rural Katsina shows the lack of an adequate response, leading to increased AG activity.

Causal Link 5 <> 9: Strength of Evidence

There were no strong priors to this connection, and though our evidence is well corroborated across multiple communities and respondents in rural Adamawa State and rural Katsina State, we cannot adequately explain *why* it occurred in these areas and not others. Thus, we hold this to be **moderate evidence** of this linkage, which admits the possibility of omitted context variables driving the linkage.

Causal Link: [5] Insufficient Capacity and Accountability of Governance and Security Actors > [11] Violence and Instability

Causal Link 5 > 11: Description of Evidence

This direct connection between the presence, capacity, and accountability of governance and security actors and violence and instability is mediated by the increased presence of security forces (both formal and vigilante) without adequate accountability structures. This was seen in over-policed urban and rural areas, where violence was reported as having been perpetuated by security actors themselves (rather than AG or criminal groups). As discussed in causal linkage [5] > [9], poorly restrained security forces perpetuated violent and/or destabilizing crimes against populations in rural Adamawa State. In that case, security was increased in response to AOG attacks, but a largely comparable pattern played out across urban areas in Abuja; Yola, Adamawa; and to a lesser extent, urban areas in Plateau State. This was not in response to AG activity, but due to security forces being deployed in cities to enforce COVID-19 lockdowns but using their presence and the COVID-19 regulations this as a pretext to prey on citizens—reinforcing a long history of abuse by security units, such as the notorious SARS unit.³⁶

Relatedly, there were many instances where vigilante groups—increasingly relied on due to the displacement of government security forces—were accused of using ‘jungle justice’ or enacting violent ‘justice’ based on ethnic prejudices (such as attacking Fulani communities indiscriminately as criminal actors). These groups were very unlikely to have adequate training or—even less likely—strong accountability outside of their direct community.

Countervailing forces include ad hoc community/civic accountability. In Madagali (Adamawa State), the community reportedly set up a human rights council to adjudicate abuses among the broader community. There were also small instances of administrative accountability among security forces, but this was an exception to the broader pattern.

Causal Link 5 > 11: Strength of Evidence

There were no strong priors regarding this linkage in Nigeria specifically, but the increase of government force without corresponding constraints through administrative or civil mechanisms is well known to lead to abuses of power.³⁷ This finding corroborates the importance of constraint in parallel to government

³⁶ Note: The violence perpetrated by protestors *in response* to this violence is NOT included in this link, as this would be mediated by causal link [4] > [10] and not direct. Likewise, violence by AG groups is mediated by [5] > [9].

³⁷ The need for balance between state power and state accountability is discussed at length in both *Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2020). The narrow corridor: States, societies, and the fate of liberty. Penguin Books.*; and

responses. We characterize this as **moderate evidence** partially because the *magnitude* of the violence by security actors pales in comparison to the largely unchecked AG violence in rural Katsina State (and thus, rural areas often welcomed the presence of security actors, even if they were predatory). More importantly, much of the causal force from the weak governance was instead directed towards [4] *Strained State-society Relations and Increased Activism* (and later social unrest), thus this connection is largely only the violence which directly took place, but not the de-legitimizing function which flows into [4].

Causal Link:

[1] COVID-19 Spread and Policy Response (Restrictions and Relief) <>
[6] Increasing Availability of Information and Misinformation

Causal Link 1 <> 6: Description of Evidence

COVID-19 generated an enormous increase in online media consumption and social media usage. This was predominantly felt in urban areas which experienced the lockdown more intensely (as it was most enforced in dense areas) and who also had better pre-existing internet infrastructure to allow for this shift. People were driven to consume and generate media content out of boredom and because COVID-19 represented a highly salient and impactful nationwide event, which people were interested to track and discuss. The closure of schools, especially, reportedly encouraged very high rates of youth participation in these discourses.

Nigeria has experienced viral social media events prior to COVID-19 (e.g. #BringBackOurGirls in 2014), yet urban respondents described COVID-19 as an unprecedented surge of online activism and sharing, driven by people using social media from home during lockdown, and investing in new devices and internet plans. Platforms included both social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) platforms but also closed message platforms such as text and WhatsApp. Rural areas did report an increase in social media usage, but it was less intense, and rarely cited as a major shift.

Past mass media events within Nigeria have often focused on a single, dominant social issue (again, such as #BringBackOurGirls). Yet, during COVID, many social issues were being simultaneously discussed. These were typically described as being catalyzed by #EndSARS, but the pent-up energy generated by this media event quickly spread to a wide variety of social grievances, including insecurity, women's rights and GBV, and economic suffering and hunger. Alongside each of these specific topics was a common theme of grievance against the current government structure and systems, which were felt to be corrupt and/or ineffective.

Thus, we characterize this shift in information as more than simple awareness of behavior, but also the shifting of relationship between government and society, which can be viewed as a shift in the social norms concerning communication. This was seen through multiple accounts in which communities had an "epiphany on citizen awareness of their human rights", and the importance of mobilize and speaking out to hold the government accountable³⁸. Whereas previously, they held their grievances silent, and believed that they had no ability to speak upward to government, the dramatic example of both #EndSARS and collective palliative looting forcefully demonstrated that wide communication was possible and yielded

Fukuyama, F. (2014). Political order and political decay: From the industrial revolution to the globalization of democracy. Macmillan.

³⁸ Community Tribal Leader-Abuja

action. There is strong evidence that these patterns significantly shifted social norms related to collective action and mass communication. As the populations saw multiple successful online campaigns, they reasonably updated their expectation that society broadly was both approving (normative expectation) and willing (empirical expectation) to collectively listen and support their own grievances, and that their own participation was likely to join a collective movement.³⁹

Again, this stated shift in norms, expectations, and behavior related to mass communication was seen multiple times across all urban areas, in which multiple different grievances were discussed. No rural areas saw a large surge in communication, and Katsina State did not exhibit this pattern in either rural or urban areas.

Finally, concerning *misinformation*, there were many references to misinformation or ‘rumors’, especially around the palliative distribution, in which folk theories about the government use of palliatives and why it was not reaching populations proliferated. Additionally, there were a handful of unsubstantiated theories around the government’s response to the protests (e.g. that the protests would trigger US intervention after a certain number of days). Yet, this misinformation was not well characterized in the data, and only broadly related to protests and increased tension (with no clear case cases or causal connections). Thus, while we *do not rule out* misinformation/disinformation as a causal driver, we find little evidence to support it being a major variable.

Concerning the opposite direction (misinformation leading to increased COVID-19 spread), there were a few rumors that certain groups did not believe in the virus, or that COVID-19 was a hoax and were therefore engaging in risky behavior (traveling, ignoring restrictions, etc.) but few instances were reported in either rural or urban areas, and it was unclear where this information came from.

Despite finding little evidence for disinformation or misinformation, we also note that the media landscape did not seem to have any large, highly trusted actors, who could act as arbiters of truth. This empowered people to generate and consume information more broadly, but limited the ability for people to differentiate truth from simple rumors.

Causal Link 1 <> 6: Strength of Evidence

COVID-19's driving of news consumption was expected—as this was a global phenomena—however, Nigeria’s massive shift towards online sharing across a wide range of topics, and specifically focusing on grievances, organization, and state accountability was surprising and unexpected. This *only* happened in urban areas in Abuja, Adamawa State, Kaduna State, and Plateau State—not in any rural areas or any area of Katsina.

As this evidence was strongly and consistently attributed to COVID-19 as both a highly salient news event and lockdown driving the boredom and free time, we view this as **strong evidence** that COVID-19 Spread and related government response led to increased availability, consumption, and production of information.

Complexifying this, we find limited evidence that disinformation or misinformation were major factors in the causal chain, by leading to risky public health behavior and spread. This could be explained by the low

³⁹ Closely following social norm theory presented in *Bicchieri, C. (2016). Norms in the wild: How to diagnose, measure, and change social norms. Oxford University Press.*

salience of COVID-19 spread generally. We characterize this sub-component of this factor as **weak evidence**.

Causal Link:

[6] Increasing Availability of Information and Misinformation <>
[4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increased Activism

Causal Link 6 <> 4: Description of Evidence

The increase in media availability, consumption, and production led to widespread sharing of grievances against the government, spanning a wide number of issues—though, as stated, the most recent shift in norms was catalyzed by the #EndSARS movement and palliative looting. Respondents in urban areas described this as a moment of broad social cohesion across ethnic, gender, and religious lines, as everyone was motivated by a common grievance: corrupt and/or ineffective government. Predictably, going to social media to share grievances and finding a wider, distributed community with the same or similar grievances further entrenched anger against the government and existing institutions.

This dynamic was mutually reinforcing, as increased sharing of grievances generated more anger and strained state-society relationship, which itself generated more information sharing, as people were increasingly motivated to participate. This dynamic then drove both online and physical activism, such as online media campaigns, protests, palliative looting, etc.. These activities regularly blurred into ‘social unrest.

This mutual connection was found mostly in urban areas, which is expected given that it was lockdown and access to social media driving most information consumption and sharing, resulting in increased state-society strain.

We also note that online activism represented a relatively safe space for increased *female activism and coordination*. Though it began online, many urban areas reported that this female-led activism spilled over into physical protesting and more extreme forms of social unrest.

To clarify dynamics in rural areas: rural communities certainly *did have* various methods for sharing information and did receive and share some information regarding increasing criminality and national movement during COVID-19 such as EndSARS and palliative looting. However, they were relatively less informed and had much less penetration of interactive, social media platforms. Finally, they were less likely to see *online* messaging targeted at large state institutions or politicians as an available recourse. Instead, they typically focused their attention on *local* issues and expressed grievances to *local* actors. As such, their grievances were less broadcast into social media or directed at larger government institutions.⁴⁰

Causal Link 6 <> 4: Strength of Evidence

⁴⁰ Rural Adamawa: “Our people are largely unaware of their rights towards governance and more so of their rights to demand improved security. Consequently, they only lodge complaints to the immediate security operatives within the community and their local leaders with the firm belief that such reports will be handled.... The covid-19 lockdown did not reflect changes in citizen awareness of rights and activism against the Government.” **CSO Leader-Adamawa**

This connection was well substantiated, with especially strong evidence on the forward causal connection ([6] > [4]). Again, all urban areas except Katsina showcased this, with no competing or contradicting narratives provided. Thus, we hold this to be **strong evidence**.

Causal Link:

[6] Increasing Availability of Information and Misinformation <>
[10] Growing Social Unrest

Causal Link 6 > 10: Description of Evidence

The description of this linkage closely follows the same causal arguments presented in the preceding section (causal link [6] > [4]). ‘Social unrest’ is a broad term, and difficult to isolate cleanly in usage, but here we operationalize it as strong actions of displeasure with the government or other ruling institutions, which go beyond expression, and represent a departure from peaceful and regularly accepted behavior.⁴¹ For this case, this includes riots, unapproved protests, property damage, and looting.

In our data, social unrest was an outgrowth of two factors: [6] increased information and [4] increased activism. Without both, it is unlikely that broad social unrest would have occurred. This is because of the intense increase in online activism, which was made possible by the increased connectivity of urban areas via a wide variety of platforms. This began as activism, but escalated in many instances into large, uncontrolled protests, rioting and looting, and specifically the looting of palliatives.

Dramatically increased usage of communication tools was key in the development of unrest because it allowed for coordination in local urban areas across the country *and* it allowed for the social unrest itself to spread. EndSARS and the looting of palliatives were the two major instances of this. The EndSARS movement was coordinated largely online, and allowed for rapid, decentralized planning of protests which were outside of government control. Though this started in Lagos, the underlying pattern was quickly copied in areas across the country, drawing on a variety of related ‘bad governance’ grievances. Another commonly cited example was the use of online platforms to share the locations of palliative warehouses, leading to widespread targeting and looting of these specific establishments.

These new communication tools were likely difficult for the government to respond to, and in the case of private messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, the government could not even observe the organizing process easily (besides infiltration).

Finally, we consider this connection mutually reinforcing because social unrest *itself* was a topic of increased communication and information sharing, in addition to being a tool for that sharing.

Causal Link 6 > 10: Strength of Evidence

⁴¹ For a more complete discussion on creating an operational definition of social unrest, see (Renn, Jovanovic, & Schröter 2011).

Again, this connection was well substantiated, corroborated, and with no contradicting accounts. It also saw the expected pattern of only occurring in urban areas, except for urban areas in Katsina State. Thus we consider this **strong evidence**.

**Causal Link:
[7] Changing Identity, Social Cohesion, and Conflict >
[11] Violence and Instability**

Causal Link 7 > 11: Description of Evidence

As discussed in causal link [2] > [7] and causal link [3] > [7],⁴² increased migration and economic scarcity generated decreased social cohesion and violence both within and between identity groups. As discussed, when economic hardship drove crime and/or competition over a resource. In instances where this was the case, many communities cited increased tension, which often resulted in cycles of violence in the case where there was an ‘sparking’ instance of violence. After this sparking incident, often there would be violent escalation, especially by youth actors. In these instances, intervention by NGOs or community leaders was typically needed to de-escalate the tension.

We will not repeat the specific arguments presented above—as the same dynamics generating conflict often spilled over into violence—but reiterate here that the dynamics played out between *ethnic groups* as the dominant mobilizing cleavage, and these ethnic identity boundaries often overlapped with various other herder-farmers, indigene-settler, and/or religious cleavages.

Causal Link 7 > 11: Strength of Evidence

Our data supports this connection with **moderate evidence**, as the connection was clearly stated in a number of case studies, but it often required multiple preconditions to be activated including: 1) a ‘sparking event’ and 2) economic competition over a scarce resource. It is very rarely identity *alone* (i.e. simple proximity) which is driving these conflicts, and these additional factors increase the possibility of misattribution and generally make the link less clear.

**Causal Link:
[7] Changing Identity, Social Cohesion, and Conflict <>
[4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increased Activism AND
[10] Growing Social Unrest**

Causal Link 7 <> 4 AND 10: Description of Evidence

A particularly interesting finding in our data is that grievance against the government seems to have *built* social cohesion, especially among urban youth of different ethnicities, genders, and religions. This social

⁴² While we also find that strained state-society relationship, activism, and social unrest lead to shifts in identity and cohesion between groups (causal link [4] > [7] and [10] > [7]), the force of these pathways were unlikely to result in violence and instability.

cohesion across a cross-cutting identity (youth) allowed for very wide mobilization of the population in both activism and social unrest. This activism began online spaces, where youth across identity groups could mutually interact and share grievances. This allowed them to further develop a common identity and cohesion, which then spilled into physical activism and social unrest.

This process of identity building and action (activism/unrest) was mutually reinforcing, as the increase in solidarity among youth across other identity cleavages increased the ability and capacity of youth to organize as both activists (online demonstrations and campaigns; peaceful protests) and perpetrators social unrest (riots, looting, blocking roads, and anti-state violence). Youth across Abuja; Yola, Adamawa; and multiple urban areas in Plateau state felt that partaking in these collective activities (especially physical protests, palliative looting, etc.) then *further solidified* their bonds with other youth around Nigeria, increasing their cohesion and thus collective capacity to carry out activism and social unrest.

While the initial impulses of this unrest and common identity were around grievances directed at the government, there is some evidence that issues of gender and rape (which targeted societal norms and impunity of perpetrators) created a second track of activism, focused at changing society more broadly. This was again driven by youth who were increasingly mobilized and empowered during this time. This resulted in both online activism and protests, though did not seem to result in 'social unrest'. That said, female youth's participation in protests and activism and unrest were noted as markedly increasing with regard to anti-government activity. This participation seemed to be a new phenomenon.

As consistently found in all factors related to activism and unrest, only the urban areas of Abuja, Adamawa State, Kaduna State, and Plateau State saw these patterns, with much less activism and unrest found in rural areas, and also in Katsina State.⁴³

The only cleavage which was used to *divide* the anti-government sentiment of youth was religion, though this found limited success. There were a handful of reports where Muslim, pro-government groups attempted to undermine the solidarity of protesters by framing it as an attempt to oust the Muslim head of state. Yet, the small number of these reports suggest that it was only a minority, cross-current among the wider youth population which accepted this narrative. It did not seem they were successful (at least yet) in peeling away the majority of muslim youth, as the vast majority of respondents described online conversations, physical protests, riots, looting, and other anti-government collective action as being a point of unity and collaboration across religious lines.

It would be naive to assume that cohesion around youth identity substantially displaces long standing social divisions in Nigeria. Yet, we do interpret this shift as the rapid strengthening of a cross-cutting 'youth' identity, which could potentially be leveraged for future organizing and collective behavior.

Causal Link 7 <> 4 AND 10: Strength of Evidence

Typically cohesion across identity lines is thought to decrease social unrest and signal a less aggrieved society. Yet, in this case, activism and social unrest against the government were drivers of social cohesion among a diverse coalition of Nigerian youth. Once this cohesion was established, this seemed to drive further activism and unrest, resulting in a mutually reinforcing connection. While more unexpected than other

⁴³ The ability of COVID-19 to act as a unifying common enemy, and bridge identities which were previously in conflict did not generally lead to activism or unrest. Thus, this mutual connection is triggered/initiated by [4] and [10], and only activates the opposite direction afterward.

links, this finding has strong evidence in areas where activism and unrest occurred. Attempts by pro-government actors to re-cast the movement in divisively religious terms were also seemingly unsuccessful, thus reinforcing the existence of this dynamic. We interpret this as **strong evidence**.

Causal Link: **[10] Growing Social Unrest >** **[11] Violence and Instability**

Causal Link 10 > 11: Description of Evidence

Social unrest is a tightly linked concept to both violence and instability.⁴⁴ Using our operationalized notion of social unrest, more transgressive anti-government activities which youth undertook are considered social unrest (looting of palliatives and also actions by broadly ‘pro-government’ entities, including blocking of roads, unauthorized gatherings, and rioting). While none of our respondents directly link these to a likelihood of government collapse, it is abundantly clear that the very widespread unrest across the country has large implications for the current government. This is most directly seen in the government’s disbanding of the SARS unit in response to the protests, which signals the realization that such mass mobilization could threaten stability (Malumfashi 2020).

Besides increasing instability, social unrest also produced reported violence both by protestors and the police. Protestors reportedly stampeded and killed members of their own group in Abuja, in addition, there was widespread disorder, theft, and property damage during the palliative and EndSARS riots which carries high risk of injury and/or death. The most referenced and severe violence however was committed by the security forces—which targeted the protesting youth—and/or ‘government thugs’ and other hired spoilers (especially Muslim youth) who were allegedly encouraged and paid by pro-government forces to hijack the protests. These groups openly attacked protests, leading to injury and death. Official police units also reportedly used violence to disperse protests and riots in urban areas.

As expected, this causal link was only activated in areas which experienced social unrest directed at the government, which were all urban areas except for those in Katsina.

The existence of large, angry protests around the country is incontrovertible (given its documentation), and the connection between social unrest and increased instability (both in this case and also generally) is evident. Moreover, the reaction of the government to this unrest strongly suggests that the government viewed the behavior as threatening. Concerning violence, it was well evidenced that there were multiple forms of violence emerging from this social unrest: both perpetrated by the protesting youth themselves and also as a counter reaction by government affiliated actors. We cannot verify the accounts of hired ‘thugs’ being recruited to perform this function, but accounts from urban areas corroborate the presence of rogue elements attempting to hijack the movement for violent and/or criminal ends.

Causal Link 10 > 11: Strength of Evidence

⁴⁴ We are using the standard definition of instability, as “the propensity of government collapse... by ‘constitutional’ or ‘unconstitutional’ means.” and consider public expressions of anti-government and/or anti-regime sentiment to be related to instability (Alesina et al. 1996)

Unsurprisingly, we find **strong evidence** of social unrest leading to incidents of violence and instability. Further, the violence by government security actors is widely documented by news reports and trackers of violence in Nigeria (Paquette 2020).

Causal Link:

[10] Growing Social Unrest >

[1] COVID-19 Spread and Policy Response (Restrictions and Relief)

Causal Link 10 > 1: Description of Evidence

This connection is largely posited as a logical deduction from the very high rates of in-person protests and events related to unrest (looting, rioting, etc.) in urban areas of Nigeria, excluding urban Katsina State. This proximity in the midst of a pandemic is certainly risky behavior from a public health standpoint. Moreover, respondents did not note any precautions, and photographic evidence of the event strongly indicates that mask usage and social distancing were limited. However, given that the majority of these events were likely outdoors, it is unclear the *extent* to which this led to COVID-19 spread.

Despite almost no data on the actual spread, we do note that correlations have been drawn between the timelines of the mass protests and COVID-19 cases, which provide some basis for inference, but certainly require further exploration given the correlational nature of the data (Ohia and Salawu 2020).

Causal Link 10 > 1: Strength of Evidence

We posit this as **weak evidence** that social unrest was a risk factor for COVID-19 spread. Noting that this connection is posited as a logical deduction from the certainty of unrest events with low mask usage and distancing, but there were no specific instances cited of people being infected through social unrest and/or protests.

Causal Link:

[8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime >

[4] Strained State-Society Relations and Increased Activism

Causal Link 8 > 4: Description of Evidence

The perceived growth of insecurity and crime was ubiquitous across communities in our sample, when this crime was not answered by security forces (which was the vast majority of the time), the government was blamed for not providing security and rule of law.⁴⁵ This increased *tension* was present in both urban and rural areas across all states and regions. In the minority of communities where security forces were perceived to effectively respond to increased crime, community members were grateful for their presence, but resented the behavior of these security agents (either government or vigilante). Indeed, the surge in

⁴⁵ Causal links [3] > [8] and [5] > [8]

security forces reportedly generated rent-seeking, excessive use of force, and abuses by security forces, thus lending itself to a different sort of crime, and also generated tension between the state and society.

However, while increased crime (including crimes directly by state actors and also an inability to enforce rule of law) increased tension universally, it only resulted in significantly increased activism (and later social unrest) in areas which saw an increase in **online** grievance sharing. As noted prior, this was consistently reported in all urban areas excluding those in Katsina State. This suggests that having a wide platform for organizing was potentially a scope condition for strained state-society relations to result in significant activism and collective action. The lockdown no doubt further increased the importance of online discourse relative to in-person forms of activism. This is nowhere more apparent than in rural Katsina State, where the rural area saw extremely high levels of crime increase, but there was no significant activism or organizing against the government in response.

Causal Link 8 > 4: Strength of Evidence

We find very **strong evidence** that perceptions of criminality and insecurity increased during COVID, and the government was blamed for its inability to constrain criminal activity (by both state and non-state actors). Absent some incentive to lie in responses (which we are not aware of), we directly collected the *perception* of criminality and insecurity increasing during the interviews, and also the increased anger and grievance against the government for not responding in ways that respondents perceived as adequate. Thus we can confidently hold this connection.

Causal Link: [8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime > [7] Changing Identity, Social Cohesion, and Conflict

Description of Evidence

Our analysis strongly supports the idea that both economic hardship and uneven government control of rural areas (notably in Katsina State) lead to pervasive insecurity and crime in communities in Nigeria.⁴⁶ This increase in crime and insecurity put significant strain on *both* inter-group and intra-group cohesion.

For *intra-group* cohesion, a sharp uptick in perceived crime was often blamed on unemployed and/or idle youth in the community; and generally respondents reported feeling less safe within their community (e.g. feeling they could no longer leave their bike outside unattended, or noting that *even a pot of food* would be stolen by community members). Besides personal and property safety, many respondents were concerned that the morals of the wider community were being damaged by an increase in prostitution, sexual violence, and drug use--again driven by a mixture of unemployment, lockdown, and youth idleness. This was seen as a *moral* breakdown of society. This pattern was seen across all regions and states. Notably, this did not tend to escalate into broader conflicts, as there was no clear 'cleavage' around which to organize grievances or scapegoat a certain group.

In contrast, crimes attributed to *outsider groups* tended to lead to ongoing increased tension between different identities. There were many small instances of this, where a specific crime (or accusation of crime)

⁴⁶ Causal links [3] > [8] and [5] > [8]

would lead to a conflict between groups, especially kidnapping or murder. However, Fulani herders were the most emblematic of an ‘outsider group’ perceived as driving both property and violent crimes and being a source of weapons and other smuggled goods. In many cases this significantly damaged relations between the groups. For instance, in rural Katsina, multiple vigilante groups began targeting Fulanis and barring them from entering certain areas or harassing them, making the entire Fulani community feel scapegoated for the perceived wrongs of their kinsmen. Due to the clear differentiation of the Fulani community, these tensions were more often able to escalate into group-level conflicts.

Strength of Evidence

We characterize this as **weak evidence**. There were a number of complaints about inter-community cohesion being strained due to crime, but there were very few ‘events’ relating to this. Regarding inter-community strain, this was mostly isolated to Fulanis as a strong and recurring pattern between states, however the rest of the inter-group conflicts due to crime were fairly isolated and it was not clear that they represented a strong pattern. In all cases, it seemed that the crime itself was a sparking event, but almost always there was a pre-existing pattern, and especially conflicts between Fulani and other groups has been a long-existing tension. Thus, it is difficult to judge whether this is a shift or continuation of identity dynamics.

Causal Link:

[9] Increasing Armed Group Presence, Capacity, Recruitment, and Activities >

**[8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime AND
[11] Violence and Instability**

Causal Link 9 > 8 AND 11: Description of Evidence

Data from Katsina State clearly demonstrated that an increase in AG activity leads to growing insecurity and crime. Adamawa serves as a comparative counterfactual, albeit a limited one. In the case of Katsina State, the under-policing of rural areas combined with economic hardship drove the proliferation of AG activity and recruitment. These organized bandit groups were especially able to violently terrorize rural areas, seizing property, preying on farmers, and establishing control over rural areas to carry out a variety of crimes, such as smuggling and kidnapping.

In contrast, Adamawa State saw a surge in AOG activity directly *prior* to the pandemic, which triggered a reaction by state and local security forces to ensure that AOG presence and activities did not increase. Our data shows that this was largely successful, and broadly security improved due to the energetic efforts of security forces to establish rule of law through additional checkpoints, patrols, collaboration between vigilantes and security forces, and a general increase in security personnel. This comparison is imperfect, as AOGs are substantially different from a bandit group (having a clear religious ideology and more formal connections to actors outside of the country), yet the comparison still highlights that limiting AG activity seems to substantially lower crime and increase security.

We also strongly note that increasing security forces is not a panacea, and can itself increase crime and insecurity.⁴⁷ For instance, security forces in Adamawa were reported to carry out crimes of their own: extorting the communities they were ostensibly protecting and abusing their force of arms in a variety of ways. Yet, community members were nonetheless convinced that their presence successfully limited the ability of AOGs to operate.

Causal Link 9 > 8 AND 11: Strength of Evidence

For Katsina, we find very **strong evidence** that increased AG activity will increase violence, crime, and insecurity (indeed, this is almost a tautology, as AG actors operating outside of the law are illegal by definition). Furthermore, these AGs perpetuated widespread violence and terror in regions they controlled. The comparative case of Adamawa also shows that crime and violence will not increase through this pathway if increased AG activity is prevented.

Causal Link: [11] Violence and Instability > [8] Growing Insecurity and Increased Crime

Causal Link 11 > 8: Description of Evidence

This linkage is extremely well supported, as the two concepts are deeply intertwined. In all cases where violence and instability increased—either due to economic or political motivations—there were corresponding increases in both the perception of insecurity in an area and also crime.

For urban areas which saw a dramatic increase in political social unrest, leading to instability, looting, riots, and violence of the state against protestors, most of these activities *themselves* can be properly categorized as crimes. And, even after the discrete events ended, many respondents—especially older respondents—felt that youth were more likely to carry out looting and attacks, even outside of the direct protests, and that the protests signaled a general decrease in rule of law and the ability of social norms to constrain criminals. In a handful of cases, criminal groups also took advantage of the violence and instability to carry out crimes, using it as a guise for their material interests (rather than political grievances which generated the broader movement).

For Katsina State, which saw a general increase in violence and instability driven by increasingly aggressive armed bandit groups, these actions were *themselves* criminal, and substantially increased the perceived level of insecurity for the population (with very good reason). It also signalled the breakdown of law and order, which was occasionally cited as the reason why people themselves would engage in criminal activity, through a 'if you can't beat them, join them' mentality.

Causal Link 11 > 8: Strength of Evidence

⁴⁷ Criminal actions by security actors discussed in causal link [5] > [8]

There is very **strong evidence** of this connection, which is expected due to the extremely close relationship between the two.

Causal Link:
[11] Violence and Instability >
[2] Shifting Migration & Movement Patterns

Causal Link 11 > 2: Description of Evidence

Violence was the most common driver of migration, resulting in IDPs. There were two types of violence which drove movement. The first was identity-based violent conflicts, in which groups were largely displaced due to violence against them. The second was increasing insecurity, especially in rural Katsina State, which drive rural to urban migration⁴⁸.

Causal Link 11 > 2: Strength of Evidence

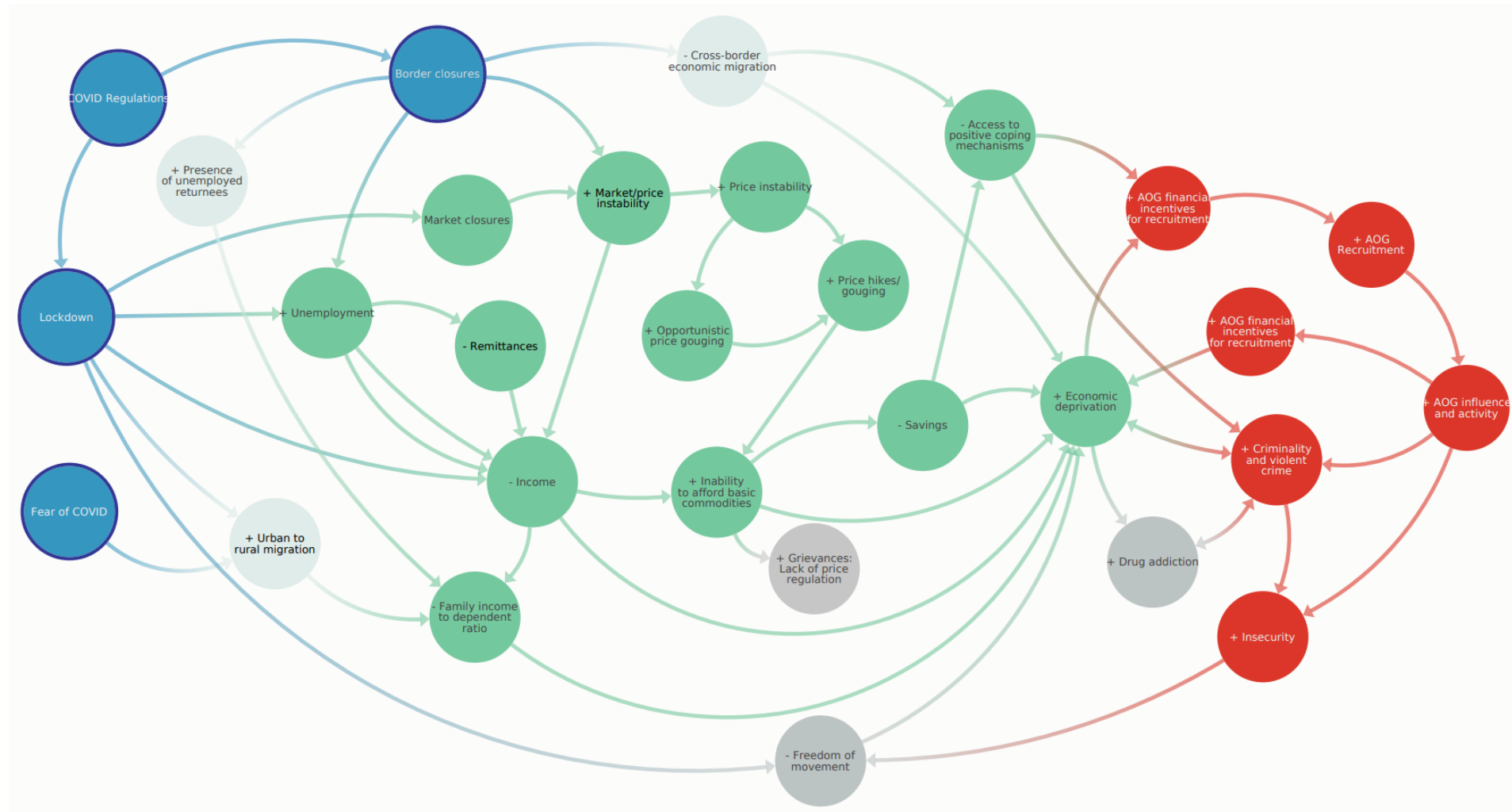
The evidence for this connection is strong, as displaced and hosting communities themselves corroborated both the reason and result of the displacement. Displacement tended to be rural to urban, except for the case of herder groups (typically Fulani), which needed pastures and therefore sometimes were displaced to other rural areas.

There is **strong evidence** for this, with multiple, well corroborated cases. No reasons were found to doubt reports, nor alternate explanations for movement presented.

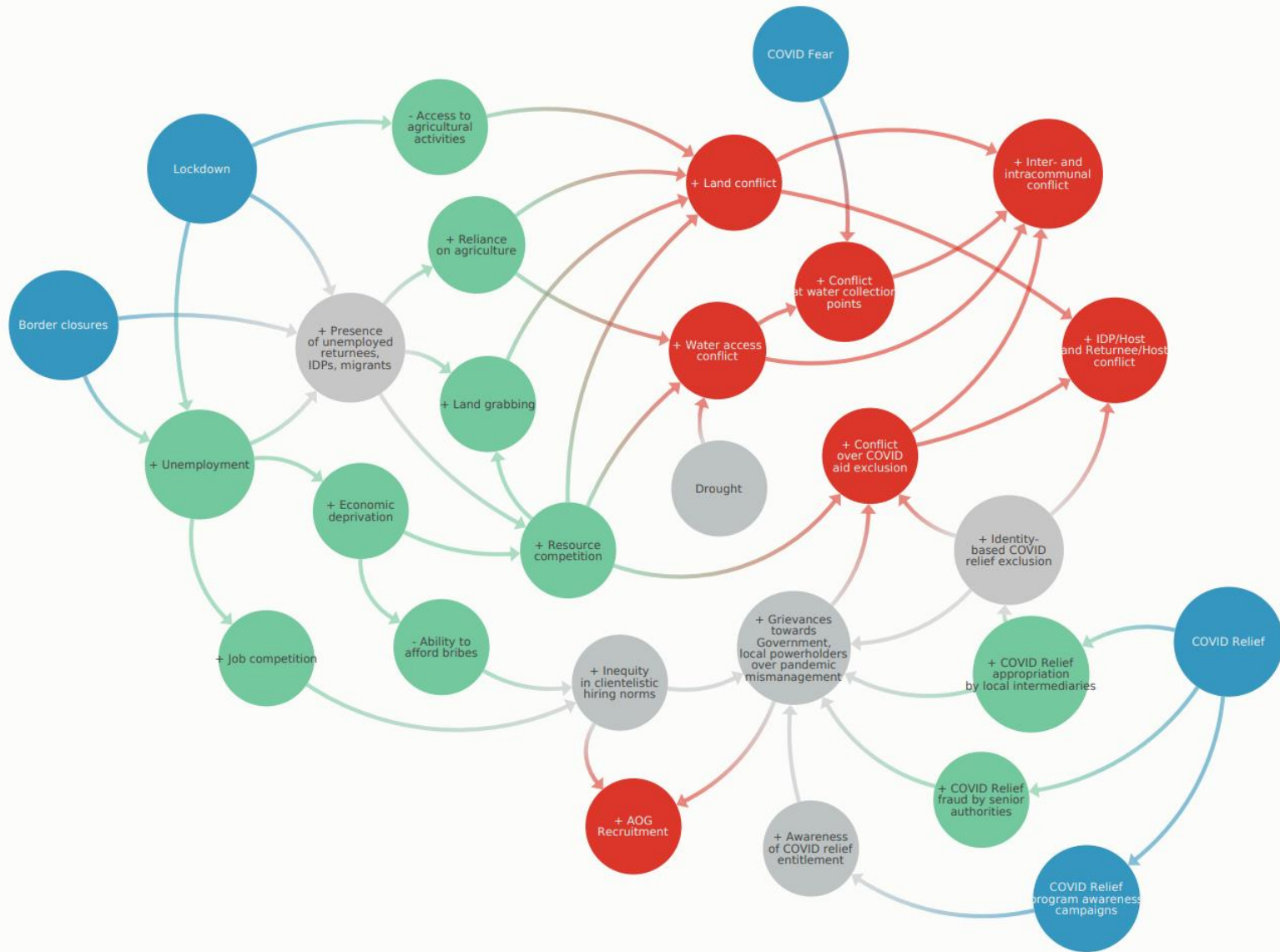
⁴⁸ Please reference evidence for both presented in [2] > [7]

Appendix E: Afghanistan Case Study- Detailed Pathway Systems Maps

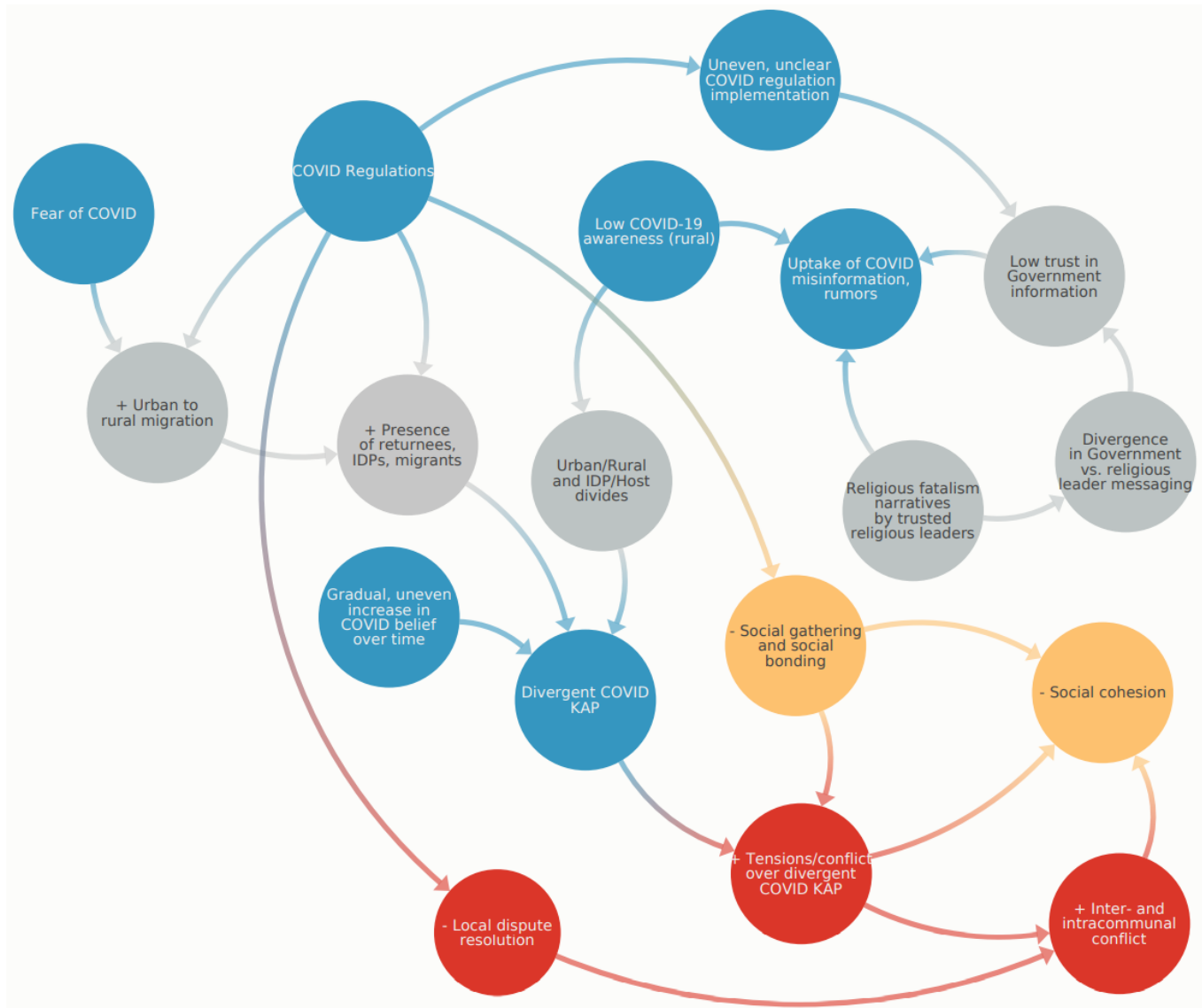
Pathway 1 Systems Map: COVID-19 Regulations, Economic Vulnerability and Insecurity



Pathway 2 Systems Map: COVID-19 Response, Resource Competition and State-Society Grievances



Pathway 3 Systems Map: COVID-19 Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) and Social Cohesion



Pathway 4 Systems Map: COVID-19 Response, Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence

