



UNRAVELING NIGERIA'S INSECURITY CRISIS

**The Urgent Need For
A Lasting Solution**

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SECTION 1

Introduction

Executive Summary

Nigeria is grappling with profound and complex challenges related to insecurity. This report delves into the intricate dynamics and complexities of insecurity in the nation, exploring its root causes and proposing strategies to build a more secure and resilient society.

The report begins with an exhaustive review of relevant literature to understand the diverse character and drivers of insecurity across Nigeria's various geopolitical zones. This analysis provides valuable insights into realities faced by communities directly impacted by Nigeria's insecurity crisis. The findings indicate that while insecurity may be perceived as a general and pervasive issue, its underlying essence, nature, character, and identity differ significantly from one region to another. Nevertheless, the impact of insecurity is uniformly felt across the country, manifesting as pervasive fear and distrust that permeates communities.¹⁶

In January and February 2024, our teams conducted qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys in Benue and Imo States. These activities were part of case studies aimed at validating secondary research findings. The case studies focused on Benue's Gwer West Local Government Area and Imo's Ikeduru Local Government Area. The goal was to uncover the common origins of shared negative experiences such as uncertainty and fear, despite differences

in the nature and scale of insecurity. Specifically, the choice of Benue and Imo as case studies was deliberate, designed to verify whether insecurity, while displaying different characteristics from region to region, has similar impacts.

This report provides policymakers and stakeholders with critical insights to guide decision-making processes, paving the way for sustainable peace and development within Nigeria and across the broader West Africa sub-region.

In Benue State, suspected Fulani herders displaced residents from rural communities, forcing them into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Naka. The herders destroyed homes, schools, markets, and health facilities, causing loss of life and severe disruption.³ Farmers lost their ancestral lands and livelihoods as invaders now occupy many villages. Similarly, Imo State experiences the impacts of sporadic attacks by 'unknown gunmen', (suspected IPOB separatists),³⁴ kidnappers, and occasionally herdsmen, which instill fear and disrupt farming, raising food prices.¹⁹ The insecurity forces youth to migrate to larger towns for safety, causing

educational institutions, health facilities, and economic and commercial activities to operate below normal levels.²

The study underscores the failure of past strategies to effectively address Nigeria's insecurity crisis. Despite substantial financial investments, the situation has only deteriorated over the years. The ineffective "fire brigade" approach and lenient treatment of the problem have emboldened perpetrators and inspired new attacks on innocent Nigerians.

The study further highlights the inadequacy of past strategies in effectively addressing Nigeria's insecurity crisis. Despite considerable financial investments, the situation has worsened over time. The superficial, reactive measures and lenient approach toward perpetrators have emboldened those responsible for violence and motivated new groups to carry out even more vicious attacks on innocent Nigerians.

The findings from this study highlight that a uniform, militaristic approach to resolving the

crisis is insufficient and often counterproductive. Such strategies have stretched the military's capabilities, forcing them to engage insurgents of varying types in 30 of Nigeria's 36 states. Instead, tailored solutions must be developed for each region's unique challenges to ensure meaningful and lasting progress. This report

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List of Acronyms

1. **ACLED** - Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
2. **BBC** - British Broadcasting Corporation
3. **DNA** - Deoxyribonucleic Acid
4. **ESN** - Eastern Security Network
5. **EU** - European Union
6. **FAO** - Food and Agriculture Organization
7. **FCT** - Federal Capital Territory
8. **FDI** - Foreign Direct Investment
9. **FEWS Net** - Famine Early Warning Systems Network
10. **FRSC** - Federal Road Safety Corps
11. **GDP** - Gross Domestic Product
12. **HDI** - Human Development Index
13. **IDMC** - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
14. **IDP** - Internally Displaced Persons
15. **IED** - Improvised Explosive Device
16. **iNSDEC** - Initiative for Social Economic Development Communication
17. **IOM** - International Organization for Migration
18. **IPOB** - Indigenous People of Biafra
19. **ISIS** - Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
20. **ISWAP** - Islamic State West Africa Province
21. **LGA** - Local Government Area
22. **NAMA** - Nigerian Airspace Management Agency
23. **NBS** - Nigeria Bureau of Statistics
24. **NCAA** - Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority
25. **NDA** - Niger Delta Avengers
26. **NGO** - Non-Governmental Organisation
27. **NSE** - Nigerian Stock Exchange
28. **OCHA - UN** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
29. **PSJ** - Peace and Social Justice
30. **SALW** - Small Arms and Light Weapons
31. **SDM** - Sub Divisional Magistrate
32. **SSCE** - Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
33. **SSG** - Secretary to the State Government
34. **UAV** - Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
35. **UK** - United Kingdom
36. **UN** - United Nations
37. **UNCTAD** - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
38. **UNICEF** - United Nations Children's Fund
39. **US** - United States
40. **WW-2** - World War 2

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This report would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of a dedicated group of individuals who embraced this project as their own.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone involved in the success of this research project. A special thank you to the research teams led by Ema Edison and Richard Adeyinka Emmanuel, whose dedication and expertise were essential to our study. They bravely navigated insecure environments to gather data across various states and local governments in Nigeria.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the editors, including Dr. Pius Adejoh, whose keen insights and meticulous attention to detail greatly enhanced the quality of our work. We are also grateful to the in-house iNSDEC team for their

unwavering dedication and collaboration throughout this endeavor.

We acknowledge the exceptional talents of our graphic artists, photographers, and designers. Their creativity and vision brought our research to life in ways we could not have imagined.

To everyone who contributed to this project, no matter the scale of their involvement, we thank you for your dedication and support.

We hope that the collective efforts put into this work will contribute significantly to making Nigeria a safer place and that the recommendations provided will help address the various facets of insecurity.

Foreword - 1

Nigeria is currently afflicted with heightening insecurity. Worst hit are her states in the north west, the north east, the middle belt and the south east. In northern Nigeria, highways are unsafe, farmers cannot go to their farms, innocent people are abducted even from their homes.

In the south east, where there are secessionist and separatist agitations, innocent people have been killed by “unknown-but-known” gunmen. School children cannot continue their education for fear that the Chibok abduction may be re-enacted. Insecurity in Nigeria has inflicted a multiple paralysis that has affected schools, hospitals, places of worship, farms, the food chain, to mention but these. Here is a situation where the future is jeopardised by a mismanaged present.

But insecurity is not peculiar to Nigeria. It is now a disturbing trend in the North and West African sub-regions. Apart from Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Cameroon and, to some extent, Benin and Cote d’Ivoire have been hit at one time or the other. Mozambique in southern Africa has not been spared. It would therefore not be inaccurate to speak of a belt of insecurity in Africa.

The opening remarks prepared for delivery on February 14, 2020 by Angela Gurría, Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) come to mind¹. The occasion was the unveiling of the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC)’s report on

the Geography of Conflict in North and West Africa. Gurría had this to say in her remarks:

“The level of insecurity in the North and West African region escalated at a threatening rate over the last few years. The sharp increase in armed attacks on communities, schools, health centres and other public institutions and infrastructure has reached unprecedented levels, with violence disrupting livelihoods and access to social services. “This ... is a threat to our entire globalised world, and we must talk about it. We must find viable solutions, together, to tackle a crisis that has the potential to affect all of us.”

The usual response of African governments has been to resort to military solution. This is what Nigeria has done and is still doing: Reinforce the military. Increase military budget spending. Buy more guns and bullets. Buy more war planes for surveillance and bombing. In some instances, the level of insecurity has provided a convenient excuse for young soldiers to stage coups, as has happened in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.

Beyond the euphoria of messiahs in military fatigue, there is need for proper diagnosis before therapy, a need to identify the factor or factors behind this disturbing trend of insecurity. Military intervention, either by way of counter-insurgency or by way of unlawful seizure of reins of government by opportunistic coup plotters, is an adventure that is to be called to question.

As Gurría continued in her remarks, the Spatial Conflict Dynamics indicator (SCDi) used in the report that was being launched, *“shows that,*

1. <https://www.oecd.org/about/secretary-general/the-evolution-of-violence-across-north-and-west-africa-february-2020.htm/1000>

while military interventions have generally reduced the intensity of violence in the short-term, and achieved their military objectives of stopping rebels, destroying the bases of violent organisations, or removing dictators, they have not brought about durable conflict resolution. Conflicts in the region have local roots; insurgencies emerge because of grievances, real or perceived, that should be addressed through civilian procedures and means. The use of the SCDi helps to show how military interventions can create both spaces and moments where violence is suppressed but will not generate durable solutions to the political circumstances that gave rise to the violence in the first place.”

The primary factor is forgotten, or ignored, certainly neglected. The factor to which other factors are related is failure of state. The state fails where and when it is no longer capable or willing to protect the citizen. It therefore becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to address real or perceived grievances “through civilian procedures and means”, to use the words of Gurría.

A constitution establishes a framework for addressing grievances that can lead to insurgency. It does so by establishing institutions that constitute the state. These institutions are to be at the service of the citizen. For them to function in this regard, they must be in the hands of leaders of requisite multiple competence, leaders with intellectual, ethical and technical competence. The electoral process must, as much as possible, reflect the will of the people. To speak of the electoral process in many African countries is to speak of a process subject to the whims and caprices of

persons lacking in democratic credentials and temperament.

It is now clear that security forces in Nigeria and in many African countries are simply incapable of adequately responding to the complexities of insecurity that bedevil these countries. Where the constitution is deficient and weak, state institutions are weak; and where institutions are weak, they become incapable of playing their primary role, which is, protection of the land, its citizens, and other inhabitants. Faced with weak constitutions, weak states in the hands of powerful but incompetent dictators, faced with the collapse of vital institutions, the North and West African sub-regions are being overrun by insurgents and bandits.

Instead of waiting till a military coup takes place in a member country before reacting, this is the time for leaders of Nigeria, leaders of other sub regional countries in Africa like the Economic Community of West African States, and leaders of countries on the African continent, the African Union, to do a serious soul searching and be frank in their conversations with their peoples and with one another.

In this well-researched, well-argued, and scientifically presented study is found an indispensable tool for researchers and policy makers. Whoever wishes to understand the embarrassing insecurity affecting Nigeria would find in this work a thorough study of the phenomenon. Whoever is in search of solution need not go further.

Rev. Fr. Professor Anthony Akinwale, OP
Deputy Vice Chancellor,
Augustine University, Ilara-Epe, Lagos State

Foreword - 2

The unfolding insecurity crisis in Nigeria has reached unprecedented levels, threatening the social fabric and economic stability of the nation.

"Unraveling Nigeria's Insecurity Crisis: The Urgent Need for a Lasting Solution" presents a comprehensive analysis and proposes targeted strategies to address this multifaceted challenge.

This report, a collaborative effort between INSDEC and PSJ-UK, offers a profound exploration of the underlying drivers of insecurity across Nigeria's diverse regions. Through meticulous research, including both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys conducted in Benue and Imo States, the report provides invaluable insights into the distinct yet interconnected nature of insecurity affecting various communities.

The analysis underscores that while insecurity manifests differently across Nigeria's geopolitical zones, its impact is uniformly devastating, breeding fear, distrust, and economic disruption. The case studies of Benue and Imo highlight how regional peculiarities shape the nature of insecurity, yet also reveal common patterns of suffering and displacement experienced by affected populations.

Despite significant financial investments in security measures, Nigeria's approach has largely been reactive and insufficiently

nuanced. This report emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift from a militaristic, one-size-fits-all approach to a more holistic and tailored strategy. It calls for the government and elite to take ownership of the crisis, engage with local communities, and leverage advanced technologies and international cooperation to develop sustainable solutions.

The recommendations within this report advocate for a comprehensive and integrated approach to combating insecurity. This includes strengthening governance, embracing community policing, reforming the security sector, and fostering regional and international collaboration. Additionally, the report highlights the importance of addressing socio-economic grievances and ensuring humanitarian support for displaced persons and affected communities.

I commend the efforts of the writers and believe this report will serve as a critical resource for policymakers, security experts, and all stakeholders committed to building a safer and more resilient Nigeria. It is my hope that the insights and recommendations herein will inspire decisive action and pave the way for lasting peace and development in Nigeria and the broader West Africa sub-region.

JON Ode

Air Vice Marshal (Rtd)

Preface

Insecurity in Nigeria – A Full-Blown Crisis

Nigeria, a federation² with vast potential and promise, is now faced with a severe crisis that threatens its very existence - insecurity. Tens of thousands have perished, and many more have been injured. Families have been shattered, and society has been thrown into turmoil. It is not an overstatement to suggest that this crisis casts a dark shadow over the nation's future. Recent data from the first quarter of 2024 underscores the gravity of the situation and diminishes hopes for a swift and decisive resolution.

According to a recent PSJ-UK Atrocity Report,³⁶ the first quarter of 2024 alone saw 442 fatalities, 1,332 abductions, and 89 injuries across Nigeria. Benue (91), Nasarawa (48), Katsina (47), and Plateau (46) States recorded the highest death tolls, while Kaduna (519), Borno (319), Katsina (133), and Zamfara (122) experienced the most abductions during this period (see table 1).

Table 1: Deaths and abductions in top 8 Nigerian states in the 1st quarter of 2024

		ABDUCTIONS

The crisis spans the entire country, affecting every geopolitical zone with its own distinct characteristics yet unified by the destruction it brings. Fear and uncertainty dominate daily life, as people are killed, properties destroyed, and communal bonds strained to their limits.

The situation is further exacerbated by the presence of bold armed groups equipped with advanced weapons often superior to those of Nigerian police and military forces.³¹ This disparity fuels their audacity, enabling them to seize territories, terrorise communities, and commit violence without consequence. These occurrences raise urgent questions about the nation's ability to sustain itself in the face of this ongoing assault.

Ungoverned spaces have proliferated across Nigeria, with armed groups assuming a quasi-governing role. Jihadists and separatist factions have taken control of local government areas, enforcing their authority through taxation and extrajudicial measures.

In response to these pressing threats, iNSDEC and PSJ-UK undertook a critical initiative to understand and address Nigeria's complex security challenges. This includes defining the current nature and scope of insecurity, analyzing its root causes, and identifying areas of heightened risk. The report also assesses the wide-ranging impacts of insecurity on Nigerian society and proposes evidence-based solutions

² Some scholars contend that Nigeria, despite its official designation, does not truly function as a federation and should therefore not be regarded as such. It's a continuous debate.

tailored to the specific needs of each state or region.

It is pertinent to state here that we had to make a hard decision to suspend collection of data on insecurity and get this report out because it was always tempting to delay and continuously add new information that surfaces on the issue, which seems to be coming up every day, every hour and almost every minute. The continuous occurrence of insecurity related matters therefore buttresses our call for urgent solutions, because things are getting worse by the day.

For instance, towards the end of June 2024, M.D. Shehu, Zamfara State Commissioner of Police, declared that banditry has become an industry in the state, where a District Head, a member of the State House of Assembly and a former local Government Chairman had been implicated.

A few days after that disclosure, The Punch and other newspapers reported that a judge of the Borno State High Court was on Monday, 24th June abducted at Jiba town, along Biu-Maiduguri Road in Borno State. The judge, working at the Borno State High Court in Maiduguri, was abducted alongside his wife, driver and orderly, as their vehicle was stopped by a team of insurgents on the road, which took them hostage and whisked them into the Sambisa Forest. The

same newspaper had also reported on the same day how some bandits killed the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, on his way to Kaduna from Sokoto State.

However, this report has to be published now, so that stakeholders can be made aware of the seriousness of the matter and be able to make an informed decision on how to curb it before it is too late.

Ultimately, this initiative seeks to play a pivotal role in promoting lasting peace and progress, not only within Nigeria but across the broader West African sub-region. The report attempts to provide in-depth analysis, practical recommendations, and targeted interventions to guide policymakers, security forces, and community leaders in their efforts to tackle insecurity and its root causes. It calls for collaboration and dialogue across all levels of society. Our goal is to establish a resilient framework that addresses the challenges of today while paving the way for a more stable, prosperous future for Nigeria and its neighbouring countries.

Richard Ikiebe, Ph.D
President, iNSDEC
Director PSJ-UK

Profiles

iNSDEC

iNSDEC, a think-tank and resource hub registered as Initiative for Socio-Economic Development Communication, is located in Lagos, Nigeria, and it is dedicated to addressing critical social and economic challenges through rigorous data extraction, analysis, and strategic communication. Our core mission is to combat poverty, inequality, and injustice by fostering economic development, enhancing social welfare, and improving education and healthcare systems.

At iNSDEC, we believe that robust data and comprehensive analysis are pivotal in crafting effective strategies to tackle the complex interplay of population dynamics and environmental factors. By providing insightful research and advocating for impactful policy solutions, we aim to drive positive transformation and contribute to nation-building efforts.

Our commitment extends to serving as a catalyst for change, promoting sustainable development, and supporting initiatives that lead to equitable growth and improved quality of life for all. Through our work, we aspire to influence policy, inspire advocacy, and implement solutions that address the most pressing socio-economic issues facing our communities and beyond.

PSJ-UK

The International Organisation for Peacebuilding & Social Justice (PSJ-UK) is a UK-registered charity dedicated to promoting peace, social justice, and sustainable development in Nigeria and beyond. Leveraging a network of partners, PSJ-UK serves as a voice for marginalised communities and champions active diaspora advocacy, striving to make a positive impact on behalf of voiceless communities in Nigeria and Africa.

We recognise that the numerous sources of insecurity and terror currently plaguing many African nations threaten their political and social stability. Allowing such conditions to persist could have far-reaching consequences for Africa, as well as for the United Kingdom and the nations of Western Europe.

As a non-partisan organisation, PSJ-UK is committed to bringing attention to, and addressing the widespread, yet often under-reported widespread atrocities in Nigeria. Our mission is working to transform the outlook of Nigeria and other African nations to achieve positive peace that enables them to become prosperous and productive societies.

Prologue

INSECURITY IN NIGERIA - A Call for Collaborative and Multifaceted Solution

In every corner of Nigeria, the pervasive issue of insecurity profoundly affects the quality of life of its people. This harsh reality is the daily experience of ordinary Nigerians, who grapple with physical, emotional, and spiritual trauma as a result of the widespread unrest. Children face hunger and adults suffer malnourishment due to soaring food prices, placing staple food items out of reach for many already financially and emotionally strained. The uncertain future faced by school children in affected communities are a stark reflection of the dire situation.

This blunt truth forms the basis for iNSDEC and PSJ-UK's collaboration to conduct this research and put together this report to help unravel Nigeria's insecurity crisis, with a view to suggesting a lasting solution.

The cost of insecurity remains alarmingly high and shows no sign of abating, underscoring the urgent need for targeted measures from all stakeholders to confront and mitigate its impact. It is our sincere hope that the insights and findings presented here serve as catalyst for informed policy changes, strategic

direction, and meaningful interventions that address root causes and foster lasting peace and stability across Nigeria.

This report is designed to act as a rallying call for policymakers, community leaders, citizens, and the international community to unite in the common goal of securing Nigeria's future. Our united position at iNSDEC and PSJ-UK, is that the time to act is now.

Collaboration among all stakeholders - including politicians, military forces, civil society, security experts, businesses, and the international community - is essential to stem the tide of insecurity and protect the well-being and progress of Nigeria. Together, these concerted efforts can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous nation.

Ogie Eboigbe
Executive VP, iNSDEC
July 2024

Ayo Adedoyin
CEO, PSJ-UK
July 2024



SECTION 2

The Report

2.1 BACKGROUND

Nigeria is a former British colony and gained independence in 1960. It has a history of military dictatorships and democratic transitions, with the most recent democratic election being in 2023. The country is located in West Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea with a total area of 923,768 sq. km, making it the 14th largest country in Africa.¹ It consists of diverse landscapes, including the Niger-Delta, Savannah, and Tropical Rain Forests. In terms of population, the country has about 228 million as of April 2024, based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data,³⁸ and a highly diverse population. The country's median age is 17.2 years, with a large youth population. There are over 250 ethnic groups in the country, with the largest being Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba.³⁴

In terms of economy, Nigeria stands as one of Africa's largest economies, with her current GDP estimated at \$1.115 trillion by the conclusion of 2023, as measured by purchasing power parity terms, according to World Economics.⁷¹ The key sectors driving the country's economic activity include oil and gas, agriculture, services, and manufacturing. However, the nation grapples with notable economic challenges, including issues of corruption, infrastructural deficiencies, and overreliance on revenue generated from oil exports.

2.2 CONTEXT

Nigeria, once celebrated for its rich cultural diversity and promising economic prospects, currently finds itself ensnared in a relentless spiral of violence and bloodshed. The opening months of 2024 have been marked by a sobering toll, witnessing the loss of over 1,000 lives, including innocent women and children, at the hands of deadly belligerent groups.³⁵ Additionally, nearly 500 individuals have endured the anguish of abduction during this brief period.³⁶

In the preceding year of 2023, the nation mourned the unnecessary deaths of nearly 3,000 individuals, victims of violent extremists including factions of Boko Haram and ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province), alongside shadowy assailants known as 'bandits' and 'unknown gunmen.'²⁵ Motivated by opaque motives and agendas, these perpetrators have sown terror across the country, perpetrating acts of terrorism, political separatism, and engaging in criminal activities including kidnapping and extortion.¹⁰

Thus, the intricate social fabric of the Nigerian society has continued to face increasing strain amidst a surge in violence, perpetuating a cycle of trauma and instability that leaves scars on the collective psyche of the nation. Three years prior, in 2021, Zamfara State bore witness to a chilling reality, as it grappled with the presence of over 30,000 bandits and over 100 encampments, serving as a grim indicator of the scale of insecurity plaguing the nation.³¹ Mass abductions by bandits and kidnapers are also rife in several other states, with Kaduna,

Borno, Katsina, and Niger being the most notorious, and with incidents targeting a wide range of individuals, including men, women, children, students, and travelers spanning various demographic and socio-economic backgrounds.⁴⁰ While the bustling urban centres may exude an illusion of normalcy, the reality is starkly different in rural communities, where violent crises fester and claim lives with alarming regularity. Lately, these gangs have begun to violate the seemingly strong security fortress of the urban centres.³⁷

The ramifications of these conflicts transcend mere numerical data, as certain regions witness mortality rates approaching epidemic proportions. Both domestic and international observers are confronted with a grim inquiry: has the Nigerian state failed in its duty to its citizens, or is it perilously teetering on the brink of failure or collapse?³³ Whatever the answer is, the trajectory of violence paints a dire picture, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to stem the tide of bloodshed and restore a semblance of peace and security to the nation. This is the context and the challenge.

2.3 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this study are outlined as follows:

- i. Define the prevailing nature and scope of insecurity in Nigeria.
- ii. Identify and analyse the core drivers and underlying causes of insecurity in Nigeria.
- iii. Identify and examine the hotspots of insecurity in Nigeria.
- iv. Evaluate the multi-faceted impact of insecurity on various aspects of Nigerian society.
- v. Understand citizens' perceptions of insecurity.
- vi. Generate pragmatic and evidence-based solutions to insecurity that are tailored to the specific challenges faced by each state or region.

2.4 MOTIVATIONS

Insecurity detrimentally impacts critical facets of societal functioning, spanning agricultural productivity and distribution to educational access, healthcare services, and people's overall quality of life.¹⁶ In Nigeria, the phenomenon and its attendant socio-economic repercussions, have catalysed a profound increase in poverty levels, consequently leading to a notable deterioration in the UN Human Development Index (HDI). A few of these tangible and extensive repercussions on lives, livelihoods, and the national economy may suffice here:

- More than 1,500 schools in the Northern states have closed their doors.⁷
- Over 18.5 million children nationwide are deprived of education due to violence,

with Nigeria hosting four out of every five out-of-school children (UNICEF).⁷

- Healthcare services have experienced a rapid decline, with professionals showing reluctance to work in rural areas.¹⁹
- Nigeria's healthcare expenditure has diminished as security spending has escalated, rising from \$2.7 billion annually in 2015 to \$5.1 billion in 2022.²⁶
- Agricultural productivity has declined by 34% over five years in conflict hotspots, leading to a significant number of individuals experiencing "catastrophic food insecurity," as evidenced by data from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net).¹⁵
- Attacks on railway infrastructure, including train tracks and stations, by armed groups and vandals have resulted in derailments, damage to rolling stock, and disruptions to passenger and freight services.²

It is in response to these pressing challenges that iNSDEC and PSJ-UK, two non-governmental organisations, have embarked on this comprehensive study to explore specific dimensions of insecurity in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the often-overlooked human and economic ramifications. The study endeavors to undertake a comprehensive review of the literature and as well collect empirical data on the nature and root causes of insecurity, the key actors involved, and its impact on society, with the ultimate goal of formulating evidence-based solutions to

the entrenched security crisis that poses a significant threat to the nation's unity and progress. This undertaking underscores our unwavering commitment to making meaningful contributions to national development by addressing critical issues that undermine the country's stability and advancement.

2.5 STUDY LOCATION

The primary data for this research were gathered from specific areas: Ikyaghev, Avihijime, SaghevUkusu, Naka, Mbabuande, and Sangev council wards in Gwer West Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State; and Amatta, Atta 1, Amakaohia, Eziama, and Umudim in Ikeduru Local Government Area (LGA) of Imo State. Benue and Imo States are in the country's North-Central and South-Eastern geopolitical zones respectively and were purposely sampled because they have recently grappled with significant security challenges.

Benue State especially, has been beleaguered by recurrent clashes between pastoralists and agricultural communities, resulting in significant loss of life. Data sourced from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED,2023) reveal that the farmer-herder conflict has claimed over 7,000 lives in Benue State alone since 2001.³⁰ Gwer West especially, has borne the brunt of recurring clashes between farmers and pastoralists, resulting in substantial casualties and the displacement of numerous individuals from their ancestral homelands and constituting a veritable threat to agriculture, a vital pillar of the state's economy.

Imo State, situated in the South-Eastern geopolitical zone, has also witnessed a surge in assaults attributed to 'unknown gunmen' alongside instances of cult-related violence. Information gleaned from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database indicates that in 2021 alone, there were over 60 recorded violent incidents in Imo State, leading to more than 150 fatalities.⁵ Ikeduru LGA specifically has experienced escalating attacks by 'unknown gunmen,' particularly those associated with separatist factions, resulting not only in loss of life and property, but also in significant disruption of economic activities.

Understanding the nature, causes and implications of insecurity underscores the need to avoid a one-size fits-all approach.

The situations in Imo and Benue States are similar to those in Nigeria's other states, but with differences in the type, scale, and nature of criminal activities. These states were chosen as 'case studies' for the survey because they illustrate the complex security challenges faced by Nigeria, driven by various factors, though not always to the same degree. Factors such as competition for resources among different groups, widespread availability of small arms, governance shortcomings, and high youth unemployment exacerbate and complicate the crisis. Understanding the nature and root causes of insecurity, and their impacts on lives, livelihoods, and sustainable

development in these specific states would give valuable insight into the situation in the rest of Nigeria.

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively examine the nature, underlying causes, and consequences of insecurity on the inhabitants of the designated communities in Imo and Benue States. The findings will furnish pertinent stakeholders with evidence-based recommendations for tailored solutions to insecurity in Nigeria, ultimately aiding in the pursuit of peace and stability. These are essential foundations for economic progress and human welfare in Nigeria.

2.6 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Given the intricate and interdependent nature of factors contributing to insecurity in Nigeria, the study employed a three-stage data collection methodology, comprising secondary research and qualitative and quantitative surveys.

2.6.1 Secondary Research

The secondary data for this study were collected in November 2023 and involved the rigorous examination and analysis of pre-existing literature, reports, articles, databases, and diverse information reservoirs to enhance understanding of the subject matter. The method was favored because of its acknowledged role in facilitating the acquisition of profound insights, validation of findings, and fortification of primary research endeavors.

2.6.2 Qualitative Survey

This involved the collection of primary data using in-depth, face-to-face interviews that were conducted by seasoned interviewers with residents, using a comprehensive interview guide. Ten respondents from various demographic categories were interviewed in each of the sampled communities in Gwer West LGA of Benue State and Ikeduru LGA of Imo State. The qualitative survey aimed to glean nuanced insights into respondents' perspectives concerning the multifaceted aspects of insecurity, encompassing its nature, frequency, underlying drivers, and consequential impacts within their respective communities. Fieldwork for this phase of the study was executed between January 9th and 12th, 2024, within specifically chosen communities in the states of Benue and Imo.

2.6.3 Quantitative Survey

The quantitative data collection process for this study utilised semi-structured questionnaires administered through an online data gathering application. The survey was conducted concurrently in the two local government areas: Gwer West LGA of Benue State and Ikeduru LGA of Imo State, spanning January 30th to February 3rd, 2024. A total of 849 respondents participated, with 417 respondents from Benue State and 432 from Imo State. Respondents were selected based on availability and convenience within targeted communities. The online platform employed facilitated geo-tagging for each interview session, ensuring accurate location

tracking. The questionnaire encompassed various aspects, including socio-demographic information of the respondents, details regarding the type and frequency of attacks experienced, factors driving insecurity, and the perceived impact of insecurity across different sectors.

2.7 CHALLENGES

During the data collection phase, the research team encountered several challenges in Benue and Imo states. In Benue State, inadequate road infrastructure significantly impeded the team's mobility, forcing them to rely on motorbikes to access certain interview locations. Additionally, the relocation of communities to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps made it difficult to reach respondents.

In Imo State, the team faced similar obstacles due to poor road conditions and unreliable network connectivity, which hindered their movements. Furthermore, some potential respondents declined to participate in interviews due to security concerns related to the activities of 'unknown gunmen.' The situation was exacerbated by high transportation costs, driven by increases in fuel prices. However, these challenges did not deter the team from achieving the objectives of the assignment.

An aerial photograph of a forested area with a stream. A building is visible in the upper right corner. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

SECTION 3

**Prevailing
Nature & Scope
of Insecurity**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents an in-depth thematic review and analysis of extant secondary data on the core objectives of this study. Specifically, the section relies on secondary data to discuss the nature, scope, and character of insecurity in Nigeria; the drivers and underlying causes of insecurity in Nigeria; the hotspots of insecurity in Nigeria and the multifaceted impact of insecurity on various aspects of Nigerian society.

3.2 NATURE AND SCOPE OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

The nation faces a wide range of groups such as Boko Haram, ISWAP jihadists, Fulani ethnic militia, ethnic Biafra agitators, unknown gunmen, terrorists, bandits, communal vigilante groups, kidnappers, separatists' militias, Ansaru jihadists, armed robbers, and various other criminal elements. Each of these groups has its own grievances, motives, and tactics, making the security landscape very complicated. The fluid alliances and allegiances among these groups further blur the lines between perpetrators, victims, and bystanders, adding another layer of complexity.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency surrounding the funding sources and ideological underpinnings of these groups makes it difficult to develop targeted interventions. As a result, efforts to address insecurity often yield limited results, as they fail to account for the complex dynamics at play. As the saying goes, "You cannot solve a

problem you cannot measure." This section thus explores the prevailing nature and scope of insecurity in Nigeria, as devising effective strategies becomes increasingly difficult. As the adage goes, "You cannot solve a problem you cannot measure." This section thus explores the prevailing nature and scope of insecurity in Nigeria, as necessary steps towards devising effective strategies become increasingly elusive.

3.2.1 Banditry

The escalating threat of insecurity in Nigeria has manifested in a significant manner, characterised by a surge in raids, kidnappings, and fatalities perpetrated by organised armed factions commonly known as 'bandits', predominantly operational in the North-West and North-Central zones of the country.⁵ In many northern states, these bandits have established parallel governments that enforce their own form of justice, collect taxes, and resolve disputes, thereby eroding the legitimate powers of state authorities and causing the fabric of the nation to fray.³³ Their nefarious activities have instilled fear among rural populations, causing profound disruptions to agricultural and livestock sectors.

Leading the roster of such groups is Yan Bindiga, notably active in Zamfara State. Research conducted by Dr. Murtala Ahmed Rufa'i from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, paints a grim picture, estimating the presence of approximately 10,000 bandits

solely within Zamfara State.³¹ Their reported atrocities span a decade, claiming the lives of over 12,000 individuals and seizing around 250,000 livestock between 2011 and 2021.

The evolution of this menace is stark, evolving from isolated operations in Zamfara in 2011 to a sprawling network of over one hundred and twenty (120) gangs spanning six states by 2021.³⁹ According to findings, the fallout from their actions includes the destruction of about 120 villages and the displacement of over 50,000 individuals, many of whom sought refuge in neighbouring Niger Republic.⁵

3.2.2 Terrorism

Nigeria also contends with terrorist violence, especially in the North-East states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, where groups like Boko Haram and its breakaway faction, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) hold sway.¹⁰

Boko Haram launched an insurgency in 2009 with the objective of establishing an Islamic state, resulting in significant loss of lives, the displacement of 2.7 million residents, and the exodus of over 500,000 individuals to neighbouring countries.²⁶ ISWAP, a breakaway faction from Boko Haram in 2016, rose to prominence through targeted assaults on military installations. According to UN estimates, the conflict has impacted approximately 15 million people and claimed between 20,000 to 30,000 lives since 2009, primarily in the North-East.²⁷

On February 7th, 2023, Boko Haram insurgents conducted an assault on a military base situated in Borno State, resulting in the tragic deaths of four soldiers, as detailed in the report by Premium Times.¹⁹ Additionally, on January 30th, 2023, suspected jihadists affiliated with ISWAP ambushed a military convoy on patrol in Borno State. Another heinous attack targeted civilians, leading to the loss of over 30 lives, as corroborated by Reuters in their January 2023 report.¹⁹

There have been several other attacks by these groups in various parts of the country, including Adamawa, Yobe and the country's capital, Abuja.¹⁰ Often, these assaults involve tactics such as bombings, shootings, abductions, and raids on both civilian settlements and military installations. The consequences of such actions have been profound, resulting in substantial loss of lives, displacement of civilians, destruction of property, and disruption to both daily life and economic activities.²⁶

3.2.3 Jihadist-Herders Attacks on Farming Communities of the Middle-Belt

The origins of the frequent attacks in predominantly Christian settlements in states such as Benue, Plateau, Southern Kaduna, Nasarawa, and parts of Niger are often attributed to competition between nomadic herders and farming communities. While these attacks have been portrayed as a conflict between equal antagonists of farmers

and herders, the reality is that they are usually perpetrated by offshoots of Boko Haram jihadism.³ Data sourced from the Nextier SPD Violent Conflict Database reveals that over the twelve months leading up to September 2021, incidents of farmer-herder conflicts occurred 71 times, resulting in 406 fatalities, 49 injuries, and the abduction of 15 individuals.⁶

On February 15th, 2023, reports from Daily Post Nigeria indicated that herders launched attacks on communities across northern Kaduna State, resulting in the loss of 18 lives within one week.¹⁹ Similarly, on January 24th, 2023, clashes between farmers and herders in Taraba State communities resulted in over 25 fatalities, as confirmed by state government sources, with numerous structures consumed by flames during the unrest, according to reports from Leadership Newspapers in January 2023.¹⁹ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that in 2021 alone, over 470 civilians were killed and 200,000 displaced due to farmer-herder clashes in the North Central and North West zones, which include Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba States.⁶

Typically, these attacks involve heavily armed motorcycle-riding jihadist-herders conducting nighttime raids on rural communities, often catching them off guard.³ It is noteworthy that attacks on Muslim villages in the Middle Belt are rare. When Muslim communities are targeted in the North-East or North-West, it is usually by other Muslim groups, often for unclear motives.³ In these attacks, farmlands

and barns are destroyed or set ablaze, and entire villages are wiped out.³

3.2.4 Solid Mineral Rush, Cattle Rustling and Kidnapping in the North-East

The Solid Mineral Rush, Cattle Rustling, and Kidnapping have emerged as a significant catalyst for insecurity in the North-Eastern states of Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kebbi, and northern Kaduna.²² Concerning cattle rustling, many analysts have argued that environmental pressures such as desertification, loss of grazing reserves, and the encroachment of farmlands as underlying factors exacerbating this crisis.²²

In the same vein, the rush for solid minerals in states like Zamfara and Borno, has attracted criminal elements who exploit the lack of regulation and oversight in the mining sector in the country.¹⁹ These criminals engage in illegal mining activities, smuggling, and tax evasion, leading to revenue loss for the government and fueling insecurity through illicit means. In a December 24, 2023 publication, the Premium Times Newspaper gave the chilling account of an 18-year-old miner of how gangs routinely abduct and compel villagers in Zamfara State, to work at mines under strict supervision of hired bandits, and often without any pay.¹⁹

The unregulated extraction of solid minerals has also resulted in environmental degradation, including deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution.¹⁹ This degradation exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and tensions within

communities, leading to conflicts over land use and resource management, violence, and insecurity in the region.¹⁹

Aside from illegal mining and cattle rustling, the North-East is also plagued by kidnapping for ransom. One of the most notorious incidents was the kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State by Boko Haram

... the rush for solid minerals in states like Zamfara and Borno, has attracted criminal elements who exploit the lack of regulation and oversight in the mining sector in the country.

militants in April 2014.²⁶ There have been numerous other cases of mass kidnappings, particularly targeting schoolchildren, by Boko Haram and other criminal groups in the region. These are in addition to incidents of individuals being kidnapped for ransom by various criminal gangs operating in the area.

3.2.5 Separatist Agitations

Secessionist groups advocating for independent states have resorted to violent protests and attacks, particularly in the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones. Prominent among these groups are the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), which seek separatist republics for the Igbo and Niger

Delta peoples respectively.¹⁰ Their activities have included targeted assassinations and sabotage of vital oil infrastructure, inflicting substantial damage on local economies. They also employ coordinated raids on specific targets, such as police stations, government buildings, or financial institutions.¹⁰

In recent events, unidentified gunmen or unknown gunmen often linked to some separatist groups, launched an assault on the residence of the Imo State Commissioner for Solid Minerals in Izombe, Oguta Local Government Area, resulting in the tragic deaths of two security personnel. Similarly, on January 29th, 2023, four police officers were fatally shot in their vehicle by unknown assailants in Okigwe Local Government Area of Imo State, as reported by Channels TV in January 2023.¹⁹ Often, their modus operandi includes ambushes targeting unsuspecting individuals, security personnel, government officials, community leaders, perceived adversaries or convoys traveling along highways, rural roads, or within communities. Suffice to add that the activities of separatist groups and the “unknown gunmen” have gravely added to the complicated character of Nigeria’s insecurity challenge.

3.2.6 Gangs, Cultism & Fetishism

Activities by university campus and local confraternities collectively regarded as ‘cults’ also contribute to insecurity through gang wars and revenge violence. Cult clashes frequently erupt within higher institutions and urban

areas across Nigeria, often linked to organised crime. Cross River State identified 18 known cult gangs within the Calabar metropolis alone, as being responsible for increasing substance abuse and insecurity.

As early as 2014, estimates indicated that between 7,000 and 9,000 young individuals were directly involved in gang activities in suburban areas of Lagos State, with an additional 20,000 individuals impacted by gang influence. Presently, these figures have surged dramatically, surpassing triple their initial count. Idowu's research in 2014³⁷ highlighted that six out of every ten boys in urban Nigeria are affiliated with or affected by gang operations, indicative of the widespread nature of this issue. Moreover, there has been a notable shift in the demographics and structure of these gangs, with membership increasingly comprising younger individuals.

3.2.7 Kidnapping for Ransom and Human Organ Sales

The intertwined threat of kidnapping for ransom and human organ sales has become a major security and human rights concern in Nigeria. Extant literature indicates a marked escalation of these maladies in recent years, propelled by a convoluted nexus of socio-economic factors and systemic deficiencies within law enforcement apparatuses. Perpetrators target individuals from all walks of life, seeking lucrative payouts from families, companies, or the government, often not only inflicting emotional trauma on victims and their families but also undermining trust in

institutions and hampering socio-economic development.

Equally alarming is the clandestine trade in human organs, fueled by a global demand for transplantable organs and a lack of stringent regulations. Vulnerable individuals, often from marginalised communities, fall victim to exploitation by organised crime syndicates. Through coercion or deception, traffickers compel victims to undergo illicit surgeries for organ extraction, inflicting grave physical and psychological harm upon them. Although comprehensive data on this crime is scarce, reported incidents and anecdotal evidence suggest a troubling surge in its occurrence. The 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report issued by the United States Department of State underscored concerns regarding the potential involvement of Nigerian nationals in organ trafficking, while noting that due to its sensitive nature and the challenges in gathering evidence, many cases go unreported or undocumented.

The implication of these crimes extends beyond national borders, with international networks facilitating the illicit trade in human organs and the laundering of ransom money. The porous nature of Nigeria's borders exacerbates the challenges of combating these transnational crimes.

3.3 DRIVERS OF INSECURITY

Insecurity in Nigeria is deeply entrenched and multifaceted, stemming from a convergence of complex socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that exacerbate one another. These key drivers encompass various dimensions of the

nation's societal fabric, contributing to a cycle of instability and conflict. A few of these are considered below.

i. Economic Uncertainty

Economic disparities, a lack of opportunities, and pervasive poverty, especially among disillusioned youth, create fertile ground for recruitment by terrorist groups and criminal organisations. High unemployment rates exacerbate these issues, leading many young people to become susceptible to the lure of extremism. The unequal distribution of resources also contributes to frustration and feelings of marginalisation, further fueling recruitment by extremist groups. The absence of sustainable livelihood perpetuates a cycle of poverty, amplifying social tensions and exacerbating insecurity across communities.¹⁵

ii. Elite Corruption

Endemic political corruption and the misappropriation of public funds by Nigerian elites have profound repercussions for socio-economic development and societal well-being. Diversion of resources intended for public services and infrastructure perpetuates inequality and marginalisation, further alienating disadvantaged population. Moreover, corruption erodes trust in government institutions and undermines the rule of law, fueling discontent and social unrest.⁹

iii. Ethno-Religious Tensions

Long-standing ethnic and religious divisions

in Nigeria have been exacerbated by political manipulation and uneven development, often driven by self-serving elites seeking to consolidate power. Historical grievances and perceived inequalities fuel inter-communal conflicts, leading to violence and displacement. The politicisation of cultural and religious identity compounds societal divisions, impeding endeavours aimed at fostering national unity and peaceful coexistence. These divisions and tensions are particularly pronounced in areas where groups compete for control of essential resources.¹¹

Diversion of resources intended for public services perpetuates inequality and marginalisation.

iv. Poor Management of the Country's Diversity

The Nigerian government has consistently failed to leverage the abundant opportunities arising from the country's rich ethnic and religious diversity by ensuring the equitable distribution of available resources and opportunities among its diverse population. This failure has resulted in widespread feelings of marginalisation and resentment, particularly in regions where resources are perceived to be unfairly distributed, thereby worsening the country's insecurity challenges.¹²

Literature evidence suggests that the longstanding farmer-herder clashes in the country are more attributable to the government's inability to effectively manage the nation's diversity and address the

competing needs of different groups, rather than solely being a result of land competition.⁴ This is particularly evident considering regions such as the north, where most of the atrocities occur, possess vast arable land compared to other areas like the South-East. Furthermore, nations with higher population densities and limited land have demonstrated a more effective management of similar challenges.

Promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue are critical for building social cohesion and resilience against insecurity.

v. Counter-insurgency Deficits

Nigeria's military and security establishments have faced chronic underfunding, inadequate training, and logistical challenges, hampering their capacity to effectively address insurgency and other security threats.¹³ The lack of strategic coordination and intelligence-sharing further undermines counter-insurgency efforts, allowing extremist groups to operate with impunity. Insufficient investment in modernising security infrastructure and enhancing personnel capabilities perpetuates vulnerabilities and undermines national security.²⁷

vi. Youth Disillusionment

A growing sense of disillusionment among Nigeria's youth population, characterised by a lack of opportunities, disaffection with societal norms, and erosion of traditional values, contributes to the allure of criminality

and extremist ideologies.¹⁶ Marginalised and disenfranchised youth are susceptible to recruitment by criminal networks and extremist groups, drawn by promises of status, belonging, and empowerment. The failure of existing social and educational systems to address the needs and aspirations of young people exacerbates social alienation and perpetuates cycles of violence.¹⁸

Addressing these interlinked drivers of insecurity requires a comprehensive and sustained approach focused on inclusive economic development, accountable governance, and community empowerment. Investment in education, vocational training, and job creation initiatives are essential to providing alternatives to criminality and extremism. Additionally, promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, strengthening rule of law institutions, and fostering civic engagement are critical for building social cohesion and resilience against insecurity. Ultimately, transformative change must prioritise systemic reforms that address the root causes of insecurity and promote inclusive and sustainable development for all Nigerians.

3.4 INSECURITY HOTSPOTS: A REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The security landscape of Nigeria is marked by profound dilemmas. Since about 2010, Nigeria has grappled with persistent challenges posed by various forms of insurgency, spanning religious, ethnic, ideological, and economic dimensions. The nature of these threats varies significantly across the country's different geopolitical zones, with lethal terrorist factions,

prominently exemplified by groups such as Boko Haram and Fulani Jihadists and other 'unknown' extremist groups now operating throughout the country, including in rural communities, along highways, and in urban centres. These actors instill fear and generate chaos as they perpetrate various forms of violence.

Thus, the country which boasts of numerous superlatives in Africa including being the most populous nation and home to the continent's largest economy⁷¹, now and most unfortunately, bears the burden of being a focal point for violence and insecurity in West Africa. Regrettably, it holds the ignominious distinction of being the third most terrorism-affected nation in Sub-Saharan Africa and the sixth globally, according to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index.²⁷ In this section, we delve into the diverse characteristics and manifestations of regional insurgency and violence hubs within the country.

3.4.1 North East Zone

Over the past 25 years, particularly since 2009, the North-East of Nigeria has been mired in persistent conflict, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of critical infrastructure, displacement of millions, and severe disruptions to economic, health, and education systems.¹ This protracted crisis has significantly hampered the region's productivity and development, straining already limited national resources.

The humanitarian situation in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States remains dire, with armed conflict persisting well into its second decade. Attacks targeting civilians and civilian



A police station vandalised by bandits at Potiskum in Bauchi State

infrastructure have rendered people more vulnerable, hindering their access to essential assistance. Over two million internally displaced individuals remain unable to return to their homes due to ongoing insecurity.²⁶

One of the primary drivers of this conflict is rooted in religious ideological beliefs⁸, with groups like Boko Haram espousing notions of religious and cultural superiority, leading to the assertion of dominance and violence against perceived rivals. The group has entered into some kind of an alliance with Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP). The two have continued to pose significant security challenges in the region, orchestrating bombings, kidnappings, and attacks while promoting a strict version of Islamic ideology.²⁷ Multiples of thousands of civilians and security personnel have been killed through Boko Haram/ISWAP operations in the region.³⁵



A mother stands helplessly in front of house burnt by Boko Haram Islamists at Baga in Borno State

3.4.2 North West Zone

The North West region of Nigeria stands out as a focal point for armed banditry, attributed largely to factors such as corruption, weak political governance structures, and inadequate security capacities across its states.²² This environment has also fostered ethno-religious conflicts and the proliferation of lethal Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).³¹

The crisis in the North West is multi-layered, with deep-seated tensions between the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups exacerbating the situation. Along major highways, armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom have

become rampant, adding to the region's security challenges.¹⁰

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in bandit attacks, leading to widespread displacement of communities across the region.¹⁰ The proliferation of armed groups and gangs has further fueled violence, which has worsened the already dire situation.³⁷

Inter-communal violence and organised attacks have escalated since 2011 in North-Western states, characterised by activities such as cattle rustling, rape, looting, plundering, kidnapping, and murder. Between 2018 and 2020 alone, at least 4,900 deaths were attributed to armed banditry, resulting in

substantial economic devastation.¹⁰ It must be added that the criminal networks in this region treat crime as an economic enterprise, engaging in activities such as extortion and the abduction of schoolchildren, clerics, and ordinary citizens for ransom.³⁶

3.4.3 The Middle Belt (North Central)

Of all the conflict highpoints in Nigeria, the cycle of violence in the Middle Belt of Nigeria is perhaps the most complex and the oldest continuing hotspot.⁸ The people of this zone have known the pain of insecurity and suffered the longest. The Middle belt has known few periods of prolonged peace since the Fulani

Jihad of 1804. Violence in the Middle Belt has many fathers; some are deep centuries-old historical roots of ethnic profiling, gross injustice and corruption.¹¹ Violence here is ethno-religious; it is political; it is economic, and it is the seed of unresolved disputes over indigene/settler status.⁸ The forces that drive violence and insecurity are both internal to the region and external, with highly connected interested parties from other parts of northern Nigeria always fanning the embers and supplying the fuel for the fight.¹⁷ Some of the states in this zone most affected by insecurity include Benue, Kogi, Plateau, Nasarawa and Niger.¹⁵



Pall bearers carrying the remains of over 70 persons killed by herders for burial in Benue State in 2018

3.4.4 South East

In the South East of Nigeria, the insurgency takes the form of a separatist movement spearheaded by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).³⁴ What initially began as a largely polemical agitation for secession has progressively escalated into violence, particularly evident in Imo State, especially within the last five years. The violence associated with IPOB has resulted in the tragic deaths of 195 security personnel and numerous unidentified gunmen between 2020 and 2023, as reported by the Council on Foreign Relations.³⁴ This staggering toll underscores the profound human cost and widespread geographic impact of the violence across the region.

The Eastern Security Network (ESN) serves as the armed wing of the pro-separatist IPOB. However, shadowy 'unknown gunmen' in the East have been implicated in attacks targeting federal infrastructure, including prisons, electoral offices, and the properties of prominent politicians. Notably, the country home of Mr. Hope Uzodinma, the Governor of Imo State, fell victim to a violent raid, resulting

in the destruction of valuable assets by rocket-propelled grenades. Furthermore, a brazen attack on the federal prison in the state resulted in the release of over 1,844 inmates, according to an official of the Nigerian Correctional Service Owerri who said, as reported by the BBC and Premium Times that, "The attackers who stormed the facility at about 0215hrs on Monday 5th April, 2021, gained entrance into the yard by using explosives to blast the administrative block." This happened shortly after the assault on the governor's residence.³⁴

The response from the federal government to the insecurity issues has been characterised by a heavy-handed approach, with soldiers deployed in large numbers throughout the South-East. Amnesty International has criticised the government's response as "ruthless excessive force," documenting the deaths of at least 115 individuals at the hands of security forces within a brief three-month period. Amnesty International believes that the actual death toll could be much higher, with many victims having no affiliation with the ESN.



IPOB march during a rally in Aba

IPOB's grievances with the Nigerian federal government stem from a sense of neglect and marginalisation in the region. Issues such as inadequate investment, political alienation, unequal distribution of resources, ethnic marginalisation, and the heavy military presence have fueled resentment and discontent among the populace in the South-Eastern, South-South, and parts of the North-Central regions of the country.

3.4.5 South West

The South-West experiences a distinct form of insecurity centred around kidnapping for ransom or ritual purposes.³⁶ Unfortunately, despite its prevalence, such incidents are often under-reported due to fear of reprisals from the perpetrators, further creating a climate of fear and intimidation among victims and their families. This phenomenon extends beyond the South-West, with vulnerable segments of the population across the country being targeted for abduction either for financial gain or politically motivated objectives, often to compel the government to meet the aggressors' demands.³⁵ Experts attribute the sharp increase in abductions for ransom over the past four years to solely dubious economic gains.³⁷

While kidnapping incidents in the North often occur in large group numbers, in the South-West, they tend to occur sporadically, leading to significant under-reporting. Nonetheless, kidnapping has emerged as a lucrative industry nationwide, with over 2,000 individuals, including women and children, reportedly abducted last year alone, according to data sourced from the International Organisation

for Peace Building and Social Justice (PSJ).³⁶ In the first quarter of 2024, over 500 kidnappings have already been recorded across the country. School children are particularly vulnerable, but travelers, farmers, and ordinary citizens going about their daily lives are also at risk.

Recent data from SBM Intelligence indicates a disturbing trend of mass abductions, with 68 incidents reported this year alone.³⁶ These developments have contributed to a concerning rise in absenteeism in schools. One in three Nigerian school-age children are currently out of school, as reported by UNICEF, 2023.⁷

3.4.6 South-South

Sabotage and theft through oil siphoning have become major security issues in the South-South or South-Central region of Nigeria, contributing to extensive environmental degradation. Instances of damaged pipelines often go unnoticed for prolonged periods, exacerbating the environmental impact, and repair efforts are often protracted.

Renowned for its abundant natural resources, particularly vast oil and gas deposits, the South-Central or South-South region serves as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economy. This region, situated in the southernmost part of the country, comprises Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River States.

Despite its economic significance, the region grapples with numerous socio-economic and environmental challenges. Various militant groups operating in the area advocate for improved conditions and environmental



Tanks used by bunkers to siphon crude oil from the creeks in Niger Delta leading to environmental degradation

protection, protesting against the adverse effects of oil exploitation. The struggle for control over oil wealth and concerns over environmental degradation have fueled violent conflicts between ethnic groups, resulting in the militarisation of much of the region by ethnic militias, the Nigerian military, and police forces, notably the Nigerian Mobile Police.

The presence of these militant groups poses significant security risks, with frequent attacks on oil and gas infrastructure. Additionally, the region faces persistent threats of armed robbery, criminal activity, and kidnapping, further contributing to instability and insecurity.

3.5 THE UNGOVERNED SPACES IN NIGERIA

Ungoverned spaces in Nigeria are regions where the government has limited or no control. These spaces are characterised by the presence of insurgent groups, bandits,

and other non-state actors who exploit the lack of government presence to establish their own control and governance structures, further complicating national security and development efforts.

Nigeria is grappling with a significant challenge in the form of ungoverned spaces across its vast territory, which have become breeding grounds for criminal elements and insurgents. These areas, where government presence is minimal or non-existent, pose a grave threat to national security and stability.

Maidugu Mustapha, a regular driver on the Maiduguri-Monguno route, recounts his abduction by insurgents while transporting diesel for an NGO. During his two-week in captivity, he witnessed numerous highway attacks, underscoring the insurgents' total control in parts of Borno State, as in other states. His account highlights the severe security breakdown in these ungoverned areas, where insurgents operate with impunity. Mustapha's experience also reveals the government's failure to assert control over these regions, with far-reaching consequences for national security, crippling businesses and depriving communities of essential goods and services. Ungoverned spaces serve as hideouts for insurgents, leaving civilians at their mercy. Major routes all over the country, once vital for transportation and commerce, have become no-go zones controlled by insurgents conducting roadblocks and searches.

Niger State faces an alarming situation, with terrorists tightening their grip on several local government areas such as Shiroro, Rafi, Paikoro, and Munya. These areas have seen relentless killings, displacement, looting, and

arson, leaving communities in perpetual fear and despair. Niger State has lost approximately 6,500 square kilometers (9% of its landmass) to terrorist groups, highlighting the problem's severity.

Ungoverned spaces are not limited to only Borno and Niger State; it is a grand national problem. Zamfara State's forests like Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu serve as major hideouts for bandits. The nation's frail and fragile security system and waning public confidence in security institutions have led to the rise of informal armed groups and local vigilantes in many communities, exacerbating the cycle of violence and lawlessness. The consequences for rural communities all over the nation have been catastrophic, with food security severely compromised and livelihoods threatened. The authorities' failure to bring

perpetrators to justice has fuelled a cycle of impunity, emboldening criminal elements.

Nigeria stands at a crossroads, faced with the stark reality of ungoverned spaces that threaten its progress and prosperity. The government must take decisive action to reclaim these areas, restore the rule of law, and provide security and basic amenities to affected communities. Failure to do so will perpetuate violence and insecurity, jeopardizing hopes for sustainable development and lasting peace.

There are large ungoverned spaces in at least 23 of Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. Here are some specific towns and local government areas (LGAs) in the states mentioned, that are considered ungoverned, leading to the presence and activities of Criminal Non-State Actors:

		GOVERNMENT AREA	
			limits for both the military and civilians, with insurgents in full control [4].
		Damboa, and Biu	
		Sambisa Forest and Gwoza Mountains	Southern Borno and locations bordering the Sambisa Forest are used by Boko Haram for attacks and training camps [7].
		Zangon Kataf LGAs	Southern Kaduna Terrorists run parallel
		Southern Kaduna	This forest has emerged as a haven for bandits and kidnapers terrorizing the Federal Capital Territory and neighbouring states. Once used by the military for training purposes, it is now abandoned, allowing criminal gangs to establish their presence and launch attacks on nearby communities.

		GOVERNMENT AREA	
		Bukkuyum, and Talata	Surrounded by forests with little or no government presence, used by bandits for launching attacks
			Major hideouts for criminals [15]
			Areas with significant violence from herder conflicts and limited government control [3][5].
		Batsari, Safana, and	Areas heavily affected by banditry and terrorism, limited government control [2][9].
		Barkin Ladi, Riyom,	Regions with ongoing violence and limited government presence, often due to ethnic clashes
		Shiroro, Rafi, Paikoro,	The State government disclosed of the presence of elements of Boko Haram in the Shiroro LGA Killings, displacement, looting, and arson have dotted communities in these four local government areas. GAs have lost large expanses of ungoverned areas to terrorist groups [17].
			Ahmed Ibrahim Matane, Niger State's former Secretary to the State Government (SSG) alerted Fed Govt. that members of the ISWAP group have already established their presence in parts of the state, including Babana, a border town between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin.
		Gujba and Gulani	Areas with significant Boko Haram activity and limited government presence [19].
		Orlu and Orsu LGA	Regions affected by activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and unknown gunmen, leading to ungoverned spaces [20].
		Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni and Ahoada West	Areas with significant cult and militant activities, leading to ungoverned
		Orumba North and	Regions affected by IPOB activities and limited government control [20]
			Areas with significant militant activities in the Niger ungoverned spaces [20].
		Abaji and Kwali Area	Regions with limited government presence and increasing bandit activities [20]

		GOVERNMENT AREA	
			Areas like Alero, Sabiyel, and Tudun Wada are considered ungoverned limited government
			The rural areas of Argungu, particularly Gulma and Lailaba, are known for banditry and terrorist
			The town of Augie and surrounding villages like Bagaye and Dundaye are affected by insecurity and limited governance [4].
			The rural areas of Gashaka are affected by insecurity and limited governance, making them vulnerable to terrorist activities [8].
			The town of Gassol and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces
			The town of Ibi and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces
			The rural areas of Madagali are affected by insecurity and limited governance, making them vulnerable to terrorist activities [
			The town of Maiha and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces [9].
			The town of Michika and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces
			This area is known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces [11].
			The rural areas of Goronyo are affected by insecurity and limited governance, making them vulnerable to
			The town of Gudu and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces [11].
			The rural areas of Adavi are affected by insecurity and limited governance, making them vulnerable to terrorist activities [3].
			The town of Ajaokuta and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces

			ene and surrounding areas are known for terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces [19].
			Areas like Omuo Ekiti and other rural communities are known for banditry and terrorist activities [4].
			The town of Ilawe Ekiti and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities [4].
			Areas like Udi and other rural communities are known for banditry and terrorist activities [4].
			of Agbani and surrounding areas are known for banditry and terrorist activities [4].
			Areas like Ishielu and other rural communities are known for banditry and terrorist activities [4].
			The town of Ohaozara and surroundin known for banditry and terrorist activities [4]
			This area is known for banditry and terrorist activities, with frequent attacks on communities and security forces [4].
			This area has been described a government, with significant security challenges
			The border towns of Ogun State have been affected by leadership crises, leading to ungoverned spaces creased insecurity [9][10][12].
			has experienced attacks by gunmen, including the brutal killing of 40 worshippers in a tical levels of insecurity [6].
<i>INSDEC compilation from various media and academic publications</i>			

3.6 THE IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON NIGERIA'S ECONOMY

Insecurity continues to pose a significant challenge in Nigeria, with profound implications for the nation's economy. Persistent violence, ranging from terrorism and insurgency to communal clashes and criminal activities, has not only resulted in the loss of thousands of lives but has also undermined socioeconomic development, investor confidence, and overall prosperity.

3.6.1 On the Disruption of Economic Activities

Insecurity disrupts economic activities across various sectors, hindering production, investment, and trade. The prevalence of terrorism, banditry, and communal violence creates an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, deterring investors and businesses from operating in affected areas. For instance, the Abuja-Kaduna highway, a vital route for trade and commerce, witnessed persistent kidnappings in February 2023, resulting in

traders incurring losses exceeding N200 million. This has led to a significant decline in business activities along the route as traders now refrain from using it. Nationally, insecurity consumes an estimated 3% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product.³⁸

3.6.2 On Capital Flight and Investment Decline

Persistent insecurity undermines investor confidence and leads to capital flight as foreign and domestic investors seek safer havens for their investments. Fluctuations in market performance have been observed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) in response to security incidents, with foreign investors adopting a cautious approach to investing in the country. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to Nigeria have declined in recent years due to concerns about insecurity and political instability.⁴⁵

3.6.3 On Rising Costs and Declining Investments

Insecurity drives up costs for businesses and governments as resources are diverted toward security measures and risk management strategies. The World Bank estimates Nigeria spends over \$2.6 billion annually on security-related expenditures, including military operations, law enforcement, and private security services.²⁶ These costs contribute to budgetary pressures and limit

Insecurity deters long-term investments in critical sectors and constrains economic growth.

resources available for critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. Moreover, insecurity deters long-term investments in critical sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, and energy, constraining economic growth and job creation opportunities.

3.6.4 On Human Capital Flight and Brain Drain

Insecurity affects physical infrastructure and economic activities and leads to human capital flight and brain drain. Skilled professionals, entrepreneurs, and educated youth increasingly seek opportunities abroad, citing concerns over safety, political instability, and Nigeria's lack of economic prospects. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Nigeria is among the top countries of origin for migrants, with thousands of skilled workers and professionals leaving the country annually in search of better prospects abroad. This brain drain worsens skills shortages, limits innovation and entrepreneurship, and hampers efforts to build a competitive knowledge-based economy.⁴⁶

Insecurity poses a formidable challenge to Nigeria's economy, undermining growth, development, and prosperity. The incidents highlighted in this report exemplify the

significant costs and repercussions of insecurity, including disruptions to economic activities, capital flight, declining investments, and human capital flight. Addressing insecurity requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses underlying drivers, strengthens security institutions, promotes inclusive governance, and fosters socioeconomic development and national cohesion. Failure to tackle insecurity risks perpetuating cycles of violence and instability, with far-reaching consequences for Nigeria's future trajectory and regional stability.

3.7 IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Insecurity in Nigeria significantly impacts food security, production, and access for millions nationwide. Agriculture, a critical sector of food production bears the brunt of insecurity, particularly in rural areas where farming activities are most affected. According to the World Bank, insecurity has led to a decline in agricultural productivity, with farmers unable to access their farmlands due to fear of attacks or displacement. The World Bank estimated in 2022 that insecurity has caused agricultural productivity losses of around 4% of GDP in the North-East region of Nigeria specifically.¹⁵

According to a World Food Programme report, conflict, insecurity, rising inflation, and the climate crisis collectively contribute to hunger in Nigeria, affecting 26.5 million people.²⁹ Insurgent activities, notably in the North-

Central zone of the country, are undermining agricultural output and leaving vulnerable populations, especially in rural areas, at risk.

3.7.1 On Agricultural Activities

Incessant attacks on the farming communities of Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa and Niger States by bandits, jihadists, and insurgents, disrupt agricultural activities, reducing crop yields and livestock production. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) notes significant disruptions to farming in Nigeria's North-East and North-Central zones, where fear of attacks or displacement prevents many farmers from accessing their farmlands.¹

These disruptions contribute to a decline in agricultural productivity, affecting the quantity and quality of food produced.

3.7.2 On Food Price Inflation

Insecurity drives up food prices due to supply disruptions and increased production costs. The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported a food inflation rate of 35.412% in January 2024,¹⁹ primarily attributed to insecurity in the Northern region, which serves as the country's food basket. This places additional strain on households that are already struggling to afford necessities.



Displaced people mostly women and children wait for food at IDP Camp, Agatu LGA in Benue State

3.7.3 On Displacement of Farmers and Food Insecurity

Insecurity forces many farmers to abandon their farmlands or migrate, leading to the loss of livelihoods and food insecurity. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates Nigeria to have one of the highest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally. As 2022 concluded, Nigeria was home to 3.6 million IDPs, of whom 1.9 million were living in protracted displacement in the North-Eastern states.²⁵ These individuals often face challenges accessing food and essential services, worsening food insecurity.

3.7.4 On Dependency on Food Imports

Insecurity impedes Nigeria's path to food self-sufficiency, increasing its reliance on imports. Disrupted agricultural activities and declining

productivity necessitate imports to meet domestic demand, straining foreign exchange reserves and contributing to trade imbalances.

Incidents such as ongoing bandit attacks in Zamfara and Sokoto States, hindering thousands of farmers from accessing farmlands,³⁹ and herder-farmer clashes destroying over 5,000 hectares of farmland in Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau States serve as stark examples of the severe impact of insecurity on food production and availability in Nigeria's agrarian regions.³

In conclusion, insecurity profoundly impacts food security in Nigeria, affecting production, access, and prices. Disrupted agricultural activities, farmer displacement, and food inflation worsen food insecurity and poverty. Addressing insecurity is crucial to promoting food security and the well-being of Nigeria's population.

3.8 IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON HEALTHCARE

Insecurity in Nigeria has far-reaching consequences, extending beyond its direct impact on lives and property to essential services such as healthcare. It has led to a disturbing trend of attacks on health workers and facilities, depriving communities of vital medical services and endangering the lives of both patients and healthcare providers.²⁵

3.8.1 On health workers and facilities

One notable incident occurred in 2014 when the Boko Haram terrorist group attacked the Federal Medical Centre in Yobe State, killing several health workers and patients.¹⁰ This brazen attack not only resulted in the loss of lives but also instilled fear among healthcare professionals, leading to disruptions in service delivery and a reluctance to work in conflict-affected areas.²⁶

Another example is the abduction of health workers by armed bandits in northwest Nigeria. In March 2021, armed assailants abducted staff members of a primary healthcare centre in Kaduna State, disrupting healthcare services and causing anxiety among residents.²⁶ These attacks not only undermine the sanctity of healthcare facilities but also impede access to medical care for vulnerable populations, particularly in conflict-affected areas.¹

On February 19, 2023, gunmen invaded the General Hospital in the Ikare Akoko area of Ondo State and abducted two medical doctors – Dr. Adeyeye Adekunle and Dr. Olorunfemi.⁴²

The gunmen had gained entrance by unleashing explosives and breaking through the entrance gate around 10:20 pm. They proceeded to the doctors' quarters and kidnapped the two doctors at gunpoint.

This brazen attack on a general hospital and the abduction of doctors have disrupted critical healthcare services and spread fear among medical personnel in the region. It has also exacerbated the shortage of healthcare workers serving vulnerable communities, especially in remote areas.²⁵

Just in 2023 alone, there were several reported cases of attacks on healthcare facilities and workers across Nigeria. This continues a disturbing trend that further undermines healthcare access and system resilience at a time when it is most needed.²⁶

On February 15, 2023, unknown gunmen invaded Modibbo Adama University Teaching Hospital in Yola, Adamawa State, and abducted two medical doctors. This disrupted healthcare services and spread fear among medical practitioners serving rural communities.

From December 2022 to February 2023, at least 15 healthcare workers were abducted in communities across Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina States. The incidents exacerbated the shortage of medical personnel in conflict-ridden areas.²⁵

3.8.2 On Suspension of Services and Drug Shortages

Insecurity has forced healthcare facilities to suspend services or operate at reduced

capacity, exacerbating health inequalities and depriving communities of essential medical care. For example, in regions affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, such as Borno and Yobe states, many healthcare facilities have been forced to close or limit their services due to security concerns.²⁶ This has left residents needing access to critical services such as maternal and child health care, immunisations, and treatment for infectious diseases.

Furthermore, insecurity has disrupted supply chains, leading to shortages of essential drugs and medical supplies.²⁶ In conflict-affected areas, healthcare facilities often struggle to procure medications and equipment due to logistical challenges and security risks; this results in delays in treatment and compromised patient care, with increased morbidity and mortality rates.¹ Sometimes, patients are forced to travel long distances to access healthcare services or resort to traditional remedies due to the unavailability of medications.²⁶

Insecurity presents significant challenges to the healthcare system, impacting access to care and service quality. Attacks on healthcare workers and facilities disrupt the provision of essential medical services, leading to suspension of services and shortages of medication.²⁵ These disruptions worsen health disparities and compromise patient outcomes. Safeguarding the health and well-being of Nigeria's population requires addressing insecurity to ensure universal access to quality healthcare. Protecting healthcare workers and facilities, bolstering healthcare infrastructure, and fostering peace and stability are vital steps

toward mitigating the impact of insecurity on healthcare in Nigeria.²⁶

3.9 IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON EDUCATION

Insecurity in Nigeria has had a profound impact on the education sector, disrupting learning environments, endangering the lives of students and educators, and undermining access to quality education.¹⁰

One of the most significant impacts of insecurity on education is the disruption of learning environments, particularly in conflict-affected areas. For example, in the North-East zone, the Boko Haram insurgency has led to the closure of schools and the destruction of educational infrastructure.¹⁰ In 2014, the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State garnered international attention and highlighted the vulnerability of students to attacks by armed groups.¹⁰

Similarly, in North-West Nigeria, the surge in banditry and kidnappings has forced many schools to shut down or operate at reduced capacity.²⁶ In 2020, the abduction of 344 schoolboys from Kankara in Katsina State underscored the vulnerability of students to kidnapping for ransom, further increasing fears among parents and communities.²⁵

Insecurity in Nigeria endangers the lives of students and educators, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty that hampers teaching and learning.¹⁰ Incidents of violence, including attacks on schools and abduction of students,

have traumatised communities and disrupted educational activities.²⁵ The 2020 attack on the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara and the abduction of students led to widespread panic and anxiety among students, parents, and educators.²⁵

Furthermore, educators face threats to their safety, with some targeted for abduction or violence by armed groups.²⁵ Targeting teachers disrupts the education system and undermines educators' morale and ability to perform their duties effectively.²⁵ In some cases, educators have been forced to flee conflict-affected areas, leaving a shortage of qualified teachers and further exacerbating educational disparities.²⁶

Insecurity undermines access to quality education by limiting opportunities for learning and hindering educational attainment.²⁶ Students in conflict-affected areas face school disruptions, including prolonged school closures, relocation to safer areas, and interruptions in their studies. The disruption of educational activities contributes to learning loss, widening educational inequalities, and compromising the prospects of affected students.²⁵

Furthermore, insecurity hampers efforts to improve educational infrastructure and resources, diverting resources toward security measures and away from educational investments. For example, funds allocated for school construction, teacher training, and curriculum development may be redirected toward security expenditures, limiting the government's ability to address educational challenges effectively.²⁶

Insecurity poses a grave threat to Nigeria's education system. Violent attacks on schools, students, and educators are unrelenting and devastating. They have caused tremendous harm, including loss of life, traumatic abductions, disruption of learning access, damage to facilities, and increased dropout rates.²⁵

Two recent examples demonstrate the severity of insecurity facing Nigeria's schools.

On February 10, 2023, armed assailants attacked Albarka Secondary School in the Faskari area of Katsina State. They abducted 30 female students and two teachers, instilling terror in children, parents, and staff.⁴³ On January 29, in neighbouring Kaduna State, bandits assaulted a school in Birnin Gwari. They killed the owner's wife and kidnapped several instructors. Subsequently, all 13 area schools were indefinitely closed, depriving approximately 10,000 students of educational opportunities.²⁵

These are only a sample of the recurrent violence damaging Nigerian childhood and future. Schools often become specific targets of bandit groups seeking ransoms through mass kidnappings - such incidents fuel displacement and withdrawal from education due to the perception of danger.²⁵

3.10 ECONOMIC LOSSES FROM FOOD INSECURITY

From all the above, it is evident that the worsening insecurity crisis in Nigeria has severely undermined the country's economic

prospects through multiple channels. The economy has been severely affected by terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, and generalised violence. Businesses have been destroyed, investments have stagnated, unemployment has increased, and inflationary pressures have been made worse. Due to insecurity, farmers are unable to access their farms, which has had a negative impact on the agriculture sector which accounted for 27% of GDP. Raw material supply chain interruptions

have also hurt manufacturing. The economic costs have been enormous; in 2020, the Presidential Economic Advisory Council predicted that the cost would be \$10.3 billion, or 2.6% of GDP that year, while the Institute of Economics and Peace noted that it would be a staggering \$132.59 billion, or 8% of GDP. Due to the unstable climate, foreign direct investment fell by 59.6% to barely \$9.68 billion in 2020.

3.10.1 Economic Losses by Nigerian Farmers

Abandoned	Many commercial and large abandoned due to banditry, kidnappings along major highways
	<p>Kaduna State lawmaker abandoned farm in Birnin Gwari LGA</p> <p>Imam abandoned 500 bag/year farm on Kaduna</p> <p>1,000 hectares rice field abandoned in Shendam,</p> <p>Farm at Gurara irrigation site near Abuja</p> <p>Farms abandoned in Taraba Benue due to</p> <p>Large maize farm abandoned in Ardo</p> <p>600 hectares farm abandoned in Otukpo, Benue for rice & cassava</p> <p>Farmer almost killed at his farm in Benue, abandoned others</p> <p>Farmer lost whole cassava farm in Benue</p>
	Ban on fertilizer supply to curtail IED production by terrorists affected crop yields in Yobe State
	Inability to access markets and distribute agricultural produce due to insecurity
	Disruptions in agricultural supply chain leading to food scarcity and high food inflation of

3.10.2 Ransom Paid to Kidnappers between June 2011 and July 2022

The economy was also on the losing side as huge sums of money were paid by families, friends, and employers of kidnapped/abducted victims. (Governments at the different levels, including security agencies always claim they did not pay any ransom to free victims and are not aware any family paid.)

But such payments resulted in huge losses to those who were involved, as such funds could have been used for other productive endeavours like farming, manufacturing and other businesses.

Some figures said to have been paid were mind boggling, as seen in the table below.⁴⁸

A report by SB Morgen Intelligence stated that at least \$18.34m was paid to kidnappers as ransom between June 2011 and March 2020.	
Release of schoolchildren in 5 separate mass kidnapping incidents in North West in Nov 2020 (The National Security Summit Report by the House of Representatives)	
In April 2021, the Zamfara State Commissioner for Information, Ibrahim Dosara, said the criminals collected ransom from victims' families between 2011 and 2019.	
On May 29, 2021 aggrieved parents of the abducted Green field University said they paid ransom to secure the release	
Abducted pupils of Tanko Salihu Islamic School, Tegin, in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State were freed by bandits after paying ransom	
Abuja hotelier, eight others were released after ransom was paid to their kidnappers	
The sum of N800m was paid recently for the release of seven train passengers.	
Family of abducted Bank of Agriculture MD, Ali had earlier paid ransom to secure his release.	
families are expected to pay for the release	
Feb 21, 2022, gunmen kidnapped a nursing mother in Ogun State and the family paid ransom.	
The wife of the owner of a supermarket in Lokoja, Kogi State, Ugochukwu Okpala, has been released after the family paid ransom to the kidnappers on March 22, 2022.	

In the case of six family members of the newly elected councilor representing Yangoji in Kwali Area Council of the FCT, Idris Ibrahim, their abductors refused victims free despite collecting ransom on April 19, 2022.	
On June 4, 2022, bandits killed a lecturer after collecting ransom in Zamfara State.	
Methodist Prelate, Kanu Uche, and two other priests were recently kidnapped and freed after ransom was paid on	
Total between June 2011 July 2022 (Punch newspaper report)	

The table presented above provides a record of ransom payments made in Nigeria from June 2011 to June 2022. It highlights the substantial amounts disbursed by individuals, families, and organisations to secure the freedom of kidnap victims.

A striking observation is the cumulative sum of N5.61 billion paid over a decade from 2011 to 2020, as reported by SB Morgan. Interestingly, the period between 2020 and 2023, despite witnessing a significant increase in kidnapping incidents, showed a comparatively lower total in ransom payouts.

It is important to note that many families and communities deliberately avoid publicising the

exact amounts paid in ransom. Consequently, the known figures represent only a fraction of the actual payments made to kidnappers, with numerous transactions remaining unreported or undisclosed to media outlets.

The burden of ransom payments has emerged as a secondary affliction for the relatives, communities, and associates of kidnap victims. The exorbitant sums demanded by perpetrators often inflict severe economic hardship on the families and communities of those abducted, further exacerbating the impact of these crimes.



SECTION 4

Case Studies

This section of the report delineates findings derived from a comprehensive survey conducted in two distinct Nigerian states, namely Benue and Imo. The primary objective of this endeavour was to compile empirical evidence concerning the tangible and substantiated lived experiences of individuals amidst the prevailing insecurity gripping Nigeria. As previously outlined, while the security landscape in these states may manifest nuances in form, character, and causative factors compared to other states of the federation, the resultant impact remains strikingly consistent and similar, characterised by pervasive feelings of uncertainty, apprehension, and grief among the populace. We aim to utilise the circumstances observed in these states to underscore the overarching regional nature of insecurity within the country and to emphasise the shared sense of fear and uncertainty permeating the lives of Nigerians across diverse geographical domains, and the imperative of tailoring responses to address location-specific challenges, rather than adopting a uniform, blanket approach.

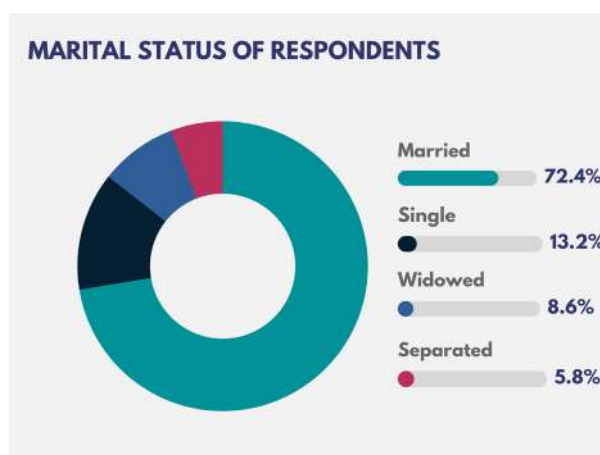
4.1 BENUE STATE SURVEY REPORT

4.1.1 Study Location

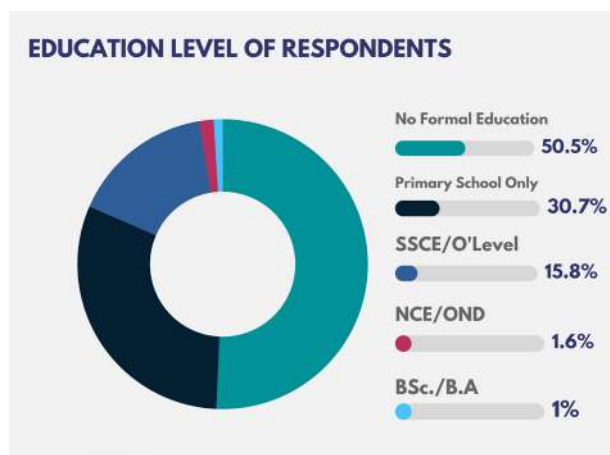
The study was conducted in Ikyaghev, Avihijime, Saghev Ukusu, Naka, Mbabuande, and Sangev council wards in Gwer West Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State. The communities were sampled because of their history of pastoralist attacks.

4.1.2 Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics

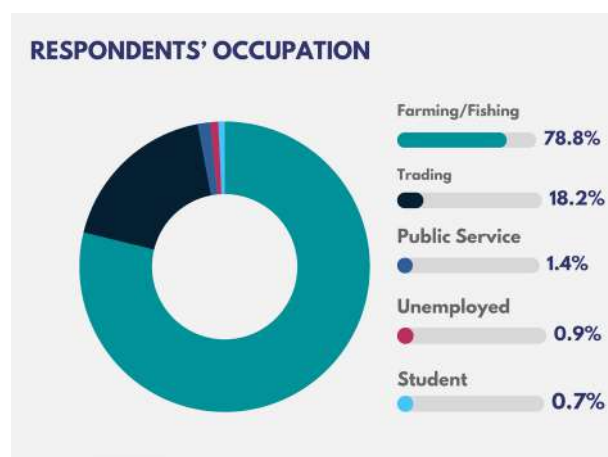
A total of 417 respondents were polled for this study in Benue state. Of these 54% were males while 46% were females. About 7 in ten of them were married.



In terms of education, a little over half (51.3%) had no formal education while another 30.5% had only primary school education, suggesting a very low educational level (Fig.2).



In terms of occupation (see fig.3), 78.8% of the respondents reported that they were crop or fish farmers while Only 2 in 10 of them were engaged in petty trading.



A significant proportion (75%) of the respondents have established roots within the community for over five years, with a notable 47% being natives who were born and raised in the study locales. Furthermore, around 28% of respondents have sustained residency within these communities for a period ranging from 6 to 10 years. An additional 22% had resided in the areas for a span of 2 to 5 years. These statistics underscore their profound familiarity with and capability to provide valuable insights into the security landscape within their respective communities.

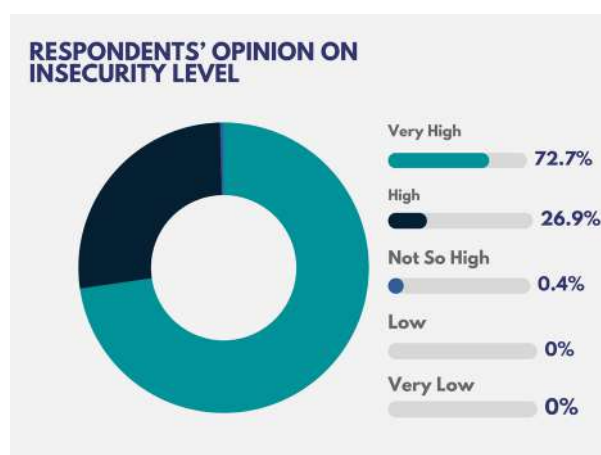
4.1.3 Main Survey Findings

This section analyses the key findings of the survey.

4.1.4 Nature of Insecurity

The insecurity in the state is characterised by kidnapping, extra-judicial killings by 'unknown gunmen,' gang violence, and attacks by herdsmen. In terms of severity, a combined total of 34% of the respondents indicated that insecurity was either very high (11%) or high (23%). About 66% reported that the situation may not be entirely terrible, but certainly degenerating.

Fig. 4 below presents a graphical depiction of respondents' views about the level of insecurity in Gwer West LGA of the state.



The prevailing sentiment among the majority of respondents underscores a profound concern regarding the severity of insecurity, with a striking 72.7% characterizing it as either "very high" or "high," while an additional 26.9% express similar apprehensions. Oral accounts from respondents indicated that rather than abate, insecurity has continued to worsen and that their communities were notably safe and secure before the onset of these attacks.

A substantial majority (71.2%) traced the emergence of insecurity to as far back as 2011, noting a subsequent increase in frequency ever since. Selected testimonials from respondents are depicted in the figure below."

"These Fulani attacks, we are saying now, it happens every time. It is regular. The invasion and attacks of Fulani herders started in 2011/2012, all through 2013 and 2014. So it has been over ten years since it began to intensely. It has been unabated. Every year, it increases. When it started, it was only in the interior villages, and those in the town used to hear about it. Gradually, however, people began relocating from the villages to the central city. This has

compounded issues in these few main towns, and those who relocated are making life difficult for those who live in safer cities."

- Market leader

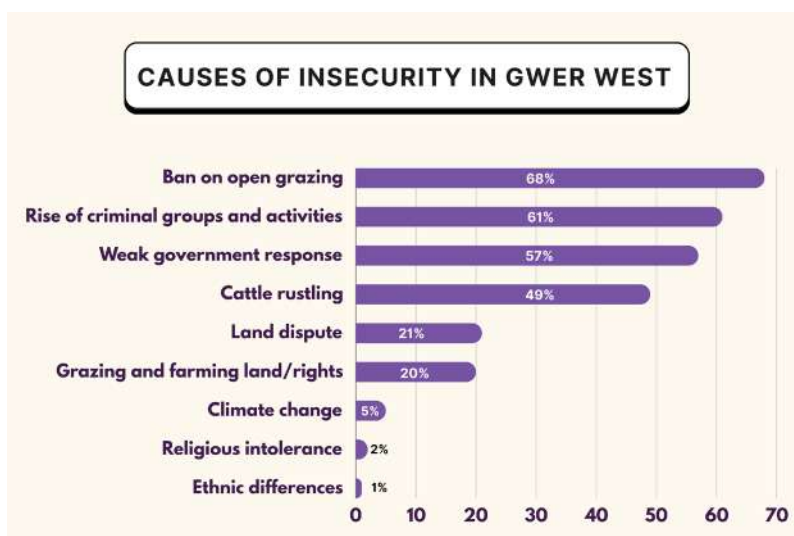
"Yes. Attacks have happened many times in the last 12 months. As I am talking, they have already pursued everybody in my village. During the rainy season, they will go back to the Nasarawa side. Sometimes, they stay high up on the hill in the riverine area around River Benue. They camp there. They will wait for us to cultivate the land and plant crops. They will invade the farm and graze on our crops."

- Community leader

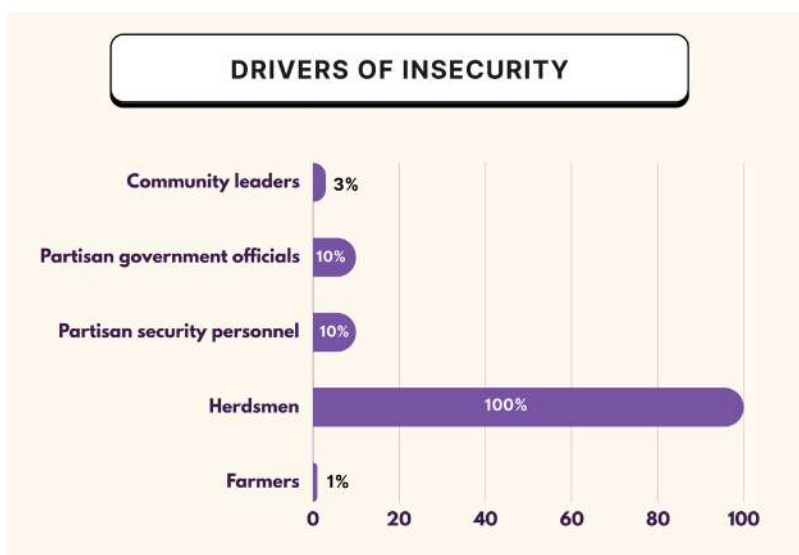
4.1.5 Causes of insecurity

The survey data (see fig. 5) reveal that the four leading causes of the prevailing insecurity in Gwer West are the enforcement of the ban on open grazing, the proliferation of criminal groups and associated activities, a perceived inadequacy in government response

mechanisms, and finally, instances of cattle rustling. It was noted that the imposition of the ban on open grazing may have incited a resolve among Fulani herders to assert control over the region and establish settlements, driven by the region's fertility for grazing purposes.



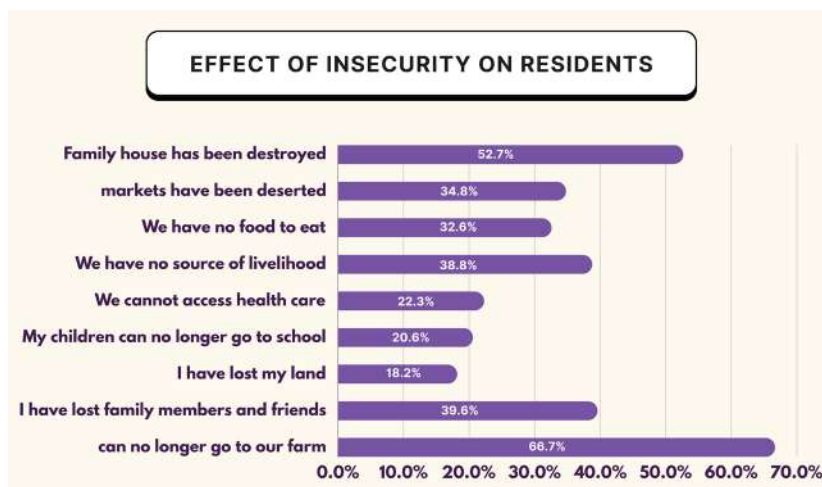
The residents of Gwer West unequivocally pinpointed the individuals and entities they perceive as fostering and perpetuating insecurity within the region (see fig.6). An overwhelming consensus (100%) identified herders as the primary instigators. A minority attributed responsibility to partisan security personnel (10.10%), partisan government officials (9.6%), and community leaders (2.6%). Notably, a mere one percent of respondents attributed culpability to farmers.



4.1.6 Impact of Insecurity on Residents

Data from this study indicate that insecurity has profoundly impacted every facet of life for the inhabitants of Gwer West, spanning community dynamics, familial relationships, and individual well-being. The fabric of

communal existence has been disintegrated, as almost the entirety of the population across the five wards has been displaced, with Fulani herders assuming control over their erstwhile homesteads. Figure 7 below presents a more lucid and specific impression of the impact of insecurity in the area.



It is seen that a staggering 66.7% of residents find themselves unable to safely venture to their farms, starkly illustrating the compromised agricultural livelihoods. Furthermore, an alarming 52.7% have borne witness to the destruction or obliteration of their familial abodes, emblematic of the widespread structural destabilisation wrought by insecurity. Tragically, 40% of residents have suffered the irreplaceable loss of family members, while an additional 40% grapple with the harrowing reality of livelihood deprivation. Such multifaceted ramifications underscore the urgent imperative for comprehensive intervention and support within the community.

Excerpts from respondents' reflections gathered during the qualitative survey in this regard are captured in the figure below.

“Due to ongoing attacks, all activities under FADAMA that used to provide employment have been stopped. Right now, it isn't easy to live in our ancestral homes again. Fulani herders will graze on our farms and kill us or chase us away. The moment they attack a community; some people will come to protect them. We believe these attacks are politically motivated. Apart from killing, they also engage in kidnapping activities, especially along the Naka – Makurdi road. But in Sengeve ward, it is mostly killing of residents. Some years back, these attacks only happened during the dry season. Lately, however, the herders have also been coming to attack during the rainy season.”

- Professional (Lawyer)

“There is no family again and no community. Most of our people have run away from their ancestral homes. About ¾ of them have left Saghev Ukusu. They now live in Naka town.”

- Opinion Leader

“Fulani people came to our place and have occupied it. They burned down our houses and occupied our farmlands. They killed our people, including my elder brother. Our mother just gave birth to two of us. They killed him, leaving his children with me. I am alone now.”

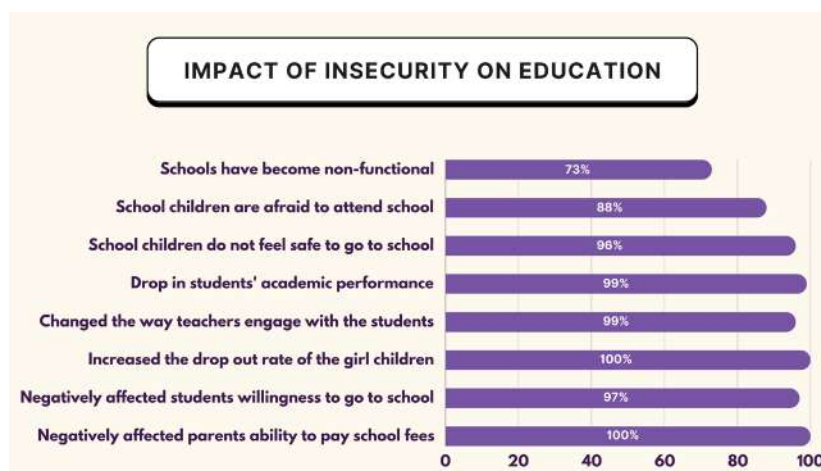
- Farmer

4.1.7 Sectoral Analysis of the Impact of Insecurity

A meticulous inquiry into the repercussions of insecurity on key societal domains revealed deeply unsettling findings. Below is a visual representation elucidating respondents' perspectives on the profound ramifications of insecurity on the educational, healthcare, and agricultural landscapes within the community.

4.1.8 Impact of Insecurity on Education

As depicted in fig.8 , a staggering 73% of respondents attested to the dire state of education within Gwer West, with the majority of schools rendered inoperable due to rampant destruction, leaving many educators and students displaced in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Even in the rare instances where educational institutions persist,



over 96% of respondents expressed grave concerns regarding the safety of attending classes. Nearly unanimous consensus (99%) highlighted a precipitous decline in academic performance among those fortunate enough to access schooling, mirroring the profound socioeconomic disruption inflicted by insecurity. Moreover, an overwhelming 99.6% of respondents lamented the inability of parents to meet their children's educational expenses, emblematic of livelihoods decimated by the crisis. Alarming, the plight is compounded for girls, as every respondent (100%) bemoaned a sharp uptick in dropout rates among this vulnerable demographic. Furthermore, insecurity has fundamentally altered the pedagogical landscape, with a notable shift towards informal teaching methodologies reported by the majority, underscoring the pervasive impact on educational practices and student-teacher dynamics.

Verbal testimonies provided by residents who participated in the study depicted a harrowing narrative of the profound impact of insecurity

on education within the study communities. Below, select excerpts are presented to underscore the gravity of the situation.

“Fulani herdsmen entirely burnt down the schools. We used to have primary schools all around, but they are gone now. Just a few schools are operating under the local government.”

– Professional (Lawyer)

“There are schools in our community here at Naka because it is a major town. But in the villages, the schools are closed down. The teachers don't go there again as they are posted to safer towns. Some parents also send their children to safer towns in other LGAs.”

– Market leader

“No school for children to go to. All the neighbouring communities have no schools there. The children are scattered everywhere, taking refuge. Some moved to Kogi State. Some are in IDP camps.”

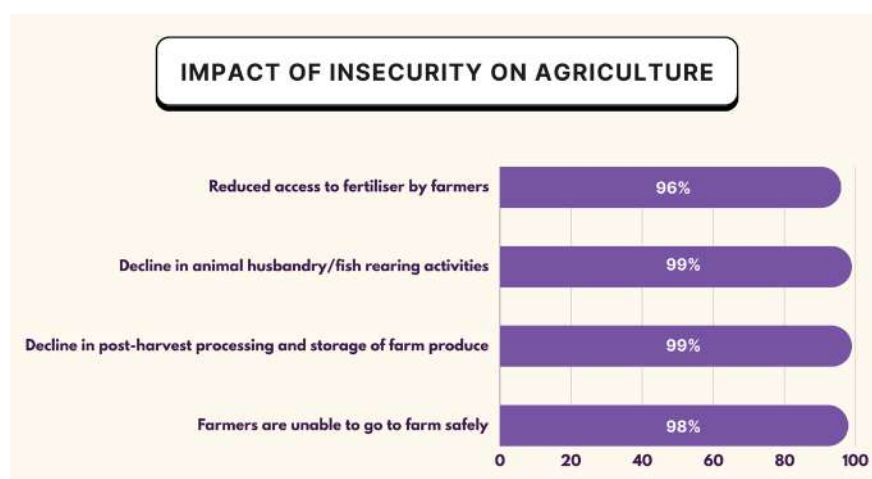
– Political leader

4.1.9 Impact of Insecurity on Agriculture

Once more, insights gleaned from the above data reveal a resounding consensus, with a striking 98.30% (see fig.9) of respondents expressing the sentiment that insecurity has rendered farmers in the study area incapable of accessing their farmlands safely. Similarly, a substantial 98.9% reported a discernible downturn in animal husbandry and fishing endeavours as a result of the prevailing insecurity in the area. Moreover, a staggering 99.3% underscored a marked decline in post-

harvest processing and storage activities concerning agricultural produce, underscoring the multifaceted impact on agricultural value chains. Furthermore, an overwhelming 96.3% highlighted the severe curtailment of farmers' access to fertilisers as a direct consequence of insecurity, exacerbating challenges faced within the agricultural sector.

Data from qualitative interviews reflected the above sentiments and a few of these are presented in the figure below.



On food security, there is no farming going on at the moment as people have been either killed or displaced. So there is no food production. With insecurity, how would people farm?

– Professional (Lawyer)

'The insecurity has affected food production in this area. People no longer go to the farm.

During raining season, if they manage to plant, they fear that during the dry season, they cannot harvest because of killer Fulani herdsmen. Anybody who forces himself to go to the farm, it is his/her corpse they will pick from that farm.'

– Market leader

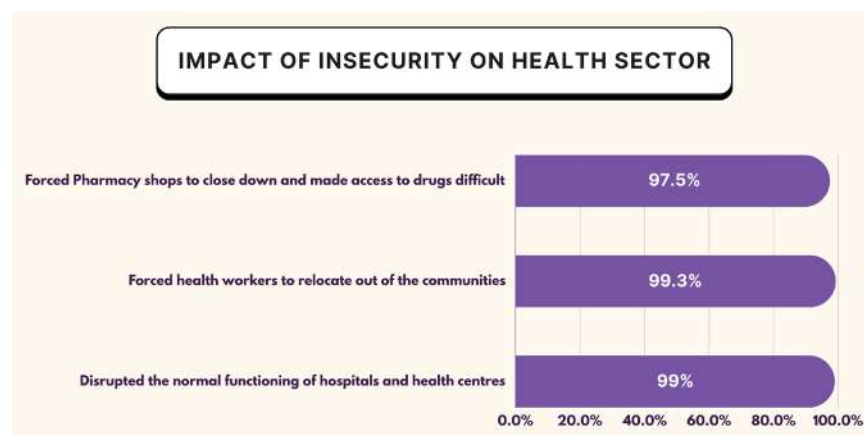
'There is generally low food production as a result of the killing of farmers. The small food that is produced by few farmers in safer towns cannot go round and it is expensive too.'

– Civil servant

'How do we produce food when we have been forced out of our ancestral lands? Look at me now, I am a farmer but I cannot farm. They have killed my brother. If I go back again, they may kill me too. So food production is low.'

– Farmer

4.1.10 Impact of Insecurity on Health Sector



Healthcare has been severely affected in Gwer West. As shown in the figure above, almost all the respondents reported that it disrupted the normal functioning of hospitals, forced health workers to relocate out of the study communities, and made pharmacy shops close down, thus limiting access to drugs.

The healthcare infrastructure in Gwer West has endured significant disruptions. Illustrated in the aforementioned figure, an overwhelming majority of respondents attested to the disruption of essential hospital services, compelling healthcare professionals to relocate from the study areas and prompting the closure of pharmacy establishments, thereby constraining access to vital medication. These assertions were corroborated by firsthand testimonies from residents, as depicted in the subsequent figure below.

“Health centres are no more. So, healthcare is seriously affected. Even the people who need healthcare are being attacked on their way to Naka town. Not only are there no health centres, but the herders still do not

allow people to seek treatment in Naka (a neighbouring town).”

– Professional (Lawyer)

“Communities like Naka still have health centres. However, the health centres are closed in the inner villages/communities. Even in some major towns like Naka, it is difficult for health centres to operate or for people to go there.”

– Tailor

“Health centres are not working. No one will go there and stand alone. The healthcare workers are not coming and nobody is coming to seek Medicare. Besides, enemies are in the bush waiting for people to come there.”

– Religious leader

“Health centres have been closed down. Even health workers have fled the communities. Only in Naka town will you find a few of them.”

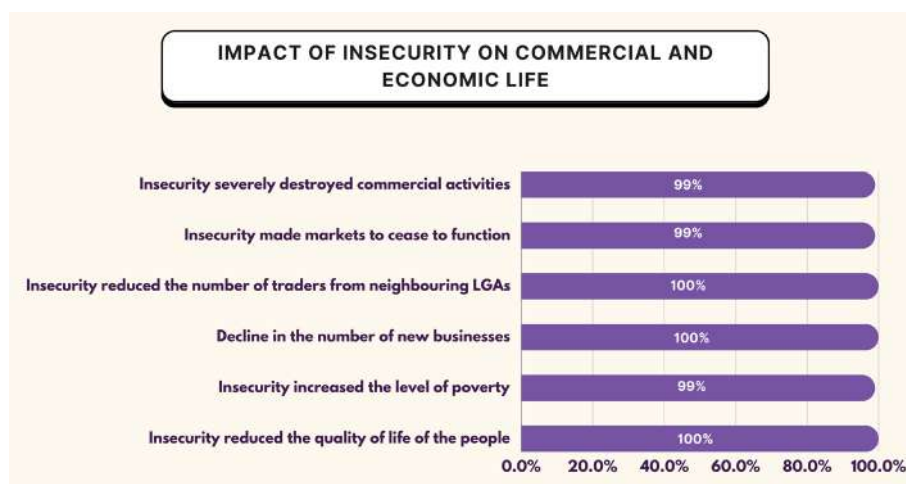
– Political leader

4.1.11 Impact of Insecurity on Commercial and Economic Life

The ramifications of insecurity on the commercial and economic fabric of the study communities are profound. As delineated by the survey findings, virtually all respondents (99.3%) unequivocally affirmed the near-complete cessation of commercial activities, as depicted in the accompanying figure. Likewise, an overwhelming consensus (99.3% and 99.5% respectively) articulated the cessation of market operations within the affected locales,

alongside a notable decline in the influx of traders from neighbouring LGAs, as illustrated in the figure below.

Furthermore, an alarming 99.5% of respondents highlighted the adverse impact of insecurity on the establishment of new small and medium-scale enterprises in Gwer West. These findings underscore a distressing escalation in poverty levels, with over 99% of participants expressing concern, while a significant 96.6% lamented a palpable deterioration in their overall quality of life.



These data were reinforced by residents in their oral accounts as reflected in the figure below:

'Maybe in Naka or Agagba, no market again in the attacked communities.

"In the whole of Sengeve, if you are not living in Naka, you are living in Agagbe. It is only when the tension is down that people go to some communities to do some buying and selling. So no economic activities are going on in most of the communities."

- Professional (Lawyer)

"It is the same thing we are talking about. When people don't have crops, they cannot sell. Markets are deserted. Even food to eat is not easy for people now. Some families give their children to other people to help raise them because they cannot sustain the children."

- Political leader

"Trading has gone. Traders are no longer coming. No safe road for traders to gain

access to the markets. Are they coming to be killed? The life of traders is not safe coming to the market. And since most of the communities are deserted, there is no market again."

– Opinion leader

"Despite insecurity, traders still come to safer towns. But such economic activities are not on the high side. However, commodity prices are high because demand is higher than what the people have to sell."

– Civil servant

4.1.12 Community Response to Insecurity

Amidst the persistent orgy of violence and instability, both the study communities and their counterparts across Benue State have found themselves compelled to devise proactive measures aimed at safeguarding their core well-being and vital interests. Primarily, these communities have taken the initiative to establish their own local vigilante groups, entrusted with the daunting responsibility of mitigating the adverse impacts of insecurity. However, the efficacy of these efforts is frequently compromised by the inferior quality of arms possessed by the vigilantes in comparison to the sophisticated

weaponry wielded by intruders. About 92% of the respondents polled for this study confirmed the existence of local security arrangement (see fig. below). Additionally, 55.9% reported that their communities went further to set up what they called "Peace Committees" to promote peace, tolerance, solidarity, and respect among the people including the Fulani herders in the communities. About 46.8% of the respondents also reported that modest security support had also been provided by both the local and state governments, but were quick to add that these have had minimal impact. About 53.7% of them also alluded to some form of welfare support from local and international NGOs to ameliorate their conditions.

Furthermore, a notable 55.9% of respondents indicated that their communities took proactive measures by establishing "Peace Committees" dedicated to fostering peace, tolerance, solidarity, and mutual respect among all members, including the Fulani herders residing within the communities. Another 46.8% of participants reported that their communities receive modest security assistance from both local and state governments, but were quick to add that this has had minimal impact. Support from local and international NGOs have hardly been in terms of security but rather in terms of relief and welfare.



Information gleaned from oral interviews reveals that the prevalent reaction among individuals confronted with attacks is to flee, reflecting a widespread sense of vulnerability. Moreover, even in instances where vigilante groups are present, they are frequently ill-equipped to contend with the superior firepower wielded by assailants. Additionally, the official law enforcement agencies, namely the police and military, if available, are frequently criticised for their sluggish response to distress calls, exacerbating the precariousness of the situation. Selected excerpts from these interviews are provided below for reference:

“The people in this area have no measure to put in place than to run away. But Gwer West, as a local government, has a vigilante group, together with the Police and soldiers. But the soldiers are not that happy. This is because when Fulani herders start their attack, if people report to the soldiers, it will take three hours before they respond. By then, the herdsmen would have finished their attack and run away.”

– Teacher

“When the attacks started, there used to be local vigilante groups, but with the sophisticated weapons these people come with now, vigilante people cannot face them because vigilantes only go around with bows and arrows while the herdsmen carry AK 47 guns. So for now, there is no local intervention except government intervention.”

– Professional (Lawyer)

“The federal government always sends security men to help the people. However, the impact has been minimal. Sometimes, farmers give security men (Soldiers) money to guide them while harvesting on the farm. When they are paid, they will stay with the farmers to protect them’

- Market Leader

“The state government of Ortom tried, but he could not make it because nobody supported him, including the President. Apart from him, nobody remembers Gwer West when they are in a problem. I have never heard of any

measures. I am saying this not because I am a politician but because of what I see happening in my place. We are crying. We are praying."

– Political leader.

4.1.13 Summary of Key Findings

The findings below encapsulate the profound impact of insecurity on the residents of Gwer West Local Government Area (LGA) in Benue State:

- Ongoing attacks by Fulani herders have resulted in the displacement of indigenous communities, who have been forced to abandon their ancestral lands to escape the threat of violence. Consequently, the herders have taken control of these vacated villages.
- Fulani herders' assaults have led to the destruction of schools, rendering them unusable. This has deprived children of their right to education, as schools remain inaccessible or non-existent. Displaced teachers have been compelled to seek refuge in safer areas, disrupting the continuity of education for affected students.
- Persistent attacks have disrupted agricultural activities, compelling farmers to abandon their lands and seek refuge in less volatile areas. This disruption has led to diminished food production, exacerbating food insecurity and poverty within the community.
- The influx of Fulani herders' attacks has deterred traders from conducting business in major markets or reduced their

frequency of trade in the region. This has stagnated economic activities, with traders fearful of being targeted for kidnapping or violence in insecure locations.

- Health centres have been targeted and destroyed by Fulani herders, mirroring the destruction witnessed in schools. Consequently, residents and healthcare workers have fled to safer locales, leaving those in need of medical attention with limited access to essential healthcare services. The resultant strain on existing healthcare facilities in safer areas has led to overburdening and reduced quality of care.
- Mass migration to safer areas coupled with disrupted agricultural activities has resulted in food scarcity, leading to widespread undernourishment among both children and adults within the affected communities.
- The escalation of Fulani herders' attacks has necessitated the establishment of an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Naka. However, the influx of displaced individuals has overwhelmed the camp's resources, exacerbating conditions of hunger, poverty, and disease among its inhabitants due to inadequate facilities and limited food supplies.

4.2 IMO STATE SURVEY REPORT

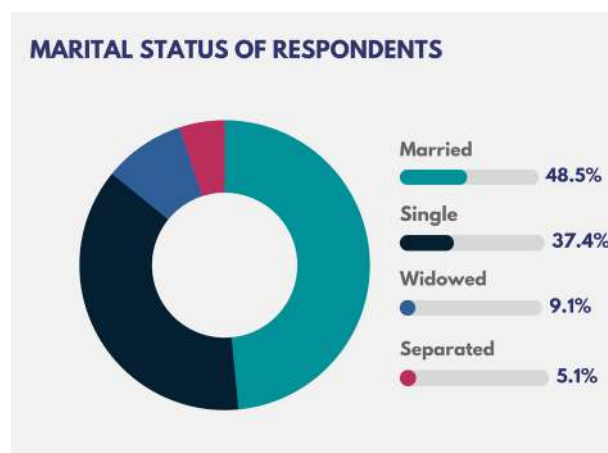
4.2.1 Study Location

In Imo State, the survey was conducted in Amatta, Atta 1, Amakaohia, Eziam, and

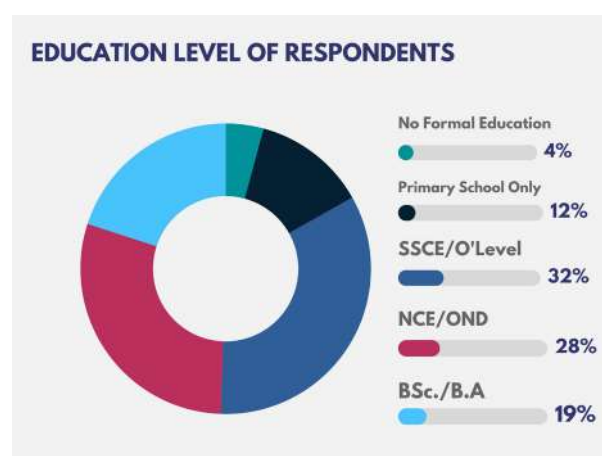
and Umudim wards of the Ikeduru Local Government Area. The selection of these wards was deliberate, owing to their notorious reputation for recurrent history of insecurity. Imo State, itself, was judiciously earmarked for inclusion in this study, because of its stark distinction as, conceivably, the epicentre of escalating insecurity within the Southeastern zone of the nation over the preceding 5 to 10 years. This perturbing surge, notably accentuated after the current administration was inaugurated, with discerning observers saying that the situation is politically motivated.

4.2.2 Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics

A total of 432 respondents were polled for this study in Imo state. Of this, 52% were females while the rest 48% were males. Also, 48% of them were married while 37% and 9% respectively were single and widowed (see Fig.13). About 5% were separated



In terms of education, about 44% of the respondents had at least SSCE while 47 had tertiary education, with only 4% reporting that they had no formal education. (Fig.2).



In terms of occupation, respondents predominantly comprised traders (17%), farmers (15%), politicians and civil servants (15%) and students (13%). Additionally, artisans (14%) and unemployed individuals (9%) were represented, alongside a spectrum of other vocations left unspecified. Remarkably, the prevailing majority of respondents (71%) fell within the age range of 29 to 58 years, underscoring a mature and diverse cross-section within the sampled population

4.2.3 Main Survey Findings

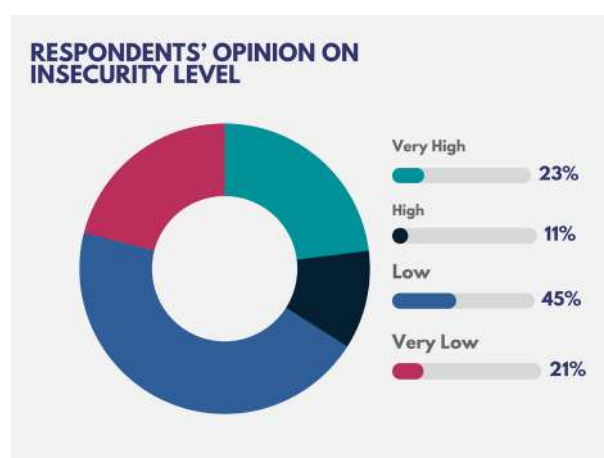
This section analyses the key findings of the survey.

4.2.4 Nature of Insecurity

The survey findings revealed a multifaceted

manifestation of insecurity within the state, marked by incidents of kidnapping, extrajudicial killings perpetrated by 'unknown gunmen,' gang violence, and encroachments by herdsmen. Regarding the gravity of these challenges, approximately 34% of residents asserted that insecurity in their communities was either categorised as high (11%) or very high (23%), while an additional 66% acknowledged a discernible deterioration, though not yet reaching crisis proportions. Moreover, a significant majority (63%) of respondents attested to the fact that their communities had not always grappled with such pervasive insecurity, tracing its origins back to the past decade and a half, but reported that it got to a head about five years ago following the emergence of the APC (an alleged Fulani dominated) government) in the State.

The figure below offers a graphical representation elucidating the perspectives of respondents concerning the extent of insecurity within Ikeduru LGA of the state



The figure below encapsulates interview narratives from some residents, illuminating a prevailing sentiment attributing the state's insecurity among other things, to the actions of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra. This secessionist faction fervently advocates for the establishment of a distinct Biafran republic independent from Nigeria. Presented herein are select excerpts from these interviews.

“Everything was peaceful—nothing like that. However, the recent change of government and other things prompted all these clashes in the community.”

– Nurse

‘It's not been peaceful ever since this crisis of IPOB has come into this community. But before now, our community has been a tranquil place.

– Civil servant

“...Ah, lives lost are uncountable, at least the ones I know Yes, there are more than a hundred, and the ones I can count are more than that. Last month, how many lives were lost as a result of it, so it's many, which is uncountable.”

- Politician

“It's getting worse because we don't have capable security personnel on the ground, we don't have, most times you find out even those our security operatives.... you will hear they are on the ground, but you won't be seeing them...Like politicians. We are going

through a lot because we are not even free, even in the community; at all times, we are afraid because we don't know what will happen the next minute, and our security operatives are not helping matters.

- Politician

Community members reported that the 'images' that come to their mind each time they think about insecurity in their communities are varied but between apprehensions and outright dread. Their sentiments are summarised below

- Fear - Reflecting the dread of encountering stray bullets or falling victim to abduction or violence.
- Danger - Symbolised by the unsettling image of an individual brandishing both a knife and a gun simultaneously.
- Lack of hope - Described as a landscape devoid of optimism, where hopelessness pervades.
- Disunity - Portrayed as a fractured nation or community, lacking cohesion and solidarity.
- Death - Evidenced by the haunting imagery of lifeless bodies strewn across the landscape.
- Toxic - Characterised by an environment devoid of prospects, particularly concerning the future of the younger generation.

These articulate expressions collectively underscore the multifaceted impact of

insecurity, transcending mere physical threats to encompass the erosion of hope, unity, and prospects for a better tomorrow.

4.2.5 Causes of insecurity

The survey data reveals that the leading causes of insecurity in the state include weak government response (40%), the rise of criminal groups (31%), land disputes (22%), and grazing & farming rights (13%). Others are unemployment (7%), poverty (6%), climate change (6%), and cattle rustling (3%) among others.

These sentiments were reinforced by the oral accounts with residents implicating such factors as political motivation, unpopular government, unemployment and herders' attacks as are reflected in the figure below:

"Politics is the primary cause of insecurity we are suffering today because each time, whereby the other political party is looking for a way to take over the power they go the extra mile to get themselves equipped by equipping these guys that are perpetrating this evil whereby at the end they can no longer be able to retrieve those weapons from them they are using to perpetrate it and a situation whereby at the end of the election and all that these men are not being taken care of very well they now look for an alternative for them to survive, they even go into kidnapping the same politicians that gave them those weapons.... Another one is the bad leadership, the wrong leadership, that's it!"

- Politician

“Bad government, bad governance. Yes. When you are in power without the people’s choice, there is force, anarchy, and the type of government of autocracy that people don’t like. When it comes to democracy, people say the government is a democracy, but indirectly, it is an autocracy. For instance, when the federal government removed fuel subsidy, the president cautioned the effect by giving the governors some palliative measures in terms of finance; when things got to the governors, they only gave it to their party members and the party members the

loyal ones are very few so the majority are hungry and angry.”

– Community leader

“...we don’t know where herdsmen are coming from. When the people manage to go to the nearby farms and plant their crops, as soon as they’re coming up, cows from nowhere will come and eat them all up, especially from people who look like northern citizens. So, they are imported to cause mayhem in a peaceful community.”

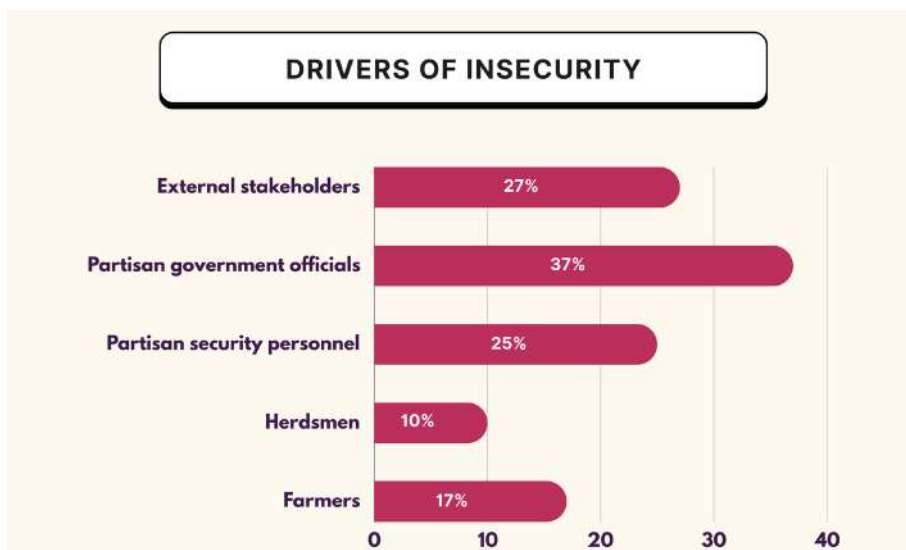
– Community leader

4.2.6 Drivers of Insecurity

Respondents were asked questions regarding the primary instigators of insecurity within both their local communities and the broader state context. Results unveiled a hierarchy of implicated parties, with partisan government officials leading at 37%, followed by external stakeholders at 27%, partisan security personnel at 25%, and community leaders at

23%. Additionally, farmers and herders each accounted for 17% and 10% respectively, while religious leaders comprised 3%, among various other contributors.

Notably, only a marginal one percent cited ‘unknown gunmen,’ potentially indicative of apprehension surrounding reprisals or victimisation.



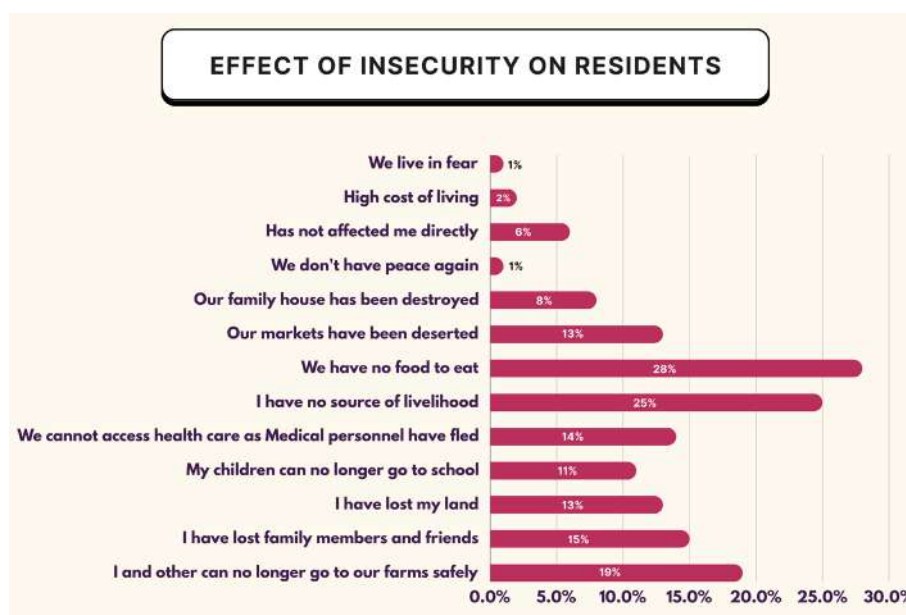
4.2.7 Impact of Insecurity on Residents

While the intensity of challenges faced by the communities in Imo state may appear less severe in contrast to those in Benue state, residents within the study areas have nevertheless borne witness to the profound impact of insecurity on their societal, economic, and psychological fabric. The ramifications of this insecurity have manifested in enduring scars across multiple dimensions.

In terms of personal losses and the associated toll, a significant majority (19%) lamented their inability to access their farmlands — a cornerstone of their livelihoods. Tragically, 15% mourned the loss of family members, while 13% grappled with the displacement of land, a fundamental asset. Additionally, 8%

suffered the destruction of family residences, compounding their plight. Furthermore, 11% were forced to confront the harsh reality that their children could no longer pursue education in a secure environment, further exacerbating the cycle of instability. Other impacts include inability to access the market (13%), loss of livelihood sources (25%), limited access to health care due to the desertion of the communities by health and medical professionals (14%) and outright starvation (28%).

These statistics underscore the profound and far-reaching consequences of insecurity, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to alleviate the plight of affected communities.



Excerpts from respondents' reflections gathered during the qualitative survey in this regard are captured in the figure below.

"Okay, if it's kidnapping, there was a kidnapping that occurred one particular time; it affected the community at large because it was school children that they kidnapped. So, it affected the community at that time. I don't know how to describe it very well, but... The families lost much money in paying the ransom, and the community helped them equally."

- Market leader

"When an unknown person came to kill somebody you know; you would be afraid because you think it might be your turn because nobody does anything before he's being killed. What affects an individual affects the community. It's the community because it's not a private dispute. It's not a quarrel between one man and another. It's due to the kind of government or the type of governance."

- Community leader

"It has been... People have been terrified. It makes people not come out; as soon as it's 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock in the evening, everybody goes to bed."

- Civil servant

"Lives were lost, people got injured, properties were damaged, and people lost their health also."

- Farmer

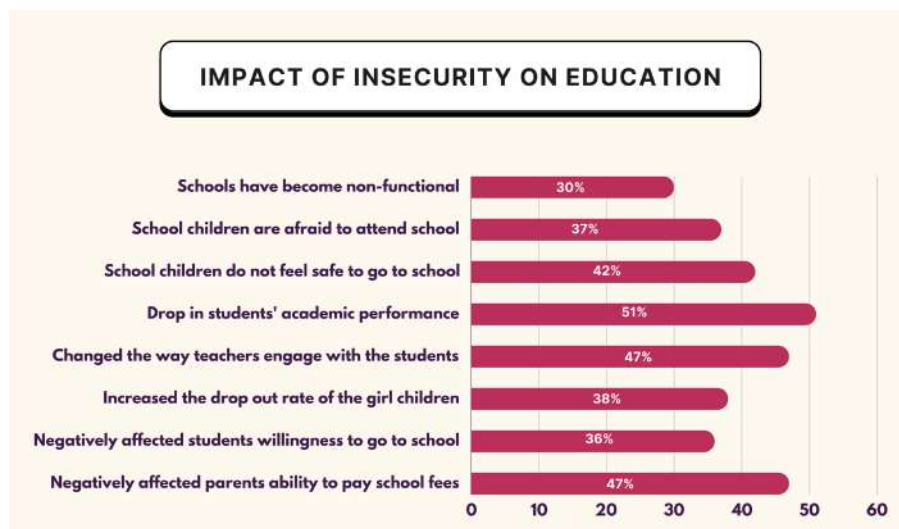
"A lot of impacts. Negative impacts per se in the sense that to the young stars or the youths, most of them have relocated or run ..ran away because of this killing because the majority of the killings are centred more on the youths. Secondly, women are afraid to go to their businesses more, so schools in some parts of Imo state, like uh Isikwuato or Okigwe, no longer go to schools on Mondays. Some have extended going to school on Saturdays instead of Mondays, so there are other negative impacts I cannot say now, but these three mentioned cover most."

- Nurse

4.2.8 Sectoral Analysis of the Impact of Insecurity

A meticulous inquiry into the repercussions of insecurity on key societal domains revealed deeply unsettling findings. Below is a visual representation, elucidating respondents' perspectives on the profound ramifications of insecurity on the educational, healthcare, and agricultural landscapes within the community.

4.2.9 Impact of Insecurity on Education



As evidenced by the empirical findings, a significant portion of the surveyed populace, comprising 30% of respondents, reported that insecurity in the study communities rendered schools inoperable. Statistics reveal that this insecurity has instilled fear and reluctance among schoolchildren, with 42% expressing concerns over their safety in attending school, while an additional 36% have been deterred from pursuing their education altogether.

Moreover, the deleterious effects of insecurity extend beyond mere attendance concerns, permeating the very fabric of educational dynamics. A staggering 47% of the respondents alluded to there being a palpable shift in teachers' approach towards student engagement, with many teachers being compelled to navigate the challenges imposed by an increasingly precarious environment. Consequently, this unsettling backdrop has precipitated a noticeable decline in academic

performance among students, exacerbating an already precarious educational landscape.

Furthermore, the figure shows that the financial strain wrought by insecurity has cast a shadow over parents' capacity to sustain their children's education, with an evident disruption in their ability to meet educational expenses. Distressingly, this confluence of factors has culminated in a stark rise in the dropout rate, particularly among girl children, with a notable 38% being disproportionately affected by this educational crisis.

Corroborating these quantitative findings, the qualitative insights gleaned from residents' firsthand testimonies serve to illuminate the stark realities endured within the study communities. Presented below are poignant excerpts encapsulating the profound impact of insecurity on the educational milieu, painting a vivid portrait of adversity and systemic upheaval.

"I would say insecurity has caused a lot of tension among the students, causing them to have an emotional and psychological effect. Like, if you remember saying you want to go to school, the fear, the phobia, so it has made people develop a phobia for school."

- Farmer

"Well, I must be frank with you, at the last meeting we had, the PTA chairman was raising the alarm on the poor performance of the students, and even some of the teachers that were being deployed even some corpors were being deployed to our community many of them worked their way out because the place is not secure for them thereby affecting the academic standard of our community."

- Politician

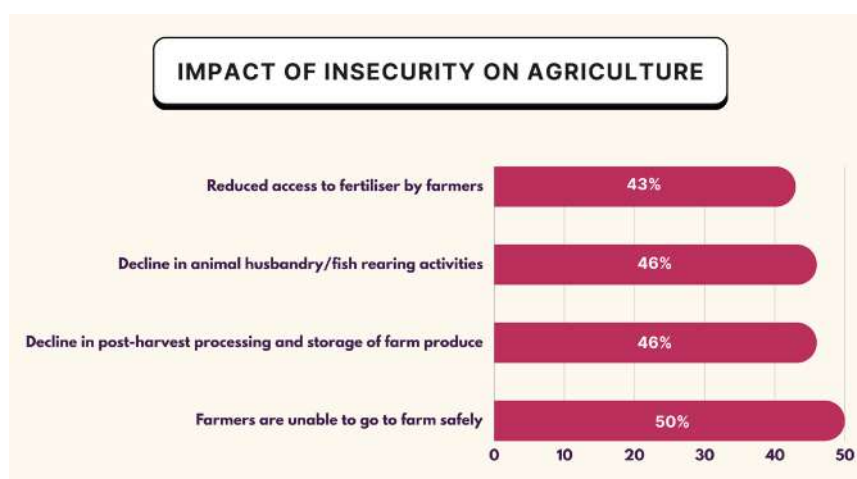
"The girl children are the vulnerable ones. If this happens, some of them will not; how do I put it? If there is insecurity ... you see that in the long run, it's the female, it's girl child that is the most affected, some of them are being raped."

- Nurse

"My dear, one of the things like this kidnapping is if you go close to some of the young guys who are schooling, they will even tell you that education is now a scam. After all, whether you go to school or you didn't go to school, you can join the people who are doing kidnapping since if you can kidnap one of the politicians, you make a hell of billions, so the thing has a negative influence on them."

- Politician

4.2.10 Impact of Insecurity on Agriculture



Once more, insights gleaned from the above data reveal a resounding consensus, with a striking 50% of respondents expressing the sentiment that insecurity has rendered farmers in the study area incapable of accessing their farmlands safely. Similarly, a substantial 46% reported a discernible downturn in animal husbandry and fishing endeavours as a result of the prevailing insecurity in the area. Moreover, another 46% underscored a marked decline in post-harvest processing and storage activities concerning agricultural produce, underscoring the multifaceted impact on agricultural value chains. Furthermore, nearly a quarter (43%) highlighted the severe curtailment of farmers' access to fertilisers as a direct consequence of insecurity, exacerbating challenges faced within the agricultural sector.

Once again, an analysis of the data underscores a prevailing consensus, as a striking 50% of respondents reported that insecurity has effectively impeded farmers within the study area from safely accessing their farmlands. Similarly, a notable 46% observed a palpable decline in both animal husbandry and fishing endeavours, directly attributable to the prevailing climate of insecurity.

Furthermore, an equally significant 46% drew attention to the discernible downturn in post-harvest processing and storage activities pertaining to agricultural produce, thus highlighting the intricate ripple effects across agricultural value chains. Moreover, a substantial 43% shed light on the acute shortage of fertilisers, a vital resource indispensable for agricultural productivity, as a direct repercussion of the prevailing

insecurity, exacerbating the myriad challenges confronting the agricultural sector.

These statistics underscore the multifaceted impact of insecurity on agricultural livelihoods, necessitating urgent and comprehensive interventions to safeguard the interests of farmers and mitigate the deleterious consequences on food security and economic stability within the region.

Data from qualitative interviews reflected the above sentiments and a few of these are presented in the figure below.

"Very poor. People hardly go to farms these days; they are terrified to enter their farms to weed and cultivate."

– Civil servant

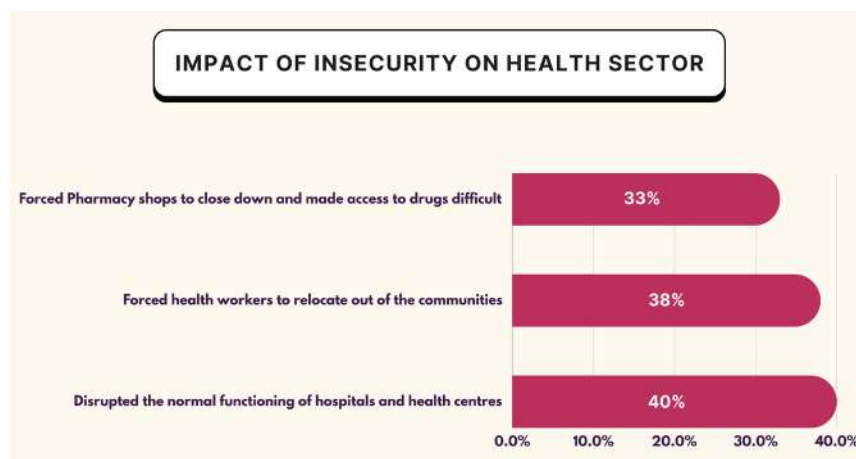
"When you did not farm, what are you supposed to harvest? What are you storing? People now use their garden in the house to farm, and they only farm to eat, not for storing or other purposes again."

– Farmer

"Hmmm, it has affected us very well because even at my fish farm now, I don't have access to feeds again. The feeding is expensive. Animal husbandry, because I... am rearing goats also, is where I am rearing ram. We cannot take them to the bush again; this is the dry season. There is no way you can get food or feed for them. And for the ones we buy, things are expensive; we cannot afford them, and most of us in this business are already closing. We cannot afford it, and you can't go to the bush again to take your animals for feeding."

– Farmer

4.2.11 Impact of Insecurity on Health Sector



The impact of insecurity on healthcare services within Ikeduru Local Government Area has been profound and far-reaching. As illustrated in the accompanying figure, a significant proportion of respondents, nearly a quarter (40%), attested to its disruptive effects on the normal operations of hospitals. Moreover, an alarming 38% reported the forced relocation of health workers from the study communities, exacerbating the strain on already limited healthcare resources. Additionally, 33% noted the closure of pharmacy shops, further impeding access to essential medications.

These disruptions have culminated in a palpable scarcity of healthcare services, exacerbating the challenges faced by residents in accessing vital medical treatments. As a nurse in the oral interview reported the prevailing economic hardship, exacerbated by the prevailing insecurity, has rendered conventional healthcare options, including hospitals and orthodox drugs, increasingly less

viable for many inhabitants. Her exact words are captured in the figure below:

'Yes um... in terms of that one because people don't have money, as they are not doing their businesses as usual and there is no income it affects the hospitals in the sense that some of them, the people that are sick or either supposed to be taken to the hospital can no longer go because of money and you know what it can result to health wise? It causes more damage, more harm to the individual.'

– Nurse

These adverse circumstances underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts to address the underlying causes of insecurity and revitalise healthcare infrastructure, ensuring equitable access to essential medical services for all residents.

4.2.12 Impact of Insecurity on Commercial and Economic Life

The ramifications of insecurity on the commercial and economic fabric of the study communities are profound. As delineated by the survey findings, virtually all respondents (57%) unequivocally affirmed the near-complete cessation of commercial activities, as depicted in the accompanying figure. Likewise, an overwhelming consensus (54% and 48% respectively) articulated the cessation of market operations within the affected locales, alongside a notable decline in the influx of traders from neighbouring LGAs, as illustrated in the figure below.

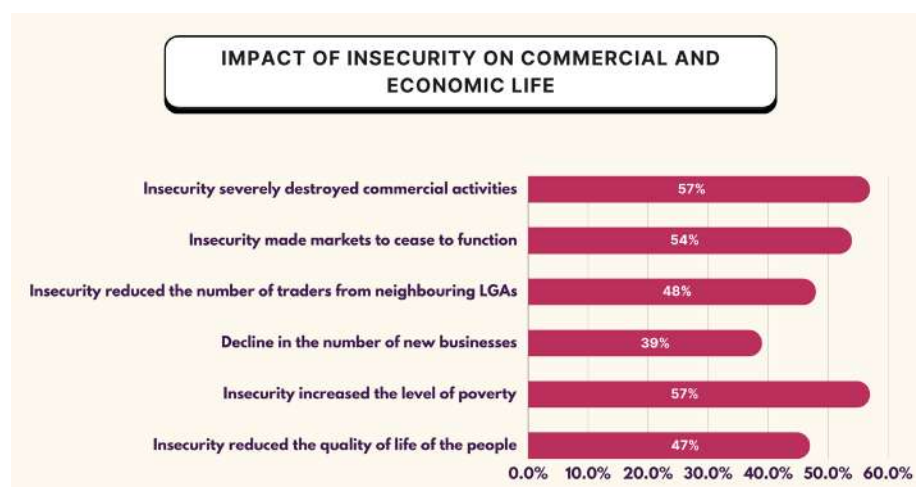
Furthermore, an alarming 39% of respondents highlighted the adverse impact of insecurity on the establishment of new small and medium-scale enterprises in Ikeduru. These findings underscore a distressing escalation in poverty levels, with over 57% of participants expressing concern, while a significant 47% lamented a palpable deterioration in their overall quality of life.

The impact of insecurity on the commercial and

economic landscape of the study communities is undeniably profound. As elucidated by the survey findings, more than half (57%) of the respondents, reported severe decline in commercial activities. Moreover, 54% and 48% respectively of the respondents highlighted the cessation of market operations within the affected locales, alongside a discernible decline in the influx of traders from neighbouring Local Government Areas.

Furthermore, a significant 39% of respondents reported that insecurity adversely affected on the establishment of new small and medium-scale enterprises in Ikeduru. These findings underscore a distressing escalation in poverty levels, with over 57% of participants expressing profound concern, while a significant 47% have lamented a palpable deterioration in their overall quality of life.

These sobering statistics paint a stark picture of the socioeconomic fallout wrought by insecurity, underscoring the urgent imperative for targeted interventions aimed at revitalizing commercial activities, fostering entrepreneurship, and ameliorating the pervasive hardships faced by residents.



These data were reinforced by residents in their oral accounts as reflected in the figure below:

'Yeah, it's affecting business activities negatively and even educational activities ... due to insecurity.'

- Politician

'Just like I told you about the school, markets are no longer continuously running because...our market runs every four days; if the four days fall on Monday, that market will not open. That market stopped running that day due to a 'sit at home' order by IPOB.'

- Farmer

'Negatively, because, as I mentioned earlier, there is no freedom, we are all living in fear, and people that are supposed to invest in this local government in this community are relocating.'

- Politician

'Wow! That's what I said (laugh)! Now, a cup of Garri, if I tell you how much a cup of Garri is now, it is almost 200 Naira, what is the reason? There are no longer enough hands in farming because crops are being destroyed. After all, herdsmen are destroying crops planted.'

- Politician

'Food production and agriculture in the community are now on the low side because people are no longer willing to go to farms because their lives are involved.'

- Nurse

4.2.13 Community Response to Insecurity

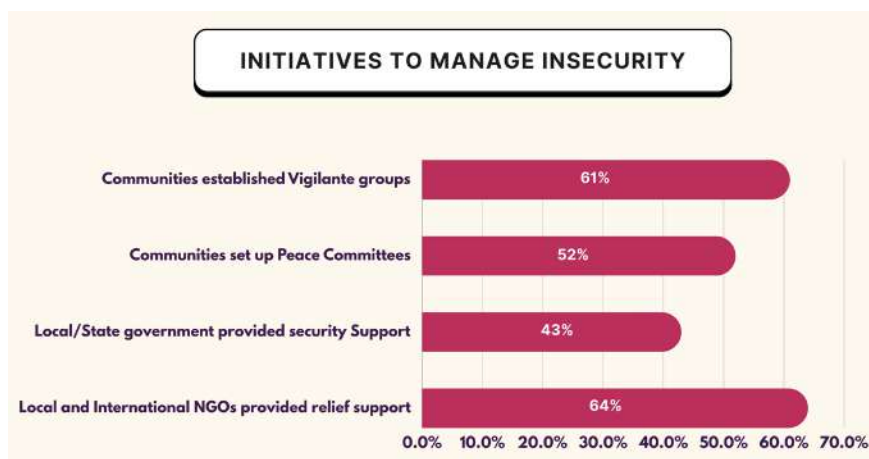
Amidst the widespread insecurity in Imo State, communities have undertaken diverse initiatives to safeguard their localities and bolster resistance against criminal acts. As the survey findings indicate, one notable response is the concept of Community Vigilance Groups which consist of committed volunteers assigned to monitor and patrol their vicinity, aiming to identify and thwart criminal endeavours. These groups frequently coordinate efforts with law enforcement bodies to fortify security measures and ensure the safety of residents. Approximately 61% of the respondents surveyed in this study affirmed the presence of local security arrangements within their communities, as depicted in the figure below. However, the effectiveness of these endeavours is frequently undermined by the inferior quality of arms possessed by the vigilante groups, in stark contrast to the sophisticated weaponry wielded by intruders.

In addition to the local vigilantes, 52% of the respondents indicated that their communities had established "Peace Committees" aimed at fostering peace, tolerance, solidarity, and mutual respect among residents. Furthermore, approximately 43% of the respondents noted

some level of security support provided by both local and state governments, albeit with minimal impact.

Moreover, about 64% of respondents referenced receiving various forms of relief and welfare support from both local and

international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to alleviate their conditions. It's noteworthy that support from these NGOs has primarily focused on relief and welfare rather than security initiatives.



Information gleaned from oral interviews confirmed the above survey information and a few excerpts are captured in the figure below:

I think they have. They have formed a group of village vigilante group that helps in those areas, and also, there are days now when the community schedules to go to the farm so that it will not be one person at the farm; it will be as a group so that if there is any occurrence or any insurgency, people can help out.

– Nurse

“There is local vigilante group formation. And you see, they are not powerful. They are just there to make sure that you know they are engaged. Even the local vigilantes are not paid. So I can't call it; they are not safe enough to secure any person because they are hungry.

– Community leader

4.2.14 Summary of Key Findings

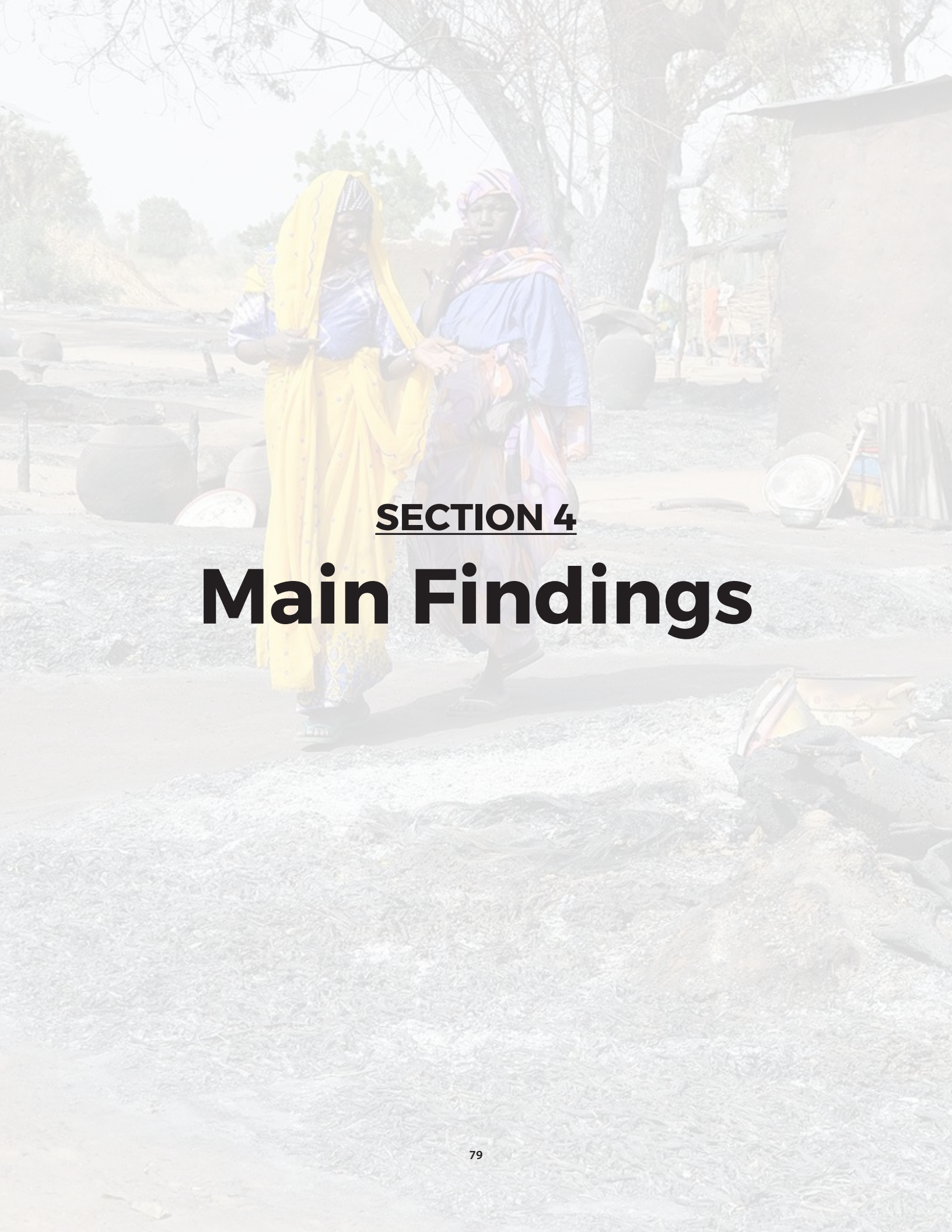
The survey conducted in Ikeduru Local Government Area yielded the following key findings:

- The insecurity prevalent in the area primarily stems from attacks by 'unknown gunmen', activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), conflicts with herdsmen, kidnappings, and tensions related to political parties or communal disputes. These incidents are sporadic rather than frequent occurrences.
- The violence accompanying these attacks has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of homes, and severe physical assaults, particularly during the peak of the crises.
- Kidnapped individuals sometimes face fatal consequences even after ransom payments, raising suspicions of political motives behind some of the killings.
- Fear of potential attacks has instilled a sense of insecurity among community members, prompting many youths to relocate to urban centres for safety.
- Farming activities have dwindled due to encroachment by suspected Fulani herdsmen on arable land, leading to decreased food production, exacerbating hunger, and poverty.
- Economic and commercial endeavours persist, albeit at a reduced scale, amidst the prevailing tensions.
- Despite the turmoil, schools continue to operate, sustaining academic activities amidst the challenging environment.
- Access to healthcare facilities and pharmacy services remains available to community members, but significantly threatened.
- The pervasive atmosphere of fear negatively impacts the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of individuals, significantly affecting their quality of life.
- The 'Sit at home' campaign imposed by IPOB every Monday, though lacking a comprehensive economic evaluation, inflicts substantial financial strain on the South-Eastern states, disrupting socio-economic activities and causing significant revenue losses.
- Many families, individuals, and communities have incurred financial losses due to insecurity, particularly through ransom payments, depleting funds that could have otherwise been invested in business ventures to foster economic growth and create employment opportunities, thereby undermining shared prosperity in the region.



The ruins of devastating terrorist attack on Diffa, Niger State

*Photo: **Stringer/AFP/Getty Images***



SECTION 4

Main Findings

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BASED ON THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

5.1.1 The Nature of Insecurity in Nigeria

This study revealed that insecurity manifests differently across Nigeria's six geo-political zones, with each zone presenting distinct challenges and contributing factors. While widespread banditry, cattle rustling, and conflicts between herders and farmers are prevalent in the Northeast, the problem in the Northwest Zone is the insurgency of Boko Haram and its splinter group, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The motivations are complicated but include socio-economic, political and religious agenda.

In the North Central Zone, insecurity encompasses ethno-religious conflicts, farmer-herder clashes, and criminal activities such as kidnapping and robbery, with sporadic outbreaks of violence over land disputes, communal tensions, and resource control. However, in the Southwest Zone, key security concerns include cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killing, and occasional clashes between farmers and herders.

Challenges in the Southeast Zone are characterized by separatist agitations, kidnapping, robbery, inter-communal tensions, and politically motivated violence, while insecurity in the South-South Zone is largely linked to militancy, pipeline vandalism, illegal oil bunkering, and resource control agitations.

The study further found that perpetrators across all zones exploit various factors such as the weak response of the security forces, poor infrastructure including bad roads, religious intolerance, and the partisan nature of government officials and security agents etc., to execute their plans. Furthermore, it was observed that the underlying drivers of insecurity are intricate and differ across regions, but frequently center around issues of governance failures, poverty, social and economic exclusion, as well as political and religious motivations.

Given these variations, this study underscores the need for a firmer definition and delineation of these various groups, as well as a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the diverse actors involved as a basis for developing effective strategies that address the root causes of insecurity and pave the way for sustainable peace and stability. By shedding light on the diverse and often overlapping identities of perpetrators, a deeper understanding can be achieved, unraveling the intricate web of violence plaguing the nation.

This deeper understanding allows for the recognition of the inter-connectedness of various actors and their roles in perpetuating insecurity. Moreover, it facilitates a more nuanced analysis of the underlying drivers fueling these conflicts, whether they stem from socio-economic inequality, ethnic tensions, religious extremism, or other root causes. When the complexity of the situation is truly acknowledged, it becomes possible to move

beyond simplistic narratives and confront the multifaceted nature of insecurity head-on.

This, in turn, enables the devising of holistic and targeted interventions that address the underlying grievances and vulnerabilities exploited by violent actors. Through such efforts, dialogue, reconciliation, and ultimately, a more resilient and peaceful society for all Nigerians can be fostered. Only through a comprehensive understanding of the nature and scope of insecurity can Nigeria hope to forge a path towards lasting peace and stability.

Going forward, the ever-changing nature of the operation of the perpetrators makes it necessary for interventions to be implemented on a state-by-state or region-by-region basis to effectively deal with the situation, taking cognisance of the peculiar circumstances of the state/region or area concerned.

We have also established that some of the attacks are politically motivated, while others are based on ethnic/religious motivation and others are carried out for monetary gains. The attacks in Benue, for example, by the suspected herdsmen are from ethnic/religious motivation as well as monetary gains, since the aim of the herdsmen is to take over the land for their cattle. In Imo state, the attacks are politically motivated to tame opposition and also to create room for the suspected herdsmen to establish ranches for their trade in the state. Additionally, the spate of kidnappings indicates some perpetrators are keen to make monetary gains.

5.1.2 The Frequency of Attacks

The frequency of attacks varies widely from region to region. While some attacks are sporadic, others are weekly or monthly, etc. In Benue state, for example, the attacks are more frequent - weekly, perpetrated mostly by suspected Fulani herdsmen, to take over the land from the original owners, to serve as grazing land for their cattle.

On the other hand, attacks in Imo are not frequent, even though there are different perpetrators - herdsmen, sponsored gunmen typically referred to as 'unknown gunmen', IPOB operatives, kidnappers, and political thugs. These groups appear to work independently.

Additional information received indicates that the last attack by 'unknown gunmen' in the area took place in June 2021, in Amakohia a neighbouring community in Ikeduru LGA. However, the fear created by the incident has remained indelible in the minds of the residents within and outside the LGA till date.

5.1.3 The Real Drivers of Insecurity in Nigeria

BENUE STATE

The drivers of insecurity in the selected villages are listed below in order of significance:

- Herdsmen: 81.3% of the respondents confirmed that herdsmen were the foremost drivers of insecurity in their community.

- Partisan government officials: The next driver of insecurity is partisan government officials, with an 8.1 % score. The officials are probably not seen to be doing enough to protect the citizenry, particularly with the switch from one governing party to another, with the new state governing party being seen to be associated with the marauding herdsmen.
- Partisan security operatives: 7.3% of the respondents believe the security men are partisan as they tend to protect the herdsmen when communities try to launch counter-attacks.
- Community leaders: Community leaders with a score of 1.6% are the 4th drivers of insecurity. This may be due to inept leadership or failure to protect their communities from the attackers.
- Farmers and external stakeholders have a score of 0.8% each.
- Policing could resolve issues, provided the governors will not abuse the system by using the State Police to oppress opposition party members.
- Community leaders: Community leaders are perceived to be the third driver of insecurity as stated by 20.2% of the respondents. This can be due to the collaboration of some of the leaders with the ruling political party, currently perceived to be behind some of the killings.
- Farmers: The fourth driver identified by the respondents (14.9%) is farmers, probably because some of them are partisan.
- Herdsmen: Herdsmen are the fifth group, according to 8.7% of the respondents. Although the herdsmen have taken over some portion of land, the scale is nothing compared with the situation in the communities in Benue.

IMO STATE

The drivers of insecurity in the selected wards in Ikeduru LGA in Imo state, in order of significance, are provided below:

- Partisan government officials: 32.5% of the respondents believe 'partisan leadership' is responsible for insecurity. The imposition of an APC Governor on predominantly PDP followers is instructive.
- Partisan security operatives: The security operatives are not perceived to be neutral, with a score of 21.9%. Adoption of State

5.1.4 The Causes of Insecurity

BENUE STATE

- Ban on open grazing: The ban on open grazing introduced by the immediate past governor is a sore point in the Benue State herders-farmers conflict. Consequently, 24.2% of the respondents see this as the main issue for consistent ferocious attacks by the suspected Fulani herdsmen, as if the ban was an affront to them.
- Rise of criminal groups and activities: The inability of the security forces to deal with

the spate of insecurity made it possible for criminal groups to emerge, taking second in causing insecurity, according to 21.7% of the respondents.

- Weak government response: In the third position is the weak response by the government, according to 20.3% of the respondents. Although the state set up a vigilante force, it did not have the needed superior firepower and the numerical strength to counter the herdsmen.
- Cattle rustling: The fourth cause of insecurity is cattle rustling (17.4% of the respondents). This has remained a challenge, as different groups of herders steal cattle from each other, causing frequent deadly clashes, with attendant risk to other innocent people.
- Land Dispute: Disputes related to land (7.5% of the respondents) are the fifth cause of insecurity.
- Grazing and farming land/rights: Grazing and farming rights (7.1% of the respondents) are in the sixth position.
- Climate change: Only 1.8% of the respondents considered climate change as a factor.
- Unemployment and hunger/poverty: These two factors had negligible scores.

IMO STATE

- Weak government response: The major cause of insecurity is attributed to weak government response (31.2% of the respondents), as citizens expect the government to take a firm, proactive action to check insecurity. Governors are currently not in control of the Police Force; the issue will probably be addressed when state policing is introduced.
- Rise of criminal groups and activities: 24.2% of the respondents believe the rise of criminal groups is the second cause of insecurity in the state.
- Land disputes: In the third position (17.2%) are land-related disputes, which give rise to frequent communal clashes.
- Grazing and farming land/rights: Grazing and farming rights (10.2% of the respondents) are the fourth cause of insecurity in the state.
- Unemployment: 5.5% of the respondents believe the high unemployment rate among the youth is responsible for youth restiveness and violence.
- Climate change and hunger/poverty were both mentioned by 4.7% of the respondents.
- Cattle rustling: Cattle rustling was mentioned by 2.3% of the respondents, but it is not a major issue as it is in Benue state.

5.1.5 Perception of Insecurity by Citizens

The spate of insecurity all over the country makes Nigerians feel unsafe. No region of the country is spared from the scourge. Citizens firmly believe and expect the government to deal with the issue of insecurity decisively as a priority. Unfortunately, the situation appears to be deteriorating instead of being resolved.

When asked what images come to their mind when they hear the word 'insecurity', the respondents mentioned the following:

- 'Fear'
- 'Danger'
- 'Lack of hope'
- 'Disunity'
- 'Death'

The current atmosphere of fear, uncertainty and danger, creates avoidable mental, physical, and emotional pressure on the citizenry. The current economic situation has compounded the situation further.

5.1.6 The impact of insecurity in Nigeria

- Food Security: The two LGAs surveyed, in Benue and Imo states, are currently unable to produce enough food to feed themselves due to insecurity. These areas were not food distributors to neighbouring LGAs and states. The implication of this is that the country may experience a major food crisis soon if concerted steps are not taken to redress the situation.

- Education (School Attendance): In Benue State, school children in the selected communities, are unable to attend schools as they are in IDP camps, due to attacks on their communities by suspected Fulani herdsmen. This has immense implications for society as these children may not be equipped to fit into the emerging AI-driven society of the future.

In Imo State, the educational institutions, in the selected communities are still open despite the tension created by insecurity. The atmosphere, however, may not be very conducive to learning and character development.

- Economic & Commercial Activities: The economic and commercial activities in the selected communities in Benue state have come to a standstill as the people have been displaced. Most of them ran away from their ancestral home without taking any items for fear of losing their lives. In Imo state, economic and commercial activities are ongoing but at a reduced level.
- Quality of Life: Life under the condition of constant fear is unhealthy. Consequently, the quality of life of the citizens in the selected communities in Imo state is low and much lower for the selected Benue state communities.
- Access to Healthcare and Wellness.

While the people in the selected Imo State communities are still able to get healthcare services, the situation for Benue State

communities is pathetic, as the healthcare facilities were burnt down.

5.2 International Dimension of Nigeria's Security Crisis

The social-political and religious crisis fomented and fueled by kidnapers, IPOB, and Boko Haram/ISWAP in Nigeria has ceased being merely a Nigerian, West African, or African calamity; it is now an unfolding disaster of global proportion. Sadly, the West and the rest of the World are still in denial, as they were 30 years ago in Rwanda... until April 7, 1994 happened. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) which habitually claims responsibility for jihadist atrocities all over Europe and the Middle East, shares a common DNA with the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and their allies – Boko Haram and Ansaru terrorist groups.

Already, local operators of the ISIS ideology in Africa have weakened many African nations and regions – in West, Central and East Africa. Existential crisis points in Nigeria, Central Africa Republic, Mozambique, Kenya, and several other nations of West, Central, and East Africa are connected and well organized. Nigeria is the trophy prize-in-waiting for ISWAP.

If Nigeria collapses, a mere 2% population displacement would unleash nearly 5 million refugees which will easily collapse the entire West African social and economic infrastructure. The total population displacement of WW-2 refugees would pale in comparison to what will happen if Nigeria implodes. It is only prudent that countries (UK and EU nations inclusive) that are likely to be flooded if the Nigerian population dam bursts, should intervene now by compelling the Nigerian government to arrest the impending catastrophe.



Women fleeing Boko Haram Islamists at Mairi village on the outskirts of Maiduguri, capital of Borno State
Photo: **Stringer/AFP/Getty Images**

SECTION 6

Conclusion

6.1 CONCLUSION

The data collected during this study vividly illustrates the profound repercussions of insecurity in Nigeria, highlighting the pressing need for immediate and decisive action. A secure environment is paramount for fostering agricultural productivity, facilitating local consumption, and driving crucial foreign exchange earnings.

Insecurity permeates all geopolitical zones of Nigeria, whether manifested through the Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, cultism, or separatists' attacks by 'unknown gunmen'. These incidents not only perpetuate hunger, frustration, and despair among ordinary Nigerians but also result in significant loss of life and livelihoods.

The survey conducted in the two locations corroborates these findings, revealing a diverse array of attacks varying in intensity, scope, casualties, and impacts on various facets of life, including education, health, and commerce. The nature of insecurity varies across states and even within sections of a given state, influenced by factors such as perpetrators' motives, geographical terrain, and responses from security forces.

Perpetrators consistently outmanoeuvre security forces, exhibiting superiority in tactics, timing, location, and weaponry, and posing significant challenges to anticipation and prevention efforts. The prolonged violence has precipitated countless civilian casualties, mass displacement, and severe humanitarian crises. The presence of extremist groups like ISWAP

further exacerbates the situation, posing a direct threat to international security.

Nigeria's security crisis encompasses multifaceted dimensions with significant implications at the national, regional, and international levels. Specifically, the persistent insecurity and violence in Nigeria disrupt economic activity, discourage investment, and compromise governance, economies, and daily lives. At the regional level, there is clear evidence that Nigeria's instability can spill over into neighbouring countries, precipitating refugee crises and economic strain across West Africa. Additionally, Nigeria's emergence as a hub for extremism poses a tangible threat to global security, potentially fueling migration and disrupting global security efforts.

Consequently, addressing this intricate challenge necessitates a holistic approach beyond a purely military solution. This approach entails understanding and addressing the underlying causes of conflict and insecurity, which often intertwine with social, economic, political, and historical factors.

6.2. Recommendations

A problem that lacks a clear definition and proper diagnosis cannot be effectively resolved. Superficial peace conferences, insincere inter-faith dialogues, and borrowed solutions from foreign contexts that disregard our unique culture and experiences offer no sustainable remedy. This report's primary recommendation emphasizes the imperative to contextualize and tailor solutions to Nigeria's

diverse insecurity challenges. To achieve this, both the government and the elite class must take ownership of the crisis, striving to comprehend its nuances to accurately assess its magnitude.

Addressing Nigeria's security crisis demands a problem-specific, or region-specific approach that transcends the current militaristic paradigm. The multifaceted nature of insecurity across different regions necessitates tailored strategies that move beyond simplistic explanations and one-size-fits-all solutions.

The recommendations below go further than prevailing solutions, which have shown limited effectiveness:

1. Government Acknowledgement and Ownership:

- The government must recognise and address the underlying causes of insecurity, which stem from failures in governance and leadership. It should own the problem and actively work towards reclaiming territories overtaken by insurgents. For too long, the government has acted as an outsider, or a standby observer, as if the problem belonged to the communities only.
- Establish a bipartisan, non-sectarian National Study Group on insecurity to identify the true nature of the perpetrators and provide informed and actionable strategies.

2. Comprehensive and Integrated Approach:

- Tackle insecurity with a holistic strategy involving key societal leaders. This includes intentional engagement of community leaders, women's organisations, media opinion leaders, civic thought-leaders, legal and law enforcement organisations, private security firms, and intelligence agencies.
- Develop region-specific strategies to address the diverse nature of insecurity across different areas. Treating it as wholly military only, will not solve the problem at the roots, some of which are ideological, or issues of non-inclusion.

3. Advanced Technological Solutions:

- Deploy surveillance systems such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) equipped with advanced cameras and thermal imaging technology for real-time monitoring.
- Utilise data analytics, secure communication networks, drone surveillance, mobile applications for citizen reporting, and other advanced technological tools to combat insecurity.
- Address the current gaps in technology, including lack of relevant technologies, inadequate manpower, insufficient training, and inadequate funding and policy backing.

4. Strengthening Security Sector And Governance

- Reform the security sector to improve training, equipment, and oversight, ensuring effectiveness and accountability.
- Strengthen governance by upholding the rule of law, enhancing public trust, and addressing socio-economic grievances through education, job opportunities, and infrastructure development.

5. Community And State Policing Initiatives

- Fully embrace community policing to empower local communities in enhancing security. This includes establishing platforms for dialogue between security agencies and community leaders. Government must lead in this respect and not leave everything to NGOs, foreign funders and foundations.
- Fast-track the adoption of state policing to allow localised policing arrangements and enhance community involvement in security processes.

6. Regional And International Collaboration

- Collaborate with neighbouring countries to secure borders and combat transnational threats through intelligence sharing, best practices, and resource allocation.

- Seek support and collaborative engagement from key allies such as the United Kingdom, European Union, and the United States, particularly in intelligence sharing and counterterrorism strategies.

7. Humanitarian Efforts And Conflict Resolution

- Increase support for humanitarian efforts to assist displaced persons and affected communities with food, shelter, healthcare, and essential services.
- Encourage negotiation and mediation at all levels of society to understand and resolve conflicts before they escalate.

8. Strategic Security Policy And Legal Framework

- Develop a comprehensive security policy document that addresses the issues of insecurity, incorporating relevant acts such as the Police Act, National Security Act, FRSC Establishment Act, NAMA and NCAA regulations, Nigerian Army Signals Act, and Armed Forces Act 2003.
- Create new regulations for the holistic management of ungoverned spaces and general insecurity in Nigeria.

9. For The International Community

- The international community should first recognise the global implications of the

crisis in Nigeria, the Lake Chad region and the Sahel. Right now, there is what appears as a general denial of the atrocious level of the killings, kidnapping and other atrocities such as forced enslavement and marriage of women and the girl-child.

- The international community should provide decisive support to Nigeria in combating these security challenges to prevent further escalation and regional instability.
- International partners should provide targeted assistance to support Nigeria's security and governance capabilities, including job creation, particularly for youths; and strengthening governance structures.
- Strengthen collaboration with neighbouring countries to secure borders and combat transnational threats, enhancing intelligence sharing and border control and mitigate the spillover effects of the crisis.
- Support Nigeria and other countries in the region through investments in socio-economic development, governance reforms, and conflict resolution.

10. For Humanitarian Organisations

- Increase support for humanitarian efforts to assist displaced persons and affected communities, ensuring the provision of essential services and facilitating return to their ancestral lands.

- Encourage negotiation and mediation at all societal levels as cost-effective means of resolving conflicts before they escalate.

These recommendations emphasise a multi-faceted approach that includes governance reform, socio-economic development, community engagement, and international cooperation to effectively address the complex security challenges facing Nigeria. National authorities must ensure a comprehensive understanding of the nature and character of insecurity in the nation; It must ensure such understanding percolates down to all stakeholders involved in insecurity to develop tailored responses.

This is crucial for developing tailored responses. Thereafter, government must come up with new policies and devise strategies that reflect the unique dynamics of each context, acknowledging that no single solution can be universally applied.

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In this well-researched, well-argued, and scientifically presented study is found an indispensable tool for researchers and policy makers. Whoever wishes to understand the embarrassing insecurity affecting Nigeria would find in this work a thorough study of the phenomenon. Whoever is in search of solution need not go further.

Rev. Fr. Professor Anthony Akinwale, O.P.
Deputy Vice Chancellor,
Augustine University, Ilara-Epe, Lagos State



This report explores Nigeria's insecurity crisis from a unique perspective with proposed recommendations for a lasting solution. Using a mixed-method approach, the study reveals a profound consequence of insecurity in Nigeria, while equally highlighting the need for urgent and practical decisive actions to save our nation. Finally, with some root causes identified, the strategies proposed in the report to mitigate the crisis should help secure a prosperous resilient society.

Dr. Joachim Adebayo Adenusi
Research & Policy Director, PSJ-UK



Overall, this report is highly recommended for anyone involved in addressing Nigeria's security challenges. It is a well-researched, clearly written, and profoundly impactful document that paves the way for meaningful progress in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria.

JON Ode, Air Vice Marshal (Rtd)

