

**CONFLICT CONTINUUM AND FOOD SECURITY IN
NORTHWESTERN NIGERIA: REFLECTIONS ON KEY ISSUES
AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

Abstract:	<p><i>This study investigates the various obstacles to food security in Northwestern Nigeria to pinpoint their root causes. The methodology used for the study was a hybrid of quantitative and qualitative methods using primary and secondary sources. The study also conducted Key Informant Interviews with pertinent parties to contextualize the issue. According to the study, banditry has a negative impact on the nutritional status and food security of rural households in the study area.</i></p> <p><i>The result also demonstrates that banditry, which damaged food storage facilities and disrupted existing food supply chains, jeopardized agriculture, the main source of income in the northwest region, negatively affecting the quality of food in the area and across the nation. Because of their dread of being harmed, most farmers avoid going to their farms. For the region's farm fields to be safe and accessible, the study suggests, among other things, that security specialists be stationed and deployed in these areas. The government also needs to make sure that rural areas have access to basic services including social services, infrastructure, and other essentials of life.</i></p>
Keywords:	Agriculture; climate change; food supply; banditry
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Introduction

Given Nigeria's continued armed violence and crimes, the country is best defined as being in turmoil today. Despite the government's shaky counter-insurgency efforts¹ some researchers² claim that Northern Nigeria, particularly the North-East, is still being pillaged by Boko Haram, while the North-Central has been plagued by herder brigandage, which has caused a serious humanitarian and economic crisis, and the North-West region has only recently been affected by a rapid upsurge of banditry along its border. There are now daily reports of banditry attacks in Nigeria's northwest because of the epidemic of armed banditry that has plagued the area in recent years³. Subsistence farmers who raised animals, farmed during the wet and dry seasons, and engaged in other food-producing activities were the main targets of bandits in rural areas. Most homes are terrified of the threat, and many of them are afraid they will be attacked by bandits if they visit the fields. Banditry still forces a lot of people to relocate and puts a strain on the economy.

Food security in the area and the nation is impacted by the most afflicted marketplaces and those that function well. Most of the impacted communities in the area are households in rural Katsina and Zamfara states. Due to continued fighting, farmers have been unable to access areas with fertile land. The destructive activities of banditry have led to widespread farmer murders and property destruction. The heart of the nation's meat and cereal production is in the northwest, thus the influx of farmers there has further reduced the availability of food and nutrition throughout the nation⁴; also, Wanep admits this⁵. Populations that are prone to banditry frequently deal with other problems brought on by food insecurity, such as ill health and a decline in productivity. Due to chronic health issues that prohibit people from working as hard as they could under normal circumstances, households commonly find themselves in a vicious loop where they are unable to produce enough food even in good years.

Food security has been a major issue for a while because of allegations that various African countries experience food insecurity. In the Horn of Africa, including Somalia, Ethiopia, and some regions of Kenya, among others, we have

¹ A. C. Okoli, A. C. Ugwu, *Of marauders and brigands: Scoping the threat of rural banditry in Nigeria's northwest*, in "Brazilian Journal of African Studies", Vol. 4, No. 8, 2019, pp. 201-222

² O. Oyelude, *Police arrest bandits' girlfriend, informant in Katsina*. *Punch*, <http://punchng.com/police-arrest-bandits-girlfriend-informants-in-Katsina>, (21.01.2022)

³ A. Abdullahi, *Rural banditry, regional security and integration in West Africa*, in "Journal of Social and Political Sciences", Vol. 2, No. 3, 2019, pp. 644-654

⁴ S. Suleiman, *Rural banditry in Zamfara state, Northwest Nigeria*. *Social Science Research Council*, <http://kuenga-amani.ssrc/2019/06/13/rural-banditry-in-zamfara-state-northwest-nigeria>, (21.09.2022)

⁵ *West African Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN), (2020). Addressing armed banditry in the north-west region of Nigeria: exploring the potentials of a multi-dimensional conflict management approach*, www.wanep.org, (31.01.2022)

seen vivid photos of malnourished children. These horrifying pictures show a disaster that might have been averted. Africa's agricultural system is out-of-date, and the issue is made worse by rising food costs globally. Budgets for Nigeria's urban and poor families include a substantial and growing portion of food. The impoverished are the ones who suffer the most when the price of staple goods increases. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), an organization under the United Nations, previously issued a warning that food disasters in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Morocco were imminent. The record stated that the situation with the arena food had gotten bad. Meals continue to be the most vital due to their relevance to human existence, while clothing and shelter satisfy the basic needs of life. It is a well-known fact that the relentless pursuit of food has shaped human history, causing battles, promoting migration, and supporting the rise of states.

Because of the challenging circumstances, the world is facing, the present rise in food costs is cause for sober contemplation. This is because the food crisis is becoming more catastrophic. This crucial issue has gained prominence among world leaders, elevating the need for the world to increase its food production to feed its 6.5 billion inhabitants and prevent widespread political instability around the world¹.

As a result, many multinational corporations and individual nations started fiercely competing in food safety campaigns to address the situation and make food affordable for everyone. According to the 2005 Food Security Evaluation, 750 million people lived in 70 low-income countries with food insecurity. The number of hungry people decreased by 30% across Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Although there was a recognizable fashion in the region, Latin America and the Caribbean countries have rarely changed throughout time. Despite a significant increase in food production, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where the rate of starvation has increased during the past ten years. Today's challenge is that high food costs will lead to an increase in food safety and a widespread food crisis in many developing nations. In developing nations, poor people spend between 50 and 80 percent of their income on food to meet their needs. Any increase in food costs will cause people to eat less and increase famine. The costs of rice, corn and wheat in Nigeria recently reflect excessive rooftops².

This global food crisis has been blamed on several factors, including climate change, population growth, a rise in the demand for biofuels, a failure to boost crop output, high oil prices, and increased input losses for producers and investors. Food costs are skyrocketing because of structural problems like underfunding for agriculture, dominance in the food delivery system, and

¹ Food and Agricultural Organization, *Preparation of Comprehensive National Food Security Programme: Overall Approaches and Issues*, FAQ, Rome, 2007

² Food and Agricultural Organization, *Market Prices, Food Situation and Prospects for Benin, Niger, and Nigeria. The report*, FAQ, Rome, 2008, <https://reliefweb.int/report/benin/markets-prices-food-situation-and-prospects-benin-niger-and-nigeria>, (21.09.2022)

agricultural regulations. For instance, Rapid City's growth is increasing concerns about food delivery. Will there ever be a moment when someone must worry about where their next meal is coming from? The focus of this paper is, modestly, one task among other tasks. To reduce insecurity in Nigeria, a small number of studies have been done to examine the effects of the Conflict Continuum in Northwestern Nigeria (Kunle, Agaptus, Nwozor & John Shola, 2020¹; also, according to Agbou, Musa and Zhema²; this approach is present in other authors research³ and studies⁴. The effects of banditry on rural livelihood in northwest Nigeria are not well understood, though. Most of the ongoing research on insecurity has been concentrated on the Boko Haram insurgency and conflicts between herdsmen and farmers. The current study investigates how the continuum of war affects food security in Northwestern Nigeria considering this.

Statement of problem

Insecurity caused by Boko Haram and banditry is Nigeria's biggest danger to the agricultural economy. The ongoing terrorist and bandit actions of Boko Haram have a detrimental effect on agricultural activity and the farming sector in north-western Nigeria. Agriculture cannot be practiced in an unstable environment because access to regional markets is restricted, farming communities are uprooted⁵, and national agricultural production is suppressed⁶. Due to their relentless attacks on rural communities and the murders they cause, Fulani herdsmen have joined the ranks of the Boko Haram terrorist organization as a significant threat to these areas. The horrific bandit attacks that occurred in these areas, which led to deaths. Farmers find it challenging to travel to their farms in order to produce or harvest crops because of the heinous bandit attacks carried out by Fulani herders in these agricultural districts. In Northern Nigeria, the banditry scenario is extremely frightening and dangerous. In Nigeria's six northwestern states, there are estimated to have been 1,100 fatalities in 2018 alone. In 2019,

¹ A. Kunle, Nwozor, A. Agaptus, S. John, *Conflicts, and the retrogression of sustainable development: the Political Economy, of Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria*, 2020

² D. Agbou, H. Musa, S. Zhema, *Insurgency, Armed Herdsmen and Instability in Nigeria: a search for the Way Forward*, in "Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences", Vol. 8, No. 6, 2020, pp. 63-81

³ I. Gadzama, M. Saddiq, T. Oduehie, J. Dariya, J., *Appraisal of Rural Banditry in "KAMUKU" Forest in BirninGwari Local Government of Kaduna State, Nigeria*, in "Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology", Vol 18, No. 1, 2018

⁴ C. Kwaja, A. B. Ademola, *Responses to conflict between farmers and herders in the middle belt of Nigeria: Mapping past efforts and opportunities for violence prevention*, 2018

⁵ A. Abdulyakeen, *Introduction to African Politics: Deconstructing the Constructed African History*, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2021

⁶ CAPS, *Nigeria: banditry violence and displacement in the Northwest*, [http://www.acaps.org/special-report/nigeria-banditry-violence-and-displacement-in-the-Northwest_\(21.01.2022\)](http://www.acaps.org/special-report/nigeria-banditry-violence-and-displacement-in-the-Northwest_(21.01.2022))

more than 2,200 deaths were documented; between January and June 2020¹, more than 1,600 deaths were recorded². Nearly 247,000 persons were uprooted by the displacement, and more than 41,000 became refugees³. More than 8,000 people died and more than 200,000 were forced to flee their homes in Zamfara alone because of bandits⁴. In Kaduna State, the afflicted communities have abandoned around 30% of the agricultural land.

Contrarily, Zamfara and Katsina states' low agricultural activity led to a 60% decrease in food output (WARN, 2019¹⁶). Over 350 rice farmers in Kebbi state were victims of bandit attacks, and their farmland was abandoned (Punch, 2019)¹⁷. Unsurprisingly, local farmers' and other disadvantaged groups' diminishing wages have an impact on their capacity to support their families' financial well-being and the education of their children. This study has filled the gap left by the paucity of empirical data on the effects of gun violence on food availability in northwest Nigeria.

Conceptualizing food security

Food security is a dynamic idea that is the subject of a lot of academic study and public policy concerns. Food security has been defined by several scientists and organizations⁵. According to Hoddinott⁶, there are around 200 descriptions of the problem and 450 food security indicators. As a result, it is practically impossible to assess food security directly; as a result, numerous indices for measuring have been proposed. Among the most commonly employed food security measures are consumer spending, nutritional status, and coping mechanisms. Food security, according to the 1996 World Food Summit, is reached when everyone has equitable access to enough, safe, and nutritious food that satisfies their dietary needs and food choices for an active and healthy life.

Contrarily, food insecurity occurs when individuals, families, or entire countries lack physical or financial access to the food they require. Food insecurity refers to a scenario in which a country, a household, or an individual lacks physical or economic access to food and is vulnerable to food survival strategies that can

¹ West African Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN), *Addressing armed banditry in the north-west region of Nigeria: exploring the potentials of a multi-dimensional conflict management approach*, www.wanep.org, (31.01.2022)

² O. Oyelude, *Police arrest bandits' girlfriend, informant in Katsina Punch*, <http://punchng.com/police-arrest-bandits-girlfriend-informants-in-Katsina>, (31.01.2022)

³ *Idem*

⁴ John Hoddinott, *Choosing outcome indicators of household food security*, in International Food Policy Research Institute, *M. Phil in Social Change Thesis NTNV*, Washington D.C., 1999

⁵ Y. Ladan, *An Analysis of Contemporary Security in Katsina State*, in "Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Education Studies", Vol.6, No.7, 2019, pp. 95-102

⁶ U. M. Okpanachi, *Policy options for Re-Positioning the Nigerian Agricultural Sector*, in P. Ogiiji (ed.), *The Food Basket Myth: Implications for Food Security and Agricultural Reforms in Nigeria*, Makurdi, Aboki Publishers, 2004

give food quickly but are not shock-resistant. If a household consumes less than 80% of the daily caloric intake suggested for an active, healthy person, it is deemed to be food insecure. Agricultural activity in Zamfara state has been disrupted by bandit attacks, this fact having a significant impact on food security in the area and nationwide¹. The literature contains several different definitions of food safety. According to Carter², the ability of regions, nations, or households in these countries to fulfill predicted annual consumption is the definition of food security. They discovered that target consumption is connected to two important aspects of its food strategy. According to Adisa³, "food security can be simply described as ensuring that all people have access to enough food to enjoy an active and healthy life. Ebohso defined it as follows: "Food security simply refers to the ability of people and households (particularly the rural and urban poor) to meet basic food demands throughout the year"⁴.

The right to determine one's policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption ensures the right to food for the entire population on a small- and medium-scale basis is known as food security, according to the 1996 World Food Summit. Additionally, it implies that we must engage in large-scale food production and guarantee that the majority of Nigerians have enough money to buy food in order to ensure adequate nutrition. According to the World Summit on Food 2003²³, a state of food security is one in which all people always have physical and financial access to enough, safe, and nourishing food to suit their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The number of people who are famished or malnourished, underweight children, and those who have micronutrient deficiencies can all be signs of food insecurity in a particular area. It is impossible to overstate the value of food to people and homes. According to Siamawalla and Valdés⁵, the ability of a nation, region, or home to reach the annual food consumption target is referred to as food security. In a similar vein, the Committee on World Food Security claimed that the availability of adequate food for all households without undue danger of loss implies food security.

¹ Siamawalla Valdes, *Global Food Policy and Food Security Crisis*, IFPRI, Washington, 2004

² F.A.O., *Agricultural Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, 2016-2025*, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2017

³ U. M. Okpanachi, *Op. cit.*

⁴ F. Idachaba, *Food Security in Nigeria: Challenges Under Democratic Dispensation*, Paper presented at Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), March 24, 2004, pp. 1-23

⁵ Siamawalla Valdes, *Op. cit.*

The nexus between conflict continuum and national security in North-Western Nigeria

Banditry and insurgency have wreaked havoc on the geopolitical areas of northwest and northeast Nigeria. To elicit more research questions, consider the following: Is there a link between banditry and Boko Haram in the Northeast? That's because his procedures and appearance are both overflowing. Bandit operations in northwestern Nigeria have revealed several flaws in the Nigerian government's ability to deal with insecurity. There is no doubt that the containment of various forms of violent forces that can be related to the continuous rise and operation of various armed groups, including banditry, in Nigeria poses a threat to Nigeria's national security. The aftermath of banditry has harmed their credibility in national security and has harmed agriculture, notably in the country's northwest and northeast. Nigeria was the 20th largest economy in the world in 2015, with a nominal GDP and purchasing power parity of more than USD 500 billion or USD 1 trillion (PPP). It surpassed South Africa to become Africa's largest economy in 2014. To increase food production in the country, the government drafted a comprehensive agriculture policy in 2017.

The paradigm shift, according to the publication FAO, 2017¹, is embedded in the most recent agricultural support policy (2016-2020). This policy, in addition to national food and nutrition policies and other frameworks, provides critical guidance. To establish priority strategic directions for improving nutrition in Nigeria through agriculture. Similarly, Egu affirmed that the policy to encourage agriculture² (also known as the Green Alternative) was adopted in August 2016 and is already transforming the country's agricultural development. The concept was viewed as a viable option for restoring the country's past agricultural and food production splendor. The agricultural promotion policy should be implemented in three stages: first, improving productivity (focusing on access to land, improving soil fertility, access to information and knowledge, production management, storage, processing, marketing, and trade), second, expanding investment (focusing on access to finance and developing agribusiness investment), and third, institutional refocusing to improve service delivery and development outcomes (focusing on greater inclusion). Such policies have been praised by the government.

Despite these attempts, it appears that the current Buhari administration has begun a series of projects to increase agricultural productivity in the country. State efforts cannot fail in some regions, particularly in rural communities where agriculture is the primary source of revenue. This is having a centrifugal effect on the country's other characteristics. Similarly, some

¹ World Food Summit Agriculture, <https://wfs.dk>, (21.09.2022)

² S. Egu, *The political economy of rural banditry in contemporary Nigeria*, in M. Kuna, J. Ibrahim (Eds.) *Rural banditry and conflicts in northern Nigeria*, Center for Democracy and Development, 2016Abuja, pp. 16-67

researchers¹ highlighted that to have national security, a country must have economic security, energy security, environmental security, and so on, resulting in less peace in Nigeria. The two (conflict continuum and food security) are linked in the sense that the former's weakness drives the latter's strength. While the latter's bad performance encourages the former to engage in additional activities. Banditry has grown throughout Nigeria as a result of poor state security. Due to banditry, farmers cannot raise crops in rural areas. As a result, there is a scarcity or limited availability of food. The country's limited food supply has resulted in price increases. As a result, securing rural areas will benefit both Nigerians and the government. Many underlying elements have conspired to foster widespread armed banditry in Nigeria's northwestern region. Climate change has long been projected to be a triggering element, likely to cause tension and full-fledged conflict in fights over the depletion of natural resources, particularly land and water supplies. Despite Nigeria's significant success in food security, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization fears that the agricultural north of the country may suffer water shortages. This location is known as a training center for foreign terrorist groups because it borders the Sahel and Sahara. As a result, climate change is a threat multiplier. It has a significant influence on escalating hostilities.

It exacerbates the conflict even if it does not directly cause it. The most evident connection between climate change and war is the former's competition for increasingly scarce resources. Some researchers² contend that given recent events such as the kidnapping of 343 schoolchildren in Nigeria, the war in Tigray in Ethiopia's northern region, and decades of conflict such as the Darfur war, the headline accumulation appears clear: there is a growing link between climate change and conflict, and this link is seen across the African continent. It is suggested that climate change is causing protracted periods of drought, extensive desertification, and soil erosion over the Sahel, from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east, resulting in lower land productivity and changes in grazing patterns. Since the 1980s, this has resulted in a civil conflict in Sudan. Returning to the countries related to the Lake Chad Basin, it is said that about 30 million people in Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon have been significantly impacted by its Water competition spring, which has lost 90% of its surface water since 1960. Displacement, hunger, and malnutrition are all prevalent. This has resulted in an increase in abductions, homicides, and human

¹ O. Nweke, O. S. Nwachukwu, *National security issue and challenges in Nigeria: Which way forward*, in "International Journal of Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Development", Vol. 1, No. 1, 2014, pp. 97-106

² Food and Agricultural Organization, *Nigeria Food Security Report 2011*, Rome, 2011; Food and Agricultural Organization, *Food Security Statistics- Nigeria*; FAOSTAT, Rome 2012

rights violations, as well as the expansion of terrorist organizations, resulting in the need for humanitarian aid for 10 million people¹.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of conflict on livelihoods. Research from 2018² investigated rural banditry and its influence on the rural economy in Kamuku Forest, Birnin Gwari Local Government, Kaduna State, in a related study. The findings indicate that banditry has an impact on the rural economy. The presence of the Kamuku forest, on the other hand, contributed to banditry, and the installation of security guards in the region did not generate the expected outcomes. Similarly³, conducts an in-depth survey and interview to investigate the nature and repercussions of armed banditry in frontier communities in Adamawa State, Nigeria. According to the findings, armed banditry is caused by an influx of ex-combatants from Nigeria's war-torn surrounding nations, unemployment, and the easy availability of weapons.

Other authors investigate the impact of the Boko Haram conflict and gunmen's actions in northern Nigeria. According to the study, the Boko Haram insurgency and attacks by armed herders in Nigeria's Northeast region caused social, political, and economic instability. Other authors⁴ published a paper titled *Conflicts and the Decline of Sustainable Development in Northeast Nigeria*. According to the study, confrontations between pastoralists and farmers have imposed significant costs on the Nigerian economy in terms of wasted resources and human lives, compromising the country's chances of eradicating poverty and hunger. Some studies⁵ investigated the Nigerian kidnapping epidemic to emphasize its consequences for national security. The investigation discovered that the kidnapping was motivated and perpetuated by the illicit pursuit of material accumulation, and it also discovered that the kidnapping posed a threat to Nigeria's national security due to its severe consequences. Researchers investigated value reorientation and defined it as "the act of

¹ UN Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Nigeria. Humanitarian Needs Overview*, February 2019, Maria Paola, 2021

² I. Gadzama, M. Saddiq, T. Oduhie, J. Dariya, *Appraisal of Rural Banditry in "KAMUKU" Forest in BirninGwari Local Government of Kaduna State, Nigeria*, in "Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology", Vol. 18. No. 1, 2018

³ W. Moses, *The Nature and Consequences of Armed Banditry in Border Communities of Adamawa State, Nigeria*, in *A Thesis submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of Master Degree in Sociology*, 2013

⁴ A. Okoli, N. Okpaleke, *Banditry and crisis of public safety in Nigeria: Issues in national security strategies*, in "European Scientific Journal", Vol. 10, No. 4, 2014, pp. 350-62; D. Agbou, H. Musa, S. Zhema, *Insurgency, Armed Herdsmen and Instability in Nigeria: A search for the Way Forward*, in "Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences" Vol. 8, No. 6, 2020, pp.63-81

⁵ A. Kunle, Nwozor A. Agaptus, S. John, *Conflicts and the retrogression of sustainable development*, in "The Political Economy of Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria", 2020

intentionally struggling to change the direction which attitudes and beliefs of Nigerian youths in a new direction with the intention of reducing banditry in our society and the world at large, the authors affirm that the incessant banditry in Nigeria could be as a result of failed moral institutions in carrying out their responsibility as it was supposed"¹. Their research suggests that families, schools, political organizations, religious institutions, and the media work around the clock to raise awareness and ensure that moral principles are upheld in society. The majority of research on insecurity has been on the Boko Haram insurgency and pastoral-peasant conflicts. According to a study of current conflict continuity research, less attention was made to conflict continuity and food security in northwestern Nigeria, which is the most afflicted by banditry. As a result, this study fills a void.

Methodology

During the investigation period, thirteen (13) LGAs were purposefully picked from banditry-prone localities in Katsina and Zamfara States in North Western Nigeria (2015-2021). Katsina had seven (7) LGAs chosen, whereas Zamfara had six (6). Table 1 shows the list of Katsina and Zamfara LGAs that were selected:

S/No	Katsina State	Zamfara State
1.	Batsari	Anka
2.	Danmusa	Maradun
3.	Faskari	Maru
4.	Jibiya	Shinkafi
5.	Kankara	Tsafe
6.	Sabuwa	Zurmi
7.	Safana	
Total	7LGAs	6LGAs

Table 1: Unit of Analysis
Source: Field research, 2021

The study employs qualitative data collection methods. To acquire in-depth and personal accounts of stakeholders in the study area, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used. Given the security/access of the study settings, which were only available during the day, the interviews and FDGs were deemed adequate for collecting quality data in short periods of time. The qualitative technique produced a fair stakeholder assessment,

¹ C. Jude, I. Hayatu, I. A. Paul, *Value Re-Oriented as a Catholicon to Reducing Banditry in Nigeria*, in "International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)", Vol. IV, No. V, 2020

generated diverse perspectives, and reduced biased responses. To ensure that the study included a diverse spectrum of stakeholder perspectives, the paper carefully selected participants for interviews and focus group discussions from security officers, traditional leaders, and youth and women associations.

No.	Stakeholder Type	Methodological tool	Katsina	Zamfara
1.	Security Agencies	KII	24	21
2.	Traditional Leaders	KII	7	6
3.	Leaders of Youth Associations	FGD	7	6
4.	Leaders-Religious Associations	FGD	7	6
5.	Women Association	FGD	7	6
	Total		52	45

Table 2: Stakeholder groups and number of informants
Source: Field research, 2021

The study conducted 77 qualitative interviews with participants from the seven stakeholder groups between February and December 2021. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the total number of stakeholders who were interviewed. All interviews and focus groups were held in either English or Hausa. The Hausa responses were eventually translated into English. Voluntary involvement, no damage to participants, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, incentives and goodwill for participants, honesty to participants, and ethical reporting were among the ethical principles used in the interview's conduct.

Conflict continuum and food security in North Western Nigeria: reflections on key issues

In northwest Nigeria, violence and war have produced an unstable environment. Banditry has ravaged villages in Nigeria's northwestern states of Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Katsina. The availability of forest reserves such as Kamuku in Kaduna, Dajin Rugu in Katsina, and Kuyanbana in Zamfara State in north-western Nigeria, which is normally off-limits to Nigerian security services, provides an avenue for growing banditry. Most robberies and kidnappings occur on state game reserves. These forests serve as ideal hideouts for criminals, who hide in the hills, mountains, and caves for their heinous crimes. Nigerian security forces' unwillingness to infiltrate these forest reserves and track down the noisy elements is the result of inefficiency, collaboration, and corruption. Nigerian securities traders are ill-equipped and unmotivated to prosecute high-profile crooks¹.

¹ A. Olaniyan, A. Yahaya, *Cows bandits and violent conflicts: Understanding cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria*, in "African Spectrum", Vol. 51, No. 3, 2016, pp. 93-105

Nigerian security forces, in comparison to well-armed criminals, lack the necessary equipment such as surveillance, tracking, and surveillance, as well as other advanced weapons utilized in modern combat. To support the above claims, the state of Zamfara, which is a hotbed of cattle rustling and banditry, is surrounded by dense forests such as Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu, with little or no government presence. These are the locations where criminals used to hide and eat after carrying out attacks on cities¹, highways, and outlying towns, and there have also been allegations of corruption against state security forces, police, judges, city chiefs, and even vigilantes². Because governments have left these forests unpopulated and abandoned for years, these criminal groups are causing this. As a result, the forests have become a breeding ground for cattle rustlers, bandits, kidnappers, and other criminal elements; for example, Boko Haram's occupation of the Sambisa Forest is due to the government's years of abandonment of the forest³. Approximately 21 million individuals in the northwest states have been subject to bandit insecurity. Bandit violence began in 2011 as a conflict between farmers and herdsmen and has since escalated to include cattle thefts, kidnappings for ransom, sexual violence, and murders unrelated to the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast. The conflict has affected approximately 35 of the 92 local governments in the four states. The discovery of gold mines and the activities of illegal miners competing for control of the gold deposits have heightened the presence and actions of armed groups in the Northwest. More than 210,000 people were internally displaced in March 2020. More than 35,000 refugees had crossed municipal boundaries to Maradi in the Republic of Niger by early March 2020. These refugees live in the regions of Madaou, Dan Daji Makaou, Garin Kaka, and GidanRoundjiin Tahoua⁴.

As a result of the unrest in other regions of the country, security has suffered. Herders fleeing conflict in the three most devastated states (Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina) are going south, putting a strain on resources in the country's Middle Belt and south. While the inflow of Fulani cattle herders has been occurring in the southern regions for decades, tensions appear to be rising in the south-east, south-west, and Niger Delta. There has been a rise in herder-farmer friction in these areas, which has frequently escalated into homicidal violence. Several criminal groups that fled police operations in the Northwest

¹ S. Suleiman, *Rural banditry in Zamfara state, Northwest Nigeria*, in "Social Science Research Council", <http://kuenga-amani.ssrc/2019/06/13/rural-banditry-in-zamfara-state-northwest-nigeria> (16.09.2022)

² A. Abdulyakeen, *Introduction to African Politics: Deconstructing the Constructed African History*, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2021

³ I. Onwuzuruigbo, *Why Nigeria's insecure forests are fertile ground for cattle rulers. The conversation*, <http://theconversation.com/why-nigerias-insecure-forests-are-fertile-ground-for-cattle-rustlers>, (31.01.2022)

⁴ M. Abdulkadir, *Crisis Group Interviews, civil society leaders Abuja, Gusau and Sokoto*, September-November, 2020

have shifted to the central and southern states, providing significant security issues for affected communities and the government¹.

Insecurity has also had a severe influence on the utilization of natural resources (such as gold mining) in the Northwest region, impacting the livelihoods and growth potential of afflicted states. The availability of valuable gold mines in the state of Zamfara drew artisanal mining activities since criminals and families relied on them for a living. However, the gold is stolen and sold on the foreign market, costing the Nigerian economy money. Former Mines and Steel Production Minister Alhaji Abubakar Bwari revealed that illegal gold miners and smugglers cost Nigeria 353 billion naira between 2016 and 2018². While artisanal mining has been linked to economic benefits such as informal employment, it has also been linked to land degradation, water pollution, and health hazards. Due to illicit mining activities, the state declared an outbreak of "lead poisoning illness" in 2010 and 2013, resulting in the deaths of 734 children under the age of five. Given that agriculture is the backbone of the local economy, agricultural disruptions caused by bandit attacks have a significant impact on agricultural productivity, with serious implications for food security. Most farming communities were forced to abandon their farms, particularly in areas near forested areas, because bandits used these areas to attack the communities. Few farmers who remained had to pay bandit taxes to gain access to their farms. The affected communities abandoned approximately 30% of the agricultural land in Kaduna state while farming activities were restricted to a few areas in Zamfara and Katsina states, resulting in a 60% increase in food production³.

Land abandonment has affected over 350 rice farmers in Kebbi state because of bandit attacks. Local farmers and other disadvantaged groups' incomes are declining, particularly women's capacity to support their children's education and household income. The violence in the northwest is spreading, and security forces are already overburdened. The military's long-running counterinsurgency operations against jihadists in the Northeast have been hampered in part by a lack of people and equipment⁴. Because of the continuous military involvement in the fight against bandits and other actions in the Northwest, more resources are consumed in the East. Another rising issue is the

¹ UN High Commissioner for Refugees/National Commission for Refugees. Migrants and IDPs, *Joint Protection Assessment Mission to Northwest Nigeria*, 2019

² S. Mommale, S. Nawaj, S. Duperas, *Zamfara Conflict Analysis and Multi-Sectoral Need Assessment, Pastoral Resolve, Search for Common Ground and Terre des Hommes*, October 2019

³ Murtala Ahmed Rufa'i, *Vigilante groups and rural banditry in Zamfara state; excesses and contradictions*, in "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention", Vol. 6, No. 6, 2018, pp. 65-73

⁴ J. Ahmadu, *Insight into the dynamics and menace of cattle rustling: a case study of lake chad basin area in Northern Nigeria*, in "World Journal of Social Science Research", Vol. 6, No. 1, 2019, pp. 18-32

proclivity of state governments affected by the Northwest spillover to form local paramilitaries or vigilante organizations. Following widespread protests in the Southwest Geopolitical Zone following fatal incidents among Fulani herders and local farmers, as well as kidnappings increasingly involving criminals from the Northwest, the governors of Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, and Osun established the Western Nigeria Security Network, also known as Operation Amotekun, on January 9, 2020. This development could pave the way for the emergence of regional security arrangements in other parts of the world, which, if they become a trend, could undermine national stability while improving local security.

High levels of conflict in the Northwest result in limited agricultural participation, reduced humanitarian access, and forced displacement, with many populations being displaced repeatedly. This, combined with well-above-average prices for staple foods, limits household purchasing power and access to food. In the worst-case scenario, famine could occur if conflicts escalate or shift dramatically, limiting access to traditional sources of food, income, and humanitarian assistance for an extended period.

As humanitarian access has dwindled in recent months because of increased conflict and ongoing displacement, many households in hard-to-reach areas face significant food insecurity, indicating high levels of acute malnutrition and excess mortality. These populations are at risk of famine until at least January 2022 because they are struggling to meet their food needs and are expected to participate only minimally in the current farming season. The farming season for 2022 has begun across the country. Farmers are hard at work preparing their fields for planting in the north and weeding in the center and south. However, high input costs for items such as improved seeds, herbicides, and fertilizers, combined with uncertainty, limit the previously subpar level of management. Agriculture-related households earn lower-than-average salaries because of increased competition from an oversupply of workers, which limits labor income. This restricts access to food and non-food products for market-dependent households.

Challenges of food security in North Western Nigeria

In a country like Nigeria, achieving full food security is a big task due to a variety of issues. Rain-fed agriculture accounts for more than 90% of Nigeria's agricultural output, with around 79 million hectares of arable land, 32 million of which are under cultivation¹. Agriculture and livestock output continues to fall short of their potential. Despite a 7% increase in agricultural productivity (2000-2008), the rising population is reliant on imported staple commodities (e.g., rice, beans), as seen by an increase in the food import bill.

¹ Food and Agricultural Organization, *Nigeria Food Security Report 2011*, FAO, Rome, 2012; Food and Agricultural Organization, *Food Security Statistics- Nigeria*; FAOSTAT, Rome, 2012

To begin, the primary cause of food insecurity in developing nations is a lack of availability of food as a result of widespread poverty and unemployment, which also limits purchasing power and prohibits secure access to food. Second, it is evident that the bandits' actions are a surefire way of impacting food production, since they tend to destroy granaries in these towns, even burning trailers full of food destined to be delivered into the city and even out of state. Furthermore, because outside traders are frightened of being abducted¹ if they bring food into the state, the traders will increase the available food². Food prices around the world have risen considerably in recent years and are anticipated to rise further or become more erratic. Food price volatility has put a major strain on global food security because many Nigerians rely on the market for food and are vulnerable to rising food prices. High input costs are generally associated with high food prices, limiting yield and production levels, and leading to inefficient input utilization. For example, Nigeria has one of the lowest fertilizer consumption rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, at 7 kg per acre³.

Third, climate change is one of the most serious threats to world peace and security in the twenty-first century. Climate change is driven by natural factors such as ocean currents, volcanic eruptions, erosion, and drought, as well as human factors such as industrial activity, greenhouse gas emissions, and the slow combustion of fossil fuels. This has resulted in desertification, with negative consequences such as water and land scarcity, low crop yields, and the extinction of animal and plant species, particularly in Africa's least developed countries. This is consistent with the Sahara and Sahel Observatory's (2007) account of climate change causing low rainfall in the African region, which is reflected in a deterioration in vegetation cover for feeding livestock, forcing people north, primarily "shepherds", to face the negative effects of desertification and move south, where it is relatively healthy to protect themselves from environmental problems, in search of greener pastures for their livestock. As a result of this battle, the conflict between pastoralists and sedentary farmers arose, because both groups are struggling to deal with the effects of environmental problems at the same time. The former is fighting for more green pastures to feed their animals, while the latter is fighting for more land to increase food production.

Consistent with the ecological challenges, Shettima and Tar contends that in the West African subregion, a conflict between sedentary farmers and

¹ O. Nweke, S. Nwachukwu, *National Security Issue and Challenges in Nigeria: Which way forward*, in "International Journal of Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Development", Vol. 1, No. 1, 2014, pp. 97-106

² B. Habib, *Gunmen storm Galadimawa village, kill vigilante, 4 others*, www.blueprint.ng, (15.09.2022)

³ Food and Agricultural Organization, *Nigeria Food Security Report 2011*, FAO, Rome, 2012; Food and Agricultural Organization, *Food Security Statistics- Nigeria*; FAOSTAT, Rome, 2012

mobile pastoralists has become ingrained due to a scarcity of agricultural land and pastures due to scarce resources. In the region's ecology and political economy, livestock farming is the primary source of income for more than 12 million people in the West African sub-region. Pastoralists move throughout the region, primarily in search of greener pastures and water for their animals; as a result, the conflict between pastoralists and farmers becomes unavoidable¹. The conflict is thus centered on the "resource scarcity" caused by climate change. This is consistent with Ibrahim and Dalugat's findings that in northern Nigeria, there is intense competition for farmland and limited water resources between sedentary farmers and Fulani herders, which frequently leads to conflict². In Nigeria today, this conflict has devolved into armed banditry. Climate's inherent properties manifested as weather changes over time have a significant impact on food security in unpredictable ways due to their negative effects on pests, crop diseases, agricultural production, animal husbandry, and humans. Climate change affects both the physical and economic availability of certain preferred foods. Changes in seasonal demand for agricultural labor as a result of changes in production practices affect income-generating capacity.

Fourth, Nigerian farmers have limited credit access, and less than 10% of irrigated land is irrigated.

Finally, the global economy is knowledge-driven, and the food system's efficiency is heavily and directly dependent on agro-technological innovations and innovations in relevant sectors. In Nigeria, adult literacy is 54.5%³. However, the rural poor account for 33.4% of all food availability actors and are primarily engaged in subsistence farming. Kola's state trade has also suffered as a result of the violence. Because of the capital's ongoing insecurity, farmers in Kano have found it difficult to market their produce. As a result, many kola nuts remain unsold, according to Yaya Haliru, a kola nut trader. Although many farmers in the state were anticipating a bumper crop this year, many were concerned that they would not be able to sell their crops. "If the current situation persists, crop sales for many farmers will be severely hampered", Audu said. Bako is a well-known dealer. The northern conflict has led some farmers and pastoralists to flee to Niger, Chad, and Cameroon neighboring countries. According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), over 65 percent of farmers in the north have fled the south due to insecurity. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization has warned that the country would face starvation later this year as most smallholders and mechanized farmers in north-eastern Nigeria fear terrorist threats. "Since the Boko Haram insurgency broke

¹ A. Shettima, A. Tar, *Farmer-pastoralist conflict in West Africa; exploring the causes and consequences*, in "Information Society and Justice", Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 163-184

² M. Kuna, J. Ibrahim, (Eds.), *Rural banditry and conflicts in northern Nigeria*, Abuja Center for Democracy and Development, pp. 16-67

³ A. Shettima, A. Tar, *Op.cit.*, pp. 163-184

out in the state of Chad, attacks on these farmers who produce beans, onions, peppers, corn, rice, livestock, and catfish in the Lake Chad area for the southern states have caused them to move". Because most of the food consumed and traded in Nigeria is farmed in the north, NEMA has warned of oncoming famine.

The relentless shelling and other violent attacks on local markets by Boko Haram, bandits, and the Nigerian military pose serious risks to northern farmers, ranchers, and agricultural product traders, forcing them to relocate to new locations far from their farmlands to transport food and agricultural products to other states. As a result, food costs have risen, notably in the country's south.

Impacts of conflict continuum on food security in North Western Nigeria

All participants (100%) agreed that banditry has had a detrimental influence on food security in Northwestern Nigeria. Killings, kidnappings, threats, robberies, theft, burnings, raiding, and blocking of local trade routes are examples of banditry.

Effect of banditry on food security

Food security is another threat posed by armed banditry to national security. Farmers can no longer travel to their farms due to the actions of armed bandits, and some have been compelled to abandon their regular location due to the dread of bandit attacks, leaving their farmland uncultivated. Farmers in some locations must pay a levy before they can access their farmlands. Farming provides a living for millions of Nigerians, and these farmers provide food and raw materials to other sectors of the Nigerian economy. Farmers suffer greatly during bandit attacks for numerous farming seasons. For example, over 5000 hectares of farmlands were left uncultivated in Zamfara State in 2018, 30% of agricultural land in Kaduna State was abandoned, and farming activities in Katsina and Zamfara were restricted to a few areas due to the fear of being kidnapped or killed by bandits¹.

As a result of banditry, over 350 local rice cultivators in Kebbi State have abandoned their farmlands². According to Alh. Saidu Garkuwa, secretary of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Zamfara state chapter, 10,000 households, largely peasant farmers, have been displaced in Zamfara state. He went on to say that the fear of being assassinated or kidnapped pushed farmers to abandon agricultural output, and that if severe steps are not taken, there is a serious food shortage in the

¹ WANEP, *Addressing Armed Banditry in the North-West Region of Nigeria*, in "African Journal of Potentials of a Multi-dimensional Conflict Management Approach", WARN Policy Brief Nigeria, 2020

² N. Odebode, (Ed.), *Bandits tax us before allowing us access to our farms-Northwest farmers. Punch. 2019*, <http://punchng.com/bandits-tax-us-before-allowing-us-access-to-our-farms-Northwest-farmers/>, (31.01.2022)

years ahead. AFAN Secretary Kaduna State Chapter further revealed that criminals send out warnings of impending attacks or demand large sums of money from farmers before allowing them access to their crops. He explained that bandits now decide whether we go to the farm or not and that some of our farmers who produce hundreds of bags of grains cannot produce even a fifth of what they used to. In addition, the AFAN Chairman in Katsina State revealed that they had lost 28 farmers to banditry¹. As a result, agricultural productivity has been disrupted, with major implications for food security, as it results in a decrease in food output and an increase in food prices because only a few can grow food crops to feed the swarming population. As a result, kidnapping and armed banditry, particularly in northern Nigeria, are endangering agricultural activity, forcing both large and small farmers to flee their farms².

Agriculture is, without a question, the bedrock of any nation, and Nigeria is no exception. The farmer's contribution to the advancement and expansion of the economy cannot be overstated. Armed banditry's displacement of farmers has a negative influence on farming and other related economic activity. Most banditry-affected communities in the country's north have virtually ceased agricultural activity, as farmers avoid farming occupations for fear of being slain.

For example, when asked if the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) had any impact on farming activities, one of the key informants (KI) responded, "Of course, the issue of the rising increase in the acquisition of sale arms and light weapons especially guns, rifles, and ammunition have posed a serious threat to the poor masses, the issue of Boko Haram and other armed banditry activities has enormously affected farming activities." For example, in my community of Damboa, whenever we plant crops and it comes time to harvest them, Boko Haram terrorists would enter our farms and harvest the crops, leaving us in famine. Even if we wanted to fight them, we couldn't because they have small arms and weapons, and if this continues, our people will continue to suffer from extreme hunger, jeopardizing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal of ending extreme poverty and hunger, and food security is not guaranteed, he lamented". He went on to say that "my people are in great poverty since money earmarked for development projects has been diverted to combat armed banditry, and as a result, development of our villages is jeopardized". Given the importance of farming, its interruption will undoubtedly have an impact on the livelihoods of agricultural families, as well as the income of local governments, states, and the federal government. This has implications for both local and global food security, nutrition, health, and food price stability. Farming disruption also leads to increasing unemployment and rural-urban migration.

¹ *Idem*

² Daily Trust, *Bandits kill 200; displace 45, 175 in 15 months in Sokoto*, 9 October 2019, Bandits kill 200, displace 45,175 in 15 months in Sokoto, [https:// dailytrust.com/bandits-kill-200-displace-45175-in-15-months-in-sokoto/](https://dailytrust.com/bandits-kill-200-displace-45175-in-15-months-in-sokoto/), (21.08.2022)

Effect of banditry on economic activities of market operation

Socioeconomic development is the basic goal of any well-intentioned administration, and it is essentially based on the degree of economic activity in the country, which is boosted by the peaceful coexistence of the people. Insecurity damages economic, human, and social capital, making socioeconomic development impossible to sustain. The Boko Haram insurgency and other armed banditry operations in northern Nigeria have nearly crippled economic activity in that region, as market closures due to armed banditry have economic ramifications at both the community and local government levels. This has a negative impact on the country's GDP, which is used as one of the indicators of development. Thus, the reoccurring security crises in various parts of Nigeria are, without a doubt, degrading existing infrastructure and preventing a tranquil and safe environment for economic operations. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation is a precursor to achieving sustainable development.

Furthermore, foreign investors are hesitant to invest in the country. Global corporate investors may be hesitant to engage in governments afflicted by armed banditry due to the crisis and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in civilian hands, which could result in the huge destruction of their interests. This may also cause refugee issues for persons from other places who have lived and worked in the host country for a long time.

Farmers/herders clashes

According to Moriki, the origins and manifestations of banditry sprang from historic farmer-herder confrontations, which had evolved into large-scale criminality. Furthermore, these respondents raised the issue of farmers encroaching on herders' paths, adding that because the herders have no other option, they transfer their herds into fields, destroying crops. According to them, the farmers' actions triggered seasonal confrontations between farmers and herders, which resulted in banditry by Fulanis throughout the state.

S/N	INCIDENTS	CASES RECORDED	DESTRUCTION/ITEMS CARTED AWAY	LIVES LOST
1.	Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts/Cattle Rustling	605	Cattle-28,335 Sheep-13,112 Camel-676 Goat-559 Donkey-40 Motorcycles-25	2,416
2.	Armed Banditry/ Reprisal Attacks	167	Cash-722,000 Motorcycles-43 Cattle-85 Sheep- 60	22
3.	Extra-Judicial Killing	63	Cattle-192 Sheep- 64 Cash-60,000	66

	TOTAL	835		
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Table 3: Farmer/Herdsmen Conflicts and other Related Crises in Zamfara and Katsina State (2017-2021)

Source: Fieldwork, September 2021

Between 2017 and 2021, there were 835 reported indices of violent conflicts and criminal activity related to farmers-herders fights, cattle rustling, armed banditry, and extra-judicial killings, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 2500 people. This is in addition to the vast amount of valuable goods that have been destroyed or taken. As a result of Farmers-Herdsmen battles and other notorious bandit actions, 600 towns and villages were destroyed, over 6000 people were hurt, over 10,500 homesteads were burned, 2688 hectares of farmlands were destroyed, and 336 vehicles were damaged in Zamfara and Katsina states. Similarly, about 10,000 livestock and other forms of life were rustled, and over 200 people were kidnapped for ransom.

Discussion of Major Findings

The main findings of this study can be grouped under the following headings: typical annual outputs (in bags) of grains and food items of the people, effects of bandits' activities on annual output, and present annual outputs amidst bandits' operations. As a result, the following are some of the study's findings:

To begin, most of the farmers interviewed claimed that bandit activity in northwestern Nigeria had a detrimental impact on their farming activities. They stated that their typical annual output used to vary from 21 to 30 bags of grains, and even more than 50 bags. However, due to bandit operations in the area, the outputs were below average. This is because robbers frequently assault their crops by leading their cows onto the cultivated grounds of the locals. As a result of such actions, any confrontation will result in the loss of life caused by bandit attacks. Domestication and rearing of cattle have also been impacted. The people admit that the bandits have stolen most of their animals.

Second, the residents reported that the attacks were regular, noting that the bandits normally strike at night and, in many cases, attack in large numbers on motorbikes, giving them the added benefit of simply escaping before security personnel arrived. Several persons testified during the Focus Group Discussion that they had been attacked by bandits. They revealed that the bandits hide and attack market days to steal money and property from them, depriving them of a good existence.

Third, several people explained that the culprits benefit from government assistance, elite sponsorship, poverty, the fertile grazing nature of the area, the rock for hiding away, their residential location, and terrible national security performance.

Fourth, the people vented their rage on the government, accusing it of being to blame. "Among the biggest barriers to the fight against bandits are the government's failure and lack of political will to confront armed banditry

squarely". They indicated that they had dropped their weapons since the government asked them to do so, but the government has failed to reach an agreement with the bandits for them to surrender their weapons.

Another point raised by the public is that the government should take on more responsibilities in dealing with crises. This is because the state is responsible for providing security to its people and territory. This is consistent with the notion of the social contract. The Federal and State Governments should assist in improving operations, such as providing logistics for use during operations and ensuring the welfare of personnel involved in the operation, as well as coordinating with G.S.M network providers in the targeted areas of operation to shut down their services during the operation to avoid security breaches. While few people believe that the government should enable them to use weapons to combat bandit attacks. Finally, because of public outrage and worry, banditry has reduced agricultural activity in Northwestern Nigeria and its environs. Because farming is the people's source of income, banditry has resulted in less commercialized farming in the region. Many young people in the region have fled due to banditry. The villagers also indicated that banditry has increased the poverty of many households in the region since it is impossible for them to engage in large-scale farming.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the findings of this study were able to investigate specific factors, such as the efficiency of security forces in addressing the concerning problem of persistent war and food security in northwestern Nigeria. The findings of this study also suggest that for a country to feed its people, national security must be in place. To combat banditry in the country, the government and the people must work together. People should have confidence in security authorities to share information. The security forces must win the public's trust by demonstrating their ability to safeguard Nigerians and their property. Security services in Nigeria must be independent and free of political manipulation or negative influence in order to combat banditry. The study also looked at the role of security forces, their inability to stop bandits from accessing villages, the lack of police stations, and the full absence of security agencies in the areas as reasons for the ongoing attacks.

Policy recommendations

The following proposals are provided to help people stop banditry and get closer to improving food safety in Northwestern Nigeria. The issue of national security and food production in Nigeria should be addressed with urgency.

The government should immediately reform the security organization to allow for robust intelligence gathering. The centralized system of safety and policing has proven to be ineffective in a country like Nigeria. Community policing strategies should be used such that policing of a specific location is the responsibility of the indigenous peoples of that location who are aware of the location's unusual challenges, as well as adjacent residents.

It is critical to recognize ethnic militias. Disarm and dissolve them in accordance with the provisions of an amnesty program launched by several states.

The government must combat military corruption to root out the rent-seeking activities of officers who have turned the war into a business endeavor for personal gain.

To address this threat, an all-inclusive community and cross-cultural engagements between communities and institutional and informal security networks are required.

Poverty and unemployment are increasing. These issues must be addressed to overcome most of the Nigeria's lack of confidence challenges. The government should build more industries to accommodate her agricultural manufacturing, which will in turn provide more jobs for Nigerians and reduce poverty.

To achieve sufficient food production and alleviate poverty in the country, national security must be prioritized in all capacities to combat banditry.

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