



RULE OF LAW AND EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

also known as **PARTNERS** WEST AFRICA NIGERIA.

# NON STATE SECURITY ACTORS AND SECURITY PROVISIONING IN NIGERIA

## RULE OF LAW AND EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE (PARTNERS WEST AFRICA NIGERIA)



Funded by  
**UK GOVERNMENT**

With Support From The Security Justice Reform Program (S.J.R.P)



---

# NON STATE SECURITY ACTORS AND SECURITY PROVISIONING IN NIGERIA

Editors

Chris M. A. Kwaja, Ph.D.

'Kemi Okenyodo

Valkamiya Ahmadu-Haruna

RULE OF LAW AND EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE also known as PARTNERS WEST AFRICA-NIGERIA (PWAN)

Published by Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative also known as Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN)

Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative

Partners West Africa-Nigeria (PWAN)

1b Faith Crescent, Off Deeper Life Way,

Kado District, Abuja.

Tel: +2348091257245

[www.partnersnigeria.org](http://www.partnersnigeria.org)

ISBN-13: 978-978-55273-0-8

Copyright © 2017 by Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of PWAN.

## Table of Contents

FOREWORD .....	vi
DEDICATION .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	ix
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
CHAPTER 1 .....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	3
Background.....	3
Emergence.....	4
Rationale of Study.....	5
Table 1: The Six Geopolitical Zones and the States Selected for the Mapping Study .....	6
References.....	8
CHAPTER 2 .....	9
NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL ZONE OF NIGERIA	9
Background.....	9
Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas .....	9
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT).....	9
Plateau State .....	10
Benue State .....	12
Kogi State .....	13
Summary of Findings.....	15
Future Trajectory and Recommendations .....	17
Conclusion.....	18
Appendix I: Profile of Non-State Security Providers in some States of North-Central Zone .	19
References.....	21
CHAPTER 3 .....	23
NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE NORTH-EAST ZONE OF NIGERIA .....	23
Background.....	23
Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas .....	23
Profile of the States .....	25
Bauchi State .....	25

Borno State.....	27
Yobe State.....	28
Gombe State.....	31
Adamawa State.....	32
Taraba State.....	32
Summary of Findings.....	33
Future Trajectories.....	34
Recommendations.....	34
Conclusion.....	35
References.....	36
CHAPTER 4.....	37
NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE NORTH-WEST ZONE OF NIGERIA.....	37
Background.....	37
Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas.....	37
Kano State.....	38
Jigawa State.....	40
Kaduna State.....	42
Future Trajectories.....	43
Summary of Findings.....	44
Conclusion.....	44
Appendix II: Profile of Non-State Security in Selected State of North-West Zone.....	46
References.....	47
CHAPTER 5.....	49
NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE SOUTH-EAST ZONE OF NIGERIA.....	49
Background.....	49
Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas.....	49
Profile of the States.....	51
Abia State.....	51
Ebonyi State.....	52
Enugu State.....	52
Non-State Security Actors in the States.....	53

Abia State.....	54
Ebonyi State .....	55
Enugu State .....	57
Provision of Intelligence to the Police .....	58
Summary of Findings.....	59
Future Trajectory and Recommendations .....	60
Conclusion.....	61
Appendix III: LGAs and Communities Visited in South-East Zone.....	63
References.....	64
CHAPTER 6 .....	66
NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE SOUTH-WEST ZONE OF NIGERIA .....	66
Background.....	66
Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas .....	66
Ogun State .....	68
Ekiti State.....	70
Lagos State.....	72
Summary of Findings.....	74
Future Trajectory and Recommendations .....	75
Conclusion.....	75
References.....	77
CHAPTER 7 .....	78
MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	78
Major Findings .....	78
Legal Framework.....	78
Funding.....	79
Membership and Recruitment Process.....	79
Modes of Operation.....	80
Gender Representation.....	80
Recommendations.....	80
Conclusion.....	81
Appendix IV: Organogram of the VGN at State Command Level.....	83

# FOREWORD

The research on Non-State Security Actors in Nigeria could not have come at a better time than now when the country is grappling with serious security challenges evidenced in the escalation of violent conflicts and crimes. From herdsmen-farmers clashes spreading across the country, festering insurgency in North-East, resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta and growing kidnapping for ransom, Nigeria's military and security agencies seem to be overwhelmed by these challenges. This is hardly surprising given that the country remains grossly under-policed, with an estimated manpower of 308,000 police charged with the responsibility of providing security for 182.2 million people. In an environment such as this, the emergence of non-state actors and hybrid security arrangement have become ubiquitous.

The inabilities of formal state security institutions to deal with challenges to life and property have created a space for other actors to operate. The acceptance of non-state actors is mostly felt at the community levels, where they have emerged to protect their communities, by **tackling** criminal and insurgents' activities. We have seen occasions where the military, other security agencies and the intelligence community rely on the information given by these actors to carry out arrest. At other times, these state security forces have conducted joint patrols and operations with the non-state security actors as seen in Borno with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF).

Despite the increase in the spread of these actors, some states still record high crime rates, and others have seen successes. More so, situations exist where citizens and some non-state actors resort to jungle justice in addressing issues of crime and injustice in different parts of the country. Though their positive contributions to community policing is worth acknowledging, certain decisive steps need to be taken to properly regulate them, so they do not usurp the powers of the police in carrying out their duties.

Although not properly instituted by by the state, it appears the state governments are promoting and recognising the use of non-state actors as instruments for addressing security concerns expressed by citizens. As we get closer to the 2019 electioneering period, the role non-state actors can play in election management is of particular interest, given the fact that local government elections are under the purview of states. This possible role raises concern over their potential politicisation by state governments in the pretext of ensuring adequate security during elections. The country remains volatile; thus, it is imperative that the activities of these actors a monitored to ensure that they operate within the ambit of the law.

In this light, the present security architecture of Nigeria calls for restructuring to evolve a robust framework with a capacity to manage the diverse security challenges as well as providing modern policing in an increasingly complex society where the prevalence of criminality is linked to both

domestic and international factors. This report will help to broaden discussions around the restructuring of Nigeria's security architecture to reflect current realities and future trajectories in respect to the dynamism of policing in an evolving democratic environment.

Hussaini Abdu, PhD



# DEDICATION

To Prof Abdulraufu Mustapha

PWAN Board Chair who passed on to glory on August 8, 2017

Your efforts at studying and pushing for  
citizen's participation in governance  
are fondly remembered.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The activities of non-state security actors continue to feature in the discussions around Nigeria's public safety and security space. Their roles (if any) responsibilities to the community and state security actors, their sources of funds, the scope of operation are some of the issues being discussed.

The Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative (also known as Partners West Africa-Nigeria) is dedicated to enhancing citizens' participation and improving security governance in Nigeria and West Africa. As part of the organisation's contributions to fulfilling this mandate with support from Security Justice Program which is being supported by the Conflict Security Stabilisation Fund (CSSF) of the British High Commission.

The mapping conducted by Partners West Africa-Nigeria contributes to the growing knowledge in the area because it updates the available information in this area on the activities of non-state security actors.

The research and reports were made possible by teams of academics and development practitioners that worked with the Citizens Security program team to make the project a success. This team was made up of Dr. Freedom C. Onuoha, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who provided the expertise and reviewing the research. We also appreciate our researchers- Dr. Chris, M.A. Kwaja, Dr. Maurice Ogbonnaya, Dr. Suleiman YB Kura, Foluso Aboderin, Habiba Mankanjoula, and Hadiza Mali Bukar, who worked tirelessly for the success of the research and its publication.

The efforts and commitment of the Citizens Security Program team led by Ms. Valkamiya Ahmadu-Haruna should also be applauded.

Finally, the efforts of all staff of the Partners West Africa-Nigeria team (led by the Executive Director, 'Kemi Okenyodo) and its stakeholders, for their dedication and commitment in ensuring the success of the research.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented escalation of violent conflicts and criminality since the return to democracy in May 1999. The Nigerian government's reliance on security agencies and law enforcement institutions in tackling these security challenges has proven inadequate, leading to increased deployment of the military in complementing the efforts of other security agencies. The military and other security agencies have had problems coping with the challenging security environment. This inability of formal state security forces to adequately provide security, effectively maintain law and order, and efficiently dispense justice in the society have underpinned an increase in the emergence and proliferation of non-state security actors in Nigeria.

The proliferation of non-state security actors in Nigeria has, however, been complemented with very little systematic attempt to understand their vastness and potential impact on the security landscape. This study maps the activities of non-state security actors, focusing on critical issues bordering on their primary functions, composition, geographical spread, modalities of operations, funding sources, and relationship with state security agencies and their host communities.

The study covers some select states in the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East and South-West zones of Nigeria, excluding the South-South zone which was to be covered in a different study. It adopts a mixed methodology, involving desk review of published materials and the conduct of field survey using interviews and focus group discussions.

The study shows that in several local communities where non-state security actors operate, residents are increasingly conscious and appreciative of the critical roles these groups are playing in their everyday security and safety needs. The existence and operations of non-state security actors holds promise and potentials, but certainly not without risks and challenges that could endanger national security. Therefore, the articulation of a strategic framework for robust engagement with non-state actors is a desideratum for sustainable security in Nigeria.

The study finds that the existence of legal framework is important in ensuring that non-state security actors are properly regulated and made to be accountable; funding of non-state security actors is not statutory, making their sustainability and future trajectory difficult to predict; and recruitment into non-state security actors is on the basis of voluntarism, leading to unpredictability in membership size and wide disparity in the skills of the members. The study also finds a close collaboration between the non-state security actors and the formal security actors, although with few instances of tension between them. Gender considerations in recruitment and operation is extremely very low, due essentially to the character of the formation of these groups as well as the longstanding cultural tradition that reinforces patriarchy in Nigeria.

To optimise the contributions of non-state security actors to national security, the study recommends, among others, the enactment of a national legislation to regulate the activities of non-state security actors, and the establishment of a Community Security Fund (CSF). The CSF aims to ensure a more reliable and transparent funding of non-security actors. The study also recommends the adoption of a code of conduct to minimise cases of human rights violations; the introduction of capacity building programme for members of such non-state security groups, and the formulation of a policy to mainstream gender into the operations of non-state security actors.

# CHAPTER 1

Dr. Freedom Onuoha

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Threats to peace and security in the form of violent crimes and conflicts are not new in Nigeria. However, a general deterioration of internal security situation since the return to democracy in May 1999, characterised by unprecedented escalation and intensification of conflicts and criminality, is worrisome. Violent crimes such as armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, oil theft, arms smuggling, and piracy have become increasingly perturbing. Added to these is the challenges posed by the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta, ethnoreligious crisis, communal conflicts and frequent clashes between herdsmen and their host communities.

Most times, such violent crimes and conflicts as well as associated state responses to them have proven costly in terms of human and material losses. It was recently reported that about 102,000 people were unlawfully killed by state and non-state actors between 1999 and 2016 in Nigeria (Johnson, 2016). The seven-year Boko Haram insurgency has claimed at least 20,000 lives and displaced more than 2.6 million people<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, an estimated 60, 000 people have died in pastoralist-related clashes in Nigeria since 2001 (Fulton and Nickels, 2017).

The Nigerian government have leveraged security agencies and law enforcement institutions in tackling these diverse and evolving security challenges. However, government's reliance on about 377,000 policemen to cater for the security needs of over 170, 000,00 people in the country has proven grossly inadequate (Ogbozor, 2016). Also, other factors such as the culture of corruption and politicisation have created a hollowed-out police force – strong on paper but ineffective in practice (Okenyodo, 2016). Consequently, the military is increasingly being tasked to deal with, or complement the efforts of other security agencies in combating, violent conflicts and criminality across the country. As at February 2017, the Nigeria Army had been deployed in about 32 states of the 36 states of the Federation (Oyedele, 2017). Yet, the military and other security agencies have had problems coping with the challenging security environment.

In several states across Nigeria, groups and communities increasingly rely on informal security providers as their response to rising insecurity and declining confidence in formal state institutions, particularly the police (Kwaja, 2014). Thus, the seeming inability of formal state institutions to adequately provide security, effectively maintain law and order, and efficiently dispense justice in the society have underpinned an increase in the existence and activities of

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/mine-kills-two-livestock-traders-yobe/>

non-state security actors in Nigeria (Ogbozor, 2016; Fourchard, 2011). Non-state security actors refer to “a group of actors outside the formal security apparatus of the Nigerian state, saddled with the responsibility of performing security and law enforcement functions on behalf of their communities” (Kwaja, 2017:2). The term encompasses diverse security providers such as vigilantes, neighbourhood watch groups, Private Guard Companies (PGCs), and Private Security Organisations (PSOs).

## Emergence

These actors, in many instances, emerge to complement government efforts at addressing challenges arising from the inadequacies of the state institutions in security provisioning. Mohammed (2013) has identified three categories of non-state security actors in Nigeria. The first one consists of a group of able-bodied young men in the village who organise themselves to patrol their areas mostly at night in order to protect the community against armed robbers. The second category is largely a product of community decision whereby the community contributes money and hires people, which they pay on a weekly or monthly basis to guard the community. The third group are mostly hired and equipped by the local government areas to prevent crimes and arrest criminals. A common feature of these three groups is the fact that they are independent of state control and they operate at the community level where policing by the formal state security agencies is largely deficit, if not non-existent.

As Lar (2015) observed, these groups emerged as part of the historical process of the institutionalisation of plural policing in support of the state and its agencies. Although their existence, mainly as community vigilantes and neighbourhood watch groups, date back to pre-colonial times, their multiplication and increasing participation in the security space has become a key defining feature of the Nigerian security environment in the last decade. To be sure, most of them emerged in response to gaps or deficits in security provisioning by formal state institutions. They are, however, heterogeneous in the sense that different groups specialise in qualitatively different security activities depending on the unique historical and environmental contexts that underpin their emergence. In reality, their activities, though complementing the provision of security by formal state actors, also complicate the environment of security provisioning in the society with duplication of duties. Hence, the Nigerian state seems to be mired in a ‘security crisis’, shaped primarily by the unprecedented increase in the scale of security threats, decline in the capacity of formal state security institutions to deliver security and protection services, and the proliferation of non-state security actors that are rarely regulated.

The proliferation of non-state security actors has not been matched with a systematic attempt to understand their vastness and potential impact on the security landscape. Partners West Africa-Nigeria (PWAN) embarked on a mapping study of non-state security actors in Nigeria against this backdrop. The study seeks to provide answers to questions that deal with the socio-

economic, policy and security implications of the proliferation and participation of non-state security actors in the country. Specifically, it pays attention to such critical issues bordering on their primary functions, composition, geographical spread, modalities of operations, funding sources, and relationship with state security agencies and their host communities.

## Rationale of Study

The study rationale is to identify those actors with whom the government can engage legitimately, isolate those that should come under security radar, and determine those that may be of less significance in shaping the security environment, now and in the near future. A mapping of the landscape will, therefore, help in understanding the trajectories of non-state security actors, and consequently in constructing a reform that may usher in a broad-based security architecture for enhanced partnership between state and non-state security actors in Nigeria.

The study is poised to address this imperative in Nigeria. To this end, researchers conducted field studies in some selected states in five of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Table 1 contains the geopolitical zones, the constituent states as well as the states where field work was conducted for this study. As indicated in the table, the study covered the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East and South-West zones. The South-South zone was left out because another organisation had already mapped it.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) with support from CSSF is currently working in the Niger Delta which also includes mapping of non-state actors in the region.

**Table 1: The Six Geopolitical Zones and the States Selected for the Mapping Study**

S/No	Geopolitical Zones	States in the Zone	States Selected for the Mapping Study fieldwork
1	North-Central	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau	Benue, Kogi and Plateau states as well as Abuja
2	North-East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe	Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe
3	North-West	Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kaduna, Sokoto, Zamfara	Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano
4	South-East	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo	Ebonyi, Abia and Enugu
5	South-South	Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers	Not covered in this study
6	South-West	Ekiti, Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Oyo	Ekiti, Lagos and Ogun

The field research was carried out between January and February 2017, by each respective zonal researcher. From a broad methodological point of view, the researchers gathered evidence on the nature of non-state security actors in the zones through a combination of desk reviews of publications such as reports, newspapers and academic literature, and conduct of field study involving interviews and focus group discussion with community members and security forces. However, the peculiar environment of the zone as well as the nature of the non-state security actors being investigated informed the specific methodology each researcher adopted. A stakeholder validation workshop on the results of the mapping study was held on 19 March 2017. Feedback received from participants was incorporated to enrich this study.

The result of the research conducted in the five zones constitutes the content of this volume, and is subsumed under seven chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter Two focuses on the



outcome of the mapping study conducted in the North-Central zone. While Chapter Three covers the North-East zone, Chapter Four discussing non-state security actors in the North-West zone. The South-East zone is covered in chapter five and the South-West zone discussed in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven, which is the last chapters, contains some of the cross-cutting issues and findings from the entire mapping project.

## References

- Fourchard, L. (2011). *A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilante in South-western Nigeria*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Fulton, K. and Nickels, B. (2017). *Africa's Pastoralists: A New Battleground for Terrorism*, ACSS Spotlight, 11 January, <http://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-pastoralists-battleground-terrorism/>
- Johnson, J. (2016). "Human Rights Day: 102,000 Nigerians Killed Extra-Judicially Since 1999-Group", *Globalsentinel* 12 December 2016, <http://globalsentinelng.com/2016/12/12/human-rights-day-102000-nigerians-killed-extra-judicially-since-1999-group/>
- Kwaja, A.M.C. (2013). *Vigilantism and the governance of insecurity in Nigeria*, available in [www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2013/11/08/vigilantism-and-the-governance-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/](http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2013/11/08/vigilantism-and-the-governance-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/)
- Kwaja, A.M.C. (2017). "Non-State Security Actors in the North-Central Region of Nigeria", A report presented at the Validation Workshop for the Mapping Report on Non-State Security Actors, organised by Partners West Africa-Nigeria, at Treasure Suite, Abuja, 2 March 2017.
- Kwaja, A.M.C. (2014). "Informal Security Provisioning in Nigeria: Implications for Security Sector Governance", *The Centre for Security Governance (CSG)* April, <http://secgovcentre.org/2014/04/32581/>
- Lar, T.J. (2015). *Vigilantism, state and society in Plateau State, Nigeria: A history of plural policing, (1950 to the present)*, D. Phil dissertation, BIGSAS at Bayreuth University, Germany, [www.epub.uni-bayreuth.de/2798/1/Jimam%20Lar%20Thesis%Final%20Copy%20\(2016-04-11\).pdf](http://www.epub.uni-bayreuth.de/2798/1/Jimam%20Lar%20Thesis%Final%20Copy%20(2016-04-11).pdf)
- Mohammed, B.S. (2013). *Vigilante groups and Crime Prevention*, *Daily Trust*, 15 December.
- Ogbozor, E. (2016). "Understanding the Informal Security Sector in Nigeria." *Special Report*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Okenyodo, K. (2016). "Governance, Accountability, and Security in Nigeria", *ACSS African Security Brief*, No 31
- Oyedele, D. (2017). *Army Currently Deployed in 32 States, Says Buratai*, *ThisDay*, 15 February, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/02/15/army-currently-deployed-in-32-states-says-buratai/>

# CHAPTER 2

## NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

Chris M. A. Kwaja, Ph.D

### Background

This chapter focuses on non-state security actors in the North-Central zone of Nigeria. The mapping study covers Benue, Kogi and Plateau states as well as Abuja – the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The study employed key informant interviews (KIIs) in eliciting relevant information from individuals. Interviewees included members of community-based vigilante groups, neighbourhood watch groups, Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Peace Corps, as well as members of the communities where these actors operate (see Appendix 1 for the respondents). Semi-structured questions, which focused on the identity of the groups, their geographical spread and coverage, the legal framework under which they operate, structure, funding, as well as the context of operations among others, were used in eliciting feedback from the respondents.

### Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas

The North-Central zone is second to the North-East in terms of the number of displaced persons in the country, as a result of violent conflicts and acts of criminality. Communal conflicts experienced mainly in Benue and Plateau States account for many of these internal displacements. In fact, the threat posed by crime among youths, which highlights the link between drugs, arms and crimes is a worrisome phenomenon in the zone. The remoteness of the communities where crime is perpetrated is evidenced by the weakness associated with policing in the country, which has made the proliferations of arms whether for self-defense or for crimes to be rising in an alarming proportion in the zone. The resort to self-help measures in responding to insecurity in the zone is evident in the rising number of youths and community led initiatives.

### Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria was created on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1976 by the administration of Major General Murtala Mohammed. With the formal relocation of the seat of power from Lagos to Abuja on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1991, President Ibrahim Babangida declared Abuja the official capital of the country. Unlike other states within the North-Central zone, Abuja, the FCT, is relatively secured, except for some bombings by suspected members of *Boko Haram* (Onuoha and George, 2016).

Abuja hosts a huge concentration of all the formal security agencies, coupled with the presence of registered private security companies that are involved in the provision of security in private houses, embassies, banks, as well as other governmental and non-governmental institutions. The VGN remain the key non-state security actors involved in the provision of security related services in the Abuja. In fact, the headquarters of the VGN is also located in Abuja, the FCT. According to the Commander General of the VGN:

The headquarters of the VGN was initially in Kaduna state. For better coordination, we moved it to Abuja, the FCT. Our presence in Abuja makes it easier for me to work with the various security agencies of the country. I relate with them, particularly in the area of intelligence gathering and sharing. The fact that the VGN are in all the 774 LGAs of the country makes it easier for us to collect first hand and real time intelligence, which we pass to the agency concerned for appropriate action. On the part of the security agencies, they really appreciate this role that we are playing.<sup>3</sup>

## Plateau State

Plateau is one of Nigeria's most diverse states, with over 50 ethnic groups, coupled with a strong presence of the two dominant religions, Christianity and Islam. Since 1994, the state has witnessed series of violent conflicts, which led to the breakdown of inter-communal relations along ethnic and religious fault lines. At the centre of this violent confrontation lies contestation over the ownership of Jos that has been expressed in the form of agitations for political, economic and socio-cultural 'inclusions'. All these have created and heightened mutual mistrust among communities that have cohabited for over a century. In Plateau state, non-state security actors have a long and strong presence. In fact, they are found throughout the state (Lar, 2016; Higazi, 2008).

As a form of community response to crime and violence prevention in Rantya community of Jos North Local Government Area (LGA), the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) was established. The former President of ECWA, Rev. Dr. Victor Musa, was one of the drivers of the initiative, which was premised on the systemic use of partnership between non-state actors (the communities) and the state (Nigeria Police Force) in responding to security threats. The PCRC was instrumental to the peace experienced in the community despite the series of conflicts that affected Jos and its environs. Christians and Muslims still co-exist peacefully as a result of the peacebuilding role played by the PCRC.<sup>4</sup> Hunduh (2014) was of the view that the success of

---

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Mr. Usman Mohammed Jahun, Commander General, Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Abuja, 20 December 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Rev. Dr. Victor Musa, former President, Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), 10 January 2017.

such partnership rests on the ability of the police and communities to share information, which in turn forms the basis for rapid response in containing or checkmating an impending problem.

One of the most deliberate decisions taken by the Plateau State Government in response to rising threats of insecurity was the establishment of Operation Rainbow (OR) and Neighbourhood Watch<sup>5</sup>. While most non-state security actors emerged or were established in response to rising crime rates and criminality, the Plateau State Government established OR through a presidential approval as a hybrid security framework to serve as a mechanism for early warning response to conflict and insecurity in Plateau State<sup>6</sup>. The hybrid nature of OR is hinged on the fact that while all institutions charged with the responsibility for security in the country are controlled by the Federal Government, funding for OR and its leadership are directly under the Plateau State Government.

The law establishing OR stipulates that the Coordinator shall be a retired Security Officer not below the rank of a Brigadier General or its equivalent in other security services. In terms of its composition, the law also states that it shall comprise personnel from the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Airforce, Nigeria Police, State Security Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, Plateau State Fire Service, Nigeria Prison Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, as well as the Federal Road Safety Corps. The law spelt out that the OR shall carry out the following functions:

- i. Stop and search at borders and entry checks into the state;
- ii. Cordon and search of suspected persons;
- iii. Arrest of suspects and handing them over to appropriate agencies for prosecution;
- iv. Joint intelligence gathering with neighbouring states;
- v. Dialogue with relevant authorities;
- vi. Measures that will enhance peace and security within the state; and
- vii. Coordinating activities of Neighbourhood Watch in the state.<sup>7</sup>

As can be inferred from the excerpt above, the creation of the Neighbourhood Watch (NW) across the seventeen Local Government Areas (LGAs) was also contained in the law establishing OR. The NW is composed of able-bodied persons not below the age of eighteen. In each of the Wards and Local Governments, Ward Supervisors and Local Government Supervisors coordinate the activities of the NW. The law spelt out the responsibilities of the NW to include to:

---

<sup>5</sup> The Plateau State Rainbow and Neighbourhood Watch Law 2012 came into effect through the assent of the Governor of Plateau State, Jonah David Jang, on 20 March 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Air Vice Marshal Bala Danbaba, former Coordinator, Operation Rainbow, Plateau State, 5 January 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Plateau State Rainbow and Neighbourhood Watch Law, 2012

- a) Identify and report persons that are likely to constitute threat to peace and security of their neighbourhood to the appropriate authority;
- b) Gather information on general security situation within the neighbourhood;
- c) Ensure the security of the community;
- d) Patrol and keeping surveillance within the community;
- e) Monitor the movement of persons and giving information to the Police and Operation Rainbow in the event of any reasonable cause for suspicion of such movement;
- f) Arrest or causing to be arrested any person found within the community reasonably believed to intend the commission of an offence or to have committed an offence;
- g) Hand over such a person arrested to the nearest police station or Operation Rainbow within the community; and
- h) Give evidence in the case of prosecution of an offender.<sup>8</sup>

The peace and stability experienced in Plateau State have been attributed to the immense contribution of OR, regarding the synergy it has been able to build with the NW across the seventeen LGAs of the state. This synergy has demonstrated great utility in early warning and response, coupled with the presence of security personnel for deployments if there is an emergency. As reported by a respondent:

The Plateau State Government bought more than one hundred Hilux vehicles with communication gadgets for Operation Rainbow. This is the kind of thing we expect from our governments. Most times, people die and property are destroyed because security agencies cannot respond on time. When we pass information to the relevant authorities, we are happy because we know Operation Rainbow will act fast. We are also praying that those of us that are doing the Neighbourhood Watch work will be appointed to be part of the security at the federal level, since the Federal Government controls security. We are only given allowance here, the state government.<sup>9</sup>

## Benue State

Benue State was created in 1976. The three major ethnic groups in the state include the Tiv, Idoma and Iggede. Apart from acts of criminality that are linked to armed robbery and other forms of rural banditry in the state, violent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, mainly Fulanis, represents one of the major security challenges confronting the state. As in other cases, the emergence of non-state security actors in the state is largely linked to the inability of the formal security actors to respond effectively. Governor Samuel Ortom underscored the importance of vigilantes in crime prevention when he announced that the Benue State government would partner with, and support the efforts of vigilantes across the state in responding to the threats posed by criminals in the state. The Governor made this assertion in

---

<sup>8</sup> Plateau State Rainbow and Neighbourhood Watch Law, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with a member of the Neighbourhood Watch in Jos South Local Government Area, 11 January, 2017.

response to the increasing role that the VGN are playing in the area of crime prevention across the state.

In response to the high rate of crime in Benue State, a group of young men came together to establish a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), which was a replication of the kind of community response to the insurgency in Borno State by a group of young men who formed the CJTF. In both urban and rural areas, communities are forced to resort to self-help measures to augment the formal security.

My people can now sleep with their eyes closed as a result of the vigilante we established. These vigilantes are members of the community and there are volunteers who understand the community more than the police or civil defence. They don't collect bribes or delay in prosecuting criminals. We trust them so much.<sup>10</sup>

The Benue State Commander of the VGN was optimistic of the fact that the passage of the VGN Bill, which is currently before the National Assembly will be a major booster to the efforts of the VGN in the state. He was also of the view that apart from the VGN there are other groups such as the Ali Sokoto and Benue State Vigilante Group. He was of the view that:

The success recorded so far on security in Benue State and Nigeria in general, is as a result of the contribution of both the security agencies of the government, as well as actors such as the VGN. The main challenge for now is the fact that there is no synergy among these non-state actors. The moment there is synergy among all these actors, we will achieve better result.<sup>11</sup>

## Kogi State

Kogi State was created in 1991 by General Ibrahim Babangida. The three major ethnic groups in the state are the Igala, Ebira and Okun. Apart from religious conflicts that are common in the state, violence by criminal gangs such as armed robbers, kidnappers, and cult groups remains a major security concern. For instance, armed bandits were reported to have attacked a police station at Kabba/Bunu LGA and carted away arms and ammunition from the armoury, with two policemen killed.<sup>12</sup>

The VGN remain the main non-state security actor in Kogi State. The VGN, which was registered in 1999 with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) (Ogbozor, 2016), currently represents the largest non-state security actor in Nigeria with respect to membership and spread.

---

<sup>10</sup> Discussion with a community leader in Makurdi, Benue State, 6 January, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Lt. Col Daniel Eworo (Rtd), Benue State Commander of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, 15 January, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> See The Violent Road: Nigeria's North-CentralNorth-Central available at [www.aoav.org.uk/2013/the-violent-road-nigeria-north-central/](http://www.aoav.org.uk/2013/the-violent-road-nigeria-north-central/)

Based on information available on its website, the group has over 400 members in each of the 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the country. With headquarters in Abuja, the group has offices at the state and local government levels.<sup>13</sup> Article (4) of the Constitution of the VGN spells out the aims and objectives of the group to include the following:

- a. To assist the police and other law enforcement agencies to curb crime;
- b. To protect and preserve public property;
- c. Assist the Police in crowd control and maintenance of peace at public functions where the need arises;
- d. With the clearance of the police, assist public agencies in the protection of their establishment plants and equipment;
- e. To give information to the police and other security agencies of criminals or wanted persons residing in the ward or Local Government;
- f. To locate the permanent or temporary residences of receivers of stolen properties and 419 (fraud) practitioners for the purposes of enabling the police to arrest or monitor their activities;
- g. To make positive and useful contributions to the advancement, progress and wellbeing of the community by mobilising and assisting in communal development efforts;
- h. To abide by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and all relevant laws and bylaws.

In terms of its structure, the VGN are led by a National Commandant who is assisted by a Deputy National Commandant, followed by six Regional Commandants representing each of the regions, State Commandants for each of the 36 states, LGA Commandants for each of the 774 LGAs, District Commandants and members respectively. This underscores the fact that VGN as presently constituted is the most organised non-state security actor in the country.<sup>14</sup> The VGN awaits the passage of the bill on the VGN and the assent of the President so that it can operate as a constitutionally recognised entity.

The VGN has, however, had some issues with other non-state security actor in Kogi State. For instance, there has been some challenge between the VGN and another actor, known as the Ali Sokoto Group. According to the Kogi State Commander of the VGN, the issue, which bothered on coordination, has been sorted out.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> For more on the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, see [www.vigilantegroupnig.com](http://www.vigilantegroupnig.com)

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mr. Usman Mohammed Jahun, Commander General, Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Abuja, 20 December 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Alh Baba Edune, Kogi State Commander of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, 20 January 2017



Apart from the VGN and the Ali Sokoto Group that operate in Kogi State, there are vigilantes such as the Enyidudu Community Vigilante Group, which has been in operation in Adavi LGA. According to a resident of the community:

We are experiencing peace in our community because of what the vigilantes are doing here. Before now, our community was not at peace because of criminals. Now, the community is supporting our young men who protect the community in the day and at night. People can now sleep with their two eyes closed. We are calling on the local government to come and support this group. The vigilantes always depend on the community for support and with the way the economy is today, the support has gone down.<sup>16</sup>

As shown in Appendix 1 to this chapter, different non-state actors with varying degrees of membership and operational spread exist in the state. In most cases, they have complemented formal state security agencies in the provision of security services. However, their divergent interests and mode of operation have occasionally led to friction between some actors.

## Summary of Findings

Notwithstanding the fact that communities are increasingly relying on non-state security actors for their security and safety needs, some level of cooperation and synergy still exists between the non-state security actors and the security agencies, particularly the police. This is evident in the aspect of joint patrol and joint raids on criminals' hideouts and havens. In Angwan Rukuba community of Plateau State, the raid on a criminal hideout known as Filin Shaitan (Satan's Arena) in 2016 was successful as a result of the synergy between the security agencies and the vigilantes.<sup>17</sup>

Dissatisfaction by the communities against the police stems from widespread perception of the formal security agents (mostly the police) as corrupt. When criminals are arrested by the vigilantes and handed over to the police for prosecution, the police **allegedly** release the criminals. As pointed out by a respondent:

Our problem with the police is that we do our best in arresting criminals that are disturbing public peace in the community, [but] they are released without prosecution. It means they have either bribed the police or used the connections they have in getting out of the police station. This kind of situation weakens our morale. The situation would have been different if we are empowered to prosecute such people.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Interview with a , resident of Eyidudu Community, Kogi State, 20 January 2017.

<sup>17</sup> NGO CALL ON GOVT TO TACKLE THE CASE OF CRIMINALS USING KEKE NAPEP TO ROBBED INNOCENT PASSENGERS IN JOS <https://plateaunewsonline.wordpress.com/2016/01/29/ngo-call-on-govt-to-tackle-the-case-of-criminals-using-keke-napep-to-robbed-innocent-passengers-in-jos/>

<sup>18</sup> Interview with a vigilante member in Jos, Plateau State, 11 December 2016

Coordination remains a major challenge for the operations of non-state security actors. Rather than seeing themselves as partners in progress, they operate competitively. The fact that most of the vigilantes are operating outside a clearly defined mode of operation or standard operating procedure that should have been designed by the Nigerian state through the agency concerned further compounds the problem. As more and more non-state actors get involved in the provision of security, with no standard guidelines for their operations, conflicts are bound to occur between and among them.

The increased involvement of non-state security actors is chipping at community confidence in the security institutions of the Nigerian state, and reliance on the formal agencies is bound to wane. More communities will rely on the self-help measures for community protection and safety, rather than depend on the state. In the words of a respondent, “I do not think we have police in this country. Our community leaders work with the vigilantes to ensure everyone is safe. We are happy with this approach”.<sup>19</sup>

Most of the non-state security actors examined in the North-Central zone do not have a deliberate policy on gender. Apart from the VGN that has women involved in both the administrative and operational aspects of its work, gender has not been mainstreamed in the activities of non-state actors. According to a respondent in Abuja:

It is not as if women are not recognised or there is no place for them. The fact is that this work is rigorous and most of the women cannot withstand the stress and pressure of the work. We have few women who are involved in such work. Though, we are careful in assigning them responsibility so that they are not exposed to the danger that they cannot handle.<sup>20</sup>

There are palpable fears that in the long run, non-state security actors will become law unto themselves given the fact that there is no concrete mechanism in place to monitor and regulate their operations. The situation in the South-East region of the country in the early 2000s readily comes to mind, when Bakassi Boys operated outside the control of the state. During this period, the group was not accountable to anybody and operated mainly arbitrarily and brutally. The issue of accountability remains a major challenge on the operations of non-state security actors. Most non-state security actors have what Ogbozor (2016) described as weak internal and external accountability systems. The absence of an accountability mechanism has created a situation where by the communities are at the mercy of the non-state security actors, since security-related decision making rests largely with these groups. In some cases, the community leaders are marginally involved. Except for OR in Plateau State and the VGN that have a clearly defined structure of command and accountability structures, most other groups operate without clearly defined accountability frameworks.

---

<sup>19</sup> Interview with a respondent in Makurdi, Benue State, 6 January 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with an employee of VGN in Abuja, 21 December 2016.

Unlike Operation Rainbow in Plateau State that was established through an act of parliament at the state level, most of the non-state security actors in the North-Central zone operate without a concrete legal framework. Though, there is currently a bill before the National Assembly on the operations of the VGN, the absence of a legal framework constitutes a major challenge with respect to issue of accountability by the non-state actors, since they do not report to anyone. There is a sense in which many citizens do not accord actors like the VGN the desired recognition and respect largely because their emergence and operations are not backed by any law.<sup>21</sup>

As pointed out earlier, a challenge of coordination and synergy exists between the state and non-state security actors, with trust as a major issue. The fear that suspects get freed allegedly after paying bribes to formal security agents has created a situation whereby some of the vigilantes would prefer to handle issues on their own, without necessarily taking them to the police for prosecution.

## Future Trajectory and Recommendations

From the findings above, the future of security in Nigeria and the North-Central zone in particular clearly lies in a concert of efforts between state and non-state security providers. In the light of the foregoing recommendations on how to better reposition these actors to deliver on these security related responsibilities is important.

Central to the operations of both the state and non-state security actors is cooperation around joint patrol and intelligence. The proximity of non-state security actors to the communities they serve underscores their primacy in intelligence gathering. Tasking the Ministry of Interior to coordinate efforts in intelligence gathering through non-state actors will require the Ministry training and building capacity of the non-state actors on the collation, analysis and use of intelligence.

The absence of a robust coordination mechanism among non-state security actors on one hand, as well as between the state and non-state security actors on another hand, makes it difficult for these actors to discharge their duties successfully. The Ministry of Interior, in concert with civil society groups such as Partners West Africa-Nigeria, should design a framework for coordination among and between these actors for effective synergy and operations. For instance, there have been reported cases of friction between the VGN and the Ali Sokoto Group in Benue and Kogi States.

Since more and more communities are now reliant on non-state security actors for their day-to-day-security and safety needs, governments at all levels should provide some form of support.

---

<sup>21</sup> Interview with a resident of Abuja, 19 December 2016.

Governments should not be perceived as aloof from the people it is supposed to protect. Attempts by the Federal Government towards a reform or transformation of the formal security sector should integrate these non-state security actors in view of the strategic role they now play as part of the country's security architecture.

As non-state security actors gain prominence in the country's security landscape, gender should be mainstreamed in the workings of these entities. In a sense, there should be a gender policy or guideline that should recognise the place of women in the operations of these non-state security actors. Incentives should be provided for women in a way that encourages them to participate in the operations of these entities. If, in the long run, the VGN receives formal approval to function, it will transform into an important employer of labour for women, who are currently working as volunteers. The evolution of the NSCDC from a non-state security outfit to a formal security actor serves as a model for optimism that the VGN will get a governmental nod.

Even then, the Federal Government should put in place a relevant mechanism and framework for the registration and regulation of vigilantes, just as it does for Private Security Companies that are under the supervision of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). This measure is important in order to mitigate occurrences non-state security actors taking the laws into their hands by applying jungle justice on suspected criminals.

## Conclusion

Nigeria is witnessing a major shift in the logic of security provisioning from the state to non-state actors. The capacity of non-state security organisations to provide security in ways that endears them to the communities is increasing exponentially. In a sense, state retreat from the provision of security to its citizens has created a yawning vacuum that non-state security actors are filling. Notwithstanding the important roles these actors play in the provision of security in their host communities, the extent to which they relate with the formal security actors as well as the way and manner they are regulated remain a major issue for policy. The view that security is a public good that only the Nigerian state can provide through its institutions no longer holds sway. If anything, there is a strong sense in which non-state security actors will be key providers of security in Nigeria, now and in the future.

## Appendix I: Profile of Non-State Security Providers in some States of North-Central Zone

State	Name of Non-State Actor	Membership	Spread	Source of Funding
Abuja, FCT	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians	Operates in all states of the Federation.	Self-funding
	Peace Corps of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians	Operates in all states of the Federation.	Self-funding
Benue	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians	Operates in all states of the Federation	Self-funding
	Peace Corps of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians	Operates in all states of the Federation	Self-funding
	Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)	Open to Citizens of Benue state	Across the state.	Support from individuals, communities and government.
Kogi	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians	Operates in all states of the Federation	Self-funding
	Peace Corps of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians	Operates in all states of the Federation	Self-funding
	Ali Sokoto Group	Selected Young men	Operate mainly in the rural areas	Self-funding
	Enyidudu Community Vigilante Group	Young men	Operate in Enyidudu Community of Adavi LGA	Self-funding
Plateau	Operation Rainbow	Recruited by the Plateau State Government and mostly Plateau State citizens	Exists across all the local government areas of the state	Funded by the Plateau State Government
	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians		

	Peace Corps of Nigeria	Open to all Nigerians		
	Neighbourhood Watch			
	Executive Guards Ltd			
	<i>Yan Banga</i> (Night Watch)	Found at the community level where they operate		

**Source:** Author's compilation.

## References

- Fourchard, L. (2011). *A new name for an old practice: Vigilante in South-western Nigeria*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Higazi, A. (2008). Social mobilization and collective violence: Vigilantes and militias in the lowlands of Plateau State, Central Nigeria, Africa: *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol.78, No.1, pp. 107-135.
- Hunduh, A.V. (2014). The feasibility of implementing community policing in Nigeria, *Jos Journal of Social Issues*, Vol.7., no. 1., pp 198-214.
- Kwaja, A.M.C. (2013). Vigilantism and the governance of insecurity in Nigeria, available in [www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2013/11/08/vigilantism-and-the-governance-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/](http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2013/11/08/vigilantism-and-the-governance-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/)
- Lar, T.J. (2015). *Vigilantism, state and society in Plateau State, Nigeria: A history of plural policing, (1950 to the present)*, D. Phil dissertation, BIGSAS at Bayreuth University, Germany, available in [www.epub.uni-bayreuth.de/2798/1/Jimam%20Lar%20Thesis%Final%20Copy%20\(2016-04-11\).pdf](http://www.epub.uni-bayreuth.de/2798/1/Jimam%20Lar%20Thesis%Final%20Copy%20(2016-04-11).pdf)
- Mohammed, B.S. (2013). Vigilante groups and crime prevention, *Daily Trust*, December 15th.
- Ogbozor, E. (2016). Understanding the informal security sector in Nigeria, Special Report 391: *United States Institute for Peace (USIP)*.
- Onuoha, F.C. and George, T.A. (2016). The Abuja bombings: Boko Haram's reaction to President Buhari's actions, *African Security Review*, Vol 25, No. 2, pp 208-214





# CHAPTER 3

## NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE NORTH-EAST ZONE OF NIGERIA

Habiba Mankanjoula and Hadiza Mali Bukar

### Background

As noted by Arase (2013:21), vigilante groups in Nigeria “have always arisen because of the need to enhance security and end or reduce victimisation of members of a given community by criminals”. With the rise of insurgent and terrorist groups, operating mostly in the North-East geopolitical zone, growing attention is being paid on diverse actors that contribute to the provision of security.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on non-state security actors in the North-East zone of Nigeria, such as the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF) and other vigilante groups. It examines how non-state security actors emerged, how they recruit their members, and their mode of operations, particularly regarding how they treat persons suspected of involvement in criminal activity. It equally examined the nature of their relationship with the communities where they operate, formal security agencies and traditional structures.

The study covered Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. In Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe States, the research was conducted in the state capitals while in Borno state data collection took place in Maiduguri and Bama Local Government Areas (LGAs). In Taraba state, data collection took place mainly in Jalingo but key informant interviews were extended to respondents from Gassol and Bali local government areas during the field study. The research was implemented between December 2016 and January 2017. The interviews were conducted in English and local languages such as Kanuri and Hausa and later transcribed into English.

### Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas

The North-East is one region where growing insecurity has forced many people and their businesses to shut down or to relocate to safer areas. The zone, which comprises Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, and Yobe states, had a population of 18,971,965 people according to the 2006 National Population Census figure. The dominant socio-economic activities in the zone include pastoral/nomadic agriculture, food crop production particularly groundnut crops, cowpeas, sorghum and millets, livestock production and animal husbandry, mining and smiting,

among others. The region has been the most affected by the 7 year insurgency crisis and it also remains among the least developed parts of the country<sup>22</sup>.

Major security challenges in the North-East zone include terrorism, ethnoreligious conflicts, armed banditry, cross-border smuggling, and cattle rustling, among others. Terrorism orchestrated by the Boko Haram tops the list of security challenges in the zone. Thousands of lives and property worth millions of dollars have been lost to multiple attacks and bombing staged by the Boko Haram in the North-East. Targets of such attacks have included churches, mosques, market places, schools, motor parks, military barracks and police stations, among others. For instance, on 29 April, 2011, Boko Haram bombed the Nigeria Military Barrack in Bauchi State, killing at least 3 people. The 29 September 2012 attack at Gujba College in Yobe State left more than 50 people dead. On 14 April 2014, Boko Haram attacked Chibok Government Secondary School, and abducted 276 female students. The June 2014 attack on Mubi in Adamawa State resulted in the death of 40 people. As at 2016, it was estimated that the seven-year Boko Haram insurgency had claimed at least 20,000 lives, displaced more than 2.6 million people, created over 75, 000 orphans and caused about \$9 billion worth of damage since 2009 (Onuoha, 2016).

The zone has equally experienced deadly outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts. For instance, in 2004 a religious crisis erupted between Christians and Muslims in Numan of Adamawa State over location of the town's Central Mosque close to the Bachama paramount ruler's palace. Seventeen people were killed in the riot. Aside the ravaging Boko Haram insurgency and religious violence, political violence poses significant threat. In this regard, Bauchi State ranked highest in the zone with electoral violence. Following the announcement of 2011 presidential election results, at least 32 Christians and 11 Corps members were murdered in Katagum between 16th and 17th of April, 2011 (Bello, 2015).

Armed banditry constitutes another serious security challenge in the North-East zone, exacerbated by Nigeria's porous borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon. These bandits steal herds, loot and burn homes, and assault women in the attacks (Ate and Akinterinwa, 2011). The porosity of Nigeria's borders, especially in the North-East zone, also facilitates transnational trafficking in drugs, arms, and stolen vehicles. Cattle rustling and kidnapping are equally major sources of insecurity

Several efforts have been made by the government to contain security challenges in the zone. At the national level, the military has sustained a counter-insurgency operation known as Operation Lafiya Dole. At the regional level, a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was established in

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ng.undp.org/content/nigeria/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/05/13/national-human-development-report-2016-makes-compelling-case-that-unchecked-human-security-parameters-impacts-on-human-development-in-nigeria.html>

2014 by the Lake Chad Basin Commission member states to combat Boko Haram insurgency and other allied security threats in the North-East and Lake Chad Basin (Assanvo, Abatan, and Sawadogo, 2016).

Growing security challenges in the zone has led to an increase in the operation of private security organisations in the zone. The dominant ones with active presence in the zone include the Halogen, Munaco, Kings Guards and Nigid. There are also other non-state security actors like hunters' associations and local youth vigilante groups that provide security services at several towns and communities across the North-East zone (Vanguard, 2012).

## Profile of the States

This section focuses on the four states that were covered in the zone, namely: Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, and Gombe. The nature of the non-state security actors that operate in the states will be discussed, subsequently.

### Bauchi State

Bauchi state is one of the states in the North-East zone that is afflicted with some security challenges, such as banditry, cattle rustling and kidnapping. The situation is made worse by the activities of Boko Haram terrorists especially around the Burra Forest in Ningi Emirate Council. The spate of insecurity has necessitated the emergence of non-state security actors in the form of community security groups in some parts of Bauchi state. As noted by some members of vigilante groups:

The Boko Haram insurgents are in constant relocation to the Burra Forest, because the forest is a very large forest, it extends to three other states and it is from there that these terrorists go to perpetrate evil in other communities and villages.<sup>23</sup>

The Burra forest is a big forest that is linked through a corridor to the Falgore Forrest in Kano state and Saminaka in Kaduna State. The terrorists who operate from the forest engage in robbing, raping and kidnapping of people almost daily. Some of the victims of kidnapping had to pay between N3million and N5million as ransom in exchange for their freedom. In response, a new Police division was opened in Burra. The police, however, were unable to dislodge the terrorists from the forest, as they considered it a high-risk operation.<sup>24</sup> The failure on the part of the Police to tackle the terrorist, among other factors, contributed to the formation of community security groups such as the Sarasuka Youth group, Vigilante group of Wunti/Bauchi, and Rijijanmaske vigilante group.

---

<sup>23</sup> Interview with members of Sarasuka vigilante groups, Azare community, on 23 December, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with member of the security force in Bauchi

### *The Sarasuka Group*

The Sarasuka group is largely a youth group, composed of mostly unemployed, school dropouts and illiterate who have not received any formal education. They are found in almost all the LGAs of Bauchi State. The group is committed to protecting and safeguarding their communities. Its mode of operation involves both day and night times patrols to fish out criminals who are subsequently handed over to security agents. Although the group is widely seen as being committed to upholding justice, the harsh economic background of most of its members heightens its vulnerability to political manipulation. Some believe that the group is easily used by politician to harass the opposition or innocent people during political unrest.

The Sarasuka do not have any legal framework or formal mode of recruitment. The main criterion for accepting members is the individual's commitment to selfless service and willingness to take risk. However, its members have been accused of taking laws into their hands or violating human rights during conflict situations, such as stabbing some suspects or use of dangerous weapons.

The group does not have any reliable source of funding. It usually depends on financial support extended to it by politicians and other reputable individuals, whom --many suspect-- use such groups to instigate political unrest. Some persons interviewed posited that government's refusal or inability to recognise or assist these groups is responsible for their being used by politicians to perpetrate violence. A respondent expressed the hope that "if such group are guided or supported by government, [they] could have been more organised and work effectively in the security sector".<sup>25</sup> Similarly, a member of the Sarasuka group noted that "there is need for the government to give us an opportunity by training and sensitisation to improve our operation in supporting the state in combating crimes and promoting peaceful co-existence".<sup>26</sup> He further noted that payment of allowance, provision of patrol vehicles and assistance with uniform could significantly improve their operations.

Some of the challenges to the operation of the Sarasuka Group are lack of reliable funding stream, absence of support of most local governments in the state and low level of education and training of members.

### *The Vigilante Group of Wunti*

The Vigilante Group of Wunti/Bauchi is another non-state security actor in the state. The group is located in the state capital, and have their offices or branches in other LGAs of the state. Although it has been in existence for a long time, only around 1990 did it became well known or recognised by community members. As stated by a member of the group, "We formed this

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with a community leader who is also a member of the local Vigilante group.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with an ex-member of the Sarasuka group.

group for our people to protect their lives and properties and safeguard their boundaries”.<sup>27</sup> Its method of operation involves regular patrols in search of thugs and criminals in their hideouts within and outside the community. The group also join police patrol teams in the fight against Boko Haram.

No legal framework or law guides the activities of the group, although its members claim they have rules and regulations that control their movement and field operations. The group’s main source of funding is through donation from people, community leaders, and politicians. Some notable challenges faced by the group are lack of reliable funding, absence of clear criteria for recruitment and lack of logistics for operation.

## Borno State

Borno State is the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency. It is both the birth place of the insurgent group and its stronghold. In response to the catastrophic impact of the Boko Haram, a community initiative in the form of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno. According to Amnesty International (2014), the name ‘Civilian JTF’ indicates a group, particularly a vigilante, made up of volunteers associated with the regular JTF in fighting or countering the activities of Boko Haram.<sup>28</sup> The Civilian JTF or Yan Gora (those who hold the cane) is mainly a youth vigilante group, initially amorphous but now, to some extent, organised (Pérouse de Montclos, 2014).

Gradually, the idea of CJTF later spread to other states such as Yobe, which is also experiencing the devastation caused by the insurgents. Members of the CJTF in Borno are bi-vocational, which entails that in addition to serving in the CJTF they also engage in other works. For instance, some are students who come after school hours while others are business men or civil servants who assist after close of business or work. Being a voluntary service, some members do not report for duties when they have personal assignments.

The emergence of the group is as a result of being caught between the insurgents and government forces. The insurgents ravaged the communities, killed and destroyed their economy while the military antagonised the populace due to the insurgents<sup>29</sup> Whether it is a state-motivated outcome or community-led initiative, it is irrefutable that the group came into existence as a result of heightened insecurity and escalating violence by the Boko Haram. Although vigilante groups, including the CJTF, have contributed positively in securing Maiduguri, there are reports of their involvement in human rights violations, including sexual harassment (Umara, et al, 2013).

---

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Alhaji Hassan, member of the vigilante group in Wunti

<sup>28</sup> Amnesty International Report 2014/15: The State of the World’s Human Rights [https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/AIR15\\_English.PDF](https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/AIR15_English.PDF)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.csq.ro/wp-content/uploads/1-Daniel-AGBIBOA.pdf>, pgs 13-14

In addition to the CJTF, there is also the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme (BOYES). The BOYES was launched by the Borno State government in September 2013. Governor Kashim Shettima noted then that the aim of the BOYES was to ensure our youths discover or rediscover their potentials and enhance these potentials with necessary skills. He also intended that BOYES would indoctrinate them into having a better organised love for their fatherland, make them conscious of what goes within and around them, and train them to be conscious of the security of wider civilian population without taking laws into their hands so that they can lawfully help in policing their own communities (Alli, 2013).

The BOYES was designed as a more structured platform for training youth vigilante members who have been in the vanguard of hunting down members of the Boko Haram sect. Thus, some observers believe that the government are in control of BOYES and CJTF because both groups work together with the military and other security, agents as they cannot go out for operation without the military. Thus, they receive instructions from the soldiers.

## Yobe State

In Yobe State, there are different non-state security actors that provide security. The three notable actors in this regard are the Youth Vigilante group, Hunters Association and the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF).

### *The Youth Vigilante group*

The Youth Yigilante Group was formed in 2009 by youths in several communities across the 17 Local Government Areas (LGA) in the state. It emerged essentially as a community based effort by concerned youths to protect life and property in their community. The group is a non-profit organisation with the primary aim of assisting state security forces in tackling the security crises in the state, especially in the light of growing security threat posed by the activities of the Boko Haram.

The group is made up of people of ages 18 years and above, who are committed or dedicated to the security of their community. They also have ex-service or retired security personnel as members. Most of the group's members are men, though there are few women who take care of issues that affect women. For instance, only one woman is a member of the group that operates in Gwange Ward in Damaturu. She is deployed for assignments such as conducting searches on women and girls during naming, burial or wedding ceremonies. Because she does the job very well and coupled with her hard work, she leads a ward in Gwange, Pompomari and Sabonlayi in night patrols. Girls are also involved in the group but their participation is usually limited due to cultural constraints.

At inception, the activities of the youth vigilante group covered the areas that were mostly affected by Boko Haram activities. Over time, the group took proactive measures by extending

its operations to gradually cover other areas that have not been affected by the insurgents. With the emergency of Boko Haram and its destructive activities, the involvement of youth vigilante groups in the provision of security across the communities in Yobe state increased. To curtail attacks on the communities by the insurgents, the Youth Vigilante Group increased the tempo of recruiting and registering more volunteer members to take part in night patrols, hunting of Boko Haram members, and overall provision of security in the community. On this account, they have accepted boys below 15 years, whom they deploy for errands in support of their operations.

There are no standard or specific criteria or qualification for assessing and accepting volunteers; what is of concern to the leadership of the groups is the willingness and zeal to join. As with membership recruitment, standard criteria for selecting those who lead the groups are nonexistent. However, strong consideration is given to the individual's ability and track record of performance in the field of action. Those who are seen as heroes in terms of possession of charms and who display other traditional evidence of bravery are often chosen to lead the group.

The Youth Vigilante Group have offices in all the LGAs, and pay their office rent from contributions made by members or at times the local government pays for it. Members of the group are paid through community contribution and donations from philanthropist or (donor) organisations operating in the state. The state government does not pay its members or support the group financially. Members of the Youth Vigilante Group are not happy that the state government is not supporting them despite their contribution to security. As a representative of the Chairman of one of the Youth Vigilante Group stated: "Security agents do not know what is happening in our community; we help them and assist in terms of searching and scouting for criminals (Boko Haram members). However, government often forgets to support us financially".<sup>30</sup>

In an interview with the Chairman of one of the youth vigilante groups, he eulogised the efforts of his members in terms of their contribution to security and peaceful co-existence in Damaturu, in particular, and Yobe State, generally. While disclosing that his father was killed by the insurgents, the Chairman expressed his desire to become a security agent in order to "contribute his quota to Yobe State in ensuring a secure and peaceful society for our children".<sup>31</sup> He further noted that members of the Youth Vigilante Group expect the government to assist them, possibly through absorbing them in any of the security agencies to continue their selfless services. This, to him, is particularly important given the reduction in insurgent activities and the need to sustain efforts at combating crimes in the state.

---

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Baba Alhaji, a representative of one of the Youth Vigilante Groups.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with the Chairman, Youth Vigilante Group, Gwange ward on December 27, 2016.

### *The Hunters Association*

The Hunters Association is another non-state security actor in Yobe State. The group has been in existence since time immemorial. The association is more of a group inherited by those who take to hunting in the bush for a living. Besides serving as a livelihood association, the group has sustained a longstanding contribution around protection of the communities from dangers such as banditry, robbery or attacks by criminals.

The group has branches and offices in all the 17 LGAs of the state. Membership is voluntary and cuts across ages and sexes. There are no clear criteria for joining the group apart from the individual showing genuine zeal and commitment to becoming a member. The individual is also expected to have the ability to perform in the field of operation and have a knowledge of some traditional ties, charms and beliefs upheld by the group. The leader of the association is usually appointed based on past performance and display of bravery.

The association does not have any legal framework that established it or a formal structure to guide its daily administration. However, members are aware of accepted guidelines to regulate their conduct in the field of operation. They have no formal government recognition or assistance to the group. Thus, the association relies on contribution of community members and levy imposed on its members to raise money to buy items needed for operation or to pay rents.

The activities of the group attracted the attention of the government in the wake of growing Boko Haram attacks in the state in 2011. Given the inability of formal security forces and the military to track Boko Haram's hideouts and routes, the government approached the group to assist the military in tracking and apprehending Boko Haram members and criminal elements that operate from the bush. The decision by the government to approach the group was borne out of the understanding that only the hunters have very good knowledge of the routes used by these criminals and insurgents, "especially the routes from Gujba to Gulani and Sambisa through Goniri".<sup>32</sup> According to a member of the local vigilante group, when the government "wanted our services, it promised to give each member the sum of N100, 000, which was later reduced to N60, 000 and at the end of the exercise only N40, 000 was given to us".<sup>33</sup> The members of the group suggested the need for government to assist them with education and a suitable framework that will better harness the potentials of their profession. This will enable them to better assist the government in curbing the problem of insurgency, banditry, armed robbery and cattle rustling.

### *Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF)*

The Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF) is another non-state security actor operating in Yobe state. They are mostly unemployed youth that came together to form the group as vigilante outfit.

---

<sup>32</sup> Interview with a member of the local vigilante

<sup>33</sup> Interview with a member of the local vigilante



Given the positive contributions they are making in providing security as well as assisting the police and the military in the task of fighting the Boko Haram, government began to pay its members some stipends as a form of appreciation and to encourage them in their work.

Most of the members of the group were hunters and farmers who engage in the vigilante works as a part-time work. They are organised in such a way that they run shifts. When any member is not on duty, the individual resorts to hunting or farming which are their main means of livelihood. Members of the group are not being paid salaries by the government. Given that they have to take care of their families, many of them sustain themselves from their engagement with farming or other income-generating activities.

## **Gombe State**

Gombe State is one of the states in the North-East zone that also hosts some non-state security actors. However, the two groups covered in this study are the Kalare Youth group and Gombe Vigilante.

### *The Kalare Youth*

The Kalare Youth group operates largely within the state capital, Gombe. The group consists of youth, mostly secondary school leavers, school dropouts and other unemployed persons. The group assist police in combating crime and civil offence in the community. In terms of operation, the group is divided into various branches and wards. Each branch operates within a specific area, and conducts night patrols.

The group has also functioned as pressure groups, especially since the return to democratic rule in 1999. In the past, Kalare Youth has mobilised to back politicians who have contributed to the development of their communities. The group does not have any legal framework or standard operating structure. Members are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with positive standard that the community or people really desired. Given that the group is not being supported by the government in any way, politicians often use financial inducement to manipulate most of its members during political campaigns and elections.

### *Gombe Vigilante*

Gombe Vigilante is a voluntary group that was formed in the 1980s to ensure safe and peaceful community. The group is located in all the LGAs of the state. Membership is open to any individual who has shown strong commitment and well known by his or her community for being honest. They are often accepted and deployed to various wards and streets to provide security in such areas. The group has its head office in the state capital, with branches across the LGAs.

There is no legal framework that backs the existence and activities of the group; however, it has rules and regulations guiding its activities and field operations. The Gombe Vigilante does not have any reliable source of funding; it relies hugely on contributions from members and

donations from wealthy individuals. Even though the group does not receive funding from government, those in authority do recognise its contributions to security, particularly in assisting the police to apprehend criminals. Some of the challenges confronting the group are lack of equipment, uniform and security gadgets.

## **Adamawa State**

Adamawa State was created in 1991 with the capital in Yola. The state is located in the North-East region of Nigeria, sharing land boundary with Borno State in the north, Gombe State in the west, Taraba State in the south and the Republic of Cameroon in the east. Prior to its creation in 1991, Adamawa and Taraba States were part of the defunct Gongola State, which was created in 1976. The state has 21 Local Government areas, namely: Demsa, Fufore, Ganye, Girei, Gombi, Guyuk, Hong, Jada, Lamurde, Madagali, Maiha, Mayo-Belwa, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Numan, Shelleng, Song, Toungo, Yola North, Yola South. Based on the 2006 population census, Adamawa state has a population of 3.7 million people, with 80 ethnic groups.<sup>34</sup>

Adamawa state has a long history of conflicts that are linked to competition over political power, which manifest in the form of access to, and control of political and economic power. In recent times, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, the Demsa/Numan conflict and the Boko Haram perpetrated insurgency became major drivers of violence and insecurity in the state. In the light of these security challenges, non-state security providers such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF), Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), as well as other forms of community protection measures, largely driven by Ali Kwarra, the Amalgamated Union of Nigerian Hunters hunters and loosely formed groups of young men in several communities have become prominent in the state.

## **Taraba State**

Taraba State was created 1991. Prior to its creation, it was with Adamawa state as part of the old Gongola State. There are sixteen Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely: Bali, Donga, Gashaka, Gassol, Ibi, Jalingo, Karim Lamido, Kurmi, Lau, Sardauna, Takum, Ussa, Wukari, Yorro and Zing. Though located in the North-East region of the country, the state did not experienced the Boko Haram insurgency, except for displaced persons that sought refuge there. Communal conflicts and violent confrontations between farmers and pastoralist continue to define the nature of inter-group relations in the state, particularly in areas like Takum, Wukari, Donga among others.

---

<sup>34</sup> See the 2005 Census Figures of the National Population Commission.

In Taraba State, another vigilante group known as the Tabital Pulaaku Njode Jam has been very active in the state in the area of intelligence sharing and joint patrol with the police. In concert with the police, the group was able to arrest a robbery gang in Bali Local Government Area of the state<sup>35</sup>. The Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) which is known as the Taraba State Vigilante Group (TSVG) and local hunters are key non-state security providers that are also active in the state. The State government donated 180 motorcycles to the group to aid their works; in addition to this, the Nigeria Police Force organised a specialised training course on basic intelligence gathering for 251 members that were drawn from Adamawa and Taraba state. This was meant to provide them with the requisite techniques that would make them more effective in supporting the police and other security agencies in the fight against insurgency in the North-East region<sup>36</sup>.

The recruitment process is voluntary and members must be responsible citizens of the society and applications must be endorsed by their wards, village heads and divisional police officers.

## Summary of Findings

Some of the key findings that emerged from the study are as follows:

- In the North-East zone, there is the absence of a legal framework for the regulation of the operations or activities of the non-state security actors
- The non-state security actors lack any formal or standardised method in their recruitment process to ensure how best to effectively carry out their duties
- Most of the non-state actors are not supported financially, except for the CJTF or BOYES of Borno and few vigilantes in Adamawa and Yobe states that are paid little amount for their services.
- The key motivations for people who join the CJTF and Vigilante/ Hunters of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states is the desire to protect their communities and exert revenge against Boko Haram members.
- The meagre allowance being provided by the states and local governments especially in assisting the formal organisations to combat crimes and insurgents in the crises states is too insignificant to address their routine needs.

---

<sup>35</sup><http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/08/21/police-vigilantes-nab-robbery-gang-in-taraba.htm>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/www.naija.com/amp/1042842-abu-alis-death-northern-hunters-get-special-training-boko-haram.html>

## Future Trajectories

Most of the non-state security actors in the North-East zone emerged as direct response to security threats that afflicted their community. No doubt they are contributing to the security of the communities where they operate, the future of the CJTF and other vigilante groups in post-insurgency era remains a genuine concern. Across the states and locations visited for the fieldwork, respondents were worried about the fact that most of them have been exposed to weapon handling and have committed human rights violations in their effort to provide security. Thus, some of them will need reorientation to be able to fully integrate into the society when the insurgency ends. Another challenge lies in how best the government can engage them either through recruitment into formal security agencies or empowering them through vocational training to acquire skills that will help them secure alternative livelihood. If the government fails to take proactive measures to address these concerns, these actors could pose serious security risks in the future.

## Recommendations

The findings from this study lend themselves to the following recommendations that will assist major stakeholders to exploit the positive potentials of the existence and activities of non-state security actors:

- The non-state security actors should be provided with an operational legal framework to assist in formalising their activities, regulating recruitment, and enthrone discipline.
- There should be formal recruitment process for the non-security actors, including guidelines and structure to ensure that all employees adhere strictly to the formalities of their respective organisation.
- A statutory and formal source of funding should be provided by the States and Local Governments alongside the host communities to the recognised vigilantes.
- There is the need to re-organise and restructure the vigilantes and other non-states security organisations to expand their coverage of communities in the states
- Effort should be intensified by states and local governments towards community policing to curtail criminality at the community level.
- Agencies that are in support of the activities of non-state actors should disclose their forms of support to enable members access them, these forms of support may include training or capacity building on early warning mechanism. This will enable members of the communities, especially youths, to know where and when to access technical or financial aids for economic empowerment
- There is the need to develop appropriate safeguards to mitigate possible politicisation of the use of non-state security actors to avoid the associated consequences for defenceless citizens.

- The government in partnership with donor agencies and civil society should develop a blueprint for ensuring effective disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and re-integration of former participants of non-state security groups.

## Conclusion

Non-state security actors have contributed immensely to the security and protection of communities against insurgency, banditry and criminality in the North-East zone. However, there are concerns and allegations that some of them are committing human rights violations, including sexual harassment. The excesses of non-state security actors have left people wondering what they could become in the future especially with their exposure to violence, weapons handling, drug use and power. As a result, there is the need for the development of a robust framework to ensure greater exploitation of the positive contributions of the non-state security actors and the mitigation of their potential or actual negative effects.

## References

- Alli, Y. (2015). 'Borno retrain 632 civilian JTF members', *The Nation*, 27 September. <http://thenationonlineng.net/orno-retrain-632-civilian-jtf-members/>
- Amnesty International (2014). Nigeria: War crimes and crimes against humanity as violence escalates in North-East 31 March, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/03/nigeria-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-violence-escalates-north-east/>
- Arase, S.A. (2013). "Non-State Policing and Internal Security: An Implementation Strategy", in S.A. Arase, *National Security: Intelligence and Community Partnership Approach*. Abuja: LawLords Publications
- Assanvo, W., Abatan J.E.A. and Sawadogo, W. A. (2016). Assessing the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, *West Africa Report*, Issue No. 19, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.
- Ate, B.E. and Akinterinwa, B. A. (2011). Cross-border Armed Banditry in the North-East: Issues in National Security and Nigeria's Relations with its Immediate Neighbours. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.
- Bello, S.K. (2015). Political and Electoral Violence in Nigeria: Mapping, Evolution and Patterns. IFRA-Nigeria Working Papers Series, No. 49. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Documents/WP12Bello.pdf
- Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme and Office of the National Security Adviser (2015). Comparative perspectives on the evolution of JAS Insurgency and its future scenarios <http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/PB-3-Evolution-of-JAS.pdf>
- Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme and UNICEF Nigeria Research Report on Children Associated with Armed Groups, Volume 2 <http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Research-Report-Children-Associated-with-Armed-Groups.pdf>
- Pérouse de Montclos, M. (2014). *Nigeria's Interminable Insurgency? Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis*, London: Chatham House Research Paper.
- Umara, I., Muazu, A., Fari, A., Imam, Y. and Bukar, Y. (2013). Study of the Activities of Civilian Joint Task Force in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Jere Local Government Areas, Borno State, Nigeria (NSRP)
- Vanguard (2012). "Survey Report Okays 12 Security Firms in Nigeria", 2 October. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/10/survey-report-okays-12-security-firms-in-nigeria/>

# CHAPTER 4

## NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE NORTH-WEST ZONE OF NIGERIA

Suleiman YB Kura

### Background

This chapter aims to identify non-state security actors operating in North-West geo-political zone of Nigeria. It focuses on the geographical spread, areas of operation, legal framework of operation, sources of funding and context of operation of the identified non-state security actors operating in the zone. Data for this study were gathered from secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources included newspapers, books, and journals. Primary data were gathered through observation and interviews conducted in Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano states.

### Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas

The North-West geopolitical zone is the largest of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria in terms of its numeric advantage of having seven states, namely: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kebbi, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The zone accounts for 4% of Nigeria's territories and 15% of its population<sup>37</sup>. About 90% of the people are Muslim and less than 5% are Christians. The economy of the zone is mainly informal with over 70% of its population being self-employed, engaging in agriculture, mainly crop production and animal husbandry. Others are involved in food processing, textile and tailoring, dyeing, metal works, blacksmithing, leather works, and carpentry, among others.

Major security challenges in the zone include violent extremism, ethno-religious crisis, banditry, cattle rustling, communal clashes, insurgency and electoral violence, among others. There is equally concern over increase in armed robbery, kidnapping and rape in the zone. As with states in the North-Central region, the issue of indigeneity ('indigene' and 'settler' status) has been central to recurring violence in the North-West zone. In 2011, hundreds of lives were lost to extreme political violence in the zone following the announcement of 2011 presidential election results. Some states in the zone, such as Kaduna and Kano, are known for their volatility in terms of violent conflicts, especially along ethno-religious lines.

Since 2012, violent attacks by Boko Haram have occurred in the zone, hitting targets in Kaduna, Kano and Sokoto. Kano State, which is northern Nigeria's commercial hub, has witnessed diverse security challenges ranging from religious extremism to terrorist attacks. In May, 2004,

---

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.naij.com/1096089-north-west-states-nigeria.html>

religious conflict in Yelwan-Shendam in Plateau State spilled over to Kano State with over 200 persons killed. Also, Kano is one of the states in the zone that Boko Haram terrorist have carried out deadly operations. In a coordinated bomb attack and gun battle by the Boko Haram in January 2012, over 186 lives were lost and property worth millions of naira destroyed.

Similarly, Kaduna State has also experienced violent attacks by Boko Haram since 2012, hitting soft targets like churches and government establishments. The state also has a history of violence between a Shi'ite group, the Islam Movement of Nigeria (IMN), and the military. Recently, in December 2015, clashes between members of the Shi'ite and Nigerian Army in Zaria resulted in the death of over 347 Shi'ite members (News Agency of Nigeria, 2016). Violence has equally erupted over access to and control of economic and political resources. In 1992, the disputes over land between the Hausa and Kataf ethnic groups in Zangon-Kataf led to the death of thousands of indigenes. Furthermore, recurrent clashes between herdsmen and farmers have degenerated into intractable conflicts characterised by attacks and reprisal attacks in Southern Kaduna that claimed over 204 Lives and the destruction of several properties between October 2016 and January 2017 (Muhammad, 2017).

Sokoto State has recorded relatively few incidents of violent conflicts and criminality compared to other states in the zone. However, sectarian conflict remains a recurrent source of insecurity. Furthermore, incessant threat of cattle rustling and banditry are fast becoming major security challenges threatening the peace and stability of Jigawa and Zamfara states. Since 2010, there has been an upsurge in criminal activities in Zamfara State characterised by armed robbery, cattle rustling, burglary, raping of minors, kidnapping, political thuggery and banditry. In April 2014, for example, more than 100 persons were killed by bandits in Yargaladima (Ibrahim, 2016). Over 155 persons were reportedly killed by bandits in less than a month in the state (Punch, 2016).

The deterioration of security in the zone has attracted diverse responses from the Federal Government, state governments, communities and private establishments. For instance, the military in March 2016 launched Operation Sharan Daji (Operation Sweeping of the Bush), which is a military taskforce with the responsibility of checkmating the incidents of ethnic killings, cattle rustlings and farmers-herdsmen conflicts in the zone (Kumolu, 2016). In addition, states such as Zamfara attempted in 2013 to promote and arm locals to form vigilante groups for the protection of their communities. Yet, government efforts have not completely addressed the security threats in the region. This has necessitated resort to private security arrangements by individuals, communities, and private organisations in the form of armed vigilante groups.

## **Kano State**

The Kano State Vigilante Group of Nigeria (KVGN) is the only non-state security actor known to operate in Kano State. The KVGN has its headquarters along Maiduguri Road, opposite NNPC Depot, Hotoro Local Government Area (LGA). The Kano State Gazette of 8<sup>th</sup> March



2012 referred to the KVGn as the Neighbourhood Watch Group. The Commandant of the KVGn traced the history of vigilante in Kano back to the 1960s when a group started operating obscurely and loosely to provide local security and safety.<sup>38</sup> The KVGn operates under a centralised command structure, and organised into the state, local government, districts and ward levels. Thus, its operation covers the whole 44 LGAs of the state.

The administrative command structure is divided into five Zonal Commands, of which the 44 LGAs are subsumed under different zones. At the LGA levels are districts and units. There are 3-4 metropolitan LGA Zonal Councils and divided accordingly into 820 units. The KVGn's main sources of funding include contributions from government, donations from wealthy individuals and philanthropists, endowment funds, grants from LGAs, and house-to-house fund raising initiative. In 2015, for instance, the Kano State Government gave the vigilante about ₦404,000 as monthly contribution. According to Mohammed, the Kano State Government has pledged to be providing allowance to about 100 members monthly.<sup>39</sup> He noted however that support from the LGAs has not been forthcoming with some occasionally providing modest financial assistance ranging from ₦30,000 to ₦100,000 as the case may be.<sup>40</sup>

Membership of the KVGn is open to all individuals. To join the organisation, a candidate is expected to purchase and complete a VGN application form, which must be signed by his or her Village Head and counter-signed by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO). The KVGn has about 22,000 registered members, with a distribution of about 5000 in each LGA. There are women who are known to be members of the KVGn; however, the researcher could not ascertain their exact number.

In relation to legal framework, the KVGn operates broadly within two important frameworks namely; The Constitution of the VGN and the Kano State of Nigeria Gazette on Neighbourhood Watch (vigilante security) Group Law 2012. The two documents provide detailed code of operation and conduct for the KVGn. The Gazette was an attempt by the state government, during the administration of Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, to establish the group as part of key actors in security provision similar to the Hisba and Karota.

Since its creation, the KVGn has played important roles in providing security across the LGAs. According to Mohammed, the KVGn's service is now increasingly needed due largely to complexity of modern security challenges, especially in areas "where formal security agencies cannot reach".<sup>41</sup> This observation was corroborated by some residents across different LGAs of

---

38 Interview with Mohammed K. Alhaji, Kano State VGN Commandant on December 23, 2016 at VGN office, Kano.

39 Interview with Isah Mohammed, State Deputy Commandant, Operations, 23 December, 2016.

40 Ibid

41 Interview with Isah Mohammed, State Deputy Commander, Operation Kano State VGN, held on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.

the state. For instance, Saleh revealed that the group work hand-in-hand with the Police in provision of security. He noted that on daily basis:

Vigilante Group patrols our community between 1.30 and to 3.00am in the night and then Police take over. They are doing excellent work and we did invite them to either wedding ceremony or naming ceremony for security reasons. Their sacrifice to our community is important because it prevent crimes and other innovations in our community. We are satisfied with the way they carry out their duty and sacrifices.<sup>42</sup>

Similar sentiment was shared by a resident of Kura LGA who acknowledged that the group is considered an important group to the community because it enforces discipline on the youth, protect the lives and property of people, and prevent crimes and other illegal activities within and around the community.<sup>43</sup> In view of this, he suggested the need for government to assist the group with all necessary materials to help modernise its operations and boost the courage of its members. Furthermore, Jingirya posited that despite the lack modern equipment to carry out their duties, vigilantes contribute to the security of the community. As he puts it:

these people are always together with us day and night in our community, and their existence puts fear in bad people. If anything happens around our community, these vigilantes come and render necessary assistance even before the arrival of any security agency.<sup>44</sup>

## Jigawa State

Similar to the Kano state experience, the VGN is the only non-state security actor in Jigawa State. The Jigawa State VGN (JVGN) office is located in Dutse, the Capital city of Jigawa. It was established in 1999 to provide *Sadaqatu Jariya*<sup>45</sup> (services on security and safety to the people). Haruna describes the services that the VGN provides as '*fi-sabilillahi*' – (in the cause of Allah).<sup>46</sup>

Operationally, the existence and activities of the JVGN covers the whole Local Government Areas (LGAs) and rural areas of the state. Administratively, the JVGN has a centralised organisational structure typical of any security agency operating in Nigeria. However, the organisation does not have any reliable source of generating funds for its operation. As a result, the paucity of funds has hampered its operational effectiveness. Yusha'u confirmed that funding is JVGN's greatest nightmare or challenge, lamenting that the group does not "receive any funding from any government or its agencies."<sup>47</sup>

---

42 Alhaji Jafar Saleh, resident of Nassarawa LGA of Kano State, telephone interview on 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

43 Interview with Alhaji Adamu Kabir Adam of Kura LGA, held on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

44 Telephone interview with Sule Mohammed Jingirya, Gegawa LGA, Kano on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

45 Continuous or ceaseless rewardable charity by Allah.

46 Saminu Haruna, Interview, 27 December, 2016.

47 Murtala Yusha'u, Office Intelligence, Interview, held at Dutse, Jigawa State on 28 December, 2016.

He recalled, however, that in 1999, during the administration of Governor Saminu Turaki, the Governor used to provide over nine million naira (₦9,000,000.00) to the organisation and each member of JVG N would be given ₦4000 monthly allowance.<sup>48</sup> Yusha’u further noted that during the administration of Sule Lamido, the organisation requested for such support and was assisted with 3 Hilux van which were deployed for “Operation Salama”.<sup>49</sup> The Operation Salam was a joint patrol with other formal security agencies such as the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corp (NSCDC), *Hisbah*, and Nigeria Immigration Service. However, touch lights and batteries are being provided to the organisation by members of the communities. Despite logistics inadequacies, the members are seen as being committed to work given that most of them see their services as ‘*sa kai’ne*’ and ‘*sadaqatu jariya*’.<sup>50</sup> As Yusha’u puts it, “Our future relies on *taimakon Allah*, so that we are integrated into the government agency.”<sup>51</sup>

The JVG N membership is voluntary and open to every interested individual. JVG N have an operational document that specifies the roles and functions of officers and code of conduct for discipline. The JVG N provide some security services such as crime control and arrest of criminals. They also conduct joint security patrols with formal security agencies, such as the Police, Immigration, Army, NSCDC, and *Hisbah*, among others. Interviews with local residents confirm the value community residents attach to the security services being provided by the JVG N. According to one resident:

Vigilante Group in Kazaure LGA are very active in the performance of their duties. In the last few months the group aided the arrest of sadistic crimes committed by one truck pusher and other several perpetrated crimes. The VG are committed towards assisting the Police and other Law enforcement agencies in preventing criminal activities and preserving public property.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Salihi, posited that vigilante groups are making laudable contributions to security, including tackling the upsurge of criminal and violent activities. The *Ya’Kato* da Gora and *Yan’Sintiri* provide valuable service to the communities.<sup>53</sup> Reflecting on the contributions of the group to community security, a student captured it thus: “I always recalled the activities of the vigilante during the late-night hours when I came back from school after evening studies. The VGN use to stop and ask me questions.”<sup>54</sup>

---

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 These are principles that promote volunteering based on expected reward from God which an individual gets even after death.

51 Interview with Murtala Yusha’u, 27 (December, 2016).

52 Phone interview with Babangida Abdul’aziz, a staff of VIO, Kazaure LGA, Jigawa State 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

53 Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Salihi, retired civil servant of JARDA, Dutse, Jigawa state on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

54 Interview with Suleiman Kabir, a student and local resident of Kurmin-Mashi area of Kaduna, held on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

## Kaduna State

In Kaduna State, there are two major non-state security actors involved in the provision of security services, namely: the VGN and the Civilian JTF, which are also known as Kabala Concern Forum (*Jarumai da Gora*). The Kaduna VGN (K-VGN) have been in operation for quite a long time before it was configured in 1999 to assume its current structure. According to Sawa, “The pre-1999 operations were too *ad hoc* as members were scattered everywhere without coordination, structure and organisation.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the 1999 reorganisation was to make for a better organisation and coordination.

As at the time of fieldwork, the operation of the K-VGN was temporarily suspended due to internal leadership crisis that started in June 2016. As posited by Sawa, the crisis, which has nearly grounded the group is “over the appointment of New State Commandant. When the crisis became too complicated, the K-VGN was divided into two factions, and each claiming the leadership of the organisation.”<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding the crisis, the activities of the K-VGN cover the whole state. This implies that the K-VGN has operational presence in Kaduna Metropolis, the LGAs and rural areas. The researcher gathered that the K-VGN maintains similar organisational structure and administration with those of Kano and Jigawa States, although attempt is being made to centralise its activities.

The K-VGN does not have a permanent source of funding.<sup>57</sup> However, it does perform similar functions to those of their counterparts in other states. Many individuals interviewed corroborated this view and acknowledged the crucial security services being provided by the K-VGN. However, its main challenge remains the lack of funding and support from the government of Kaduna State.

Membership of the K-VGN is drawn from volunteers who usually apply for recruitment. As at the time of fieldwork, the K-VGN has “over 39,000 members across the state and some 8000 female members”.<sup>58</sup> The K-VGN has a legal document guiding its operation. It specifies, among other things, the code of conduct of members, procedure for arrest, punishment, operational guidelines, offences and disciplinary procedures, forms and finances, powers and functions of executive committee members at all levels, board of trustees, and general meetings, among others.

Asides the K-VGN, the Civilian JTF in Kaduna is another non-state security actor in the state. This small group which was created in March 2016 is also known as the ‘Kabala Concern Forum’ and *Jarumai da Gor*. It provides services to only Kabala area of Kaduna Metropolis, which

---

55 Dauda Sawa, Public Relations Officer, Interview, 29 December, 2016.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Abubakar Nasiru, Local Government Commandant, Igabi LGA Interview, 30-12-2016.

comprises Kabala, Doki, Marafa and Kostin. Structurally, it operates with these core administrative offices: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary, Provost, and Auditor.

Currently there are over 300 members spread across all the areas it operates. Members contribute financially to sustain the group. Its recruitment exercise is open, however prospective candidates are subjected to some level of moral screening or checks by elders before being accepted. At Kabala office, there is no female member, however, other areas have few female members. As at the time of fieldwork, a legal framework was being drafted. This suggests that there was hitherto no formal document containing rules and regulations guiding the operation of the association.

The Civilian JTF provides services related to crime control as well as handles other sundry matters bordering on inter-youth organisational conflict, female harassment at secondary schools, provision of security at primary and secondary schools, truancy and delinquency among school children, and security support to contractors who executive projects. Other issues the group attends to are civil matters such as marriage, divorce, family conflict, reconciliation of civil disputes, assistance to security, loan and credit repayments. Some of the impediments to effective operation of the Civilian JTF are lack of coordination, limited geographical spread, absence of reliable funding sources, and unpredictability of membership.

## Future Trajectories

In the three states examined, the VGN are the notable non-state security actors, except in Kaduna where a small informal association operates to provide security at the community level (See Appendix I). The activities of VGN predate any formal security institution in Nigeria, including the Nigerian Police. In the early years of its evolution, it operated largely as a loose association of hunters and volunteers that was very active in security provision, especially in rural areas. As the VGN began to formalise its activities across Nigeria, it got registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission on February 18, 1999 with RC 11834. However, this registration does not translate into formal recognition by the government. In the three states under review, VGN operates under a recognised structure of operation. Article 4 of the VGN Constitution expressed its aims and objectives as follows:

- To assist the Police and other law enforcement agencies to curb crime.
- To protect and preserve public property.
- Assist the Police in crowd control and maintenance of peace at public functions where the need arises.
- With clearance of the Police, assist public agencies in the protection of their establishment plants and equipment.
- To give information to the Police and other security agencies of criminals or unwanted persons residing in the ward or Local Government.

- To locate the permanent or temporary residence of receivers of stolen properties and 419 practitioners for the purpose of enabling the Police to arrest or monitor their activities.
- To make positive and useful contribution to the advancement, progress and wellbeing of the community by mobilising and assisting in communal development efforts.
- To abide by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and all relevant laws and byelaws.

## Summary of Findings

The three states sampled from the North-West zone provided ground for the evidence-based analysis of various non-state security actors that exist in the zone. The following findings emerged from the mapping study.

The services of the non-state actors are well appreciated in most rural areas, especially in the wake of the upsurge of rural banditry, cattle rustling and other local crimes.

Except in Kaduna state, partly because of its peculiar historical and contemporary social trajectories, two non-state security actors operate, the VGN and Civilian JTF (*Kato da Gora*).

In terms of administration and organisation, the VGN in the respective states operates a centralised structure with chain of command that transcends the State, LGAs, districts and ward levels, typical of formal security agencies.

Though with formal recruitment procedure, the voluntary nature of its membership makes it very loose since individuals can join and disengage at will. This makes control of membership very difficult. In the three states, the number of vigilantes in operations is far less than the requirement for proper and effective security services.

Across the three states, the source of funding for the non-state security actors is not statutory and they depend largely on donations and support of the local people. This kind of support not only fluctuates, but is also very insignificant to provide effective security services desperately needed in local communities.

The VGN members are not adequately trained to deal with increasing complexities of modern crimes being recorded in both urban and rural areas. They mostly depend on crude local tactics and practices, and rely hugely on crude weapons such as sticks, cutlass, bows and arrows.

## Conclusion

This research attempted to map non-state security actors operating in the North-West zone of Nigeria. In the states visited, except Kaduna, only the VGN was in operation as a visible non-state security actor. The VGN has evolved from a largely loose association of traditional hunters and jobless citizens to more coordinated group with headquarters at Abuja that maintains loose

contact with state commands. However, the VGN faces daunting challenges, which vary from one state command to another. Despite this, the VGN holds a great promise by virtue of their contribution to peace, crime control and conflict resolution in communities. In view of the increasing complexities of these issues, the services of non-state security actors will continue to attract community support. In order to better harness the positive contributions of the VGN, the following key recommendations are proffered:

- The VGN organs and branches should be expanded and extend to all nooks and crannies of each states to ensure wider coverage. This is because the VGN are directly part of the communities in which they provide services and could be more easily responsive to the challenges of local security problems than the formal security agencies;
- Provision of adequate financial support, especially from key philanthropists and the introduction of ‘service fees’ to the community. The Government at all levels should partake in providing adequate financial support for the VGN activities. This is a veritable means of ensuring that communities contribute to the funding of the VGN which will make the group socially responsible and accountable;
- The VGN should be re-organised and administratively re-structured based on the social peculiarities of each state and societies for proper coordination and efficient service delivery;
- A much more formal procedure for periodic recruitment of members should be provided in order to increase and ensure retention of the membership of VGN. This will reduce the frequency of those leaving the group because of the voluntary nature of membership. Furthermore, this would help in addressing the problem of unemployment among the youth in various communities; and
- The VGN members should be well trained to enhance the security services they provide to fill the vacuum created by poor performance of state security institutions. This will further professionalise their operations, enhance their response to the changing nature of modern crimes and improve on their respect for human rights provisions.

## Appendix II: Profile of Non-State Security in Selected State of North-West Zone

State	Name of Non-State Actor	Organisational structure	Membership	Spread	Source of funding	
Kano	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Centrally organised and a chained of command from state through LGAs to wards	Open to all local citizens of Kano	Operates in all districts and wards	Donations and contributions from individuals and occasional donations from Government	Operational and functioning
Jigawa	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Centrally organised and a chained of command from state through LGAs to wards	Open to all local citizens of Kano	Operates in all districts and wards	Donations and contributions from individuals and occasional donations from Government	Operational and functioning
Kaduna	Vigilante Group of Nigeria	Centrally organised and a chained of command from state through LGAs to wards	Open to all local citizens of Kano	Exist in every part of the state	Donations and contributions from individuals and occasional donations from Government	Suspended by Government due to internal conflict
	Civilian JTF (Jarumai da Gora)	Loosely organised	Open to only residents of Kabala area of Kaduna	Operates only in Kabala areas	Self-funding	At formation stage

Source: Author



## References

- Abdulrahman, I. and Tar, U.A. (2008). "Conflict Management and Peace building in Africa: The Role of Non-State Agencies." *Information, Society and Justice*, Vol.2:185.
- Alemika, E. and Chukwuma, I.C. (2004). "The Poor and Informal Policing in Nigeria: A Report on the People's Perceptions and Priorities on Safety, Security and Informal Policing in the A2J Focal States in Nigeria." Lagos: CLEEN
- Annan, N. (2013). "Providing Peace, Security and Justice in Ghana: The Role of Non-State Actors". *Policy Brief*, No.7 Kofi Annan International Peace and Training Center.
- Fourchard, L. (2011). "The Politics of Mobilisation for Security in South Africa." *African Affairs*, 110, No. 441: 607-627.
- Ibrahim, I. (2016). "Insecurity in North-West: How it all started", *Guardian*, 27 November, <http://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/cover/insecurity-in-north-west-how-it-all-started/>
- Kantor, A. and Persson, M. (2010). *Understanding Vigilantism: Understanding Security Providers and Security Sector Reform in Liberia*. Folke Bernadotte Academy
- Kumolu, C. (2016). "Invasion of Farming Communities: Between cattle rustlers and killer herdsmen", 4 MAY, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/05/invasion-farming-communities-cattle-rustlers-killer-herdsmen/>
- Muhammad, G. (2017). "Nigerian govt says 204 killed in Southern Kaduna crisis", *Premium Times*, 13 January, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/220353-nigerian-govt-says-204-killed-in-southern-kaduna-crisis.html>
- News Agency of Nigeria* (2016). "Kaduna Govt says 347 Shi'ites killed by Nigerian troops given secret mass burial", *Premium Times*, 11 April, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/201615-kaduna-govt-says-347-Shi'ites-killed-by-nigerian-troops-given-secret-mass-burial.html>
- Ogbozor, E. (2016). "Understanding the Informal Security Sector in Nigeria." *Special Report*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Osodo J., Kibirige, I. and Mung'ou, C. (2014). "The role of State, Non-state Actors and Information Communication Technologies in Peacebuilding in Mt. Elgon Regon, Kenya". *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 5, No. 3:358-67.
- Paden, J.N. (2008). *Faith and Politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*. Washington, DC. United States Institute for Peace Press.

Punch (2016). “Bandits killed 155 in Zamfara in 30 days –Yari”, Punch, 22 November  
<http://punchng.com/bandits-killed-155-zamfara-30-days-yari/>

Schwartz, M. (2015). “Policing and (in)Security in Fragile and Conflict-affected Settings: A Review of Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Africa.” Policy Security and the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law.

# CHAPTER 5

## NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE SOUTH-EAST ZONE OF NIGERIA

Dr. Maurice Ogbonnaya

### Background

This chapter highlights the main findings of the mapping of non-state security actors in the South-East zone of Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to provide answers to questions that deal with the socio-economic, policy and security implications of the proliferation and participation of non-security actors in the region, namely: What are the primary functions of non-state security actors in the society? What is their composition and geographical spread; what are the modalities of their operations and who controls their activities? How are they funded? What is the nature of their relationship with state security agencies and their host communities? What are the future projections and the possibilities of a future security sector reform that may develop a broad-based security architecture that will create partnership between state and non-state security actors in the sector?

The study utilised key informant interviews (KII) for generating information from target respondents. Two sets of interview questions were developed and utilised. One set was for non-state security actors (those who provide security, i.e. vigilante groups, PGCs and PSOs) while the second set was for beneficiaries of security services (community and religious leaders, corporate organisations, and community members). This was complimented with secondary data generated from extant literature – books, journals and reports. Each state was divided into three Senatorial districts for purpose of the interview. Apart from state capitals, other communities were selected based on two main criteria; state of security in the community; and rural nature of the community.

### Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas

Since the civil war, the South-East region has been mired in various forms of conflicts, governance and security challenges that are rooted in exogenous and endogenous factors (Ukiwo and Chukwuma, 2012). Being predominantly an agrarian society where land is a major factor of production, disputes over land ownership remains a major source of conflict and insecurity as evidenced by the Onitsha-Obosi land tussle of the late 1960s, the Akaeze-Oso Edda land dispute, that started in the late 1970s, the Aguleri-Umuleri fratricidal war; and the Ezza-Ezillo war over land (IRIN, 2000; Agbo, 2010; Mbah and Nwangwu, 2014).

Other sources of insecurity in the region include disputes over border communities with neighbouring states: Abia State has had border disputes with Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Rivers States. Similarly, Ebonyi State has had border disputes with Cross River and Benue States over the ownership of certain border communities (Vanguard, 2011; Anioke, 2014). Others include clashes between indigenous farmers and herdsmen as in the April 25, 2016 invasion of Ukpabi-Nimbo Community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State by herdsmen, the November 8, 2016 clash in Ndi Okereke Abam, Arochukwu LGA and the December 2, 2016 clash in Ozuitem, Bende LGA, both in Abia State.

In recent years, especially since the early 2000s, insecurity in the region has assumed more frequent, deadly and worrisome dimensions. Insecurity, which manifests in armed robbery, kidnapping and targeted assassination, political and electoral-related violence; cultism, gangsterism and brigandage, are mostly perpetrated by youths (AOAV, 2013). Most fundamentally, the emergence of youth-based ethnic militias and ethno-nationalist groups such as the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and the Biafran Zionist Front (BZF) have escalated conflicts and insecurity in the zone, threatening both human security and Nigeria's corporate existence.

The escalation of insecurity in the region has been accentuated by two main factors. First is the near absence of the formal security structure in the region. Like other regions in Nigeria, the South-East is highly under-policed. Police stations and outposts are remotely located only in urban and semi-urban centres at the exclusion and detriment of the rural centres. Thus, in most communities, accessing state security assistance in emergency and crisis situations is very difficult. The second factor is the fact that the region is a close knitted society, with economic and socio-cultural linkages, in which communities live in close proximity one to another, so that drawing clear and distinct boundaries between and among them, becomes difficult. The implication of this is that conflicts and security challenges in one State or community produces a domino effect in the others and by extension, across the region. For instance, the activities of criminals in Aba, Abia State between 1997 and 2010 before the formation of Bakassi Vigilante group (Bakassi Boys), practically crippled the economy and impacted negatively on the stability of the region. The emergence of Bakassi Boys marked the beginning of the proliferation of community vigilante groups across the zone. This sought to checkmate the relocation and invasion of the criminals displaced from Aba by Bakassi Boys into neighbouring urban and rural communities.

Thus, the peace and security architecture of the South-East region largely revolves around the informal security network namely, community vigilantes and neighbourhood watch groups, community development unions, age-grades and youth organisations, organised private guard companies (PGCs) and private security organisations (PSOs). Specifically, these groups provide such services as safety and protection of lives and property (security), traffic control, community

development services, among others. The role of these non-state security actors in ensuring security of lives and property is well acknowledged and appreciated by the people. In most communities, vigilante groups have transformed from providing just security to performing other important roles such as resolving land disputes and domestic conflicts and enforcement of community development projects.

## Profile of the States

Three States, Abia, Ebonyi and Enugu were covered in the Project and a brief profile of these states is discussed subsequently.

### Abia State

Prior to the formation of the Bakassi vigilante group, armed banditry, kidnapping and wide spread criminality had practically turned Abia State in general and Aba in particular a lawless zone, where, according to Ukiwo, Henri-Ukoha and Emole (2012:24):

life was short, nasty and brutish and Aba, the once bustling commercial capital of the State that attracted merchants and buyers from across West Africa became a ghost of itself as its new image as den of kidnapers and robbers repulsed visitors and forced its rich residents to relocate to safer places.

The spate of kidnapping activities, criminality and associated fatalities in the State came to a crescendo in 2010, when “a high-profile kidnapping of over a dozen schoolchildren from a bus, led to a security offensive by military and police” (Haken and Taft, 2015:1). Beside armed robbery and kidnapping, youth restiveness, political violence, human trafficking, cultism, communal clashes and border disputes also form major sources of insecurity in the State. This state of insecurity has been heightened in recent times by clashes between farmers and herdsmen like the November 8, 2016 clash in Ndi Okereke Abam, Arochukwu LGA and the December 2, 2016 clash in Ozuitem, Bende LGA, among other places (Okoli and Alozie, 2016; Udochukwu, 2016).

Thus, the formation of Bakassi vigilante group in Aba in 1997 was an informal security response measure by members of Aba Traders Association to the escalating degree of insecurity in the State. Since then, the role of non-state security actors, have remained key “factors in the security landscape of the State” (Haken and Taft, 2015:1). However, the challenges of “sustainability in terms of funding and allegations of human rights violations associated with the operations of the Bakassi vigilante group resulted in its adoption by the State Government”<sup>59</sup> as the Abia State Vigilante Group (ABSVG).

---

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Mr. Orji Okoro, a vigilante group leader, in Aba, Abia State on December 28, 2016.

## Ebonyi State

Although crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, youth restiveness and political thuggery and violence constitute major sources of insecurity in the South-East region in general and Ebonyi State in particular (Otu, 2012), insecurity in Ebonyi State has largely been occasioned by a series of communal clashes and disputes over land and territories. Most prominent among the disputes are the Akaeze-Oso Edda land dispute, the Ezza-Ezillo war, and border clashes with Cross River and Benue States, among others.

The escalation in the scope and tempo of both criminal activities and communal clashes has had some implications. First, it has impacted on human security and socio-economic development of the State. For instance, while the Akaeze-Oso Edda land dispute claimed about 27 lives and occasioned devastation of community livelihoods (IRIN, 2001), the Ezza-Ezillo war claimed over 50 lives (Reuters Africa, 2011; BBC News, 2012), with accompanying socio-economic dislocations. Also a series of “bank robbery incidents in Afikpo in 2010 and 2011 claimed some lives and negatively affected banking operations and economic activities in Afikpo and neighbouring towns.”<sup>60</sup> Secondly, this has informed the evolution of a security architecture in the State that is predominantly informal in nature.

Thus, there is the prevalence of community vigilante groups, youth associations and PGCs/PSOs across the State. Interactions with a respondent showed that “non-state security actors play significant roles in providing security and protection of lives and property.”<sup>61</sup> In Ezza North LGA for instance, vigilante groups have transformed into strong security outfits upon which the community depends “especially in instances where the Police have not been forthcoming.”<sup>62</sup> This is also the case in Ishiagu, which has witnessed upsurge in criminal activities in recent times. A respondent informed that in Akaeze, community vigilante groups which were formed “to protect rural electrification project materials from being vandalised have grown to serve as major security outfit for the community.”<sup>63</sup>

## Enugu State

Insecurity in Enugu State stemmed principally from “theft, burglary, armed robbery, kidnapping, targeted assassinations, gang related violence like cultism, political violence, and domestic violence.”<sup>64</sup> As Orji (2012:114) has noted, in many instances in the state, “Criminal gangs have stalled social and economic activities as they raided homes, markets, banks, churches and social

---

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Ikenna Ukpabi Unya, Chairman, Amuro Youth Association/Vigilante Group in Afikpo on December 23, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with the Police PRO, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki on December 21, 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with the Parish Priest of St. Enda's Parish, Okposi Umuogara, Ezza North LGA on December 22, 2016

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Joseph Chukwu at the Ivo LGA Secretariat, Isiaka on December 23, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Dr. Freedom Onuoha, Senior Lecturer, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, on January 10, 2017.

events.” However, the invasion of the Ukpabi-Nimbo Community in Uzo Uwani Local Government on April 26, 2016 by herdsmen and another attack in Ndiagu-Attakwu Community in Nkanu West Local Government on August 24, 2016 has heightened security tension in the State (Igata, 2016).

As obtains in other locales, the failure of state security agencies to effectively respond to security challenges in Enugu resulted in the search for alternative security measures and what analysts have described as the “privatisation and communalisation of security” (see Orji, 2012:115). Thus, there is the preponderance of vigilante and neighbourhood watch groups, youth militia groups, and PGCs/PSOs, working collectively and independently to guarantee security and peace in rural and urban centres of the State. These are more prevalent in Nsukka, Uzo-Uwani and Nkanu West LGAs of the State.

Although non-state security outfits have evidently been part of the security framework of Enugu right from the old Anambra State, their spread, occasioned by escalation in insecurity, have also resulted in some challenges such as human rights violations, among other illegalities. This informed the efforts by the State Government to restructure community vigilante system by ensuring their control and regulation through the enactment of the March 2006 Enugu State Neighbourhood Association and Watch Groups Law.<sup>65</sup>

### **Non-State Security Actors in the States**

There are different non-state security actors that operate in the different states of the South-East. Their origin, geographical area of operation and activities are as diverse as the peculiar circumstances that gave birth to their emergence in their respective states.

---

<sup>65</sup> This is the legal framework in Enugu State that established and defined the operations and role of Neighbourhood Watch Groups in Enugu State. A copy of the Law was provided by Mr. Uzoigwe, Coordinator, Aninri Central Neighbourhood Watch

## Abia State

A major non-state security actor in Abia State is the Abia State Vigilante Group (ABSVG). The former Bakassi Vigilante group, which was formed by Traders Association in Aba was taken over by State Government and renamed Abia State Vigilante Group. Membership of the group cuts across the entire State, and it is open to members of the public who must be indigenes of Abia State. So far, the membership of the Group is only males although there are no restrictions for the females.<sup>66</sup> Beside the ABSGV, local communities still maintain their own vigilante groups. This is because, “some communities still consider the ABSVG to be very far from them and so do not receive prompt and speedy responses in emergency security situations.”<sup>67</sup>

The ABSVG is not operating under any legal framework, although the State Government is working towards developing a legal framework that will regulate the operations and activities of the Group.<sup>68</sup> The sources of funding for the ABSVG and other community vigilante groups are:

1. The Abia State Government: The members of ABSVG at all levels are on the State payroll.
2. The State also provides all logistics for the Group.
3. Community Security Levies from members of the public, especially for community vigilante groups.

Members of the ABSVG openly bear arms (pump action rifles). Though by law, they are not meant to bear arms, it was, however, not ascertained in the course of the work if the group enjoys any waivers from relevant law enforcement agencies. However, given that the group's members bear arms, they are subjected to training and sensitisation programmes at least once in a month from officers of the Abia State Command of the Nigeria Police. The training arrangements are facilitated by the State Government.<sup>69</sup> This helps to deepen the relationship between the Police and members of the ABSVG. The Group also has a distinctive uniform and identity cards approved by the State, which differentiate and identify its members from other uniformed security agencies.

Other non-state security actors that operate in Abia State include Private Guard Companies/Private Security Organisations. There are a total of 62 PGCs/PSOs operating in Abia State. Out of this number, only six (6) have their head offices in the State, while the rest maintain annex offices. Those that have their head offices in the state are:

---

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Mr. Orji Okoro, a vigilante leader, in Aba, Abia State on December 28, 2016

<sup>67</sup> Interview with HRM, Eze Silas Chukwu (Ibinna I of Ndundu Autonomous Community) and the Chairman, Isuikwuato Council of Traditional Rulers, in his Palace on December 29, 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with the State Commandant, NSCDC, Abia State Command, in Umuahia on December 30, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Mr. Orji Okoro, a vigilante leader, in Aba, Abia State on December 28, 2016.



- Accurate Guards Ltd
- Ark Security & Allied Services Nigeria Ltd;
- Blue Tiger Security Ltd;
- Living Watch Global Security Services Ltd;
- Milak Services & Systems Ltd; and
- Peak Global Guards Ltd.

Basically, PGCs/PSOs provide services to corporate organisations and private individuals under the supervision of the NSCDC, which has oversight function over them. Management and Staff of PGCs/PSOs receive trainings and sensitisation courses from officials of NSCDC in the State.<sup>70</sup>

## Ebonyi State

The Ebonyi State Neighbourhood Watch was formed by the State Government as an informal security response to the upsurge in inter- and intra-community conflicts. At the peak of the Ezza-Ezillo conflict, the administration of Governor Martin Elechi had mandated all Traditional Rulers to form neighbourhood vigilante groups at their various autonomous communities. Local Government Chairmen and Development Centre Coordinators were also directed to do same at the LGA levels. The leaders of the LGA Neighbourhood Watch groups formed the Executive Committee at the State level. Although the formalisation of The Ebonyi State Neighbourhood Watch was as a result of State directive, various communities had, before then, maintained community vigilante groups, which were responsible either to the Traditional Rulers or to the Executive Committee of the Community Development Unions.<sup>71</sup>

This security arrangement has been sustained and further enhanced by the current administration, which has gone further to facilitate through the Ministry of Local Government, the training of leaders and members of the vigilante groups from the 13 LGAs by the Police and the State Security Services (SSS) and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)<sup>72</sup>.

The membership of the Neighbourhood Watch is drawn from the various communities, cutting across the 181 electoral wards and 13 Local Government Areas of the State. Membership includes both men and women (although the numbers of female members are few). Although a bill seeking to establish the Ebonyi State Neighbourhood Watch is being drafted for onward

---

<sup>70</sup> Interview with the Head, Department of Private Guard Companies, Abia State Command of NSCDC, Umuahia,

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Police PRO, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki, which was corroborated by a staff of the Office of the SA to the Governor on Security Matters in Abakaliki.

<sup>72</sup> See No.8 Achievements of the Ministry of Local Government, “The Ministry following rampant cases of kidnaps, armed robbery and other social vices, selected and trained vigilante groups from all the wards in the Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. These she achieved through collaboration with the Ebonyi State Police Command, Director of State Security Services and the Commandant of the Civil Defence Corp. All the trained vigilante members are now paid monthly stipend and are under the supervision of the respective Divisional Police Officers. Retrieved from [http://www.ebonyistate.gov.ng/Ministry/Local\\_Government/Achievement.aspx](http://www.ebonyistate.gov.ng/Ministry/Local_Government/Achievement.aspx).

transmission to the State House of Assembly <sup>73</sup>, the absence of a legal framework has not impeded the establishment of a well-laid out leadership structure and channel of command and communication for the Neighbourhood Watch.

The funding of the Neighbourhood Watch is not clearly defined. In some cases like Ivo, Afikpo North, Afikpo South, and Ezza North LGAs, the Local Government Councils have been largely responsible for the funding of the group. In Ivo Local Government, “The Local Government Chairman provided four (4) buses, among other items for four groups in four different communities.”<sup>74</sup> In other cases, Neighbourhood Watch groups are funded by their various communities through “community security levies” paid by community members either directly to the groups or through Community Development Unions. In some cases the community security levies are either decided by Traditional Rulers while in others, the Community Development Unions decide modalities for payment.

Basically, the function of the Ebonyi State Neighbourhood Watch is to provide security services in their various communities. They maintain and keep watch over community property. Members of the group are also expected to provide intelligence to the Police. It was intelligence provided by vigilante groups that assisted the Police in tracking and arresting a murder suspect in Ezza North LGA in June, 2016<sup>75</sup> and in foiling a kidnap attempt in Akaeze in December, 2016.<sup>76</sup>

In Ebonyi State, members of the Neighbourhood Watch do not bear arms, although the professional hunters among them carry their dane guns and machetes. Most fundamentally, there is a cordial and robust relationship between members of the Neighbourhood Watch and the Nigeria Police. For instance, in Amuro Community of Afikpo North LGA, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) made it a duty to assist the community neighbourhood watch with 2 Police Officers on night watch. This was to facilitate the DPO’s pilot plan to establish a vibrant police community relationship framework in the area.<sup>77</sup>

There are also a total of 32 PGCs/PSOs operating in Ebonyi State. Out of this number, only one; Triumph Security Services Ltd, has its Head Office in the State. The rest have annex offices.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Interview with a staff of the Office of the SA to the Ebonyi State Governor on Security Matters in Abakaliki.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Joseph Obasi at the Ivo LGA Secretariat, Isiaka on December 23, 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with the leader of Okposi Umuogara Community Vigilante Group at the St. Enda’s Catholic Church on December 22, 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with a respondent at the Ivo LGA Secretariat, Isiaka on December 23, 2016.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with the Ikenna Ukpabi Unya, Chairman, Amuro Youth Association/Vigilante Group in Afikpo on December 23, 2016.

<sup>78</sup> A comprehensive list of PGCs/PSOs operating in Ebonyi State was provided by NSCDC, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki.

## Enugu State

The recent herdsmen attacks in two different communities in Enugu State have coalesced with already existing security challenges; armed robbery, kidnapping, assassinations, gang related violence; cultism and other forms of political violence, to heighten security tension in the State. Although the Enugu State Neighbourhood Association and Watch Group Law of March 2006 established Neighbourhood Watch groups in the State, the law seems to have only been activated in 2015. The consequence of this is that the State is highly securitised with the preponderance of vigilante groups and private security organisations working to secure life and property in the State.

For instance, the Nsukka-Adanni road, which leads to Ukpabi-Nimbo community is a long, lonely and bumpy road. Between Nsukka and Ukpabi-Nimbo junction, there are about six security checkpoints, three of which were manned by members of the Ad hoc Security Watch. The Ad hoc Security Watch created in 2016 after the herdsmen attack in the community is an arm of the Nimbo Central Neighbourhood Watch, which in turn is part of the various Neighbourhood Watch Groups. While the members of the Nimbo Central Neighbourhood Watch are stationed inside the community and operate mostly at night, members of the Ad hoc Security Watch are stationed along Nsukka-Adanni road. They not only bear arms, they also jointly patrol the highway with officers of the Nigeria Police. The Ad hoc Security Watch reports directly to the Uzo-Uwani LGA Chairman, who funds its operations and provides important logistics.<sup>79</sup>

At the State level, there is the Urban Neighbourhood Association and Watch Groups. At the LGA levels, there is the Central Neighbourhood Watch while at the community levels; there are community neighbourhood watch groups. The basic functions of the groups include:

- Ensuring the security and safety of life and property of the people;
- Enforcement of State-wide monthly sanitation programmes and community development projects;

In Nsukka and Uzo-Uwani, for instance, the neighbourhood watch plays significant role in profiling and mapping of tenants who wish to reside within the neighbourhood.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Nnanna Jacob, a member of the **Ad hoc Security Watch** on duty along Nsukka-Adanni road, on January 10, 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Mr. Jimmy Osondu, Coordinator, Nsukka Central Neighbourhood Watch on January 10, 2016. He also provided a copy of the Obiagu Neighbourhood Watch Tenant Information Sheet during the interview

## Provision of Intelligence to the Police

Membership of the Watch Groups is open to the public. On the gender composition of the membership of the Watch Group, the Group, in Aninri in particular does not have female membership although they are not restricted by any law.<sup>81</sup> This is also the case in Nsukka and Uzo-Uwani LGAs. Although Part 7, Sections 31 and 32 of the Enugu State Neighbourhood Association and Watch Group Law 2006 provide that members of the Watch Group “may use and keep their kits”, which is interpreted in Schedule 3 of the same law to include “an ID card, a uniform, raincoat, touch light, whistle, wireless communication device or radio (if approved); long baton and a patrol vehicle”, members of the Watch Group bear arms.

Although the Law does not provide for the sources of funding for the Groups, Mr. Jimmy Osondu and Mr. Joseph Uzoigwe opined that subventions from State and Local Governments, donations from corporate bodies and spirited individuals as well as security levies imposed on the public are sources of funding for the Groups. For instance, in December 2016, the Enugu State Government released N100 million to the Watch Group through the State Ministry of Human Capital Development and Poverty Reduction that supervises the groups.

Members of the Watch Groups receive trainings from the Police and NSCDC, which is facilitated by the State Government. Thus, there is a very robust and cordial relationship between the neighbourhood watch groups and the Police especially in intelligence gathering. For instance, intelligence supplied by the Nsukka Central Neighbourhood Watch led to the killing of 2 armed robbery kingpins in Nsukka by the Police in 2016.

Over time, the neighbourhood watch groups in Enugu State have grown and built confidence among the populace to the extent that they have been severally invited to settle domestic issues and land disputes between and among communities within their areas of operation. It is expected that the groups will continue to advance in relevance and prominence in the years to come, despite militating funding, logistics and legal challenges.

Beside the Neighbourhood Watch Groups, other non-state security actors in the state include private guard companies/private security organisations. Several of these operate in the State although about seven of them have their head offices in the State:

- ✓ Willforce Security Services;
- ✓ Our Saviour Security Services;
- ✓ Dan Vigilance Services Ltd;
- ✓ PIM Skynet Investment Ltd;
- ✓ Santana Security Agency Ltd;
- ✓ Prudential Guards Ltd; and
- ✓ Bas Matis Nigeria Ltd.

---

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Mr. Joseph Uzoigwe, Coordinator, Aninri Central Neighbourhood Watch at the Aninri LGA Secretariat, Ndeabor on January 11, 2016.

## Summary of Findings

From the interactions held with different respondents during the study, the following findings were made:

- In South-East Nigeria, non-state security actors, have become a prominent part of the security architecture of the zone. Their prominence has been occasioned, in recent times, by upsurge in inter- and intra-communal clashes, land disputes, armed robbery, kidnapping/targeted assassination, and political violence.
- Non-state security outfits in the region serve as a means of employment creation, particularly for the youth. While PGCs/PSOs provide fulltime employment, membership of vigilante groups, especially at the State and Local Government levels in Abia and Enugu States are also considered fulltime employment with names of members in State payroll. However, this is not yet the case in Ebonyi State although the State Government provides stipends and “allowances” for members of the groups.
- There is a general acceptability of the relevance and importance of non-state security actors by the people. This acceptability is informed by two main factors:
  - a. The obvious failure of state security actors to provide the much-needed security and protection of lives and property for the people, especially those in rural;
  - b. The membership of community vigilante groups comprise of indigenes of the communities, who know both the people and the terrain and topography of their various communities. According to a respondent, “community vigilante groups are very important because they assist the Police in securing communities by providing actionable intelligence. So they are very important and should be encouraged through training and adequate funding”.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, “PGCs are generally accepted and have become relevant especially in the corporate world as evident by their robust presence in banks, hotels, government establishments, places of worship, among others”.<sup>83</sup>

In the region, vigilante groups and neighbourhood watches are more prominent in rural and semi-urban areas than in urban areas while PGCs/PSO are more prevalent in the urban than in the rural areas. This is because, the services of PGCs/PSOs are required more by corporate organisations, which are mostly located in urban centres.

While the existence and utility of non-state security actors are widely acknowledged and accepted, the absence of legal frameworks to regulate the formation, recruitment, training and operations of non-state security actors, especially the vigilante groups have created a number of challenges;

There is the proliferation of community vigilante groups with loose membership and command structure, without supervising authorities in many communities;

---

<sup>82</sup> Interview with a Police Officer at the State CID, Enugu State Police Command, Enugu on January 9, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with the State Commandant of NSCDC, Abia State Command, Umuahia.

This has aided the deployment of non-state security actors for all manner of uses by some individuals. In some communities, various factions of vigilante groups exist with factions declaring their loyalty either to the Traditional Ruler or to the town unions. In some other places, vigilante groups have been hijacked by highly placed politicians and other public office holders for their personal interests. The consequence of this has been inter-group rivalries and clashes that have negatively impacted on the peace and security of the affected communities;

There is also the abuse of non-state security actors by either the traditional institutions or leadership of town unions or politicians and public office holders in the zone;

In some of the affected communities, the specific functions of community vigilante groups are not clearly understood by the people, which results in some degree of friction between the people and members of the groups;

Vigilante groups and neighbourhood watches in the region bear arms. The arms are said to be procured and supplied by their respective State Governments even though non-state actors are not meant to bear arms.

Vigilante and neighbourhood watch groups in the region have very limited knowledge or training on human right issues. The implication of this is that there are cases of human rights violations associated with the groups. Some respondents attested to this and informed that members who abuse rights of the people are usually dismissed and handed over to the Police for prosecution.

While there exists cordial and robust relationship between community vigilante groups/neighbourhood watches and the Nigeria Police, such is not the case with the NSCDC. Both in Ebonyi and Abia States, officials of NSCDC clearly stated that they do not work closely with vigilante groups and neighbourhood watches for two reasons; 1). It is not within the mandate of NSCDC to supervise, monitor or work with vigilante groups and neighbourhood watches; 2). In some cases, community vigilante groups have become “breeding grounds or provide cover for cultists and criminals” who disguise as members of vigilante groups. So NSCDC would want to “crush vigilante groups if given the opportunity.”<sup>84</sup>

## Future Trajectory and Recommendations

Evidently, the role of non-state security actors in the security of the South-East region is prominent, despite identified challenges and shortcomings. Strengthening these challenges becomes very much imperative in order to enthrone an inclusive security sector governance characterised by robust and cordial relationship between state and non-state security actors,

---

<sup>84</sup> Interview with the State Commandant, NSCDC, Ebonyi State Command, Abakaliki on December 21, 2016.

especially in joint patrol and intelligence sharing. Given the utility and acceptability of community vigilante and neighbourhood watch groups, especially in the rural areas and the inability of state security actors to effectively respond to emergence crisis and security situation, designing a modality and framework for security sector reform in Nigeria, by the Federal Government, through the Ministry of Interior, with a view to incorporating the non-state security actors into the national security architecture has become imperative. This will help in bridging the gap occasioned by the failure of state security agencies, especially in the rural areas to quickly respond to emergency security situations

Secondly, like the PGCs Act of 2004, which regulates the formation and operations of PGCs/PSOs in the country, the Federal Government, through the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice and the National Assembly, should set in motion the process for the enactment of a federal legislation to regulate the formation and activities of vigilante and neighbourhood watch groups across the country. The Act should recognise and legalise the extant Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) with the power and mandate to coordinate the operations and activities of all vigilante groups across the country.

Thirdly, the proposed law should establish a statutory and independent sources of funding for non-state security actors, especially at State level. Thus, State Governments in the South-East may take advantage of this to make provisions for adequate funding of vigilante groups at the State and local government levels. This is because one of the challenges impeding the effectiveness of vigilante groups in the region is lack of or poor funding. Thus, adequate funding by the State will significantly help in the provision of necessary logistics that will boost their capacity in providing prompt and effective services.

Fourthly, State Governments in the South-East region should take advantage of the cordial and robust relationship between non-state security actors and the Police to expand, deepen and sustain collaboration between the non-state security actors and other security agencies. This can be done through the formation of State-wide platforms for meetings, dialogue and collaborative trainings especially for members of non-state security actors. Part of the proposed state-wide platforms for meetings and dialogue should include training of group members on human rights observation and the sensitisation of community members and the general public on the functions and roles of vigilante groups and need for a harmonious relationship between and among them.

## **Conclusion**

As this report has demonstrated, vigilantes have both positive and negative impacts on the communities in which they operate. While their relevance and utility are widely accepted, there are also cases of their abuses and misuse in many communities. Under the present arrangement, members of state vigilante groups are not formally held accountable for their actions. Looking

ahead, vigilantes should be charged for violations of the disparate vigilance service laws, and justice should be sought for victims of vigilantes. While it is necessary that these abuses should be addressed, it has to be in such a way that the role of vigilantes as protectors of their communities is preserved and their effectiveness enhanced (Ogbozor, 2016:15).

While some States in the zone like Enugu have legalised the activities of vigilante groups through State law, Nigeria as a nation does not have a national legal framework for vigilante groups. The absence of national legislation has made it difficult for the VGN to attract support from the Federal Government.



### Appendix III: LGAs and Communities Visited in South-East Zone

S/No	State	Senatorial Zone	LGA	Community	Criteria for Selection
1	Abia	Abia Central	Umuahia	Umuahia	State Capital
			Ikwuano	Umudike	Border Dispute with Akwa Ibom
		Abia South	Aba South	Umuosi	Rural
		Abia North	Isiukwuato	Ndundu, Uturu	Security Crisis
2	Ebonyi	Ebonyi North	Abakalili	Abakaliki	State Capital
			Ishielu	Ezza	The Ezza-Ezillo land dispute
				Ezillo	
		Ebonyi Central	Ezza North	Okposi Umuogara	Rural Community
		Ebonyi South	Ivo	Ishiagu, Akaeze	Akaeze-Oso Edda land dispute
			Afikpo South	Oso Edda	
Afikpo North	Amuro		Rural		
3	Enugu	Enugu East	Enugu	Enugu	State Capital
			Enugu East	Umuchi Igbo	Rural
		Enugu West	Aninri	Ndeabor	Rural
		Enugu North	Nsukka	Nsukka	Armed robbery
			Uzo-Uwani	Ukpabi-Nimbo	Security

## References

Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) (2013) “The Violent Road: Nigeria’s South-East”, December 12. Available int <https://aoav.org.uk/2013/the-violent-road-nigeria-south-east/>

Agbo, D. (2010) “Brothers at War! The Story of the Ezza/Ezillo Communal Strife”. *Vanguard*, March 6. Available in <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/03/brothers-at-war-the-story-of-the-ezzaezillo-communal-strife/>

Anioke, O. (2014) “Ebonyi Committed to Resolving Boundary Disputes”, *The Nation*, September 18. Retrieved from <http://thenationonlineng.net/ebonyi-committed-to-resolving-boundary-disputes/>

BBC News (2012) “Nigeria's Ebonyi State Ethnic Clashes: 50 Killed”, 1 January. Available in <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16376582>.

Fourchard, L. (2008) A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilante in South-Western Nigeria. *Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 78(1), 16-40.

Haken, N. and Taft, P. (2015) Nigeria Conflict Bulletin: Abia State - Patterns and Trends, 2012-2015. Fund For Peace, August 19. Available in <http://library.fundforpeace.org/conflictbulletin-abia-1508>

Igata, F. (2016) “Again, Fulani Herdsmen Invade Enugu Community, Kill Catholic Seminarian.” *Vanguard*, August 25. Available in <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/againfulani-herdsmen-invade-enugu-communitykill-catholic-seminarian/>

Inyang, J. D. and Abraham, U. B. (2013) Policing Nigeria: A Case for Partnership between Formal and Informal Police Institutions. *Merit Research Journal of Art, Social Science and Humanities*, 1(14), 053-058, August.

IRIN, Land Dispute Claims 27 Lives, July 24, 2001. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/23578/nigeria-land-dispute-claims-27-lives>.

Kwaja, C. (2014) Vigilantes, Public Safety, Crime and Violence Prevention in Nigeria. *Jos Journal of Social Issues*, Vol.7, no.1.

Mbah, P. and Nwangwu, C. (2014) Sub-Ethnic Identity and Conflict in Nigeria: The Policy Option for the Resolution of the Conflict between Ezza and Ezillo in Ebonyi State, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.5, no. 2., pp. 681-688.

Ogbozor, E. (2016) Understanding the Informal Security Sector in Nigeria, *Special Report 391 of the United States Institute of Peace*, September.

Okeke, V. O. S (2013) Community Policing, Vigilante Security Apparatus and Security Challenges in Nigeria: A Lesson from Britain and Igbo Traditional Society of Nigeria. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol.14, no. 11., pp. 306-323.

Okoli, A. and Alozie, C. (2016) “7 Injured as Abia Community clash with Herdsmen” Vanguard, November 8. Available in <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/11/7-injured-abia-community-clash-herdsmen/>

Orji, N. (2012) “Governance and Security in Enugu State”. In Ukiwo, U and Chukwuma, I. (eds.) (2012), *Governance and Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, pp. 114-147.

Otu, S. E. (2012) “Governance and Security in Ebonyi State”. In Ukiwo, U and Chukwuma, I. (eds.) (2012), *Governance and Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, pp. 83-113.

Reuters Africa (2011) “Update 1: East Nigeria Lashes Kill at Least 50 - State Gov't, Sat Dec 31. Available in <http://af.reuters.com/article/nigeriaNews/idAFL6E7NV0A820111231>;

Truth Newspaper (2016) “Police Kill 2 Armed Robbery Kingpins in Nsukka’ March 2.

Udochukwu, M. (2016) “Farmers, Herdsmen Clash in Abia Leaves Scores Hospitalised”, Today, December 2. Available in <https://www.today.ng/news/nigeria/224922/farmers-herdsmen-clash-abia-leaves-scores-hospitalised>.

Ukiwo, U and Chukwuma, I. (eds.) (2012), *Governance and Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation.

Ukiwo, U., Henri-Ukoha, A., and Emole, M. O. (2012) “Governance and Security in Abia State”. In Ukiwo, U and Chukwuma, I. (eds.) (2012), *Governance and Insecurity in South-East Nigeria*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, pp. 24-57.

Vanguard, “Cross River, Abia Meet on Boundary Dispute”. October 7, 2011. Available in <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/10/c-river-abia-meet-on-boundary-dispute/>

# CHAPTER 6

## NON-STATE SECURITY ACTORS IN THE SOUTH-WEST ZONE OF NIGERIA

Foluso Aboderin and Kemi Okenyodo

### Background

Nigeria is one of the African countries severely affected by insecurity. The issue of insecurity has assumed a worrisome dimension in both the urban and rural areas in Nigeria. The problem of insecurity is evident in the growing incidence of criminal victimisation in the form of burglary, physical assault, insurgency, militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, rape and domestic violence, among others. The country was ranked 149 out of 163 countries worldwide in the 2016 Global Peace Index, indicating very low level of peace due to incidents of violence, insecurity and criminality (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016).

Efforts by several state security outfits to deal with recent surge in crime and violence have proven largely ineffective in most cases, thereby necessitating the dependency by local communities on non-state security actors, especially the vigilantes, to assist in the provision of security (Kwaja, 2013). From a governance standpoint, the inability of the Nigerian state to effectively discharge its core constitutional mandate of providing security has created a huge security vacuum that non-states security actors are emerging to fill in some places. Thus, citizens attempt to organise into groups in order to enforce norms and maintain law and order on behalf of their communities, often by resorting to violence in the perceived absence of effective official state action through the police or courts. These groups operate in areas beyond the reach of the formal state apparatus as well as in urban and semi-urban areas where the formal security institutions are domiciled. They exist in various forms across the different geopolitical zones in the country.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on the existence and operations of non-state security actors in the South-West zone of Nigeria. It seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how they operate; their capacity in the areas of organisation and management, service delivery, accountability to the communities they serve and collaboration with the police. The idea is to find out areas they could be assisted to improve their processes, services and accountability. The study covered Ekiti, Lagos and Ogun states.

### Context: Zonal and State Profile of Mapping Areas

The South-West zone of Nigeria consists of six states; Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. The zone which has an estimated population of at 32.5 million people is majorly a Yoruba speaking area (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The South-West zone is a strategic economic

hub in Nigeria, hosting about 60% of the nation's industrial capacity, 44% of banking assets, and 67% of insurance assets (Bello, 2015). In addition, it houses the nation's three deep sea ports (Apapa, Tin Can Island and Roro) and is also home to two of Nigeria's three largest cities: Lagos and Ibadan. Across a range of human development indicators, the South-West zone performs relatively well compared to other zones in Nigeria. However, the zone is not without its security challenges.

The violence recorded in the zone include inter and intra-communal violence, ethnic militancy, vigilante violence, political violence, boundary dispute, armed criminality, ethno-religious crisis and cross-border smuggling. In recent times, farmer-herdsmen clashes have added to issues of serious concern in the zone. Perpetrators of armed violence include ethnic militias, youth gangs known as 'Area Boys'<sup>85</sup>, criminal gangs (vandals, kidnappers and militants), Fulani herdsmen, and state security forces – the police, paramilitaries, and the armed forces. Like in other zones in Nigeria, the drivers of insecurity in the South-West include rising youth unemployment, poverty, circulation of small arms and light weapons, and corruption.

In recent years, the region has been hit by increase in kidnapping, militancy, vandalism and ritual killings. However, armed violence and criminality in the zone are largely concentrated in Lagos. In particular, armed robbery, organised crime, disproportionate use of force by state authorities and domestic violence are perceived to be high in Lagos. There have been a number of high-profile kidnappings in the zone, particularly in Lagos State. In its 2014 crime and safety report, the U.S. Consulate Regional Security Office tracked 32 kidnappings in Lagos in the first-quarter of 2013, eight of which targeted the expatriate community. The state is also notorious for its ethnic militia and vigilante groups (AOAV & NWGAV, 2013).

As with Lagos state, Ogun state is hit by crimes such as armed robbery, ritual killings, rape, burglary and cultism. Between July and December 2015, for instance, the state police command arrested 205 suspected cultists, 38 suspected rapists and seven suspected kidnappers. The command also recovered 45 arms, 125 ammunition, 69 stolen vehicles and the sum of N6 million from some of the suspects (Kayode-Adedeji, 2015). Violent confrontations between smugglers and border officials, and raids on communities by militants are another source of insecurity in the state.

Other states in the zone such as Ekiti, Ondo, Osun and Oyo have witnessed security challenges arising from the activities of kidnappers, armed robbers, ritualists and herdsmen. The increase in armed violence and criminality have attracted the attention of stakeholders in the zone such as governors, traditional rulers, religious organisations, community development unions and labour organisations, among others. In February 2017, for instance, governors from the zone resolved

---

<sup>85</sup> 'Area boys' are the unemployed young people – mostly men – who constitute themselves into loosely organised groups that take part in opportunistic violence mostly in Lagos.

to work together to address security challenges confronting the region, particularly kidnapping and clashes between herdsmen and host communities (Ugbodaga, 2016).

Meanwhile states such as Ogun and Osun states had supported vigilante security outfits to complement the service of the police and other security agencies. Notwithstanding, deadly clashes between herdsmen and host communities have started taking place more frequently in the south-western states, such as Ondo, Osun and Ekiti. In October 2016, for instance, the Ekiti State government inaugurated a vigilante group, Ekiti Grazing Enforcement Marshals (EGEM); popularly called ‘Anti-malu’ to respond to the security threat posed by armed Fulani herdsmen (Ekekee, 2016).

It is pertinent to note that the rise of non-state security actors particularly in the form of vigilante groups in the zone is not new. Prior to British colonial rule in Nigeria, local communities had their systems of crime prevention and security. Policing or law enforcement was traditionally the responsibility of able bodied men in the community organised as age grades, cult/masquerade groups and such and such other associations rather than something delegated to a specialized agency of the state. Crime prevention was often linked with the moral, religious and spiritual institutions of the society (Tamuno, 1970). Even with the establishment of modern police, these traditional organisations still play prominent roles in the maintenance of law and order in the society. For instance, the ‘Oro’ and ‘Egungun’ performed police duties of arrest and punishment of offenders in the South-West. Some of these groups were known by their symbol of ‘club carrying’. The Yoruba speaking area still refer to the modern police officers as ‘olopa’, meaning ‘the man with the club’ (Tamuno 1993). Thus, community reliance on non-state security actors in the zone is a practice that is rooted in pre-colonial history of Nigeria. However, the new forms they take is in part a reflection of the evolution and changes in the modern society.

## Ogun State

The Ogun State Vigilante Group of Nigeria (OSVGN) is the main non-state security actor in the state. Prior to the emergence of the OSVGN, there was a loosely organised vigilante group known as the “Ode Agbegbe” (Neighbourhood Watch) which came into existence in 1983. The group was not registered and had no structured operational procedure. It was predominantly made up of men who are hunters and few others persons who were concerned about crimes prevalent in their communities. Membership process was basically by an individual indicating willingness or interest to join the group.

In 2002, however, Ogun State formally joined the VGN and started adapting the formal structure and operation of the national organisation to suit its peculiar environment. The headquarters of the OSVGN are in Abeokuta, the state capital. It has offices in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) and units at the ward levels. It is at the ward level that members are split into departments – intelligence, operations, medical, investigation, and surveillance.

Currently, they have membership strength of about 1300 personnel with only about 130 (10%) female members. According to Enitan, “There is current move in the state to recruit more women into the group because they have seen that women are very key especially when it comes to information gathering and surveillance”.<sup>86</sup> He stated that the VGN intend to achieve this by applying as a group for loans, which can be accessed by members of the group to expand their businesses. It is expected that such loan facility will serve as an incentive for women to join the group.

The main source of funding for the group is through yearly subscription, sale of membership forms, and donations from the patrons of the group in the state. The group also levy members to generate funds when the need arises. Hence, it is compulsory for individuals who want to join the group to have a source of livelihood. Currently, the group receives little or no support from the state government. This has made the group somehow independent, thereby reducing the potential of its activities being manipulated politically. Mr Enitan noted however that some members of the present state cabinet have set up new groups called the Vigilante Services of Ogun state which they hope to use to realise their political objectives. These new groups usually have issues with the police because they are not registered and they have no standard operation procedure like the OSVGN. Additionally, the new groups have also clashed with the OSVGN in their operations.

In the past, the OSVGN had received some support from the previous government gave the VGN in the form of provision of patrol vehicles, fuel and stipends. However, it is believed that this form of support has been diverted from the OSVGN to the new group when the present government came on board.<sup>87</sup> Recently, majority of the members of these vigilante services of Ogun State are now crossing over to the OSVGN because of the fact that the OSVGN enjoy popularity and acceptance from members of the community.

In terms of recruitment of members, prospective individuals who have shown interest in joining the group are made to purchase and fill the registration forms. The applicant is expected to supply the names and details of two guarantors who must be from his or her ward. The registration form also contains the details of the individual such that if the person defaults or gets involved in illegal or criminal activities, he or she can be easily traced or the guarantor will be held responsible.

The Constitution is the legal framework that guides the existence and activities of the OSVGN. It is the same with that of the parent body (VGN) which has been duly approved by the

---

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Mr Enitan Emmanuel, Assistant Commander General for the South-West zone of VGN, (Ogun state. 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Mr Enitan Emmanuel, Assistant Commander General for the South-West zone of VGN, (Abeokuta. 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) of Nigeria. It serves as the guiding policy of the group in addition to other basic administration policies.

In terms of method of operation, the OSVGN go on patrols regularly but not without the permission of the Police. In other words, the permission of the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in a particular area is sought first before members of the OSVGN can operate. If the DPO do not grant such permission, the planned operation will be stand down for further directive. According to Emmanuel, “there exists very cordial relationship between the OSVGN and the Police in the state such that sometimes the DPO calls the OSVGN members to assist in raids where the police personnel on ground are not enough”.<sup>88</sup> When members of the OSVGN on patrol apprehend a suspect, the individual is usually handed over to the police within 12 hours as part of its standard operating procedure.

The OSVGN are confronted with some challenges in their efforts at contributing to security in the State. One of the problems faced by the group is that most members of the community whose stolen properties have been retrieved do not show up in court to testify against the criminals. In such a situation, the judge is left with no option but to release the criminal on bail or even discharge the individual in some cases. Mr Apata stated that “the reason why some people do not show up in court is that they are afraid of their safety as there have been cases where police officers have revealed the identity of the witnesses to the criminals”.<sup>89</sup> This has further reduced the trust the community members have in the police and has increased the risk for members of the OSVGN to retributive attack by criminals. Notwithstanding, members of the community prefer to present their complaints or give information to the VGN rather than to the police.

## **Ekiti State**

The predominant non-state security actor in the state is the Ekiti State Vigilante Group of Nigeria (ESVGN), which started in Ekiti in 2007. Before the emergence of the ESVGN; there was no other organised vigilante group in the state. The ESVGN are currently embroiled in a major crisis, leading to the existence of two factions. There is one faction led by Alhaja Jimoh Aliu, who is the newly-elected State Commandant. The other faction which are considered the splinter group is led by Mr Akin Olorunlani, and is called the Akin Olorunlani Group. The split is as a result of alleged mismanagement of funds and resources by the former leaders of the ESVGN, which made some disenchanted members to break out and form rival faction.

The ESVGN are organised or structured with headquarters in Ado-Ekiti, the state capital, and offices in the LGA and units at the ward levels. The members are deployed at the ward level to various departments such as intelligence, operations, medical, investigation, and surveillance.

---

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Mr Enitan Emmanuel

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Mr Apata Adeniyi, a member of the VGN in Ogun State, (Abeokuta. 26th January 2017)



ESVGN are registered under the general VGN body in Nigeria, and operate under the same law that established the VGN.

As a voluntary organisation, the leaders source for fund to cater for the needs of the organisation. Funding is sourced through appeals to banks and other establishments in the state. Contributions are also made by individual members to attend trainings and national meetings. Prior to the crisis, the group had about 600 members out of which about 150 were women.<sup>90</sup> However, there was massive reduction in member size as a result of the breakup of the group into two factions. There is on-going effort by the new commandant to reassure members and get them to return back to the ESVGN. There is also the prospect of more women being recruited into the group now that a woman is at the helm of affairs. As the new Commandant enthused, “I am a woman, so you can be sure that I will recruit more women into the group during my tenure”.<sup>91</sup>

In relation to the organisation’s recruitment process, individuals who indicate interest in joining are recruited after proper screening for good behaviour, mental and physical health, social orientation and communication skills. Such prospective candidates are fully investigated, and detailed information about them properly documented and preserved. They are also required to provide references from at least two persons with good reputation in the community. The individual is further expected to obtain a police clearance before his or her membership is confirmed. For purposes of identification, the recruited individual will be issued with an identity card and expected to wear a uniform which he or she purchased from the organisation. There is also an electronic data capture of the members, which is also deposited with the state police command. The data capture is done internally by the ESVGN staff that has been trained to handle this process. Also, new members have to attend initial training programme, which is conducted by the police or military and they pay for this training by themselves.

The ESVGN has a good relationship with the state police and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and they work together on joint patrols. For instance, the state government recently established “Operation Flush” and this entails joint patrol of the Police, NSCDC and members of the ESVGN. Most members of the ESVGN use their personal motorcycles and cars to do patrols. They either use their own money or contribute money to fuel these vehicles. However, when the ESVGN apprehends criminals, they hand over the suspect to the police within 24 hours, since the group does not have powers to prosecute criminals.

---

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Alhaja Jimoh Aliu, new State Commandant of Ekiti State VGN (Ado Ekiti, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Alhaja Jimoh Aliu, new State Commandant of Ekiti State VGN (Ado Ekiti, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2017)

## Lagos State

Lagos State is one of the states in the South-West zone with high level of armed violence. Lagos plays host to more than 65% of the commercial institutions in the country. The commercial profile of the state makes it vulnerable to crime and criminality. Certain parts of Lagos are reputed to have high crime rates; for example, Oshodi / Mafoluku, Adeniji Adele, Mushin, Ajegunle to mention a few. The upsurge of crime in the state in the 80s and 90s led to landlords building high walls and fences, erecting of street gates in strategic places to restrict movements during certain times of the day particularly late at night. This was complemented by forming street vigilantes who were usually made of male residents who took to patrolling the streets at night whenever threat letters are received from armed robbers. These group of men were usually armed with locally made guns, sticks, clubs and at times cutlasses.

In the 90s and early 2000, the O'odua People's Congress (OPC), an ethnic based vigilante group was quite active in the State. They worked across the State and focused on dismantling criminal gangs and ridding a community of criminality. For example, in the Oshodi axis, which was quite notorious for its high rate of criminality, the OPC operated there based on invitation by the Baale (that is the traditional ruler of the area), who invited them to assist to rid of his community of all forms of criminality.

Initially, the community were appreciative and commended the activities of the OPC, however, over time, they became a law unto themselves and committed various human rights violations including being involved in rape and harassment of women and young girls in the community. In Lagos State, vigilante groups were named based on the area of their coverage for example, there was the Ajegunle group, Adeniji Adele group, Gbogunleri / Isale Oja group to mention a few. Based on the activities of these groups and broad acceptance by the community members, the relationship continued between the vigilante groups whom were later referred to as voluntary policing groups under the British Department for International Development Justice for All Program which was implemented over a period of five years in the State commencing from 2012. The objectives of the project include, among others, to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of the service delivery, increase accountability of vigilante groups in Lagos community and help them to work more closely with the Nigeria Police at the Divisional Command level and other relevant counterparts.

The intervention was adopted against the backdrop of the recognition of the J4A of the pivotal role that vigilante groups play in addressing the safety and security needs of poor communities, which is well documented. For many Nigerians, especially the poor, VPS groups are the first, and in some cases, the only groups they feel able to go to for their safety and security needs.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Mr Morufu Oladele, VPS Lead, Agege LGA (Isokoko, Agege, 11th January 2017).

Although the VPS was established in 2012, it is yet to get registered with the CAC due to issues of conflict of operational status with the Police.

The operation of the VPS is not yet state-wide but it is spreading fast and their membership is increasing almost on a daily basis. The membership strength is currently put at about 2,200 members.<sup>93</sup> In Agege, for instance, the VPS has 400 members out of which only 10 are women. Membership of the VPS is solely drawn from people who live within the community. In selecting members there is no discrimination with regard to religion, tribe or gender. The selection drive strives to maintain equal representation of the various sections of the community as much as possible. However, membership is restricted to persons who are 18 years and above.

There is a code of conduct regulating members' behaviour which was designed by the VPS with support from J4A. Through this policy, members of the VPS are meant to understand that the respect and trust earned from the community is only as good as the respect they show to the rules that guide their operation as a group. As members of the vigilante/ neighbourhood security watch, they are expected to bear in mind that they exist to serve the community and the powers they exhibit is given to them by the community and the Police authority. As such, these critical stakeholders must be respected at all times. Also, there is a code of conduct adopted to regulate the behaviour of member as well as outline the consequences for unacceptable behaviour. It therefore stipulates what is good and acceptable and what is not with regards to their activities.

The VPS are self-funded. They usually contribute money to do whatever they need to do or solicit funds from community members and other well-wishers to support their activities. At the initial stage, members of the community promised to contribute 500 Naira per house monthly to support the VPS. The VPS used the initial contribution to ensure that streets are properly lighted and generators were also procured to power the street-lights.<sup>94</sup> In some communities, the members were given raincoats, boots and torchlights to aid them in their work. This support has since dwindled even though the VPS is still working hard to keep their communities safe. Notwithstanding, the VPS goes on joint patrols with the police. The VPS also hold regular meetings with the police and members of the community.

One of such meetings is the NPF/VPS Coordination Meeting. This is a coordination forum that brings together the NPF and the VPS groups. The forum seeks to improve the coordination of VPS groups by the police for effective service delivery. Membership of the forum usually includes DPO of the local police station, Neighbourhood policing coordinator (Chairman of the Forum), the entire Neighbourhood policing officers in the division, and Chairman and secretary of all VPS group.

---

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Mr Morufu Oladele, 11th January 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Mr Morufu Oladele, VPS Lead, Agege LGA (Isokoko, Agege, 11th January 2017).

Another platform for engagement among the various stakeholders is the Community Accountability Forum (CAF). The CAF is a meeting where general discussions on activities of VPS within the community are held and the community plays an oversight role on the VPS. Members of this forum include the representatives of traditional rulers or elders, Chairman of Community Development Association, DPO, religious leaders, women group, youth group, heads of ethnic groups, traders' association and landlords. The VPS groups are established in the following areas of Lagos state: Agege, Alimosho, Ilupeju, Amuwo Odofin, Agbado Oke-Odo, Odiolowo (Ilupeju), Lagos Island (Adeniji Adele) and Amuwo Odofin (FESTAC). These VPS are coordinated through Community Development Associations (CDAs) and Community Development Committees (CDCs). Membership of CDAs is voluntary while CDCs are elected from the CDAs. The CDC serves as advisory body to the Local Government and deals with community issues including safety. There is only one CDC in every LGA of the State. The CDAs are involved in initiating, planning, mobilization of resources and implementation of community projects, including safety and security provisioning especially in rural and inner-city communities. The VPS remains the principal organ often used by CDAs and CDCs in intervening to improve safety and security within their jurisdictions.

Apart from the VPS groups, the VGN are another non-state security actor that operate in Lagos state. Their mode of operation is same as the VGN in other parts of Nigeria (See Annex 1 for the organogram of the VGN). They have a membership strength of about 3500 members. The organisation is self-funded and operates under the guidelines of the VGN in Nigeria.

In recent times, the Lagos State Government is making effort to absorb the VGN and start paying their members a monthly stipend. It is expected that such initiative by the Lagos State Government will encourage members to be more dedicated to their work. It is unlikely that the VPS will benefit from this though, as they are not yet formally registered.

## Summary of Findings

There are some of the key findings that emerged from the study. These are highlighted below.

- There is popular support and appreciation of the roles of the VPS by the communities.
- A near cordial relationship exists between the VPS groups and the police, which has brought about improved relationship with the community.
- On the government end, there are very few stakeholders working directly in violence and crime reduction and this number is not enough to effectively police the communities due large number of citizens per area. Those that work indirectly are generally Vigilantes. This reinforces the belief that, for violence to be properly addressed in these states, the states must come together and work in partnership with Vigilantes. Only by doing so will they be able to successfully address the challenges posed by violence and crime.

- There is little or no support for non-state security actors from state governments in the south-West zone.

## Future Trajectory and Recommendations

The operation of non-state security actors in the South-West zone is bedevilled with some challenges that have hampered their contributions to the provision of security at the community level. There is also the potential for some politician who have tacitly supported the emergence of some the non-state security actors to manipulate their activities in pursuit of their selfish political objectives. As a consequence, the following recommendations are therefore proposed.

1. The Federal Government should put in place logistical, administrative and financial support for the vigilantes to enable them assist the state security actors properly. Such support from the Federal Government will reduce the influence the state governors would have on the non-state security actors to avoid the abuse or misuse of them for selfish purposes.
2. The development of standardized gender-sensitive recruitment, training, performance, and conduct procedures as a way of mainstreaming gender into the operations of the non-state actors for greater women participation in VPS groups.
3. There is the need for proper training of the vigilante members on how best to handle criminal suspects to minimise cases of human rights violation. Such a training programme should be rendered to them free.
4. Capacity building of leaders of VPS on management best practices, to cover training on strategic planning that would ensuring the groups have clear, appropriate and workable policies and procedures for all aspects of employment and volunteering.
5. Development of workable deliberate system of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes for the vigilante groups. This will help to avoid some negative effect that has been noticed, or to seek some positive benefit in the non-state security actors.

## Conclusion

This chapter examined the existence and activities of non-state security actors in the South-West zone. It uncovered that the VGN operates in the three states sampled in this study, and that majority of the non-state security actors are voluntary and self-funded. Due to lack of reliable funding, their operations are significantly hampered. There is equally capacity deficit in these non-state security actors, evident in the lack of documented strategies, approaches and processes for routinizing their functions and relationships with stakeholders. Added to this is the challenge of poor organisational management skills on the part of the leadership cadre of the VPS. The groups were inadequately equipped to carry out their risky functions and suffer from poor remuneration and motivations. In addition, most of the non-state security actors lack effective

accountability mechanisms. However, there exists a basic understanding among the members of how things are done, which were usually learnt through participation, experience and sometimes hunches. Despite these challenges, the non-state security actors across the states try to maintain a cordial relationship with the police, leading to their participation in joint patrols. Through structured capacity building programmes and trainings, the potentials of these non-state actors could be harnessed to improve on the provision of security.

## References

- AOAV and NWGAV (2013). 'The Violent Road: Nigeria's South-West', 12 December, <https://aoav.org.uk/2013/the-violent-road-nigeria-south-west/>
- Bello, F. (2015). "Nigeria: One Country Four Economies Discussion Points", 18 April, <http://www.gamji.com/article6000/NEWS7879.htm>
- CLEEN (2012). Presentation of Summary of Findings, <http://cleenfoundation.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/summary-of-findings-of-2012-national.html>, accessed.
- Ekekee, A. (2016), "Association of cattle breeders attacks Fayose for introducing Grazing Enforcement Marshals", Newspeak, 23 October, <http://breaking.com.ng/nigeria/association-of-cattle-breeders-attacks-fayose-for-introducing-grazing-enforcement-marshals/>
- Kayode-Adedeji, D. (2015), 'Police arrest 116 armed robbers, kill 7 in Ogun', Premium Times, 21 December, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/195534-police-arrest-116-armed-robbers-kill-7-in-ogun.html>
- Kwaja C.M. (2013) Vigilantism and the Governance of Insecurity in Nigeria, SSR | Nov 8,
- National Bureau of Statistics (2012), Social Statistics in Nigeria Part III: Health, Employment, Public Safety, Population and Vital Registration. Abuja, National Bureau of Statistics.
- Tamuno, T.N. (1970). *The Police in Modern Nigeria* (University of Ibadan Press).
- Tamuno, T. N. (1993) Crime and Security in Pre-colonial Nigeria in T. N. Tamuno et al (eds.) *Policing Nigeria: Past, Present and Future*, Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited
- Ugbodaga, K. (2017) "Southwest Governors Resolve to Collaborate on Security", PM News, 14 February, <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2017/02/13/photo-southwest-governors-meet-in-ekiti/>
- Global Peace Index 2016 Report, Institute of Economics and Peace

# CHAPTER 7

## MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### Major Findings

The proliferation of non-state security actors in Nigeria is development that merits serious attention from appropriate governmental authorities at the local, state and federal levels. Understanding the operations, recruitment, financing and accountability processes of non-state security actors is crucial in framing an engagement framework for harnessing their positive potentials for enhanced national security. This is what this mapping study have attempted to achieve. The study employed field evidence and secondary data to elicit information on non-state security actors in relation to their emergence, role, composition, geographical spread, operations, funding sources, and relationship with state security agencies as well as with their host communities. The key findings of the study are highlighted and discussed here, focusing essentially on crosscutting issues in the five zones.

### Legal Framework

The existence of legal framework is important in ensuring that groups who provide vital security services are properly regulated and made to be accountable. Across the zones and states surveyed, there is variation in terms of the enactment and scope of legal framework vis-à-vis the existence and activities of non-state security actors. In some zones for example, some states adopted legal frameworks to regulate non-state security actors such as vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch, while others have no such legal instrument. Even in some states like Enugu, Plateau and Kano that have enacted legal frameworks, their respective instrument circumscribed only one out of many non-state security actors that exist in their territory. For instance, apart from Operation Rainbow in Plateau State that was established through an act of parliament at the state level, most of the non-state security actors in the North-Central zone operate without a concrete legal framework. Similarly, there is the lack of legal framework for regulating non-state security actors in the states examined in the North-East zone.

In the North-West zone, the VGN in Kano operate under clear legal framework but some other non-state security actors in the zone do not have legal frameworks to guide their existence and operation. In the South-East zone, Enugu State is the only state that has adopted a legal framework to regulate the activities of the Neighbourhood Watch. However, states such as Abia and Ebonyi are reportedly working towards developing legal frameworks to regulate the activities of non-state security actors operating as vigilante groups or neighbourhood watch in their domain. While the existence and utility of non-state security actors are widely valued, the absence



of legal frameworks in some places to regulate non-state security actors, especially the vigilante groups, have created some challenges.

## **Funding**

Reliable means of funding is vitally important for the survival and operation of any organisation. The issue of reliability of funding is one key challenge that confronts almost all the non-state security actors surveyed in the report. The source of funding for the non-state security actors is not statutory; thus, most of them depend on donations or financial support from local communities or few philanthropic individuals to meet their operational or logistic needs. In some states, for instance, the government have supported non-state security actors with modest financial assistance at some point, while in others such support has not been forthcoming.

In most cases, these actors have not received appreciable financial assistance from the Local government authority despite their existence and contributions being largely located within local communities. Thus, the survival and sustainability of most non-state security actors largely depended on money donated to them by their host communities, wealthy persons, politicians, and at times state governments.

In the absence of a more structured and reliable source of funding, the sustainability and future trajectory of these actors becomes difficult to predict. In the event that their funding declines significantly or dry off due to depressed economy, the tendency for these groups to be manipulated for selfish purposes by donors such as politicians becomes high.

## **Membership and Recruitment Process**

Virtually all the non-state security actors operate on the basis of voluntarism. The inherent advantage in voluntarism is that the group attracts individuals at little or no cost. However, its inherent disadvantage is the unpredictability and fluctuation in membership size that it causes for such groups. This is essentially because individuals can wilfully join or disengage from the group at very short notice. Related to this challenge is the issue of recruitment process. There are usually no standard, codified criteria for assessing prospective individuals for recruitment into the groups. Although due consideration is often given to qualities such as honesty, integrity, bravery, and commitment, the lack of standard criteria makes it difficult to have reasonably degree of convergence in terms of the strength or weakness of the group. Thus, there is evident wide disparity in the skills and qualifications of the members of some of these groups.

## Modes of Operation

In almost all the states surveyed there is a close working collaboration between the non-state security actors and the formal security actors, especially in the area of conducting joint patrols and intelligence sharing. Due to their knowledge of the local community, the non-state security actors have played the role of first responders to security threats that endanger their community. Given that they are closer to the communities, non-state security actors are better placed to collate intelligence that aids the Police, military and other security agencies in their work. However, there are few instances of tension and mutual suspicion between vigilante groups and the police, as well as accusation of some non-state actors' involvement in human right violations. In addition, there are cases of factionalisation within the group, especially the VGN. For instance, the VGN in Kaduna state and VGN in Ekiti state were both mired in internal crisis as at the time of field work in the two states. The crisis led to the emergence of two factions in both states, which undermine their operational effectiveness.

## Gender Representation

The level of gender consideration in members' participation is extremely low, due essentially to the character of the formation of these groups as well as the longstanding cultural tradition that reinforces patriarchy in Nigeria. However, the need to ensure or promote better gender representation cannot be over-emphasised especially in relation to the gendered nature of victimisation in some communities. Across the zones surveyed, very few of the non-state security actors have women as members. There is therefore the need for further study on the constraints and prospects of women participation in these non-state security actors to inform future security sector reform interventions that would promote greater inclusiveness in both state and non-state security institutions.

## Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, the government ought to evolve a strategic framework for responding to the proliferation of non-state security actors, possibly to incorporate them into the national security architecture. Thus, the following specific recommendations are proffered:

**Enactment of a National Legislation on Non-State Security Actors and Providers:** The Federal Government, through the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice should initiate the process for the enactment of a national legislation to regulate the activities of non-state security actors such as vigilante and neighbourhood watch groups.

**Development of Community Security Fund (CSF):** There is the need to establish a CSF at the community level in order to enthrone a more formal, reliable and transparent funding of

non-security actors. Such a mechanism, as a product of a robust partnership between governments at all levels and the private sector, will boost the level of funding non-state security actors could receive from philanthropic individuals, corporate bodies, and fund-raising initiatives at community level. It will also entrench transparency and accountability in its management as well as minimise the potential for manipulation of such groups through financial inducements by overzealous politicians.

**Adoption of Code of Conduct:** Standardisation of the activities of non-state actors through the formulation of code of conduct is crucial for optimising their contribution to security. Such guidance document will promote good operational conduct among the members of the group as well as enhance streams of collaboration between non-state security actors and formal state security actors such as the police. The articulation of a code of conduct will equally assist in minimising cases of human right violations committed by members of vigilante and neighbourhood watch.

**Conduct of Training/Capacity Building:** In order to improve the effectiveness of non-state security actors and providers, there is the need for capacity building programme in the form of regular training on how best to handle criminal suspects to minimise cases of human rights violation. Civil society organisations could partner with donors and the police to design and deliver such training packages or modules for the non-state security actors.

**Formulation of a Gender Policy:** Increase in gender-based violence and the disproportionate impact of conflicts on women demand the formulation of a gender policy or guideline that would encourage greater women representation and participation in the operations of non-state security actors. Concerted efforts to mainstream gender into the operations of non-state security actors through the formulation and faithful implementation of a gender policy will ensure a more inclusive security sector in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

Non-state security actors play an important role in the provision of justice and security services in many local communities in Nigeria. They take different forms and derive varying levels of support from different stakeholders depending on the context of their evolution. Some have evolved from traditional hunters group, while others emerged as direct response to crime in the community. A few others have emerged as desperate response to the outbreak of terrorism and insurgency, particularly in the North-East zone. While some have been supported by the state and local governments where they operate, others have been largely neglected in terms of support with funding, logistics and legal framework. Regardless of these variations, non-state security actors operate largely on the basis of voluntarism in most cases, and encourage personal commitments or sacrifice for the wellbeing of their host community.

In several local communities where they operate, residents are becoming increasingly conscious and appreciative of the critical roles non-state security actors play in their everyday security and safety needs. While governments occasionally applaud their contribution to internal security, little or no conscious effort is being made to develop a strategic framework for the engagement of these actors in the promotion of national security. The existence and operations of non-state security actors holds potentials and opportunities, but certainly not without risks and challenges that could endanger national security.

As Nigeria's security environment evolves due to the persistence of threats, risks and vulnerabilities in an environment characterised by deficient or inefficient state security forces, community support for, or reliance on, non-state security actors would likely grow. If non-state security actors are not properly engaged to optimise their positive contributions to security provisioning, these actors could further exacerbate security challenges confronting the state and the citizens. Thus, the articulation of a strategic framework for robust engagement with non-state actors is a desideratum for sustainable security in Nigeria.

## Appendix IV: Organogram of the VGN at State Command Level



