INTRODUCTION

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, manifestations of insecurity in Nigeria have become complex and inter-related. Key among these are terrorist and violent extremist attacks which have gained prominence with perpetrating groups expanding exponentially, particularly over the last decade. While Boko Haram/Islamic state of West Africa Province (ISWAP) insurgencies, armed banditry and farmer-herders clashes have unleashed enervating carnage and humanitarian crisis in the Northern region, other incidents of organised crimes including, kidnapping and proliferation of arms continue to fuel conflicts and violence in vulnerable communities.

Another cause for concern is the secessionist agitation in the South-East that have taken a violent dimension with series of criminal attacks and destruction of government infrastructures.

7,222 fatalities were recorded between January & July 2022

4,420 people (including 460 females, 270 children) abducted from Jan. to Aug., 2022

11,536 schools shut down since December 2020

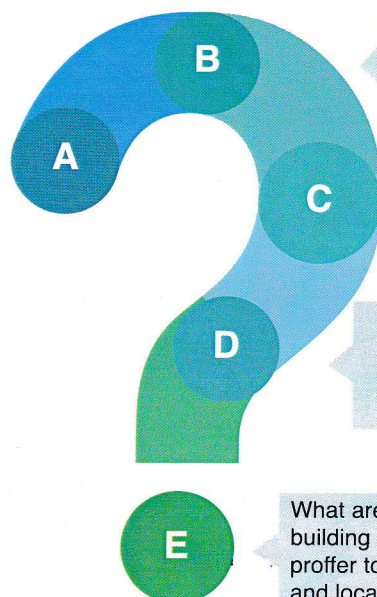### Some states affected by activities of criminal groups
- Anambra
- Benue
- Delta
- Enugu
- FCT-Abuja
- Niger
- Sokoto

6,154,000 million firearms in possession by non-state armed groups and civilians

Although criminal attacks in these states have largely been concentrated in remote villages, there is a major shift in the geography of violence to peri/semi-urban areas. The humanitarian challenges, loss of livelihood and heightened vulnerability of women, children, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) occasioned by armed violence generates concerns for action. These vulnerable groups bear the most under-reported, unreported, and poorly documented burden of banditry and other forms of violence in the identified states. With the recurrence in criminal activities within communities, the vulnerable groups (women, children, PWDs) are exposed to the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, radicalization and recruitment by criminal groups. Moreover, provisions of humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons remain a challenge. These challenges range from inappropriate shelters, irregular and/or zero food distribution, poor access to healthcare and education, amongst others, in IDP camps.

FGD/KII SAMPLE QUESTIONS

A What have been the greatest challenges (in terms of insecurity) or negative impacts that Nigeria has experienced in the past years?

B What are the current and/or recent initiatives/efforts/structures aimed at addressing root causes of conflict and building peace within communities?
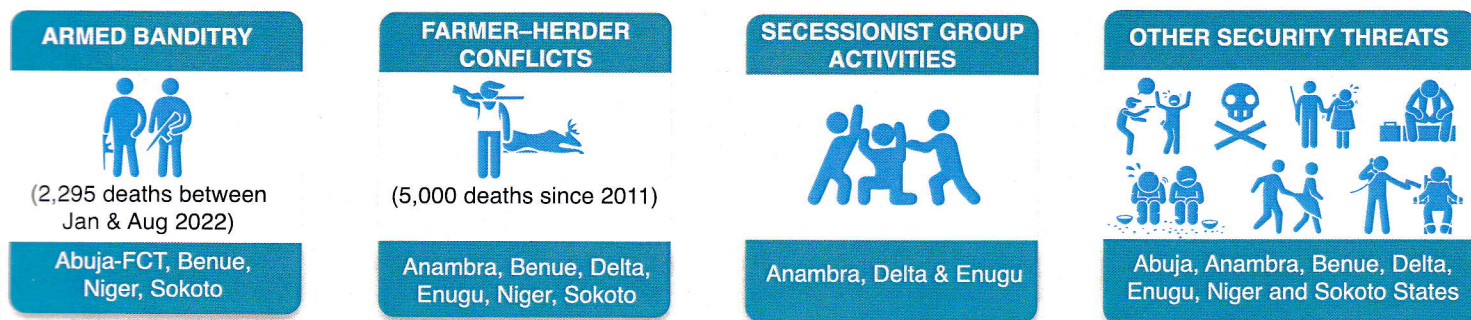If these structures/initiatives exist enumerate them.

C How many (or what %) of the initiatives you identified/listed would you say are led by women?

D What will be the effects of involving women and youths in activities that include policy monitoring and identification, security briefing, and strategy rehabilitations in ensuring that the problem of these violent attacks is addressed?

E What are you/your organization doing to contribute to the peace-building process in Nigeria? What recommendations can you proffer toward promoting peace and stability at the federal, state, and local levels?
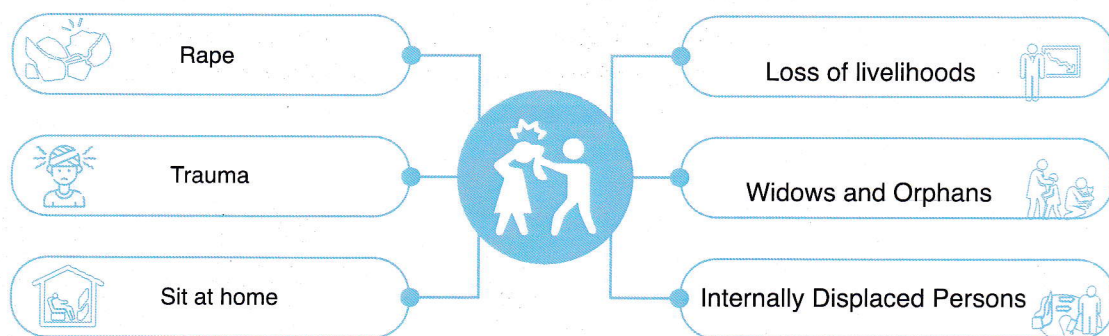
TRENDS AND DYNAMICS OF SECURITY THREATS

Given the complexity and multifaceted nature of insecurity, their causes, and dynamics in Nigeria, attempting a clear-cut categorization of security threats is often challenging. Yet, a description of the peculiarities of insecurity and violence manifestation are necessary, and more so, to reflect the perspective and perception of community voices from the field interviews conducted. The dominant security threats identified across the focus states included banditry, farmer-herder crisis, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, and violence by secessionist groups and "unknown gunmen" particularly in the South-East States of Anambra and Enugu. The intensity and spread of the security threats vary across the different states. Crimes such as banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and criminal herders' activities cut across all states, while secessionist agitation was most dominant in Enugu and Anambra States. A detailed analysis of the common security threats in the assessed states is provided below.

ARMED BANDITRY	FARMER–HERDER CONFLICTS	SECESSIONIST GROUP ACTIVITIES	OTHER SECURITY THREATS
(2,295 deaths between Jan & Aug 2022)	(5,000 deaths since 2011)		
Abuja-FCT, Benue, Niger, Sokoto	Anambra, Benue, Delta, Enugu, Niger, Sokoto	Anambra, Delta & Enugu	Abuja, Anambra, Benue, Delta, Enugu, Niger and Sokoto States

CONFLICT IMPACT AND HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

The diverse security challenges continue to heighten increased fragility of target states and human security in Nigeria. The frequency in violence across the states also continues to expose women and children to the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and criminal recruitment, amongst other vulnerability.

- Rape
- Trauma
- Sit at home
- Loss of livelihoods
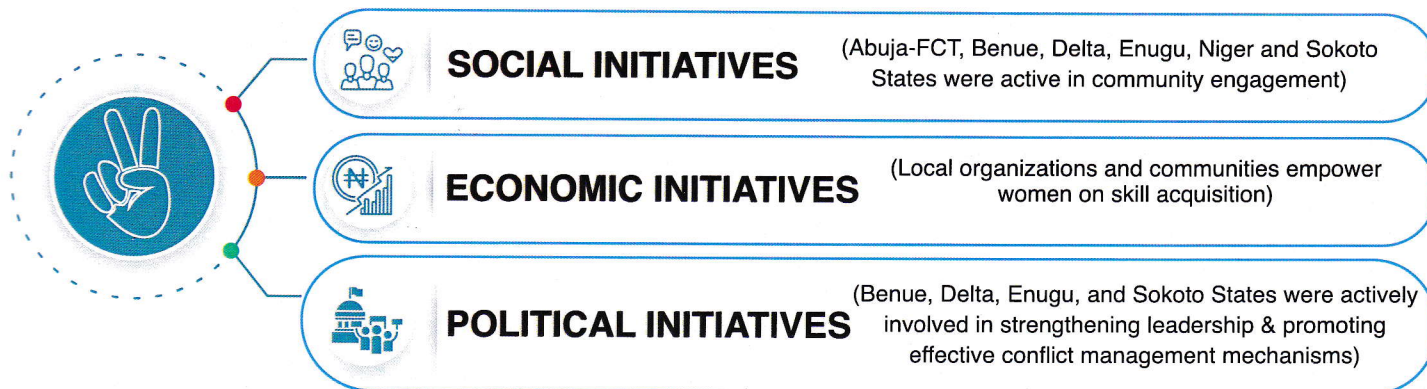- Widows and Orphans
- Internally Displaced Persons

In Anambra, Enugu (South-East) and Delta States (South-South), armed violence by secessionist groups and "unknown gunmen" also resulted in the burning of police stations and other government infrastructures. The local economy of the highlighted states in the South-East has not been spared as the activities of armed groups affected community livelihoods. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) sit-at-home order, for instance, disrupted the day-to-day economic activities in the area, as markets and shops were shut down for fear of attacks as violators of such orders are often killed or maimed.

Additionally, in most farming communities of Benue, Niger and Sokoto, farmers are denied access to farming activities by bandits, thus hampering cultivation and harvest of crops, and this in turn affects household consumption and income of farming communities.

STAKEHOLDERS INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS INSECURITY

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS
The state governments have set up committees to investigate the root causes of armed violence in their respective states and recommend workable solutions.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES
NGOs and International agencies offered humanitarian assistance to communities affected by crisis

PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS BY STATE GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS
Promotion of public awareness campaigns on insecurity and measures to ensure personal/public safety.

WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS INSECURITY
Women actively engaged in sensitization projects, skill acquisition training/peace campaigns, with some of the activities specifically focusing on women with disabilities

PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES BY LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE SELECTED STATES

SOCIAL INITIATIVES (Abuja-FCT, Benue, Delta, Enugu, Niger and Sokoto States were active in community engagement)

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES (Local organizations and communities empower women on skill acquisition)

POLITICAL INITIATIVES (Benue, Delta, Enugu, and Sokoto States were actively involved in strengthening leadership & promoting effective conflict management mechanisms)

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Given the identified security challenges in the target states and their impact on communities, the following recommendations have been proposed for response:

GOVERNMENT

The Federal, State and Local Governments in collaboration with security agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), traditional and religious institutions and women groups should create platforms for rebuilding public confidence and trust through consultations and inclusive participation of youths in peacebuilding and decision-making processes in the country.

The Federal and State Governments should continue to strengthen partnership with key partners to enhance the capacity of security agencies to curb insecurity in the affected states, particularly through intelligence gathering, surveillance. CSOs should strengthen community women and youth groups in the Early Warning Early Response (EWER) mechanisms.

Government should provide a budgetary line for women peace and security and also make these funds assessable to relevant bodies or communities. Emphasis should be placed on gender analysis in needs assessments, planning and monitoring of budgets, attaching dedicated budgets to national implementation frameworks such as national action plans; consistently using tools such as gender markers to assess performance and improve accountability for financing gender equality.

Within states, there is need to institutionalize the Women, Peace and Security desk in the Local Government Councils where pockets of conflict emanate.

The need for psychological services in schools has become imminent such as providing counselling for peacebuilding, security and development" to champion the prominence of being gainful at the instance of achieving peace in communities. An alternative to violence is the introduction of peace education to inculcate the moral values needed for peacebuilding.

CIVIL SOCIETY STAKEHOLDERS

Partnership with relevant government agencies and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to promote entrepreneurial skills development and other forms of economic empowerment for community members, especially the women and youths.

The engagement of traditional and religious leaders and institutions in conflict prevention, management and community reconciliation is critical to communal peace.

The family is a very important unit to peacebuilding as it is the starting point to peace and should be integrated into peace structures. The family is a good place to start building peace. Communities would benefit from supporting families that nurture and raise children to physically, mentally healthy and socially responsible individuals.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Community participation by traditional institutions and community leaders in crime prevention and security management has become imperative, particularly given inadequate resources and manpower available to security agencies for effective policing. This includes
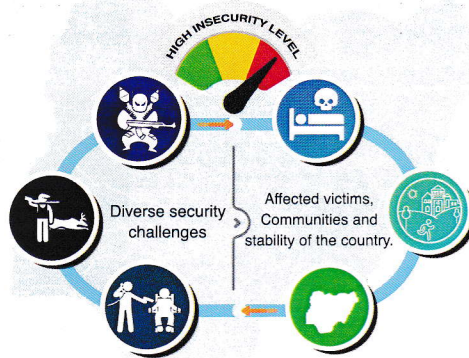
Traditional leaders and community-based organization should organize and consolidate the established vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch for improved local community policing. Partnership should be strengthened with the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other grassroots security organizations to enhance the infrastructure for crime detection, prevention, and management.

Traditional and community leaders and should support the integration of women into local peace and community governance initiatives. There is a need to break cultural barriers and other impediments that have worked against women's participation in peacebuilding and community governance in some traditional and religious settings, particularly in the north.

Engage the wives of traditional rulers/leaders to mobilize women for peacebuilding programs. Notably, mediation training for community women so that women can be involved in peacebuilding processes. Also creating a safe platform for women to give out information and report cases of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and other issues as it may affect their wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

The security landscape of the country continues to witness diverse security challenges that have heightened insecurity. The various manifestations of violent conflicts and armed violence have far-reaching effects that are highly detrimental to the well-being of affected victims, communities, and stability of the country. Thus, the need for continuous peace dialogue and review of peace and security strategies in line with the emerging dynamics and trends by local community stakeholders including women and security actors is critical to sustainable peace. The assessment reveals the multifarious effects of insecurity, including the economic and psychological impact of armed violence on women, girls, and other groups in the target states. Enhancing the capacity of security agencies and adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach to peacebuilding, involving collaboration with relevant CSOs and community stakeholders is tantamount to peaceful coexistence. Such peacebuilding approach needs to be inclusive and reflective of the needs and capacities of women affected by violent conflicts. Notably, women should not only be viewed as victims, but also as strategic partners and stakeholders in peacebuilding efforts and initiatives.

ABOUT WANEP - NIGERIA

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-Nigeria) was established to provide an organised platform for collaborative peacebuilding in Nigeria by indigenous organizations working in conflict prevention, transformation, and peacebuilding. Its operational framework is designed along visions of the regional network operating in West Africa with the overarching goal of building sustainable peace and development in the region. WANEP-Nigeria operates through a membership scheme that provides technical support and builds the peacebuilding capacity of its member organizations to intervene effectively at the grassroots level in various communities of the country. These therefore provide opportunity for sharing experience and comparative learning among various network member organizations towards a holistic intervention on various conflicts in Nigeria. Intervention programs of the Network are divided into five basic thematic areas: Women in Peacebuilding; Conflict Prevention; Active Non-Violence and Peace Education; Democracy and Good Governance; Research and Documentation.