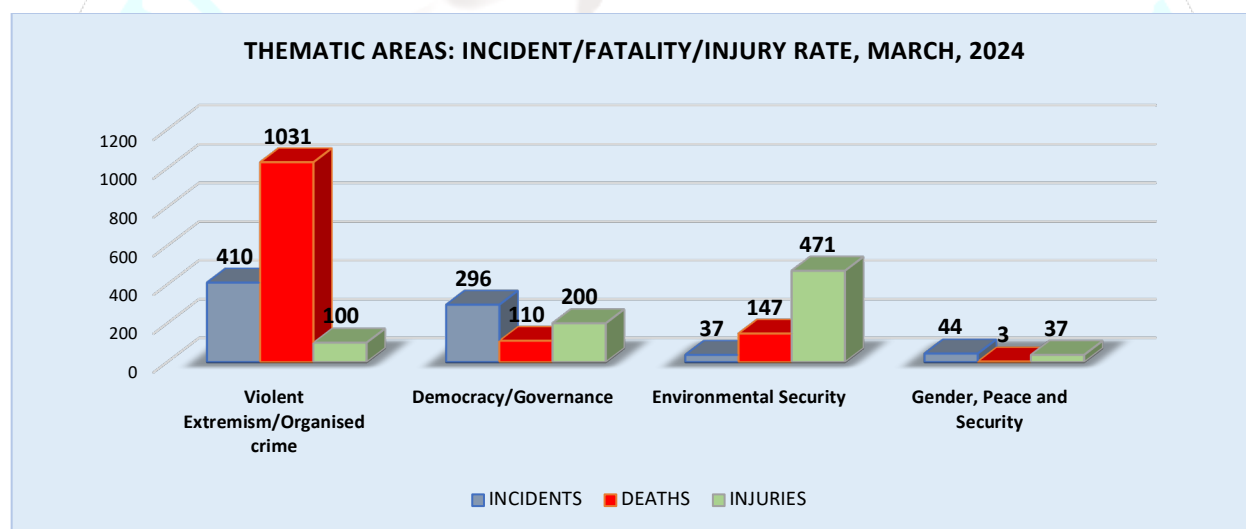


I. INTRODUCTION

As of March 2024, 787 incidents were recorded in the *Monthly Conflict Census* from the WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS).¹ A cumulative fatality of 1,291 and 808 injuries and infected cases emanating from criminal attacks, road accidents and diseases related incidents were recorded in March 2024.

As shown in the thematic graph below, Violent Extremism and Organised Crime recorded a total fatality of 1,031, accounting for the highest of the total number of fatalities (1,291) recorded in the reporting period while Environmental Security theme recorded 147 deaths.² Also, Democracy and Governance theme recorded 110 deaths while the Gender, Peace and Security thematic area recorded 3 fatalities in the reporting period.³ (see annex for the monthly census).



Source: WANEP-NEWS⁴.

The *Monthly Bulletin* presents an analysis of the security challenges identified from monitoring trends of incidents through the WANEP NEWS and the mass media. It also offers recommendations for stakeholders' interventions and mitigation.

2. ORGANISED CRIME AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The series of counter offensive operations against insurgents in the North-East region of Nigeria has yielded positive outcomes with low cases of terrorist related attacks and fatalities recorded in the reporting period. The WANEP NEWS recorded 12 terrorist related-incidents in Borno and Yobe States which resulted in the fatality of one (1) military operative and 2 injured victims in March 2024 compared to the 17 deaths reported in February 2024.

¹ Source: WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

² Source: WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

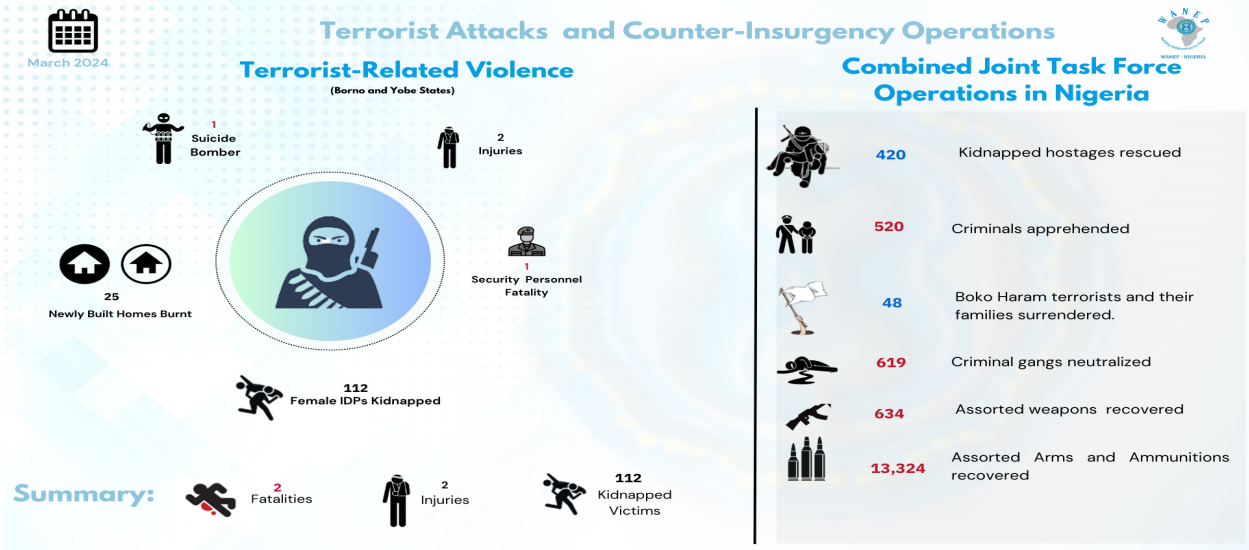
³ ibid

⁴ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

Additionally, in the reporting period, 112 female IDPs were abducted with 25 newly constructed buildings by the Borno State Government for returnee Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Dikwa LGA of Borno State burnt down by terrorists in the reporting period.⁵ The destruction of housing facilities by terrorists further accentuates the importance of enhanced safety and security mechanisms to protect returnee IDPs. Nevertheless, the Borno State Government has continued to roll out initiatives to facilitate the safe return and resettlement of displaced persons, with the intent to shut down all IDP camps in the state by 2027.⁶ According to the North East Development Commission (NEDC), over 90 percent of IDPs have been resettled to their ancestral homes in Borno State.⁷

As security clearance operations continues against Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists, several terrorists and their collaborators were apprehended and neutralised while 48 combatants and their families surrendered to the Nigerian Army in the period. Similarly, the Nigerian Defence Headquarters indicated the release 313 terrorism suspects to the Borno State Government in compliance with the orders of the Federal High Court in Maiduguri on the basis of no evidence to support their conviction.⁸ The combination of security offensive operations including airstrikes and ground forces in the reporting period resulted in the apprehension of 520 criminals, 619 criminals neutralized, 420 kidnapped hostages rescued, 634 assorted weapons and 13,324 ammunition recovered as reflected in the diagram below.⁹

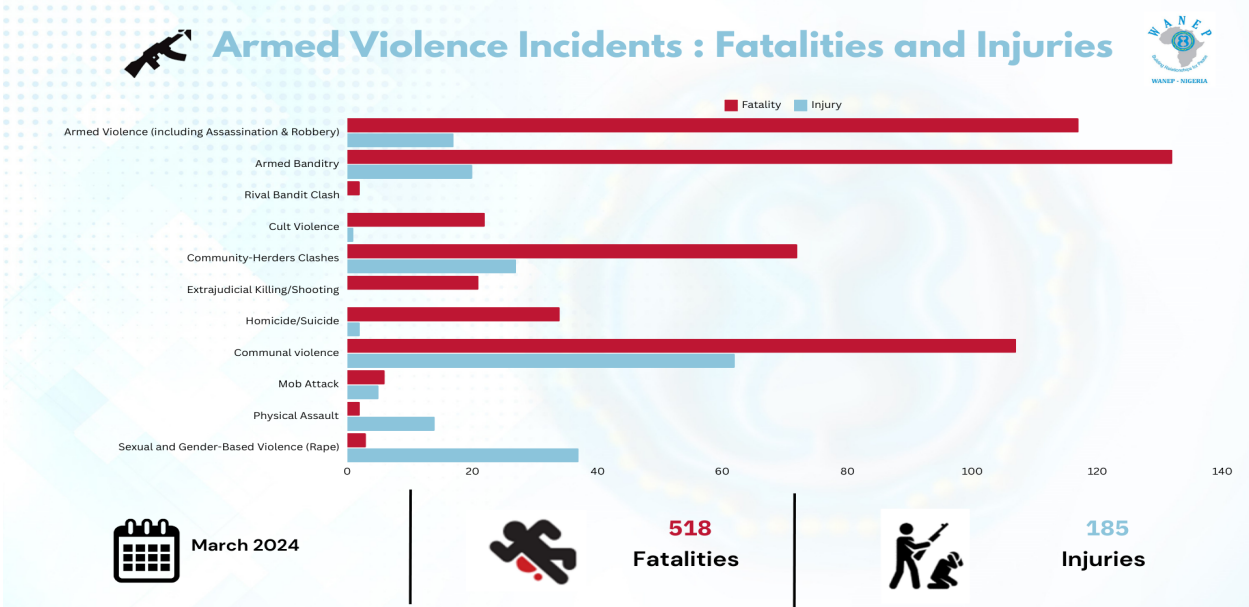
An update on military operations nationwide in the the first quarter (January-March) of 2024 revealed that 1,241 kidnapped hostages were rescued, 2,308 criminals apprehended, 2,351 criminals including terrorists neutralized, 2,847 assorted weapons and 58,492 ammunition recovered¹⁰.



Source: WANEP-NEWS¹¹

⁵ Source: WANEP-NEWS; <https://leadership.ng/how-boko-haram-burnt-25-houses-abducted-100-female-idps/#:~:text=More%20details%20have%20emerged%20on.government%20area%20of%20Borno%20State.>
⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/area-based-assessment-returns-relocations-and-selected-settlements-borno-state-nigeria-sulumri-idp-and-maiduguri-primary-school-nme-and-jere-igas>
⁷ <https://punchng.com/nedc-closes-90-idp-camps-in-borno/>
⁸ <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/03/28/court-ordered-release-of-313-suspected-terrorists-to-borno-govt-dhq/>; <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/681674-why-we-released-313-suspected-terrorists-to-borno-government-dhq.html>
⁹ Source: WANEP-NEWS; <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/04/04/video-troops-killed-2351-terrorists-in-q1-2024-dhq/>
¹⁰ <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/04/04/video-troops-killed-2351-terrorists-in-q1-2024-dhq/>
¹¹ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/ ; <https://dailypost.ng/2024/03/21/nigerian-armed-forces-neutralized-974-terrorists-in-february-fg/>

The recurrent cases of **Organized Crimes** exacerbated by the proliferation and smuggling of firearms continues to fuel the cycle of violence, adding layers of complexity to the security situation. The WANEP NEWS documented 460 incidents of organized crime including drug/arms trafficking, banditry, human trafficking, kidnapping, cult/gang violence, community-herder violence, and armed violence, amongst other crime in the month. The WANEP NEWS recorded a total of 1,139 fatalities, out of which 619 were members of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG).¹² Also, out of the 1,139 recorded deaths, the NEWS recorded 518 civilian and security fatalities in the period.¹³ Out of the 518 fatalities, 35 were females, 14 children, 45 security personnel.

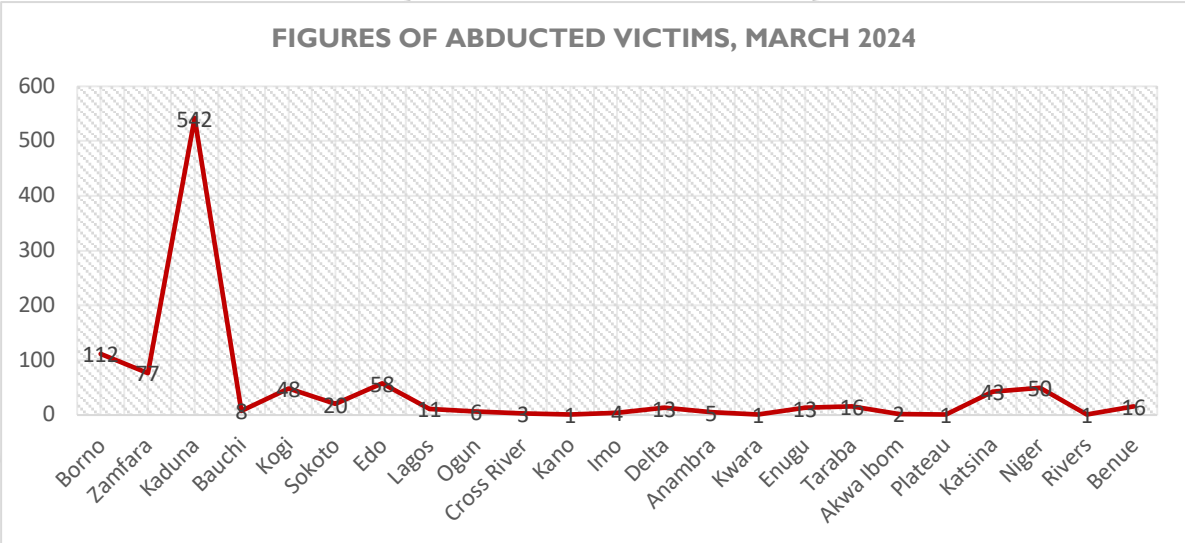


Source: WANEP-NEWS¹⁴

In the period, **armed banditry** recorded the highest fatality of 132 people in Kaduna, Sokoto, Katsina, Zamfara (North-West) and Niger State in the North-Central.¹⁵ Alongside the threat of banditry, is the supremacy tussle between bandits and Ansaru terrorist group in Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State over control of gold mining sites which resulted in the death of several terrorists¹⁶. The rival clash further spotlights the infiltration terrorist elements in the North-West region embroiled in banditry. **Armed violence/murder** accounted for the second highest fatality in the reporting month with 117 deaths, while communal clashes resulted in the death of 109 people¹⁷. Also, **armed attacks by suspected ethnic militias/herders** in Benue, Plateau and Edo States led to the death of 72 people.¹⁸ **Other armed violence incidents** including **homicide, cult/gang violence** and **extra-judicial killing** resulted in the death of 28, 22 and 21 people respectively.¹⁹

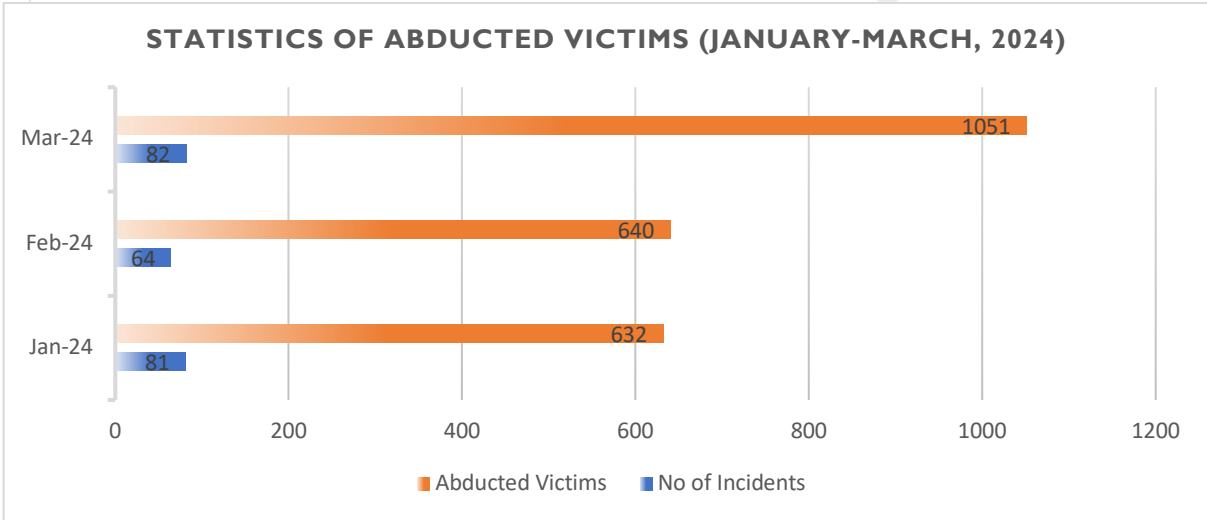
¹² Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
¹³ Ibid
¹⁴ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
¹⁵ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
¹⁶ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/04/notorious-bandit-mudi-son-others-killed-in-kaduna/>
¹⁷ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
¹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

Another critical area of concern is the unabated threat of kidnapping in Nigeria. The abduction of female IDPs and school children in Borno, Sokoto, and Kaduna States further reveals the security gap and vulnerability of remote communities. The WANEP NEWS recorded 82 incidents of kidnapping across 23 States as reflected in the graph below. A total number of 1,051 people were kidnapped in the reporting period. Out of the 1,051 kidnapped victims, 248 were females and 342 children.



Source: WANEP-NEWS²⁰

Likewise, between January and March 2024, a total 2,323 people were kidnapped. Out of the 2,323 victims, 484 were children, 462 females and 4 security personnel.²¹ The graph below illustrates the statistics of kidnapped victims across the affected States in the period.



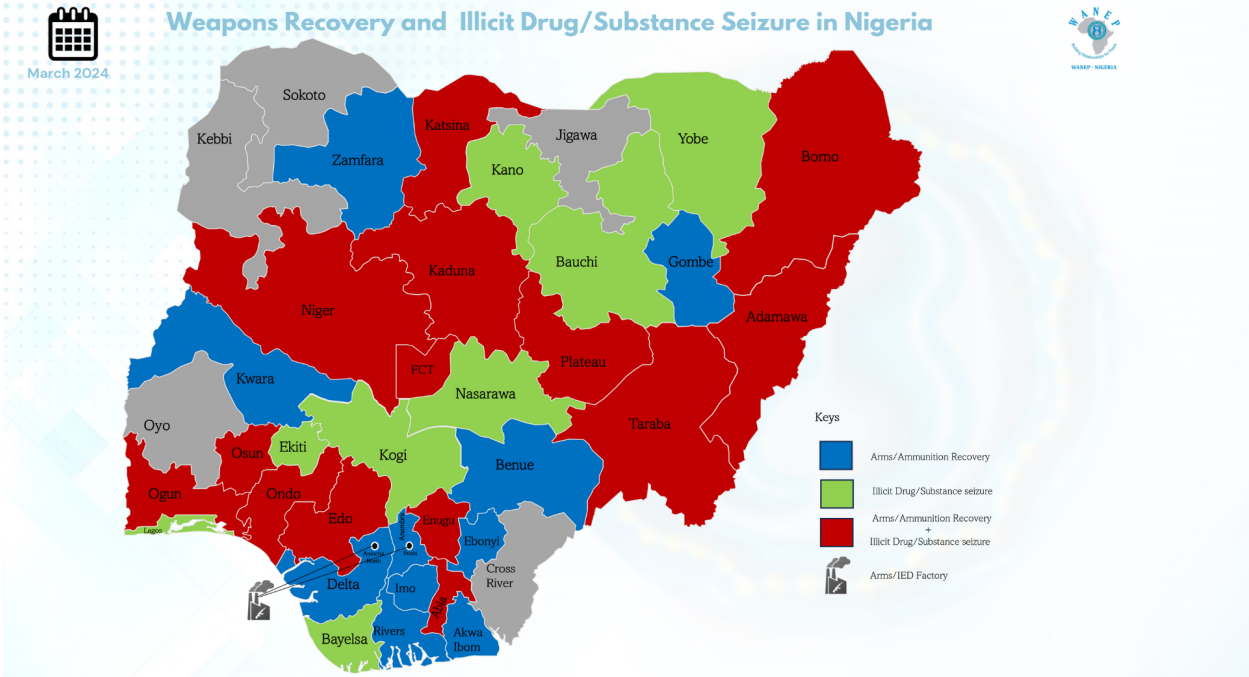
Source: WANEP-NEWS²²

²⁰ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
²¹ ibid

²² Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

The coordinated joint security operations across states in Nigeria led to the arrest of several criminal suspects. The WANEP NEWS documented 195 incidents of arrests in March 2024. The arrests cuts across incidents of violent demonstrations, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), armed violence, crude oil theft, terrorism, armed robbery, human/drug trafficking, arms smuggling, banditry, fraud, cybercrime, vandalism & destruction of public infrastructures, amongst other crimes.²³

In addition to the arrest, several illicit drugs and weapons were intercepted across states as shown in the map below. Specifically, in Anambra and Delta States, illegal firearms, drone, and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) factories were uncovered in Ihiala LGA of Anambra and Aniocha North LGA of Delta State.²⁴



Source: WANEP-NEWS²⁵

3. DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE:

The protracted nature of insecurity in the country continues to generate widespread concern and discussions around the efficacy of existing security mechanisms and the huge financial investments made by state governments. According to the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu and as propagated by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s administration, a blend of kinetic and socio-economic initiatives remains critical to building sustainable peace.²⁶ Nevertheless, citizens continue to grapple with the accelerating inflation in the cost of good and services with its attendant economic and social consequences.

²³ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
²⁴ ibid
²⁵ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/
²⁶ See: Addressing multidimensional insecurity challenges in Northern Nigeria, by Nuhu Ribadu - <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/687149-addressing-multi-dimensional-insecurity-challenges-in-northern-nigeria-by-nuhu-ribadu.html>

The WANEP NEWS recorded 25 public demonstrations and strikes, out of which one (1) degenerated into violent demonstrations in Delta state, following the killing of two (2) commercial motorcycle riders during an enforcement operation by the Delta State Task Force.²⁷ Also, strike actions by the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and Non-Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (NASU) of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Awka, Anambra) over poor welfare and disparity in the payment of salaries by the Federal Government was recorded in the period.²⁸ Similarly, the Academic Staff of the Federal College of Education in Zamfara also embarked on an indefinite strike to demand for the immediate removal of the Provost.²⁹

Other recorded peaceful demonstrations in the month include; demonstrations by inmates at the Jos Correctional Center over plans to reduce food consumption due to inflation rate; protest over escalating security challenges in Katsina and Kogi as well as the non-payment of salaries and Zamfara State. In addition, community residents and university students in Oyo, Lagos³⁰ and Plateau States³¹ have continued to protest against poor electricity supply. Amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), conducted series of demonstrations in Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Jos, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Adamawa and FCT-Abuja, demanding for an immediate ceasefire in the city of Gaza in Palestine³², amongst others. The recurrence in demonstrations and strikes is indicative of the weakened social contract and cohesion between the State and citizens.

The WANEP NEWS also recorded road accidents resulting in 161 injuries and 79 deaths across 15 States while an incident of building collapse in Anambra State recorded no fatality in the period.³³

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY:

The recurrent public health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks arising from poor sanitation, low vaccine coverage and the prevailing weather conditions, amongst others remains endemic. The reporting month recorded cases of Lassa Fever, Cerebro Spinal Meningitis (CSM), Diphtheria and Idiopathic disease (unknown disease). As documented by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), a total of 21 deaths, 125 confirmed cases and 1,384 suspected cases were recorded in 12 States of Ondo, Bauchi, Plateau, Edo, Taraba, Benue, Ebonyi, Anambra, Delta, Kaduna, Cross River and Kogi States between March 4 to 31, 2024.³⁴ Also, between January and March 2024, a cumulative total of 150 deaths emanating from Lassa Fever disease across 125 Local Governments (LGA) in 27 States have been recorded by the NCDC.³⁵ Further, the prevailing weather conditions have partly been attributed to the outbreak of Cerebro Spinal Meningitis (CSM) with 57 infected cases and 6 deaths recorded in Babura, Birniwa, Malam Madori, Maigari, Kaugama and Suletankarkar LGAs

²⁷ https://leadership.ng/motorcycle-riders-protest-alleged-killing-of-colleagues-in-delta/#google_vignette

²⁸ <https://punchng.com/unizik-ssanu-nasu-members-join-seven-day-warning-strike/>

²⁹ <https://dailypost.ng/2024/03/15/zamfara-college-of-education-lecturers-embark-on-strike-demand-removal-of-provost/call-for-ekede-removal/>

³⁰ <https://punchng.com/unijos-students-protest-water-scarcity-blackout/>

³¹ <https://dailytrust.com/israel-hamas-islamic-movement-holds-nationwide-protest-in-solidarity-with-palestine/>

³² Ibid.

³³ <https://ncdc.gov.ng/diseases/sitreps/?cat=5&name=An%20update%20of%20Lassa%20fever%20outbreak%20in%20Nigeria>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

in Jigawa State. However, no new reported CSM cases were reported in Gombe and Yobe States in the month.

EPIDEMICS	Deaths	Confirmed Cases	Suspected Cases
<i>Lassa Fever</i>	21	125	1,384
<i>Cerebro Spinal Meningitis (CSM): Jigawa State</i>	6	57	-
<i>Diphtheria: Kano State</i>	4	28	-
<i>Unknown disease outbreak in Sokoto</i>	7	-	196

Similarly, the re-emergence of diphtheria disease was recorded in Kano State accounting for the death of 4 children and 28 infected cases, while reports of unknown disease outbreak in Isa, Sabon Birni and Illela LGAs of Sokoto resulted in 7 deaths and 196 suspected cases.³⁶ Although laboratory diagnosis of suspected cases in Sokoto states have commenced, the disease outbreak is suspected to be heavy metal poisoning possibly linked to mining activities.³⁷ Inadequate surveillance systems and community health centers in remote areas have also hampered effective response and mitigation efforts including the timely detection and confirmation of disease outbreaks.

5. GENDER, PEACE AND SECURITY:

The increasing incidents of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), particularly rape remains prevalent despite the domestication of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) law and the Child Rights Act (CRA) across states. In the reporting period, the WANEP NEWS recorded incidents of rape involving minors in Yobe, Anambra, Ondo, Adamawa, Plateau, Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, Bauchi, Imo, Oyo, Osun, Delta and Edo States.³⁸ Out of the 40 recorded incidents, 3 females were raped and murdered in Ondo, Plateau and Lagos States.³⁹ Also, over 77 victims of human trafficking including 29 children were rescued in Kano, Abia, Lagos and Kaduna States as documented in the NEWS.⁴⁰ To mitigate the recurrence of human trafficking incidents, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has uncovered a resurgence of activities by suspected human traffickers under the guise of employment opportunities to traffic persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years to neighbouring West African countries for exploitation. An instance of trafficking under the guise of employment was recorded in Lagos State in the reporting month with 50 nationals from neighbouring African countries including 20 children rescued.⁴¹

Nevertheless, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have continued to advocate for the reintroduction and passage of five (5) gender bills⁴² earlier rejected by the National Assembly to safeguard rights of women and vulnerable groups in the country.

³⁶ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-news/679756-diphtheria-four-children-dead-28-hospitalised-in-kano.html> ; <https://www.thecable.ng/ncdc-holds-emergency-meeting-as-unknown-disease-spreads-to-zamfara/>

³⁷ <https://www.thecable.ng/ncdc-holds-emergency-meeting-as-unknown-disease-spreads-to-zamfara/>

³⁸ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Source : WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) : www.wanep.org/news/

⁴¹ <https://dailypost.ng/2024/03/17/police-rescue-50-stranded-foreigners-in-lagos-building/>

⁴² The five gender bills include: 'Expansion of the Scope of Citizenship by Registration'; 'Special Seats for Women'; 'Affirmative Action for Women in Political Party Administration'; 'Provision of voting rights for Nigerians living in the Diaspora'; 'Right for women to obtain indigeneship of her husband's state after at least five years of marriage'.

Implications for Peace and Security in Nigeria

Nigeria's insecurity remains pervasive with an array of security challenges occasioned by socio-economic, political, ethnic and religious tensions. The consequences of these security threats are not only impacting negatively on human security, but also undermining the progress and investments made towards actualization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda. In particular, the negative impact on the safety and welfare of women and children in conflict settings expose them to the risk of SGBV, radicalization, trafficking and other social vices. In the reporting month, 248 females (including IDPs) and 342 children (including school children) were abducted, with Borno, Kaduna, Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina States accounting for the highest rate of women and children kidnapping. In a bid to ensure a more responsive security environment amid rising concerns over school safety, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) launched its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Safe School Initiative.⁴³

Additionally, farming activities and other community livelihoods have been hampered following recurring armed attacks and threats of violence. This has severe implication for food security, household consumption and income of populations who largely engage in agriculture. Moreover, these volatile communities have limited opportunities in education and economic empowerment which further compounds their vulnerability. The food security projections by the Federal Government between March and May 2024 indicates that 24.7 million people across 26 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT-Abuja) are facing acute food and nutrition crisis.⁴⁴ Moreover, the number of IDPs across the country is also expected to rise from 14,000 to 83,846 in the absence of measures to curb the trend.⁴⁵ These dire humanitarian challenges underscore the need for urgent interventions to mitigate the threat.

Besides, the rise in arms and drugs trafficking compounds national insecurity, with intricate cross-border networks facilitating illegal imports.⁴⁶ The proliferation of weaponry has not only amplified violent conflicts but also poses significant challenges to peace and stability efforts. An instance of cross-border arms trafficking was reported in the month with a cache of arms including Rocket Propelled Guns (RPGs) from the South-West region of Nigeria intercepted in Niger Republic.⁴⁷ Also, as documented in the WANEP NEWS, joint security efforts led to the seizure of 634 weapons and 13, 324 ammunition across Nigeria in the reporting period.⁴⁸

The surge in Lassa Fever cases and other epidemics (meningitis, diphtheria, etc.) continues to undermine the health security of the population in Nigeria. Limited health care facilities in rural communities further hampers early detection and treatment thereby increasing the risk of spread and mortality rate in the affected States.

⁴³ <https://punchng.com/abduction-dhq-launches-guidelines-for-safe-school-initiative/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/04/nigeria-battles-to-save-31-5m-people-in-26-states-from-food-crisis/>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See: Addressing multidimensional insecurity challenges in Northern Nigeria, by Nuhu Ribadu - <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/687149-addressing-multi-dimensional-insecurity-challenges-in-northern-nigeria-by-nuhu-ribadu.html>

⁴⁷ <https://thetreejournal.org/army-intercept-illegal-arms-trafficked-for-terrorists-in-niger-republic/>

⁴⁸ Source: WANEP NEWS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In view of the human security threats and the analysis highlighted, the following recommendations are proposed for response and mitigation by stakeholders:

- The State Governments should continue to strengthen collaboration with traditional/community leaders, faith-based institutions, women and youth groups to increase dialogue and mediation platforms to address increased threats to security and foster social cohesion in communities;
- The State and Local Governments in partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), traditional and religious leaders, women groups, youths groups and the media should continue to strengthen its advocacy for the implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) and Child Rights Acts;
- The State and Local Governments in partnership with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to strengthen collaboration with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), mass media, traditional and faith-based organisations to increase public health, safety and hygiene awareness, particularly in remote communities to mitigate the recurring outbreak of epidemics – Cerebro Spinal Meningitis (CSM), Lassa Fever, and Diphtheria, amongst other unknown disease outbreaks.
- The Federal and State Governments should continue to create and increase sustainable employment and skill acquisition opportunities (for instance Nigerian Youth Academy) for young people including out-of school youths to help reduce their involvement in crime, as it provides sustainable income to mitigate vulnerability.

CONCLUSION:

Amidst the volatile security situation, the Nigerian Government continues to strengthen collaboration with critical stakeholders in a bid to explore strategies to enhance peace and stability. These strategies through inclusive dialogue combines military, political, and socio-economic efforts, underlines the importance of cross-border cooperation, enhances youth empowerment and the strengthens local institutions. More importantly, there is the need for health agencies to sustain awareness on the prevention and management of epidemics to enhance resilience against the spread of diseases.

CENSUS OF INCIDENTS FOR MARCH 2024

THEMATIC AREA	NO of Attacks.	VICTIMS	
		DEATHS	INJURIES

VIOLENT EXTREMISM: Boko Haram/ISWAP attacks/Armed Action	12	-	2 (1 military operative and a male suicide bomber)	2
Security Clearance Operations - Shoot-out between security operatives and criminal gangs & Terrorists.	49	619	-	-
ORGANISED CRIME: (Armed-robbery, assassination, armed violence, armed bandits, mob attack, arson and cult/gang clash).	123	277		43
Rival Bandit Clashes in Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State.	1	2		-
Abduction (evident across 23 States)	82	-		-
Cybercrime/Fraud	5	-		-
Extrajudicial killing	8	21		-
Physical/Armed Assault	14	2		14
Herder-Community Conflict	27	72		27
Violent Clash in Ogun State	2	2		12
Illicit Drug Trafficking	51	-		-
Homicide	30	28		2
Suicide	6	6		-
DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE:				
Demonstration (peaceful)	22	-		-
Demonstration (violent)	1	-		-
Strike	2	-		-
Intimidation and Threats	7	-		-
Arrest/Detention	195	-		-
Road Accident	34	79		161
Building Collapse	1	-		-
Stampede (Nasarawa & Bauchi)	2	17		24
Looting of Food items (Abuja-FCT, Kaduna and Kebbi)	3	-		-
Fire Outbreak + Gas Explosion +Electrocution	28	11		11
Accidental explosions (arising from gun powder)	1	3		4
ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY:				
Communal conflict	16	107		62

<u>Pandemic/Epidemics:</u>			<u>Confirmed/Infected Cases</u>
a. Lassa Fever Outbreak	12	21	Lassa Fever: 125
b. Cerebrospinal Meningitis (CSM) Outbreak (Yobe, Jigawa and Gombe States)	3	6	CSM: 57
c. Diptheria (Kano)	1	4	Diptheria: 28
d. Unknown disease (Sokoto)	1	7	196
Illegal Mining Collapse (Cross River)	1	2	3
Flood/Rainstorm/Ocean surge	3	-	-

Through its National Early Warning System (NEWS), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP- Nigeria) develops and disseminates a monthly bulletin on Human Security at the end of each month to inform the different actors and / or partners and formulates recommendations to different decision-makers for targeted responses to the given alerts. This monthly monitoring is based on information gathered from the field by the WANEP-NIGERIA field monitors, and also information gathered from the various national and international media.

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<u>GENDER, PEACE AND SECURITY:</u>			
SGBV: Sexual Assault/Rape	40	3	37
Human Trafficking	4	-	-
Total	787	1,291	808

