

# Policyweekly

## Community-Based Intelligence Gathering and Early Warning Systems

How to Resist Violence in Nigeria



(Photo credit: Onpolicy.org)

### Policy Recommendations

- 1 Ensure government presence in local communities.
- 2 Build trust between local communities and the security agents.
- 3 Foster closer engagement between local actors and government.
- 4 Need for sensitivity to conflict indicators.

### Introduction

The rate of atrocious violence in Nigeria has surged exponentially, as manifested by the rising trends in massacres, arsons and kidnappings. Data from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database<sup>1</sup> shows that between June 2020 and April 2022, at least 8,455 persons were gruesomely murdered. A yearly breakdown shows that 1,494 were killed in the second half of 2020, 4,379 in 2021, and 2,582 from January to April 2022. Among the 2,582 persons killed between January and April 2022, 2,424 were civilians and 158 security officers. In another report, a significant indicator of atrocious mass violence is the upsurge in cases of abductions which rose from [2,002](#) in 2020 to 5,663 in 2021. As evident from the rising trends of violence, extant mitigation strategies have not been effective. As political elites' desperation to capture power in the 2023 elections unfolds, there is widespread apprehension that violence cases, including assassinations, might escalate. Besides, members of state security agencies are too few, not strategically deployed, overstretched, ill-equipped and corrupt to effectively manage ubiquitous terrorism,

banditry, secessionist agitations, ritual murders, cultism, kidnapping and other forms of violent insecurity. There is a need for a system that monitors at-risk locations and assesses the probability of violence eruption, escalation, continuation and geographic diffusion. In line with the preceding, this edition of Nextier SPD Policy Weekly examines how the mainstreaming of community intelligence and early warning systems can help in conflict prediction and quick response in Nigeria.

**Trend of Violent Conflicts and Deaths in Nigeria (Jun 2020 - April 2022)**

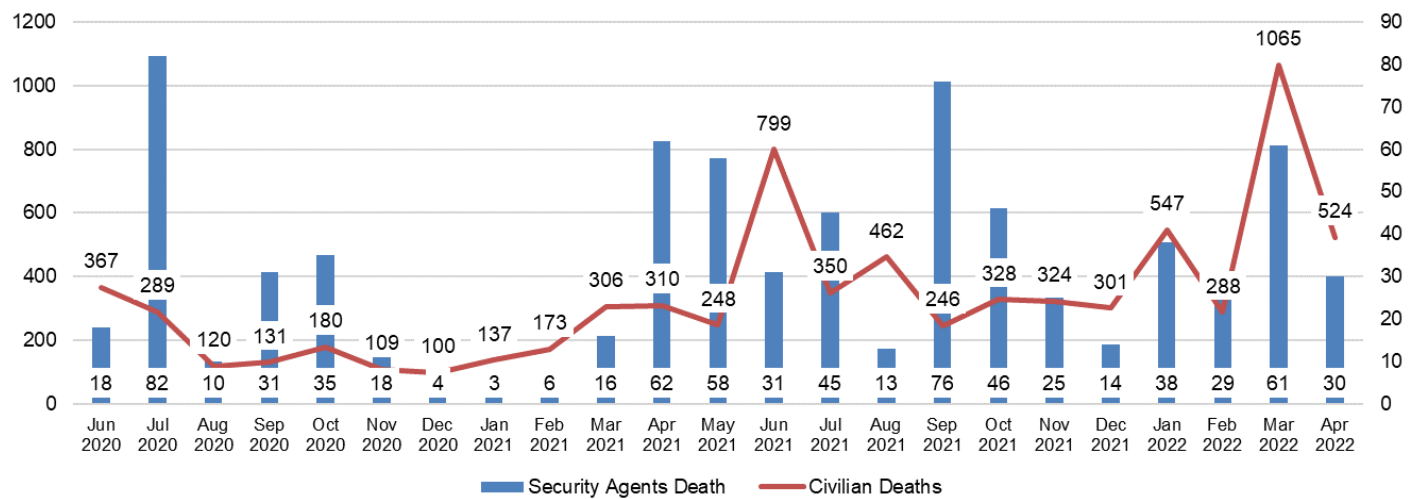


Figure 1: Trend of Violent Conflict and Deaths in Nigeria (Jun 2020 - April 2022). Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

**Multiple Peacemakers, Yet No Peace**

Following the high rate of atrocious violence, the state deployed both kinetic and non-kinetic strategies for stabilisation and security. Some kinetic approaches include operations Lafiya Dole, Crocodile Smile, Ayem Akpatuma, and several others in conflict locations nationwide. A [Multinational Joint Task Force](#) was also launched in the Lake Chad region with Nigeria’s North-East as part of the area in response to the jihadist onslaught of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province. Some pro-government militias such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), vigilantes, and even local hunters were deployed in counter-terrorism operations. A non-kinetic approach was implemented alongside military forces in the North-East when [Operation Safe Corridor](#) was launched for repentant terrorists in 2016. This was followed by establishment of the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) in May 2019, with a take-off grant of [10 billion Naira](#) for the ravaged region. In response to rampaging bandits, the Zamfara State government struck an amnesty deal with the terrorists, which involved the exchange of ‘cows for guns’. Similarly, in response to the Niger Delta oil resource conflict, both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches were deployed (Aghedo, 2013).

Ambivalently, while the federal government has used both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches in response to jihadist terrorism and Niger Delta insurgency, the secessionist agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East have only attracted the use of [kinetic measures](#). Thus, the South-East seems to be marginalised in peacetime and conflict situations. However, despite the government’s politicised peace-building, the use of both kinetic and non-kinetic strategies has not been able to guarantee sustainable peace across the conflict locations. In the North-East, North-West, North-

Central and South-East, and many other parts of the country, incessant violent attacks on communities remain unabated, resulting in killings, pillages, abductions and displacement of persons. The cases of farmers-herders and ethnoreligious crises in the middle-belt region and Kaduna state have remained perpetual. The response of state security agents to the violence is always too little and too late. In many areas under attack, the assailants operate for several hours without any response from state security agents. This has emboldened the bandits and fueled their impunity. These days, the rebels [send messages](#) to vulnerable communities to inform them of attacks if their demands are not met. Thus, there is an urgent need to build community intelligence and early warning mechanisms to promote effective conflict prediction and quick response.

**Building Community Intelligence and Early Warning Mechanism**

Early warning and early response (EWER) are critical to sustainable conflict prevention and peace-building in volatile societies. According to Sodipo, [early warning](#) refers to the “collection, analysis and communication of relevant information and conclusions to enable policymakers to make strategic choices”. Early warning and intelligence analysis involve collecting, analysing, and communicating strategic information. But unlike intelligence analysis, early warning is neither self-directed nor presumes the other party or parties as adversaries. Most communities in Nigeria have local EWER mechanisms and institutions, including village assemblies and town hall meetings, but there is little or no close collaboration between them and public policymakers and security agents. Following the upsurge of atrocious violence, community intelligence and EWER need to be mainstreamed into government conflict prevention and security

architecture. Suggestions for ensuring this collaboration are discussed below.

1. Ensuring government presence in local communities: Most rural communities in Nigeria where rebel groups proliferate lack the most basic government presence. “Some do not even have accessible roads, electricity, and mobile telephone services” (Personal communication). The non-availability of these basic infrastructure makes such communities vulnerable to attacks. This is because the people living in the areas find it challenging to make distress calls to security forces. Sometimes, even when security agents are eventually contacted, they find it difficult to access the communities because of bad roads or lack of bridges. With such pervasive structural violence in these communities, other forms of violence quickly emerge, leading to more conflicts and violence (Nwokolo, 2017). Thus, the government and its development partners should ensure that all Nigerian communities have access to roads, even if they are just earth roads.
2. Building trust between local communities and the security agents: There is minimal trust between most Nigerian citizens and the security agents, particularly the police. Many Nigerians, especially those living in rural communities, perceive state security agents as ‘predators’ rather than ‘protectors’. This perception may not be unconnected with the ignoble culture of brutality, human rights violations, and extra-judicial killings that characterise Nigerian security establishments (Isumonah, 2013). To ensure effective collaboration and sharing of strategic information, there is a need for trust-building between the security agencies and Nigerian citizens. Reputable security firms can be contracted for the sensitisation and trust-building project.
3. Fostering closer engagement between local actors and government. In Nigeria, most conflicts are grassroots-based. Even those which later spread to urban areas, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, usually erupt and emerge from rural settings. As a result, the engagement between government agencies and community-based organisations such as faith groups, traditional institutions, and other civil society organisations needs to be strengthened to ensure the effective sharing of information and support. A starting point for this in areas where there are telephone services is the sharing of phone numbers of Divisional Police Officers, Divisional Crime Officers, military commandants in the state, and local government chairpersons with local actors such as traditional rulers, pastors, imams, and other relevant persons for quick communication in emergencies.
4. Need for sensitivity to conflict indicators: Violent conflicts hardly emerge from the blue. They often start in the form of crisis and build up to escalation if the grievances fueling them are unaddressed. As part of EWER, both government and community leaders need to be trained to identify and nip conflict situations before they escalate. Government should work with security firms to execute such training. The money expended on such contracts is negligible compared to the losses of lives and investments that often accompany violent conflicts.

### Conclusion

Conflict situations in Nigeria have become more atrocious in recent years. There is the probability that the intense power struggle ahead of the 2023 elections might accentuate the conflict trends. One of the challenges of Nigerian security agencies has been a poor response to emergencies and distress calls. To address this challenge and ensure prompt security of lives and investments, there is a need to embrace the EWER mechanisms of providing good government presence in vulnerable communities, building trust between communities and security agents, fostering closer collaboration with local actors, and promoting conflict sensitivity among local leaders.

### References

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- Isumonah, Victor Adefemi (2013), “Armed Society in the Niger Delta”, *Armed Forces and Society*, 28(2), 331-358.
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**Nextier SPD Policy Weekly** provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

**Nextier SPD ([www.nextierspd.com](http://www.nextierspd.com))** is an international development consulting firm that uses evidence-based research to develop and build knowledge and skills to enhance human security, peace, and sustainable development as means to achieving stability and prosperity in Nigeria, and in the African region.

# Weekly Update

## ELECTRIFYING NIGERIA:

### Foundational Blocks for a Sustainable Off-grid Electricity Market

🕒 5:00 - 7:00 PM WAT  
📅 June 02, 2022

📍 **THOUGHT PYRAMID**  
18 LIBREVILLE CRESCENT, WUSE 2, ABUJA.



Zoom registration link

[https://bit.ly/electrifying\\_nigeria\\_nextier](https://bit.ly/electrifying_nigeria_nextier)



In-person registration link

[https://bit.ly/electrify\\_nigeria\\_nextier\\_reg\\_inperson](https://bit.ly/electrify_nigeria_nextier_reg_inperson)



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Valedictory Session:

**Dr. Wiebe Boer**

## Nextier Sample Publications



### Jihadist Violence and Military Resurgence:

The Crisis of Fragile Democratisation in Africa

In just over six months in 2021, coups made a rude comeback in Sudan, Mali, Chad, and Guinea.



### Conflicts and the Dilemma of Traditional Rulers:

Examining Nigeria's North-Central Region

The North-Central Zone has been in the eye of the storm of Nigeria's multiple conflicts for several years.



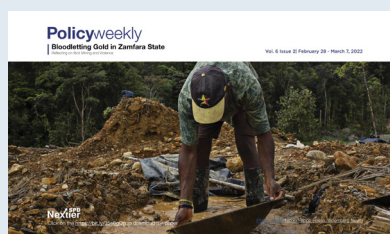
### A Resource Conflict Perspective:

Questioning the Lingerin Zamfara Crises  
The conflict in Zamfara is one instance of the festering conflicts in the North West of Nigeria with its peculiar grisly tales and very dim prospects of resolution in the near future.



### Beyond Farmers and Herders:

Natural Resource Conflicts in the North-Central  
Resource conflicts have remained intractable in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria.



### Bloodletting Gold in Zamfara State:

Reflecting on Illicit Mining and Violence  
Zamfara State has gained infamy for bloodletting connected to illicit gold mining activities.



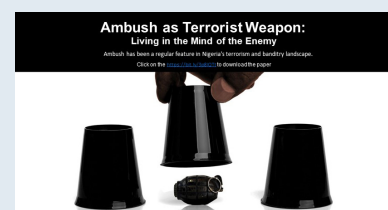
### Planning Development and Navigating Insecurity:

How Soludo can Achieve a Peaceful State  
As Anambra State Governor-elect Prof Charles Soludo prepares to take the mantle of leadership on March 17, 2022, a flurry of dreams and great expectations reverberates across the State and beyond.



### The Sit-at-home Protest:

Its Impact on Education  
Ultimately, educational standards are likely to suffer a decline.



### Ambush as Terrorist Weapon:

Living in the Mind of the Enemy  
Ambush has been a regular feature in Nigeria's terrorism and banditry landscape.