



RECONSTRUCTING THE NORTH-EAST

The North-East's region of Nigeria has been the worst hit by insurgent violence in the last decade. The campaign of violence waged against the state and society by the Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province which pledged allegiance to the Islamic State have reduced [human life to misery](#). Tens of thousands of lives have been lost on account of the insurgency as well as the counter-insurgent efforts to rout

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the jihadi extremists. In response, the Nigerian government and its allies have recovered swathes of lands and communities initially taken over by insurgents, but outright defeat of the rebels has remained an uphill task.

The state's elusive focus on winning the war has resulted in ineffective humanitarian interventions as evidenced in government-run Internally Displaced Persons' camps (IDPs). Similarly, efforts by donor agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to ameliorate the plight of victims have not yielded the desired results chiefly because of security threats, inadequate funds, poor knowledge of the environment, and lack of proper coordination. These backdrops have [forced some victims of violence to return to the ruins](#) of

their homes saying that there is no difference between them and IDP camps. Following these developments, this edition of Nextier SPD places the reconstruction of the North-East on the policy agenda by outlining the critical sectors that require urgent public attention.

With the President Muhammadu Buhari's [nomination of the board of the North East Development Commission \(NEDC\)](#), with Major Gen. Paul Tarfa (Rtd) as the chairman and Mallam Mohammed Alkali as Managing Director, the herculean tasks before these men and the commission are unprecedented, judging that from Nigeria political history and economic development. First, the commission is to be driven by the liberal ideology that [security and development are inextricably linked](#) and inseparable, and need

to be jointly chased and achieved (World Bank, 2003). As observed in the North East, Nigeria and any other conflict region, there are heavy development cost from conflict. Therefore [“promoting security is instrumental for development, and that inclusive patterns of development are an important element in avoiding conflict, so that development is instrumental to the achievement of security”](#) (Stewart, 2004). Nextier SPD will in the next ten weeks, analyse in details the various post-conflict reconstruction challenges facing the North-East Development Commission.

Security sector reform: One of the obvious manifestations of state weakness is the inability of the security services to rise to the threat posed by non-state violent actors. In the North-East, Boko Haram insurgent violence claimed 1,500 lives in the first half of 2012 (Agbiboa, 2017); and another 6,644 deaths in 2014 thus emerging as the deadliest insurgent group in the world for the year according to the [2015 Global Terrorism Index](#). While government-led counterinsurgency has reduced insurgent attacks since 2015, violence against both soft and hard targets continues as evident by frequent sacking of rural communities and the incessant raids on military bases respectively. Thus, urgent security sector reform is required to build the capacity of formal security personnel such as the police and the military as well as non-formal security operatives such as the Civilian Joint Task Force. Thus, as opined by OCED, and in line with jointly achieving development and security, SSR should be [“people-centred, locally owned and based on democratic norms and human rights principles and the rule of law”](#) (OECD, 2007) especially considering some of the triggers of the insurgency.

Effective management of displaced persons: Insurgent violence in the North-East has resulted in both internal and external forced migration of almost two million persons. Besides the several thousands in IDP camps across the country even as far as Uhogua in Edo State in the South, a number of them were forced to northern Cameroun, Chad and the Diffa region in Niger as refugees. The Displacement Tracking Matrix developed by the International Organization for Migration (OIM) estimated [1,884,331 displaced persons \(across 339,362 households\) in the six North-East states](#) as at April 30, 2017. The living conditions of the displaced remain appalling leading to malnutrition, diseases, sex-for-food and penetration of camps by insurgents. Current responses to IDPs and the sustainability of the camps need to be thoroughly interrogated in policy

Housing and agricultural reforms: The insurgency has further worsened the housing crisis in the North-East. For example, the Borno State government revealed that insurgents destroyed 986,453 homes and 726 electric power distribution stations and transformers across the 27 local government areas of the state between 2011 and 2017. The [cost of reconstruction was put at N1.9 trillion](#). Considering the huge number of displaced persons, the planning and execution of housing policies require considerable expertise. Similarly, besides the displacement of persons from their homes and livelihoods, the insurgency has also resulted in an untold level of sabotage including the [vandalism of 1,630 water facilities](#) in Borno State. Since some of these facilities were used for irrigation, their destruction has fuelled food insecurity in the region, hence the need for targeted policy formulation to address hunger and malnutrition. NEDC will need to think through its housing and city reconstruction, so as not to make some of the mistakes made in reconstructing some war-torn cities like [Beirut, which left it with wide-ranging political and economic repercussions](#).

Education and health sector reform: Based on its ideological interpretation of modern education as a sin, the insurgency has deliberately targeted schools for destruction. In the worst-hit state of Borno, a total of 5,335 classrooms have been destroyed and [600 teachers killed, resulting in the closure of 1,200 schools](#) in the Lake Chad region. In the same vein, a total of 248 primary healthcare centres and 19 out of the 48 general hospitals in Borno State were destroyed between 2014 and 2016 by insurgents. Reconstruction efforts need to painstakingly focus on these critical sectors of human security.

Finally, poor governance has been at the root of the insurgency. For instance, the North dominated the Nigerian and West African textile industry with its 63% capacity, 175 functional mills and over 800,000 employees in the 1980s. However, as at 2008, the number of employees had declined considerably to [24,000 and its mills reduced to only 25](#). This economic crunch threw many people out of employment; made them vulnerable to rebel recruitment; and increased the burden of the unviable state. An assessment conducted by Economic Confidential based on the Annual States Viability Index in 2017 discovered that Borno State, and 13 other states were insolvent having below 10% Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), which cannot survive without the monthly allocation from the Federation Account. Thus, there is need for governance reform to be built into the region's reconstruction strategy.