

Special Issue (Policy Brief)

Africa and its Disarmament Complexities: A Policy Brief

Introduction

Disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation are critical global concerns, and the African continent is no exception. Africa faces various complexities in its pursuit of disarmament, ranging from armed conflicts and interstate tensions to the illicit flows of arms. Excessive build-up and illicit trafficking in conventional weapons endanger international peace, security, and long-term development.¹ At the same time, the deployment of powerful conventional weapons in inhabited areas endangers humans. New and developing weapon technologies undermine global security and have gained significant attention from the international community in recent years. Disarmament is now widely accepted as the process of reducing the size and expenditures on armed forces, the destruction or dismantling of weapons, whether deployed or stockpiled, the progressive elimination of the capacity to produce new weapons, and the release and integration of military personnel into civilian life.²

The complexity that the African continent is faced with regarding disarmament is deeply rooted in the inability to curb small arms and light weapons trafficking,

which has fuelled various conflicts through misuse by state and non-state actors. Despite regional initiatives and civil society projects, arms proliferation and misuse are rising. It can be viewed from the perspective that some West African states have [liberalised](#) gun possession laws, arming paramilitary groups, which often facilitate arms diffusion, an unintended consequence. Also, the inability and fragmentation of West African States have limited the capacity of states to enforce a clear boundary between illicit and legal markets.

In light of the above, Nextier conducted a Development Discourse through a webinar, which was conducted with the objectives of:

1. Assessing and discussing the magnitude of arms proliferation on the African continent
2. Identifying the obstacles towards complete disarmament on the continent.
3. Scrutinising the ongoing efforts towards disarmament.
4. Proffering solutions necessary in attaining disarmament on the continent.

The Development Discourse was moderated by Dr. Ndubuisi Nwokolo and

¹UN, International Day for disarmament and non-proliferation awareness. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/disarmament-non-proliferation-awareness-day>

²Saxena, S. C. Strategic analysis: Disarmament: The African Perspective. CIAO. https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/sa/sa_98sas01.html

consisted of panelists: Major General A.M. Dikko (Retd), Juliana Betancourt, and Eric G. Berman. The discussion with the panelists, experts in arms control, migration, and safeguarding security sector stockpiles, touched on various issues affecting disarmament from various perspectives as well as the government efforts and the way forward.

In light of the above, this policy brief analyses the webinar on disarmament complexities in Africa and proposes key measures to address these challenges effectively.

Identified Issues

The panelists identified a wide range of issues affecting the African continent. Some of these include:

Responsibility of Security: The responsibility of security lies with both the security agencies and the people. This means all stakeholders must contribute to the discourse, including civil societies, traditional institutions, faith-based organizations, youth groups, and others.

Porous Borders: When it comes to open borders, the idea of a border becomes less clear as no lines are drawn. Consequently, the routes used to transport goods are often unmarked and free to use. Illegal arms routes across borders that converge at certain exchange points have been identified through an intelligence-driven process. For instance, a key problem is that weapons are shipped down from Libya. Although weapons have indeed been shipped down from Libya, other sources must be considered.

Under Utilisation of Frameworks: ECOWAS comprises 15 Member States that regularly share information and best practices. There are creative ways to bring together practitioners and share good practices. However, one of the challenges is that these frameworks do not always get picked up and operationalized.

Criminal Cooperation: Armed groups are pooling their resources together and trading weapons. For instance, if armed Group A only has about 150 to 200 men, they get support from Armed Group B to boost their strength and capabilities. In the success of their mission, they return the weapons to the original group as part of the loot.

Criminality: Criminal elements are the main problem in this space, and they are dominating it. The issue is not with armed groups seeking territorial gains or setting up a governance system but rather with the present power dynamics. Unfortunately, the Northeast is in a situation where confused motives drive individuals to bear arms. Many individuals do not fully understand what they are getting involved in and find it difficult to extricate themselves. The initial ideology behind bearing arms was based on a certain faith or belief system. Still, it has now metamorphosed into a hybrid form of terrorism with all sorts of elements that make it difficult to deal with. Criminal elements are operating within this space. Their actions are seen as part of terrorism; hence, it is important to develop innovative solutions that consider the unique dynamics of this situation.

Rapid Advancement in Local Fabrication: Local fabricators have a delivery capability capable of discharging a cartridge or a projectile. The capacity in local fabrication is at a point where 7.6 rounds of ammunition have been discharged from a locally fabricated window using simple material. Also, local fabricators possess the skills to manufacture a revolver pistol that uses a nine-caliber range. This is one of the issues the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons is trying to harness.

Awareness: There is a level of awareness pitching people on the side of the requirement to have arms for self-defense. However, criminal elements have found a quicker method and a quicker means by which they can meet their social and economic needs. So, there exists a psychological problem from somebody moving away from legitimate means to criminality. It is beyond individuals and within some formal organizations where quasi-security exists.

Limited cooperation towards Disarmament: There is a collaborative gap between the efforts of government institutions and other stakeholders towards disarmament. To bridge this gap, there is a need to raise awareness and bring on board all stakeholders. This exercise requires a whole-people approach and must be addressed as such.

Government Efforts

There is a complex environment that the government and other institutions like NCCSALW must key into to understand that the responsibility is collective.

Managing Stockpiles in Africa: Over the past decade, the focus has been on strategic stockpiles at the state and donor levels rather than tactical and operational ones. Although people have knowledge and expertise in this area, the energy has been directed towards strategic stockpiles. In conflict scenarios where weapons are stored in fixed sites, the perpetrators of an attack can easily access them. This issue needs to be unpacked and addressed. Understanding why attacks result in casualties and why people flee is important. The problem requires engagement with security sector governance and reform, not just physical security stockpile management. The root of the issue lies in leadership training and morale. While this issue is prevalent in Northeast Nigeria, it's a problem across the continent and in other conflict zones.

Marking of Weapons: When discussing marked weapons and the reduction of illicit weapon proliferation, it's crucial to note that a marked weapon can also be considered an illicit weapon if it's not legitimately required. Unfortunately, simply marking weapons has not significantly reduced the number of illicit weapons in circulation; however, it has helped identify the owners and trace how they were acquired. This information enables the identification of networks and manufacturers involved in illegal weapon trade. Surrendering weapons to legally authorized authorities is the best way to ensure they are removed from circulation. Claiming ownership without proper documentation does not diminish the fact that the weapon is illicit.

It is important to approach the situation with innovation to address the issues in this particular space. It is crucial to recognize that disarmament complexities are not just textbook impediments and

cannot be dealt with by simply putting functionalities on paper templates. It is necessary to meet the situation's demands by meeting specific obligations or disarming completely. It is important to understand that the security dynamics of an environment cannot be ignored when dealing with these issues.

Policy Recommendations

1. Federal and state governments can spearhead social cohesion alongside NGOs and CSOs, implementing Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration.
2. As porous borders remain an existential threat to complete disarmament, mapping out routes of illegal entry and exit is crucial within the Nigerian borders and with neighbouring countries. Information sharing is also key to addressing arms movement across borders.
3. Local Fabrication Capacity: Rather than allow these fabricators to be continuously exposed to criminal elements, efforts must be channelled to bring them on board and formalize their skills to mainstream them into the military-industrial complex.
4. There is a need for regional bodies such as ECOWAS to maintain consistency in the operationalization of frameworks against arms.
5. There is a need to sensitize communities and explain how integration works.
6. From the Humanitarian Perspective. (DDRR) - There is no one-size-fits-all template for internalization, and governments must design the process based on the context. Replicating the same approach, methodology, and process from state to state can backfire due to different conflict dynamics and challenges various stakeholders face. Therefore, involving communities at the center of the process is crucial,

Nextier SPD Special Issue 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.thenextier.com/spd) 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.

and informing authorities of the risks involved in taking arms out is vital.

7. Peacebuilding, mediation, and conflict resolution must take precedence in disarmament efforts.
8. Offering ex-combatants economic opportunities, vocational training, and psychosocial support will help to promote long-term peacebuilding and reduce the likelihood of weapons being recirculated.

Africa has complicated disarmament issues that call for all-encompassing, integrated strategies. Africa can make great strides toward disarmament by prioritizing

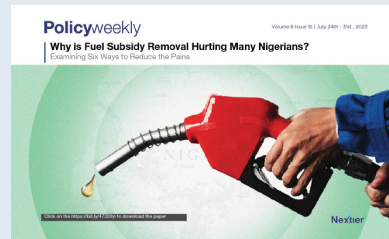
resolving conflicts, restricting the use of small and light weapons, encouraging regional initiatives, and strengthening multilateral cooperation.

The public has a stake in the effort to increase security. Incorporating a framework to eliminate guns from circulation must consider individuals who see them as a means of self-defense, agitation, or asserting some authority over a state. Africa can get over the challenges of disarmament and move toward a more secure and peaceful future with coordinated efforts from governments, regional organizations, and the international community.

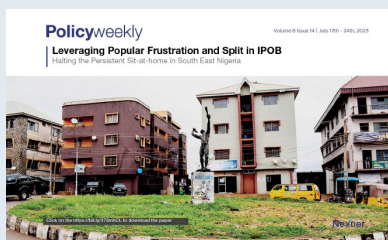
Nextier Sample Publications



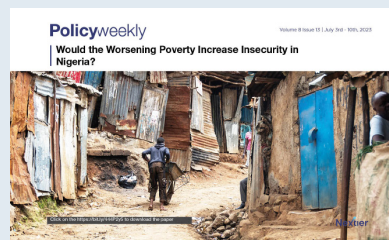
Food, Fear, and Fortitude:
Rural Women's Journey Amid Armed Conflicts in Plateau State
Plateau State has been under the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. The region has been grappling with an increasing threat of armed attacks, particularly in its rural areas. The aftermath of these bloodbaths...



Why is Fuel Subsidy Removal Hurting Many Nigerians?
Examining Six Ways to Reduce the Pains
Fuel subsidy ended in Nigeria when on 29th May 2023, the newly sworn-in President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, subtly announced the end of subsidy by thanking the outgoing...



Leveraging Popular Frustration and Split in IPOB
Halting the Persistent Sit-at-home in South-East Nigeria
You are currently viewing Leveraging Popular Frustration and Split in IPOB Halting the Persistent Sit-at-home in South-East Nigeria...



Would the Worsening Poverty Increase Insecurity in Nigeria?
Third World nations in general, particularly Africa, which includes Nigeria, struggle greatly with poverty. Many individuals in Nigeria live in poverty due to the country's...



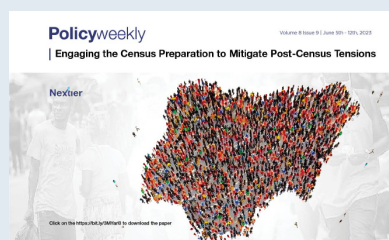
Safety of Buildings Versus Claims of Vengeance:
Exploring Issues around the Alaba Market Demolitions
On Sunday, February 18, 2023, videos were circulating about the commencement of demolitions in Alaba International Market, Ojo Local Government Area of...



Strengthening Child Protection in Post-Conflict Communities in North East Nigeria
Children are usually the most vulnerable in armed conflict and post-conflict environments. Beyond being afflicted by humanitarian crises occasioned by armed...



Nigeria's Off-Cycle Elections and the Impending Violence
Off-cycle elections are held outside the regular elections calendar. General elections take place in the same year in Nigeria as part of the country's...



Engaging the Census Preparation to Mitigate Post-Census Tensions
Barring the last-minute suspension of Nigeria's housing and population census, scheduled to start on 3rd May and end on 7th May 2023, the country would...