



THE IMPACTS OF CURRENT GLOBAL PANDEMIC ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Summary

When Nigeria's first case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a public health emergency of international concern according to WHO, was announced on 27th February 2020, the most populous black nation was already battling with several peace and security issues like rural banditry, Boko haram insurgency, Niger Delta militancy, kidnapping and armed robberies, communal clashes, gender-based violence et cetera.

As with several countries across the world, the containment measures adopted by the government of Nigeria such as lockdowns and bans on movements, needed to be enforced, hence the reassignment of security forces to other parts of the country, and the subsequent shift in focus from the pre-existing security issues. There were thus less security personnel available to sustain the countering insurgency operations against Boko Haram, bandits, armed robberies, gang wars, and uprisings across the country. A lot of gains made were lost, and a pre-existing concern of excessive use of force and deep levels of police brutality became even more visible.

The coronavirus pandemic has reminded us that the world is indeed a global village, as occurrences in the global north does have life-changing impacts in the global south, and vice versa, hence the need for solidarity and collective-cooperative actions at all levels. It also revealed the rot within our systems especially around peace and security, and showed that health pandemics are indeed huge security issues.

As countries continue to adapt to the new normal following the current pandemic, it is imperative that researchers, peace and security experts, development practitioners, state actors et cetera, begin to unravel the impacts of the current pandemic on peace and security in Nigeria.

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Introduction

Nigeria like other countries across the world, is still in the process of unraveling the societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been described as the most crucial global health calamity of the century and the greatest challenge that the humankind faced since the 2nd World War.²

Although the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus disease a Public Health Emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020, the deadly coronavirus pandemic did not hit Africa until February 11, 2020 when a case was recorded in Egypt. Nigeria through its Federal Ministry of Health confirmed the country's first case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the 27th of February 2020, in Lagos State.³

.Like most countries around the world, Nigeria adopted containment measures that were geared towards reducing the spread of the pandemic, with the virus exposing the rot across all sectors of development in Nigeria: health, education, agriculture, governance, communication and information, security and so on. These measures albeit inadequate such as lockdowns and ban on interstate travels took a huge strain on the economy of

the country with huge job losses and revenue streams especially in the informal sector where people depend on daily incomes, sharp rise in food prices and a steep decline in food production quickly translated into hunger and anxiety; collapse of the crude oil market for an undiversified economy like ours grinds all forms of economic activities to a halt.

With the Nigerian government confronted with the simultaneous challenges of combating the public health crisis of the pandemic alongside trying to bolster a weakening economy, insecurity issues heightened across the country. The reassignment⁴ of security forces across the country to enforce the containment measures, heightened concerns about the excessive use of force in implementing restrictive measures aimed at preventing the spread of Covid-19, and meant that there were less security personnel available to sustain the countering insurgency operations against Boko Haram, bandits, armed robberies, gang wars, and uprisings across the country.

Since the security forces were preoccupied with enforcing containment measures like lockdowns, Boko Haram and groups linked to it, took advantage of the shift in the focus of the

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969720323998>

³ <https://ncdc.gov.ng/news/227/first-case-of-corona-virus-disease-confirmed-in-nigeria>

⁴ <https://kujenga-amani.src.org/2020/06/04/covid-19-and-nigerias-counterinsurgency-operations-in-the-northeast/>

government, intensified civilian abductions, new fighters' recruitment and revived its offensives against military and civilian targets in the Northeast. Banditry operations got intensified, the Southern Kaduna attacks resumed, and conflicts between farmers and herders became visible again.

At the height of the lockdown, cases of gender-based violence, police brutality, armed robberies, gang wars, banditry et cetera rose sharply, with devastating consequences on ordinary Nigerians. Incidents of violence perpetrated by security forces deployed to enforce lockdown and curfew measures were highly reported. Deaths and injuries resulting directly from actions by State security personnel were also largely reported across Nigeria.

At its 910th meeting held on February 13, 2020, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) noted that the Covid-19 outbreak is a public health emergency that "could constitute a threat to peace and security on the continent. On 23 June 2020, the AU PSC again emphasized the importance of broader stakeholder engagement and involvement on peace and security especially by the youth, by adopting the continental framework on youth, peace and security and its 10-year implementation plan, providing the needed blueprint to foster inclusivity of youth in all areas of peace and security. On 14 July 2020, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on maintenance of international peace and security, UNSCR 2535 which called on all stakeholders to consider ways

to increase the inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacebuilding, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, and encouraged member states to include young people in decision-making processes across these areas.

Following the warning by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that the coronavirus pandemic has profoundly affected peace and security worldwide,⁵ a virtual roundtable dialogue was convened on 3 September 2020 to discuss the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on peace and security in Nigeria, and lay a foundation for a holistic assessment of the pandemic.

The inter-generational dialogue was also designed to conduct a deep evaluation of Nigeria's peace and security situation before and during the pandemic, and as well, provide an outline for a broad stakeholder engagement in addressing the peace and security challenges of Nigeria in the post COVID-19 era.

The roundtable was convened by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Nigeria, and attended by a crop of peace and security experts, developmental practitioners, youth peace experts, academia and researchers, young people, and the representatives of relevant state institutions, Civil Society Organizations, international organizations among others. This policy brief is an outcome of the virtual dialogue on the Impacts of the Global Pandemic on Peace and Security in Nigeria.

⁵ <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/un-chief-covid-19-challenge-global-peace-security>

Comparing Nigeria's Peace and Security situation before and during the pandemic: Identification

Nigeria is home to one-fifth of the population of sub-Saharan Africa and is currently in the second largest economy and the largest oil producer in Africa, so its importance in the region is clear. It's severe peace and security challenges are also well known, from the protracted war against the Boko Haram terrorist, to banditry, militancy, Shiites crises, the Southern Kaduna killings, the farmer-herder deadly clashes, to renewed surge in kidnapping and armed robberies, gang wars, intra-community clashes, Biafra secessionist agitation and its associated violent clashes with the security forces et cetera. Other overarching issues include poverty, unemployment, corruption and inequalities which includes social and economic

The world continues to experience one of the worst pandemics in human history. The novel Coronavirus is wreaking havoc on all facets of human existence, and nation-states are mobilizing diverse resources to provide medical, political, economic, and legal solutions. Over 50,000 cases and over 1,000 fatalities have been recorded across 36 states in Nigeria and the FCT as at the time of this brief. This presents a gloomy outlook for governance and development, and peace and security.

Between 30 March – 13 April 2020, incidents emanating from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of Nigerians by security forces, topped the chart of the complaints received by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) during the initial COVID19 lockdown, according to the report released by the Commission on 15 April 2020.⁶ The report also provided data that showed that as at 15 April 2020, more Nigerians (18 people⁷) had died from incidences of brutality (extra-judicial killings) involving security forces in the course of the enforcement of containment measures, than from the coronavirus disease (10 people). This provided deep insights into the protocols and rules of engagement for law enforcements in the country as well the efficiency level and capacity of law enforcement agents to deal with civil population. The shocking display of impunity and reckless disregard for human life in law enforcement by security personnel in Nigeria, was again visible during the lockdown enforcement period.

The rise of new forms of conflict including abuses and inter- personal ones within homes and communities amidst the rising loss of jobs and other means of livelihood among families, and the struggle for survival, was also visible during the lockdown enforcement period.

⁶<https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/nhrc-media/press-release/100-national-human-rights-commission-press-release-on-covid-19-enforcement-so-far-report-on-incidents-of-violation-of-human-rights.html>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/NCDCgov/status/1249802077498494976>

Addressing Peace and Security Challenges post COVID 19 in Nigeria: Outline for a broad stakeholder (including youth) engagement

From a peace and security lens, the imperatives of COVID-19 revealed that health pandemics are potent threats to the gains recorded around peace and security, and that social distancing is the new norm at least for the foreseeable future, hence the quintessential need for adaptation measures going forward. It also revealed the huge limitations of government interventions especially in emergency situations, emphasizing the importance of the complementary roles of CSOs to government interventions, while acknowledging that the private sector are paradigm players in the peace and security arena through their corporate social responsibility duties. Finally, it helped reiterate the fact that the world is indeed a global village, as occurrences in the global South does have life-changing impacts in the global North, and vice versa, hence the need for solidarity and a collective-cooperative action at all levels.

The pandemic provided notable opportunities such as the reevaluation of the definition

of impact from quantity (how many) to quality (how well) which validates the call for the development of new competencies especially in ICT especially for the State; and the acknowledgment of the importance of meaningful participation of citizens (individual and corporate) in governance, as a necessity to the protection and promotion of (human) security. It also presented an opportunity to reemphasize the value of international cooperation as a pre-requisite for international peace, security and development, as in the words⁸ of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, "we are all in this together".

Now more than ever, unhealthy narratives must change especially those that do not echo cooperation and partnerships such as: government is the state; business is for profit; CSOs are anti-government; partners (especially international) have their agendas; youth as perpetrators of trouble; the place of women is in the kitchen and other room et cetera.

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/we-are-all-together-human-rights-and-covid-19-response-and>

Conclusion

The effects of COVID-19 on the Peace and Security in Nigeria is still unraveling and would be more long term across regions especially the North-East, as it risks further eroding an already fragile social fabric and in turn undo the gains made in deepening foundations for peace and stability in the region .

Health pandemics are potent threats to peace and security situations and have the potential of exacerbating the already numerous peace and security challenges across nation-states especially Nigeria. There is need and also a huge opportunity for collective-cooperative actions and strategic systems thinking across all levels and involving everyone, in addressing issues relating to pandemics.

⁹<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/COVID-19-CO-Response/UNDP-NE-COVID19-Briefing.pdf>

Recommendations and Key Policy Options

The Government of Nigeria

- The Nigerian government must uphold its primary duty “to ensure that security of lives of the citizens are protected and guaranteed under the law” as guaranteed in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). More specifically, all interventions and engagements of the government at the national and sub-national level must contribute to improving the security of lives of the citizens, and addressing the underlying socioeconomic and political conditions of its citizens including poor health and social infrastructures, poverty, unemployment et cetera.
- Nigeria needs to develop a comprehensive and inclusive National Resilience and Mitigation Strategy, as the pandemic revealed an apparent lack of a National Resilience Roadmap which is a governance imperative. It is clear that ensuring national resilience requires the Federal government to regulate and take the lead in coordination, taking serious health measures, pulling everyone along, and polling all available resources in the common interest. A key lesson for the post COVID-19 era is the acknowledgment of the relevance of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and strategic resiliency processes to the national security architecture of any country.
- Human rights cannot be an afterthought in times of crisis, and even as the world still grapples with the biggest international crisis in generations, human dignity and the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, can and must guide

COVID-19 response and recovery. They must be put at the core of all efforts, as in the words of the UN Secretary General, a human rights lens puts everyone in the picture and ensures that no one is left behind.

- Containment measures that violate the fundamental rights of citizens cannot and must not be used as templates for shrinking of civil spaces and intimidation of citizens.

Security Agencies

- Protection of human rights of all Nigerians including young men and young women before, during and post-COVID-19 must be upheld. The leadership of the security agencies must conduct honest investigation into all allegations of unlawful killings reported by the NHRC and publish the outcomes. It must ensure that all the suspected perpetrators are brought to face the law, thereby ensuring justice.

Civil Society Organizations and Youth

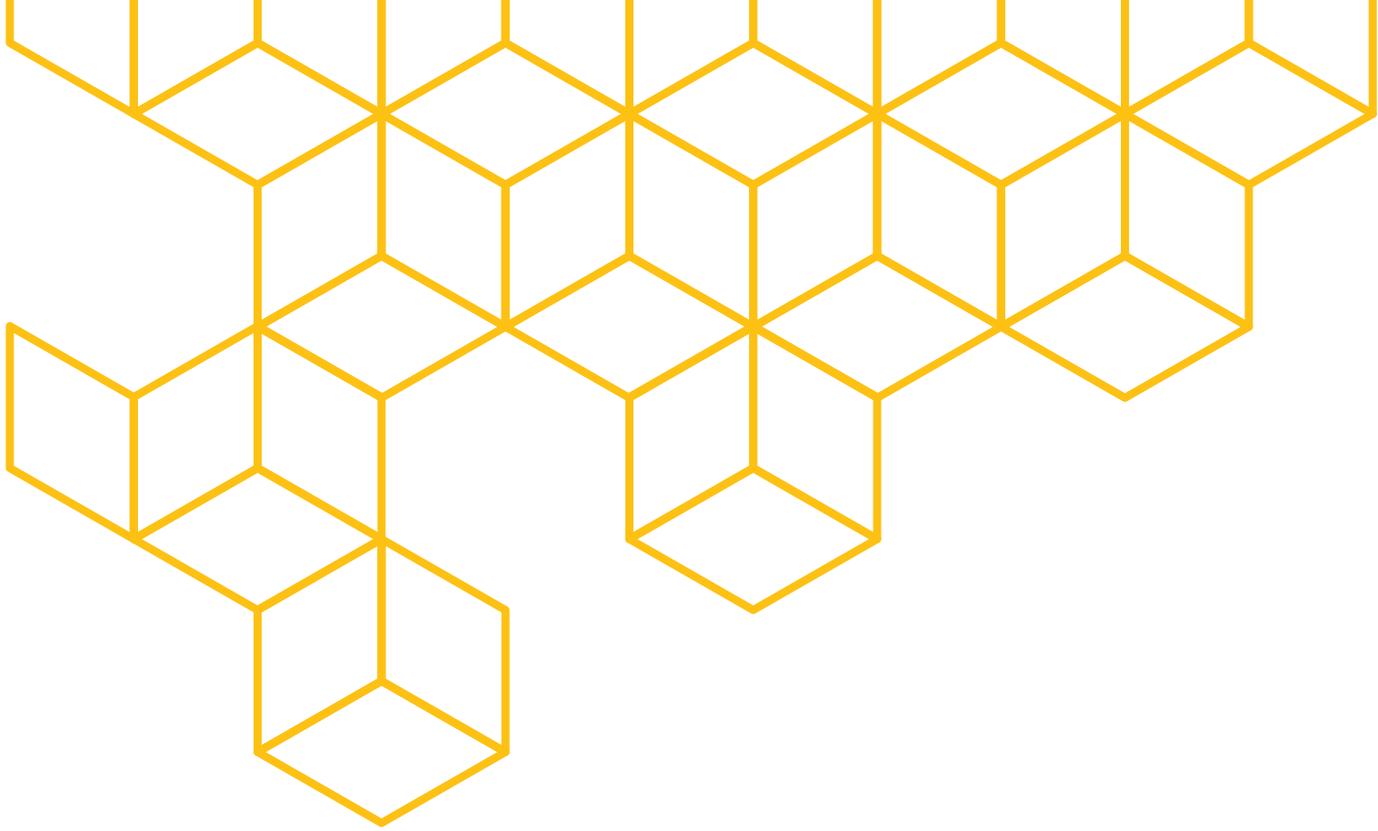
- CSOs must build strong partnerships amongst themselves toward building stronger citizen led peace and security initiative for the post-COVID-19 era. CSOs especially youth and women groups are most able to complement efforts of health officials as they have proven to be very resourceful during the darkest moments of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

¹⁰ <https://thenationonlineng.net/lack-of-resilience-strategy-hobbles-nigeria/>

- Youth, as major beneficiaries of peaceful and stable societies, must continue to play integral roles in promoting peace and security. The resilience, innovation and dedication which were further highlighted in COVID-19 era by young people, must continue to be showcased. The significance of collaboration especially with their peers; and the essence of the normative and legal frameworks (communiqués and resolutions) that protect as well as advance the roles of youth in Peace and Security, and in development, must be recognized and embraced. Young people -proven by their contributions and responses to the needs of their communities at the height of the pandemic- are equal partners in development and not just beneficiaries.
- The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is a potent framework that young people can embrace to further their work in peace, security and development across Nigeria.
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- Through corporate accountability programs, private sector and development partners provide the requisite technical and resource supports. These must be harnessed to empower the Nigerian people especially through capacity building in business and project management; mentorship and internship programs, exchange programs, and more.
- Much more than ever, cooperation and partnership, solidarity and collective ownership are needed in all actions relating to sustainable development in the post COVID-19 Nigeria.

Private Sector and other stakeholders

- Health pandemics have proven to be serious threats to peace and security, and the robust contributions and interventions of the private sector were the positive turning points in the struggle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Hence, the private sector are major players in the peace and security arena (especially



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