Non-State Armed Groups in North East Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities for Security Sector Governance

Edited by
Freedom C. Onuoha and Chris A. M Kwaja
DEDICATION

To all those killed, injured, and displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria
PREFACE

Nigeria has battled governance and security challenges since independence. Following the return to democracy in May 1999, however, a spike in the activities of a diverse number of armed violent groups increased the level of insecurity in the country. Since Boko Haram’s emergence in 2009, the group has killed at least 20,000 people, displaced more than 2.6 million others, and deeply fractured the Nigeria’s fragile security environment.

Government’s limited capacity to deal with security breaches by Boko Haram and a host of other armed violent groups, became the basis for the emergence of other armed groups wanting to fill the gap. These groups, comprising vigilantes and neighbourhood watch groups, were embraced by the communities that they served as viable alternatives or complements to state-provided security. They became part of the evolving security architecture of communities in the North East region.

The proliferation of counter-insurgency armed groups in North-East Nigeria presents an interesting subject for study. This research examines their roles from a security governance standpoint, focusing on Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, states that have been hotbeds of the Boko Haram insurgency. The objectives of the study are to map the groups, establish their capacities and impact, examine the relationships between the groups and with state security institutions and identify opportunities for constructive engagement.

The researchers gathered evidence on the nature of armed groups in the zone through a desk review and field study. The later involved key informant interviews (KII s) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with traditional rulers, local residents, members of NSAGs, and security forces. The study adopted a working definition of armed groups as “groups that bear arms with the capability to use it to alter the environment of peace and stability in pursuit of their objectives but who are not statutorily formalised as part of the state security institutions”. The definition accommodates a broad spectrum of armed actors that operate with and without an intention to challenge the state’s authority to govern.

Several key observations or findings presented in this report are specific to the states in which they were made, while other observations cut across the states. The key findings of the study include the emergence of the Civilian
Joint Task Force (C-JTF), which triggered more brutal attacks on civilian populations by Boko Haram, the absence of mechanisms for effective oversight and coordination of armed groups that assist in the provision of security, and the lack of relevant guidance documents in the form of standard operating procedures, code of conduct or rules of engagement that regulate the operations of the armed groups. One key finding from the study is the growing concerns over current and future threats posed by armed groups in the region and Nigeria in general.

In the light of these findings and for the purposes of programmatic engagement with pro-state armed groups, the study recommended, among others, comprehensive intervention in the area Demobilisation, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration programme (DDRR) for ex-combatants in the North East region; institutionalisation of frameworks for regulating the activities of armed groups, as well as emplacement of mechanisms for operational coordination among armed groups, community representatives and other state actors.
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We are also grateful to the team of researchers – Dr. Freedom Onuoha, Dr. Chris Kwaja, Dr. Yagana Bukar and Dr. Abubakar Munguno for their painstaking efforts towards the research in the North East region.

We thank very specially the staff of the CLEEN Foundation for their untiring efforts, which saw to the success of the fieldwork, report writing, validation meeting, and publication. The Executive Director, Dr Benson Olugbuo, and the Programme Manager, Ruth Olofin, provided critical support at different phases of the project.

Finally, our appreciation goes to participants in our Key Informant Interviews (KII s) and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), especially for their candid responses.
FOREWORD

Different Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) operate in several parts of the world under ideologies that pose a threat to national peace and security. NSAGs have also become a major security concern in Nigeria. Their ideologies and activities challenge governmental authority and violate human rights. But NSAGs are not all alike. Some came on the scene in response to the perceived failures of the state to secure life and property. These, commonly known as vigilantes, operate with the objective of complementing the state in securing communities.

The emergence of NSAGs in Nigeria is not entirely a new phenomenon. Their existence in the country goes back by several decades. However, the rise of the Jama’atu Ahlus Sunnah Liddawa’atti (People committed to the Teachings of the Prophet and Jihad), the violent insurgency group commonly known as Boko Haram) amongst a host of other security challenges, has thrust the NSAG phenomenon to the front burner of national security discourses. The interesting twist to these challenges, or perhaps to the failure of the state to contain them, was the emergence of the vigilante NSAGs mentioned above. NSAGs that emerged to augment the State’s efforts at combating insurgency and violence, and have operated with some level of support from the state. Unfortunately, vigilante NSAGs are adopting modus operandi that could in the end, add to the layers of insecurity confronting the nation.

Thus, we see a proliferation of NSAGs operating with different objectives. On one hand, Boko Haram, its splinter groups, and armed herdsmen are responsible for cataclysmic atrocities in and outside Nigeria. On the other hand, groups like the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), State Hunters Association, Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) claim to operate for the greater common good, to secure communities against insurgency and rampaging herdsmen. Unfortunately, vigilantes do not always play a positive role. Some have challenged constituted authority and state security actors, causing considerable unrest that have threatened all alike, regardless of creed or nationality.

Whatever the objectives that the various NSAGs ascribe to, they are changing the security landscape of Nigeria. They are redefining the security architecture of communities that have been at the centre of insurgent and herdsmen attacks. They are significantly altering the environment of peace and stability in the pursuit of their objectives.
This research documents complementary relationships that have emerged between state security operatives and NSAGs around strengthening security in communities, as well as the best practices evolving from such relationships in Northeast Nigeria. The report shows that each researcher’s focus on individual states enhanced the mapping of the complex mix of geographic, demographic and socio-economic elements that underpin security challenges and responses in each state. The study makes a compelling case for addressing security concerns – some of which were raised by NSAGs working for security in communities - in a timely manner that forestalls future threats to peace and security in the states.

This publication addresses the knowledge gap that exists in terms of understanding NSAG typologies in Northeast Nigeria, as well as their roles and impact. While the activities of some pro-security NSAGs have posed serious security concerns to the country’s economic, social and political fabric, there is – in the light of their potential for positive contribution to the security landscape - need to seek opportunities for engaging them constructively. This publication is a collection of desk reviews, Focused Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and reports by experienced researchers and academia who have studied NSAGs in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States of Nigeria and their relationship with state actors. They have identified strengths and weaknesses in the groups. Also, they have researched ways of resolving current and future threats generally posed by NSAGs in the North East. The cooperation of security operatives, experts and informants with the researchers during data collection and field work has been highly commendable.

We are grateful to the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) program of the British Council for their support for the research. We also thank the European Union for supporting this research through the British Council. We hope that policy makers, security agencies, NGOs and relevant stakeholders will find it resourceful in relation to the different roles of NSAGs in Nigeria.

Benson Chinedu Olugbue, PhD
Executive Director,
CLEEN Foundation
June, 2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOSHA</td>
<td>Borno State Hunters Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOYES</td>
<td>Borno Youth Empowerment Schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOYPAJ</td>
<td>Borno Youth for Peace and Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Corporate Affairs Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJTF</td>
<td>Civilian Joint Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoC</td>
<td>Code of Conducts</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDRR</td>
<td>Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
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<td>ICG</td>
<td>International Crisis Group</td>
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<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHL</td>
<td>International Humanitarian Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPOB</td>
<td>Indigenous People of Biafra</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAS</td>
<td>Jamaatu Ahlis-Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad</td>
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<td>KIIs</td>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGAs</td>
<td>Local Government Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAUTECH</td>
<td>Modibbo Adama University of Technology</td>
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<td>MCN</td>
<td>Conflict Management in the North East of Nigeria</td>
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<td>MEND</td>
<td>Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta</td>
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<td>MJTF</td>
<td>Military Joint Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>National Action Plan</td>
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<td>NERI</td>
<td>North East Regional Initiative</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>NSAGs</td>
<td>Non State Armed Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSCDC</td>
<td>Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYSC</td>
<td>National Youth Service Corps</td>
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<td>ONSA</td>
<td>Office of the National Security Adviser</td>
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<td>OPC</td>
<td>O’dua People’s Congress</td>
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<td>OSC</td>
<td>Operation Safe Corridor</td>
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<tr>
<td>OVGNAS</td>
<td>Organogram of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria in Adamawa</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCNI</td>
<td>Presidential Committee on North-East Interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>QH</td>
<td>Queen Hunter</td>
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<tr>
<td>RoE</td>
<td>Rules of Engagements</td>
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<tr>
<td>SALWs</td>
<td>Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOG</td>
<td>Standard Operations Guideline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAG</td>
<td>Vigilante Association of Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>VGN</td>
<td>Vigilant Group of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YPG</td>
<td>Yobe Peace Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>YPGVO</td>
<td>Yobe Peace Group and Vigilante Operation</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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BACKGROUND

Since independence, Nigeria has battled governance and security challenges. Increased insecurity, brought about by the activities of diverse violent armed actors, has, in particular, trailed the country’s return to democracy in May 1999. Groups from different ethnic, regional or religious identity have challenged the state’s monopoly of the instruments of violence.¹ Dominant ethnic militias such as the O’odua People’s Congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), and Bakassi Boys, among others, straddled the security landscape in the immediate aftermath of return to democracy.

Recently, however, violent criminal gangs involved in armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, oil theft, arms smuggling, piracy, and terrorism have become increasingly worrisome. Particularly concerning has been the escalation of terrorist attacks perpetrated by the extremist group known as the Jamaatu Ahlis-Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad (JAS), aka Boko Haram. The eight-year Boko Haram insurgency has left at least 20,000 people dead, forced more than 2.6 million others to flee their homes, and deeply fractured the fragile security environment in Nigeria.² A key feature of the deteriorating security environment is the emergence and proliferation of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). It was reported that the number of NSAGs that took up arms against the Nigerian state increased from just two

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in May 2015 to as high as 20 in August 2016. The groups include the Niger Delta Liberation Front, Niger Delta Avengers, the Ijaw/Oduduwa Militant Movement, and the Agatu Warriors, to mention but a few.

In the heightened security environment, government has shown limited capacity to deal with the armed groups or with the socio-economic and political issues that gave rise to them. State security forces - military, police and other security agencies - have had problems coping with the evolving threats. As a result, local communities have increasingly resorted to another category of armed actors in Nigeria - vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch - to provide security. A common feature of these vigilante groups is the fact that they are independent of state control and operate at the community level where policing by the state security forces is largely deficient. Another interesting feature is that they increasingly bear arms, crude or sophisticated. Vigilante groups have proved useful in helping to contain the spread of crime, but have also indulged in several excesses, such as extortion, harassment of citizens, unlawful killings of ‘suspects’, and abetting of crimes.

While the activities of certain categories of NSAGs such as insurgents, terrorists, militias, and criminal gangs pose grave threat to the Nigerian state, the operations of vigilante groups hold both promise and peril for the state, humanitarian actors and the civilian populace. In a sense therefore, there are challenges posed by NSAGs that could be considered as anti-state and those that are pro-state. Nowhere is the challenge more evident than in the North East region where Boko Haram insurgency has claimed thousands of lives, forcibly uprooted people, and destroyed property worth billions of naira. Insurgency in the North East, particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, has forced people to engage in self-help measures to ensure their own safety. The fragile security environment has therefore played host to diverse NSAGs either acting in opposition to the state or in concert with state actors to bolster safety and security. Groups like neighbourhood guards, village hunters’ guild, and the government-supported Civilian Joint Task Force

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(CJTF) have intervened to reinforce counter-insurgency operations.\textsuperscript{5}

The existence of different NSAGs in the region is an issue of serious concern not only to state security forces that have failed to contain their activities, but also to scholars who are mainly concerned with the factors behind their emergence and transformation. Increasingly, humanitarian actors and donor agencies are equally becoming interested in understanding how the activities of these actors shape the environment of their current and future programme interventions. Therefore, understanding the emergence, operations and relations of NSAGs will be vital in framing, designing and delivering programme interventions that will foster sustainable peace, security and development in the conflict-ravaged region.

It is against this backdrop that the Conflict Management in North Eastern Nigeria (MCN) programme of the British Council engaged the CLEEN Foundation to map the presence, role and impact of NSAGs in the selected states in the region. Thus, this study charts the proliferation and significance of NSAGs in the security environment of the North East region, focusing on Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states that bore most of the brunt of the Boko Haram insurgency. Its main objective is to map NSAGs in these three states to establish their roles, capacities, impacts, and opportunities for programme engagement. However, the study’s specific objectives were to:

- ascertain the presence, capabilities and nature of NSAGs operating in the three targeted states – Adamawa, Borno and Yobe;
- examine the relationships or linkages between the different NSAGs and with other state and non-state actors in the targeted states; and
- identify weaknesses and threats in the NSAGs landscape and opportunities for engagement by the MCN programme in the three states.

The study is animated by the following questions: How are NSAGs organised and funded? How do they operate? What is the nature of their relations with other state actors as well as other non-state actors? How are they perceived by the communities where they operate? What roles do they

play in society? And what opportunities and threats exist for engaging with these diverse actors by states, donors and humanitarian actors? These and other related concerns are central to the chapters in this volume. The result of the research conducted in the three states constitutes the content of this volume, and is presented in five chapters.

**CONTEXT AND CONDUCT OF THE STUDY**

The study focused on three states in the North-East region of Nigeria – Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe (see figure 1). The North-East region, which comprises Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe states, have a population of 18,971,965 (2006 Census) and an area of 279,636 square kilometres. The region shares international boundaries with the republics of Niger, Chad and Cameroon to the north, north-east and east, respectively. The region is very heterogenous, accounting for nearly half of the estimated 300 or more ethnic groups in Nigeria.6

The dominant socio-economic activities in the region include pastoral/nomadic agriculture, food crop production particularly groundnut crops, cowpeas, sorghum and millets, livestock production and animal husbandry, mining and smithing, among other. The region is known for its low human development indices, evident in high level of poverty and illiteracy, low access to safe water, poor housing and hygiene conditions, and high prevalence of diseases.

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Governance deficit in the region has created several security challenges including growth in the activities of NSAGs. Security challenges confronting the zone include terrorism, ethno-religious conflicts, cross-border armed banditry, smuggling, and cattle rustling, among others. The Boko Haram insurgency represents the greatest security challenge to the region, as thousands of lives and property worth billions of naira have been lost to multiple attacks and bombings by insurgents. Targets of such attacks have included churches, mosques, market places, schools, motor parks, military barracks and police stations, among others. As a result, the North-East has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. The scale of devastation and displacement in the affected states are largely a function of the frequency and lethality of insurgent attacks. In addition, the region’s porous borders facilitate transnational trafficking in drugs, arms,
and stolen vehicles. Insecurity in the region has forced many people and their businesses to shut down or to relocate to safer areas.

**METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW**

The researchers gathered evidence on the nature of NSAGs in the zone through a combination of desk review of publications such as reports, newspapers and academic literature, and conduct of field study involving key informant interviews (KII)s and focus group discussion (FGD) with traditional rulers, local residents, members of NSAGs, and security forces. The respondents to the KII s and FGDs were selected in such a manner as to ensure gender representation. However, there are differences in the number of KII s and FGDs conducted by the state researchers, due in part to the peculiar environment of the states as well as the nature of the NSAGs being investigated. For the purposes of fieldwork, local government areas (LGAs) in a state’s capital were chosen as representing urban centres while at least one rural community in each state were selected based on some peculiar considerations. Table 1 details the States and LGAs where fieldworks were conducted. Preparatory to the conduct of the survey, a methodology workshop was held on 29 June 2017 to enable the researchers and other stakeholders to validate the instruments – the questionnaire and interview guides – for the field survey. The field research was carried out in July 2017, by each respective state researcher.

*Table 1: States and local government areas were fieldworks were conducted*

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<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Type of LGA/Community</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adamawa</td>
<td>Numan; Yola North</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Borno</td>
<td>Jere; Biu</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Yobe</td>
<td>Damaturu; Potiskum</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Rural</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Gombi; Lamurde; Mubi</td>
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Some challenges were encountered by the state researchers in the conduct of the KII s and FGD. These include respondents’ avoidance of questions concerning Boko Haram, reluctance of most members of NSAGs to discuss the weaknesses of their groups, and overall suspicion by some respondents. The researchers relied on information from secondary sources as well as on their personal experiences as residents of these states to mitigate the possible gaps created by the limitations encountered in the field.
CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

The concept of NSAGs is not only the pivot on which this mapping study revolves, but one that has gained increasing usage by media practitioners, security analysts, military planners, policy makers, humanitarian actors, and academics in discourses on violent conflicts and wars. It is apposite therefore to clarify the way it is understood and used in this study.

Since the end of the Cold War and the sudden rise in the level of intra-state conflicts, attention on the phenomenon of NSAGs has grown considerably. As a result, there have been numerous efforts to define ‘NSAGs’ but the term still suffers from a lack of definitional clarity due to the very nature and types of armed actors. One report, for instance, views NSAGs as “sizeable groups with clearly defined shared agendas, which might include ethnic, religious, geographic, economic, social or political aspirations”. This definition is quite broad that it can accommodate any form of group, whether armed or not armed as constituting NSAG. Similarly, Grävingholt, Hofmann, and Klingebiel, define NSAGs simply as any “group that challenges the state’s monopoly of power by its actions”. This definition equally adopts a blanket approach that views any group that is in opposition to the state as a NSAG. It therefore stresses the challenge such groups pose to the state’s ‘monopoly of power’ while ignoring the element of arms or weapons possession as a defining element of such a group. Yet, there are situations where groups challenge state’s monopoly of power by their actions without using arms.

An example is secessionist agitations by groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Southeast Nigeria that are challenging the power of the Nigerian state without resort to arms. It is hugely contestable to qualify such groups as NSAGs.

In contrast, San-Akca defines NSAGs as “any armed opposition group that uses violent means to pursue certain political objectives. It is an overarching concept used to refer to ethnic and religious insurgents, revolutionary movements and terrorists”. This perspective raises the important element

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8 J. Grävingholt, C. Hofmann, and S. Klingebiel, Development Cooperation and Non-State Armed Groups (Bonn: German Development Institute, 2007), p.1
of armed violence in qualifying such actors but the classification of NSAGs goes beyond the three categories. Traditional definitions of NSAGs that emphasise the element of challenge to ‘state monopoly of power and violence’ are quite revealing much as they are problematic. They are revealing because they reaffirm the Weberian view of the state as the only entity that is legitimately entitled to the monopoly of violence in its territory. However, they are problematic in that they view NSAGs strictly as those groups that ‘challenge’ the state’s monopoly of violence. As Nett and Ruttinger put it, “NSAGs are often perceived as challengers without formal responsibilities that are not part of state structures, in contrast to state actors like governments that are tasked with maintaining peace and security and providing public goods”.10 Meanwhile, history has shown that:

The world is populated by armed groups that do not mount direct challenges to the Weberian state, but that are still relevant for their violent and destructive capabilities, the predatory and rent-seeking behaviour in which they engage locally, regionally, and trans-nationally, and the damage that they inflict on human rights, public security, the rule of law, and prospects for inclusive social and economic development. Many so-called ‘non-state’ armed groups are also deeply entangled with state power and state agents in complex ways.11

Thus, Krause and Milliken have observed that “the label ‘non-state’ represents a barrier to understanding their multiple roles and functions.”12 Indeed, there are contexts where armed groups are really not challenging the state’s monopoly of violence, instead they are complementing the effort of the state to monopolise the instruments of violence for the promotion of safety, security and stability. In other words, these set of actors do not exist in ‘opposition’ to the state but in support of the state in overcoming actors that are challenging the state’s authority. In fact, there are circumstances where state actors covertly or overtly supported the emergence of armed groups to bolster the provision of security.

10 K Nett and L Ruttinger, Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups, (Berlin: Adelphi, 2016), p.3
12 Ibid.
Therefore, such definitions do little to advance our overall understanding of other armed groups that may not be in ‘opposition’ to the state but are in themselves a partial creation by state actors to help shore up the capacity of the state in providing public goods such as security.

As Dew rightly noted, “history is replete with examples of armed groups – insurgents, terrorists, militias, and criminal groups – that have fought against each other, fought against states, and fought with states against other armed groups”.13 While these groups may differ in their motivations, forms, size, organisations, and functions, they share one thing in common; the capacity to perpetrate organised violence whether in opposition or in support of the state.

At the risk of over-simplification, discussions on which armed groups should be of interest has been subsumed under five broad categories, namely: insurgent groups; militant groups; urban gangs and warlords; private militias, police forces and security companies; and transnational groups.14 Owing to their many types and characteristics, Hofmann and Schneckener view NSAGs as:

- distinctive organizations that are (i) willing and capable to use violence for pursuing their objectives and (ii) not integrated into formalized state institutions such as regular armies, presidential guards, police, or special forces. They, therefore, (iii) possess a certain degree of autonomy with regard to politics, military operations, resources, and infrastructure.15

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For the purposes of this study, therefore, NSAGs are defined as groups that bear arms with the capability to use it to alter the environment of peace and stability in pursuit of their objectives in support or against a state. Viewed in this way, NSAGs have three crucial defining elements. First, they are sizeable groups with access to or in possession of weapons or arms. Second, they have the capacity to perpetrate organised violence that could alter the environment of peace. Thirdly, they are not part of the state’s formal national security institutions, even though they may have some form of relations with state institutions or actors. Depending on exigencies and their motivation, they may be in support of the state or against the state. As will become clearer in this volume, there are NSAGs that set out with the objective of endangering society, such as the Boko Haram, and NSAGs who want to protect society such as the vigilante groups, neighbourhood guards, village hunters’ guild, and the CJTF. The intent is to accommodate a broad spectrum of armed actors both with and without intentions to challenge the state’s authority to govern. This working definition guides analysis of the diversity of NSAGs that operate in the North-East of Nigeria.

Following this introduction, chapter two focuses on the outcome of the mapping study conducted in Adamawa state. While chapter three is on Borno State, chapter four discusses the activities of NSAGs in Yobe state. In addition to a modest analysis of the NSAGs in each of the states, each chapter provides a dashboard that contains a snapshot of these groups in ways that make an appreciation of their nature and activities easier. Finally, chapter five contains the conclusion of the entire study.

It summarises the key findings and puts forward various recommendations for the MCN and other stakeholders. After producing the first draft of this mapping study, the CLEEN Foundation organised a validation workshop in Abuja to present the findings of the study to key stakeholders, particularly representatives of security agents, the military, and civil society organisations (CSOs). The workshop was held on 8 August 2017, and feedback received from participants were used to enrich this study.
CHAPTER 2

NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN ADAMAWA STATE
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INTRODUCTION
The time has come to measure the risks posed by such a massive mobilization of vigilantes...In the longer term, vigilantes may become political foot soldiers, turn to organized crime or feed communal violence. Vigilantism can be a powerful counter-insurgency tool, but there is a compelling need to confront the immediate concerns it raises, notably in terms of impunity, and to begin planning for its long-term post-conflict transformation.\(^\text{16}\)

The security landscape of most communities in Africa has experienced a significant transformation. Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) have become dominant actors in the security and public safety of communities\(^\text{17}\). Depending on the reason or motivation for their emergence, NSAGs can be seen as a ‘double-edged sword’. They can be a major source of insecurity, as represented by the insurgent group, \textit{Jamaatu Ahlis-Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad} (JAS), popularly known as \textit{Boko Haram}.\(^\text{18}\) They can also become primary providers of protection, deterrence and intelligence as the case with groups such as the Civilian Joint Task Force, Hunters Groups, Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), as well as other community level mechanisms for protection and public safety.

There is a strong feeling among Nigerians that the erosion of public confidence in the security agencies, with respect to the provision of security and public safety, has led to an increase in the credibility and legitimacy of


\(^{18}\) While the insurgents refer to itself as JAS, The name \textit{Boko Haram}, which is a Hausa word that connotes western knowledge is forbidden, was used by Nigerians to describe the group.
some NSAGs that seek to protect their communities. Hence, communities are increasingly dependent on these category of NSAGs for their day-to-day security needs. Their emergence in Adamawa State reinforces the fact that they now constitute an integral part of, and vehicle for, public safety and protection community, which underscores their strong link with the people. While they manifest in the form of pillars of security and protection at the community level, the risks associated with weak oversight or regulation of these category of actors present a serious security dilemma in Adamawa State.

It is in the light of the foregoing that this mapping examined the nature, roles, capacities and impact of NSAGs seeking to promote security in Adamawa State. The objective is to identify potential opportunities for programme design and intervention. The overall goal is to identify state and community level conflict management and peacebuilding capabilities that can be supported, in order to help prevent the escalation of violence or deterioration of security in the State.

**CONTEXT: A PROFILE OF ADAMAWA STATE**

Adamawa State, with its capital in Yola, was created in 1991. The State is located in the North East region of Nigeria, sharing land boundary with Borno State in the north, Gombe State in the west, Taraba State in the south and the Republic of Cameroon in the east. Prior to its creation in 1991, Adamawa and Taraba States were part of the defunct Gongola State, which was created in 1976. The state has 21 Local Government areas namely Demsa, Fufore, Ganye, Girei, Gombi, Guyuk, Hong, Jada, Lamurde, Madagali, Maiha, Mayo-Belwa, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Numan, Shelleng, Song, Toungo, Yola North, and Yola South. Based on the 2006 population census, Adamawa state has a population of 3.7 million people, with 80 ethnic groups.

The economy of Adamawa State is predominately agrarian, although the state also has some mineral wealth. Common crops include maize, millet, sorghum, rice, yams, and cassava. Cotton and groundnuts are also produced as cash crops. The Fulani, Mumuye, Higi, Kapsiki, Chamba, Margi (Marghi), Bachama, Hausa, Kilba, Gude, Wurkum, Jukun, and Bata peoples can be

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20 See the 2005 Census Figures of the National Population Commission.
found in the state.

Geographically, Adamawa state lies in the middle of what is described as the second major grazing route North-East of Nigeria which runs from Niger, Chad and Cameroon Republics through Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano, Plateau, Nasarawa and terminates in the Niger Benue Basin.\(^{21}\) The relationship between farmers and herdsmen has been put under strain by demographic and environmental pressures arising from increased population, drought, reduced arability of land and scarcity of potable water.

The challenge of managing the ethnic and religious diversity of the State and the fierce competition over natural resource such as land, has led to series of violent confrontations in the state. For instance, about 10 villages were attacked in central Adamawa between January and July 2016, killing 100 people and displacing 2,500.\(^ {22}\) Similarly, in Demsa LGA, violent clashes between pastoralists and agrarian communities in early 2017 left over 30 people dead and hundreds displaced. In 2012, Fulani herdsmen allegedly raided a farm killing one man and the farmers attacked the Fulani camp in retaliation, killing 10 persons.\(^ {23}\)

Adamawa State has suffered huge losses from the insurgency that engulfed and devastated the North East region, beginning from 2009, killing hundreds and displacing thousands from their communities. Seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) were directly affected, including Gombi, Hong, Madagali, Maiha, Michika, Mubi North and Mubi South. The insurgency fractured relations between communities, and between communities and government.

**METHODOLOGY AND JUSTIFICATION**

The research used a triangulated social science research methodology, which involved the reviewed of secondary data, and the gathering of primary data through Key Informant Interviews (KII)s and Focused Group Discussion (FGDs). Using this methodology, the study examined key research questions that were crafted around mapping and establishing the roles, capacities, impact and opportunities of engaging NSAGs in Adamawa State.


\(^{22}\) See Daily Trust, 8\(^{th}\) October 2016.

\(^{23}\) See This Day, 9\(^{th}\) January 2017.
Between 1st and 20th July 2017, the researcher interviewed members of security agencies, vigilante groups, civil society, communities and the academia in Gombi, Lamurde, Mubi, Numan, in Yola North Local Government Areas of Adamawa State. In locating the respondents, the researcher took into cognisance, diversity on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, age and occupation respectively.

For security reasons, the identity of our respondents remains confidential. This is a necessary risk containment measure. The insurgency in the North East region still rages, and people are not too free to express themselves. The researcher was often reminded that people who spoke out against insurgency were killed. People were therefore careful about what they said and who they spoke to about the insurgency. For fear of repercussions, respondents may have held back sensitive information that could have been useful for this study.

In a sense, the choice of communities for the research was informed by the poor state of security in those communities, or the weakness in the capacity of the state to guarantee safety in the communities. The communities have all experienced insurgency and other forms of criminality, which accounted for the emergence of armed vigilantes.

OVERVIEW OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN ADAMAWA STATE

Issues around public safety across communities in Adamawa State, as well as the spate of insurgency in the North East region, which have had a devastating effect on the state, provided the basis for the emergence or transformation of other NSAGs. Their emergence has altered the environment of peace and security in a way that reveals that security provisioning has become a public good that is no longer within the realm of the State to monopolise. It is pertinent therefore to briefly look at the Boko Haram as the major NSAG whose activities led to the emergence or transformation of other NSAGs that seek to protect society in Adamawa state.

JamaatuAhlis-Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad (JAS) - Boko Haram

The JamaatuAhlis-Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad (JAS), commonly referred to as Boko Haram, represents one of the most dangerous and deadliest NSAGs in Nigeria and beyond. Mohmmed Yusuf founded the group in
2002 and after his death in police custody, Abubakar Shekau took over as its leader. Since 2009, the group has killed more than 20,000 people and rendered millions homeless in the North East region, with Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states as its main targets. It is estimated that 136,000 people were displaced as a result of the insurgency in Adamawa State24. In Adamawa State for instance, the group attacked Gombi, Hong, Michik, Mubi North and Mubi South LGAs. Access to weapons is a major enabler for Boko Haram, making it possible for the group to violently confront the Nigerian state from 2009 to date.

Attacks by Boko Haram against the Nigerian state and its citizens have been the main cause of deaths, displacements and devastation of communities across Adamawa State. This took the form of coordinated and deadly attacks, suicide bombing and abductions among others. This attacks not only led to the death and displacement of people, families were separated, livelihoods were destroyed, and a legacy of fear and trauma was created in the lives of the people25. The use of maximum retaliatory measures by the Nigerian military, as part of its comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy against members of Boko Haram, led to the arrest of many of its members. It was also reported that 8,000 members of the group surrendered to the military26. They are currently undergoing a de-radicalisation programme under the Operation Safe Corridor (OSC).

Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)
In the wake of the Nigerian state’s inability to respond effectively to security threats posed by Boko Haram in the North East region, the Civilian JTF emerged as a major actor in the fight against insurgency, complimenting the efforts of the Nigerian military. Since its emergence in 2013 to date, no military operation has been carried out without the involvement of the CJTF. According to a respondent:

25 Centre for Civilians in Conflict (2015) When we cant see the enemy, civilians become the enemy: Living through Nigeria’s six-year insurgency, United States.
26 This information was provided by Brigadier General Rabe Abubakar, Director of Defence Information, Defence Headquarters, Abuja, Nigeria. Available in www.google.co.uk/amp/www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/8000-boko-haram-members-voluntarily-surrender-military/amp/
We know Adamawa State more than most of the security agents. They have good guns but they don’t have a good knowledge of the environment. The insurgents took advantage of this to commit crimes. That’s why we are involved in joint patrol with the security agents. In each of the check-points you see, there are members of the CJTF that work with the security agents.27

Concerned by the inability of the security agencies to effectively contain Boko Haram in Adamawa State, a group of youths led by Alhaji Bako Ali Goni, established the CJTF. According to one of its members:

If the security agencies were effective in dealing with Boko Haram, the CJTF would not have been established. We were forced to set it up so that our communities would be free. This deadly group called Boko Haram destroyed many of our communities. I am glad that we came together to defend our land.28

With respect to the procedure for the recruitment of its members, one of the members of the CJTF maintained that:

Membership of the CJTF is drawn from volunteers who apply for recruitment. The recruitment procedure is contained in a guideline what explains our operations. It specifies the code of conduct for the members, responsibility of members, operational guidelines, offences and discipline. We are all supposed to work based on this guideline.29

One dominant feature of the Civilian JTF is the oath that is administered to prospective members, which reads as follows:

We have committed our lives to fighting the ungodly activities of the Boko Haram, and we cannot implicate any innocent person as a result of hatred, rivalry or any other differences. We would not take anything,

27 Interview with Alh Bako Ali Goni, Commander, CJTF, Adamawa State, 17th July 2017.
28 Interview with a member of the CJTF in Jimeta, Adamawa State, 15th July 2017.
29 Interview with a member of the CJTF in Yola, Adamawa State, 15th July 2017.
including money, as a bribe from anyone and we swear by the Holy Qur’an that we would expose any member of the sect, be they our parents, relatives, neighbours or friends and we would not turn our back on them… It is this mission that is the true Jihad not their acts of wickedness⁴⁰.

The administration of this oath to members of the Civilian JTF is a statement of commitment by the group in the fight against insurgency in the North East. Though, the extent to which the group has been able to monitor its members and sanction erring ones has not really been documented. The International Crisis Group (ICG) also raised such concern about the CTJF. It observed that:

While the use of civilian vigilantes has won praise for helping to drive many Boko Haram members, residents complained that the same CJTF harassed, insulted and manhandled motorists at checkpoints. The vigilantes’ operations have also provoked increased insurgent reprisal attacks against them, as well as local communities suspected of collaborating with the security forces. Residents further fear that as the vigilantes include remnants of “ECOMOG” and “area boys” (many of them drugs users), they could eventually become another source of insecurity.⁴¹

The procedure for recruitment in the CJTF also requires willing members to provide the names of persons of impeccable character that will stand for them as guarantors or sureties. This requirement allows for the recruitment of young men that are committed to the job and can be trusted. The circumstance that led to the emergence of the CJTF did not allow for proper screening, which created a situation whereby come members of the group had questionable characters. As some members of the CJTF noted:

Each time we discover people among us that are not working in line with the principles of the organization, they are penalized and even dismissed. Our commander

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⁴⁰ This information was provided by Alh Bako Ali, Commander, CJTF, Adamawa State.

is a very disciplined person and he makes sure all members are disciplined too. This is one of the reasons why we have been succeeding in our work here in Adamawa State.³²

The successes of the CJTF across the communities they operate is linked, at least in part, to the robust intelligence and early warning system they have put in place, which helps in tracking and monitoring the activities of people in the communities. Such measure is also extended to population centres such as motor parks. According to a member of the CJTF:

We adopted an approach of ensuring designated motor parks become the only places where people access cars for their travels. This is the only way we can identify criminals and suspected members of Boko Haram that are on the run. We still have a challenge with this. The Adamawa State Government needs to enforce it for compliance.³³

Hunters Association

As part of its counter-insurgency efforts in Adamawa State, the Nigerian military enlisted local hunters in view of their understanding of the local terrain. One of the successes of the hunters’ association in Adamawa State is attributed to the organized response of the group in fighting Boko Haram. For instance, the group was reported to have killed 75 members of Boko Haram in Maiha Local Government Area (LGA).³⁴ Members of the hunters’ association are mostly young men, with a sizeable number of women. In the case of Gombi LGA, a female hunter named Aisha Bakari Gombi, was honoured by her community as Sarauniyan (Queen Hunter).³⁵ She now leads a band of hunters who patrol the town and defend it from the Boko Haram insurgents. The hunters’ association joined the efforts at providing security in Adamawa state based on the conviction that there is a security vacuum

³² Interview with Ibrahim Hassan and Awana Mohammed, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force, Jimeta, Adamawa State, 16th July 2017.
³³ Interview with a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force, Yola, Adamawa State, 16th July 2017.
³⁵ Gombi was one of the LGAs that were attacked by members of Boko Haram.
associated with the inability of the security agencies, particularly the police, to effectively address security challenges. As observed by a respondent:

The security agencies, particularly the police, have logistical challenges, which makes it difficult for them to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Most of the police personnel have no vehicle, guns, radios for communication and other office needs. Many of them even use their personal money to do official jobs. The successes we have recorded so far in fighting Boko Haram is as a result of our commitment to protect our people.36

Beyond the counter-insurgency operations undertaken by the hunters’ association in Adamawa State, the group is also involved in guarding markets and public institutions. For instance, there is an existing partnership between the hunters’ association and the management of the Modibbo Adama University of Technology (MAUTECH), Yola, for the provision of security in the school. In the words of a respondent:

The management of MAUTECH engaged the services of about 50 members of the hunters association for the provision of security in the school. All critical facilities owned by the university are under the protection of the hunters. They are involved in 24 hours patrol, which makes the school safe for both the students and staff.37

Small Arms and Lights Weapons (SALWs) played a major role in the fight against insurgency. While most of the hunters use their personal weapons to confront the insurgents and conduct other community protection activities, there are instances when they are armed by the military. Some of the commonly used weapons include double barrel and pump action among others. These are approved weapons that are licensed by the Nigeria Police. Access to SALWs by the hunters made it possible for them to confront the insurgents and in some instances, arrest and recover weapons from them, which they handover to the military. As pointed out by a respondent:

36 Interview with Mallam Abdulahi Sale, Member, Hunters Association, Lamurde Local Government, Adamawa State, 18th July 2017.
37 Interview with Dr. Momodu, member of the MAUTECH Security Committee and Lecturer, Centre for Peace and Security Studies, MAUTECH, 17th July 2016.
I have a double barrel gun and pump action. They are licensed by the Nigeria Police. I bought them with my personal resources as part of my sacrifice in fighting the Boko Haram insurgents. With these weapons we have the courage to fight these insurgents and overpower them. Once we arrest them, we confiscate their weapons, record them and hand over to the military.\footnote{Interview with Mallam Garba Tarfa, General Secretary, Vigilantes and Nigeria Hunters Association, Adamawa State.}

The strong relationship that exists between the hunters’ association and the communities, particularly bolstered by their traditional leaders’ is a major boost for the group’s operations. They enjoy the support of the Lamido of Adamawa, Alhaji Muhammadu Barkindo Aliyu Musdafa, who convenes periodic meetings between the hunters’ association and the Adamawa State Emirate Council. The deliberations and resolutions in the aftermath of the meetings are transmitted to key stakeholders such as the Adamawa State Government, security agencies, as well as community and religious leaders across all communities in the State. As pointed out by respondents during an FGD:

If not for the support of the Lamido of Adamawa, there would have been serious problem in terms of coordination among the hunters. There are cases of leadership crisis, but the Lamido is always active in resolving it. Also, their relationship with the communities would not have been cordial. The community leaders are the leaders of the communities and the people respect them. No matter how important your idea or initiative is, if they don’t support it, you will definitely encounter serious problem during implementation.\footnote{Focus Group Discussion in Michika Local Government Area, Adamawa State, 7th July 2017.}

The public confidence and acceptance of the hunters and other local vigilantes that work in concert with them greatly contributed to the level of public security and safety that the people enjoy. In the words of a resident of Numan LGA:
The vigilantes and hunters are very active in the performance of their duties. In the last few years, the group has been able to arrest criminals along the Numan-Yola road, which is one of the most dangerous roads in Adamawa State. The situation is different today because they patrol this road all the time. We feel safe and happy today. Government should support them to ensure they have the required materials to function very well.40

One area that public confidence in the hunters has been expressed is in the form of support that the group receives from individuals. For instance, in Lamurde LGA, an individual provided shelters at designated check-points to shield the hunters against rain and sun. As explained by the donor:

I strongly believe these persons that have sacrificed their lives for the safety of our communities should be appreciated. Since we do not pay them salary, it is our responsibility to make their work easy by providing them with facilities that will also make them comfortable. We should not allow the rain or sun to deal with them just because they are sacrificing their lives for us. They also have families and they are human beings.41

Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN)
The Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), registered the VGN in 199942. The group represents the largest non-state security actor in Nigeria. The organisational structure of the VGN is contained in Annex 1. Article (4) of the Constitution of the VGN spelt out the aims and objectives of the group to include the following:

a. To assist the police and other law enforcement agencies to curb crime;

b. To protect and preserve public property;

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40 Interview with Niven Haman, Youth Leader, Numan LGA, Adamawa State, 15th July 2017.
c. Assist the Police in crowd control and maintenance of peace at public functions where the need arises;

d. With the clearance of the police, assist public agencies in the protection of their establishment plants and equipment;

e. To give information to the police and other security agencies of criminals or wanted persons residing in the ward or Local Government;

f. To locate the permanent or temporary residencies of receivers of stolen properties and 419 (fraud) practitioners for the purposes of enabling the police to arrest or monitor their activities;

g. To make positive and useful contributions to the advancement, progress and wellbeing of the community by mobilising and assisting in communal development efforts;

h. To abide by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and all relevant laws and byelaws.43

In a significant way, intelligence gathering and sharing between the formal security actors and the NSAGs has contributed to the successes recorded by the security agencies in the prevention of violence and crimes. In view of the spread of its members in all the communities across the state, intelligence is easily gathered and analysed, which in turn makes it easy for the security agents to respond in a timely manner. As observed by a police officer44:

We work closely with the vigilantes because of their knowledge of the communities. They have been helping us in gathering information about the activities of criminals. In most cases, they give us correct information about the criminals and their locations. In fact, there are instances when we receive intelligence about the time that criminals might strike. When we deploy our men, they arrest the criminals.

The activities of the VGN in Adamawa States involves joint patrols with the police and other security agencies, intelligence gathering and sharing with the relevant security agencies, as well as the maintenance of public

44 Interview with a Police Officer in Jimeta, Adamawa State, 15th July 2017.
order and safety in the communities. According to one of the leaders of the VGN\(^45\):

Government does not fund us. Though, we sometimes receive stipends in the form of support. We make the necessary sacrifice to ensure our State is safe and secured. We work with all the security agencies and they know our capabilities. You cannot talk about security in this state without mentioning our name. Some time ago, the Adamawa State Government said it would employ us. We are still waiting.

Notwithstanding the successes associated with the work of the VGN and other NSAGs in Adamawa State, there are concerns about mechanisms for control and oversight put in place. The general state of insecurity in the State, as a consequence of the insurgency, made it difficult for government to checkmate the activities of these NSAGS. Some respondents observed that:

Some of the NSAGs carry prohibited weapons such as pump-action, single and double barrel guns. The Boko Haram issue makes it difficult for them to be arrested. Some of them were trained and given by the army, mostly in Gombi, Madagali and Michika areas. If the army is involved, it becomes difficult for the police to step in and make any arrest. We are often reminded that the North East is still under a State of Emergency, which means the military is fully in control.\(^46\)

Among citizens of Adamawa State, there are strong concerns about the activities of NSAGs. While they are commended for their role in the restoration of peace and security across the state, their involvement in human rights violations remain a major challenge. This is particularly the case with the CJTF and hunters’ association. According to a respondent:

\(^45\) Interview with a member of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Yola, Adamawa State, 16\(^{th}\) July 2017.

\(^46\) Focused Group Discussion with some security personnel in Yola, Adamawa State, 14\(^{th}\) July 2017.
We are grateful that the CJTF and hunters’ association have come to support the security agencies, but they are now involved in collecting bribes at checkpoints. Sometimes, you see them flogging or making their fellow citizens to do frog jump. We are worried that if they are left unchecked, they will be worse than Boko Haram. Government should do something about it.47

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
Against the backdrop of the rising insecurity and weak state capacity to meet the security needs of the people, the emergence and activities of NSAGs in Adamawa State have become one of the defining features of the security environment. They have emerged as one of the major actors in the conflict, peace and security landscape of the state. In this light, there is a sense in which fragility defines the weaknesses associated with the lack of capacity of the formal institutions of the Nigerian state to meet the day-to-day security needs of the people. This provides a basis for the emergence of other NSAGs that work in concert with the state to counter the Boko Haram.

Presently, most NSAGs operating in Adamawa state are complimenting the efforts of the police and other security agencies. While there are supervisory and oversight institutions and mechanisms for the formal security actors, the NSAGs are not subjected to any form of serious oversight in terms of their conduct, nature of weapons possession, as well as accountability for crimes and human rights abuses. Without oversight, they might be a threat to security in the future.

Unlike the formal security institutions that are guided by Rules of Engagements (RoE) and Code of Conducts (CoC) in the fight against insurgency and management of internal security in the North East region, there are still no clear cut and officially designed Standard Operations Guideline (SOG) that regulates the activities of those NSAGs that are committed to providing security in their community. They operate under a regime of weak regulation, which makes accountability a challenge for security sector governance. This near absence of a regulatory framework raises concerns about human rights violations and impunity.

47 Interview with Dr. Said Owonikoko, at Girei, Adamawa State, 16th July 2017.
While the emergence of the Civilian JTF is crucial to crime prevention and security provisioning in the North East, there is a sense in which failure to integrate them into the security governance framework will make them become politicised and vulnerable to elite manipulation for selfish ends, or make them metamorphose into criminal gangs in the future. From a post-insurgency standpoint, the future of NSAGs in Adamawa State is a major concern for people in the State should these young people that have sacrificed so much for the security of their community fail to secure alternative source of livelihood.

Notwithstanding the successes recorded so far in the fight against insurgency and other forms of criminality in Adamawa State, there are concerns about the involvement of NSAGs in extra-judicial killings of insurgents, as well as other forms of human rights violation on citizens. The CJTF is viewed as an entity that sees itself as the military and that abuses people.48 This has further worsened the human rights situation in the state. As noted by the International Crisis Group, these NSAGs could become another source of insecurity, as the state risks creating yet another group of unemployed youths with fighting skills and capabilities.49

Apart from Boko Haram that constitutes a major existential threat to both the state and its citizens, other NSAGs have proven to be key providers of security across communities in Adamawa State. Since communities will increasingly rely on them, there is a sense in which a triangulated programming that seeks to foster and strengthen relations among NSAGs, security agencies and communities should be implemented. The focus here should be to ensure stronger collaboration and synergy among these stakeholders through periodic interfaces and exchange of information and intelligence.

Against the backdrop of the current de-radicalisation programme undertaken for members of Boko Haram that have surrendered, the issue of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) constitute a real challenge as normalcy gradually returns in some affected communities in Adamawa State. These concerns are critical, in the context of the kind of measures and mechanisms to be put in place as part of a stabilisation plan in the state.

48 Centre for Civilians in Conflict (2015) When we can’t see the enemy, civilians become the enemy: Living through Nigeria’s six-year insurgency.
RECOMMENDATIONS
In view of the increasingly important positive role that some NSAGs are playing in Adamawa State, there is a serious potential and opportunity for engaging them. This engagement can take place directly with them at the local level where they are visible and strong. There is also a role for the Nigerian State in the sense that it can provide the structures and mechanisms that accommodates these NSAGs with specific reference to oversight and accountability. To this end, the following recommendations are proffered.

- Interventions that target robust programmes for NSAGs with specific emphasis on understanding the strategic, ethical and legal importance of civilian protection should be implemented. This will help in ensuring adherence to human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) principles by NSAGs in their fight against insurgency and community protection. Specialised trainings on human rights principles should be designed and mainstreamed into the activities of NSAGs in Adamawa State.

- As some NSAGs become key actors in the provision of security, the issue of gender becomes a real challenge. There is a need for gender mainstreaming in the workings of these groups. To this end, there is the need to put in place a gender policy or guideline that recognises the important roles of women in their operations. For instance, the recognition given to Aisha Gombi, a female hunter in Gombi, by the traditional ruler is a major incentive.

- There is need to develop a legal framework and mechanism for the transformation, recognition, legitimisation and regulation of the activities of NSAGs, as a precondition for integrating them into community policing structures as practiced in other states. The Adamawa State and Local Government Councils should handle recognition of such NSAGs like the CJTF as part of a hybrid security system, among others.

Notwithstanding the complimentary role NSAGs are playing in terms of security provisioning and public safety across communities across Adamawa State, the primary responsibility for public safety and security rests with the formal security agencies. Programming that would help strengthen coordination and collaboration among security agencies, NSAGs and communities should be designed, with priority given to information sharing, early warning and response, as well as community policing. The success of such mechanism will rest on the ability of the police and communities to share information, which in turn enables rapid response in containing or checkmating security challenges.51

Programming that targets wealth creation, in the context of livelihoods should be designed to ensure that some members of NSAGs secure employment opportunities such as integration within the formal security structures of the government.

Intervention that supports programming around DDR is an important pillar for security and stability in Adamawa State. A credible DDR programme should be one that involves the communities, since at the end of such programme, the people involved will be reunited with the same communities they may have injured.

CONCLUSION
The weak capacity of formal security agencies to effectively respond to the existential threats posed by Boko Haram, was responsible for the emergence of other NSAGs such as the CJTF, Hunters Association, VGN, in complimenting the efforts of the state in the fight against insurgency and criminality in Adamawa State. The emergence of NSAGs in Adamawa State represents a major shift in the widely held perception that the security of the people rests primarily with the security agencies of the Nigerian state. Increasingly, there has been a surge in public confidence on NSAGs, largely due to their capacity to provide community protection and safety in the face of insurgency and criminality across Adamawa State. There is a strong sense of common commitment to peace and security by NSAGs in Adamawa State, which has contributed to the present state of public safety and stability enjoyed by communities across the state. The major challenge however lies in the extent to which these groups can operate in a synergized, cooperative and collaborative manner, as peace, security and stability multipliers. More so, there are concerns that these groups might constitute a new source of security threat if not properly regulated or effectively engaged in the post-insurgency era. Governments at all levels should look for more robust ways and mechanisms for engaging these actors.
Figure 2: Organogram of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria in Adamawa State
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Mode of Operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Joint Task Force</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Alh Bako Ali (Commander)</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Voluntary or enlistment by interested individuals.</td>
<td>Combat operations, Patrols, deployed to military check-points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunters Association</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Mallam GarbaTarfa</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Restricted to Hunters</td>
<td>Combat operations, patrols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilante Group of Nigeria</td>
<td>Registered by the Corporate Affairs commission in 1999</td>
<td>Mallam Abdulahi Adamu</td>
<td>17,756</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Patrols, protection of critical infrastructure, conflict management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Coverage</td>
<td>Function/Scope</td>
<td>Gender Status</td>
<td>Sources of arms</td>
<td>Arms used</td>
<td>Funding sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked Gombi, Maiha, Michika, mubi, Yola</td>
<td>Intelligence gathering, Combat operations, as well as linkage with other armed groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magrib (AQIM), ANSARU</td>
<td>Mostly young men. Was able to recruit young women who function as spies and suicide bombers.</td>
<td>From both local and international sources. Mostly, thefts from police or military armoury, purchase among others.</td>
<td>Double barrel, AK 47, Pump action, sub-machine gun,</td>
<td>No established source, through the group has been involved in attacks of banks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate in the frontline areas such as Gombi, Hong, Song, Madagali, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Shuwa</td>
<td>Intelligence gathering, arrests, escort services</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Locally manufactured.; and sometimes supplied by the military during combat operations against the insurgents.</td>
<td>AK 47, double barrel, single barrel, pump action, den gun, bow and arrows,</td>
<td>Support from the governments at the federal, state and local levels, as well as personal donation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found in the frontline LGAs such as Gombi, Hong, Song, Madagali, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Shuwa</td>
<td>Provide guarding services, patrols</td>
<td>Dominated by Males. (Though, with a female head of hunters in Gombi).</td>
<td>Locally manufactured. sometimes armed by the military during combat operations against the insurgents.</td>
<td>AK 47, double barrel, single barrel, pump action, den gun, bow and arrows,</td>
<td>Support from the Adamawa State Government, Local Governments, and personal contributions by members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found in the 21 LGAs of Adamawa State</td>
<td>Settlement of disputes, guarding services, patrol, escorts.</td>
<td>Dominated by males. Though, with few females.</td>
<td>Locally manufactured; and sometimes armed by the military during combat operations against the insurgents.</td>
<td>AK 47, double barrel, single barrel, pump action, den gun, bow and arrows,</td>
<td>Support from the Adamawa State Government, Local Governments and personal contributions by members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3

NON STATE ARMED GROUPS IN BORNO STATE
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INTRODUCTION
Security of lives and property is one of the fundamental elements of the social contract between the state and its citizens. The return to democracy in May 1999 has witnessed rapid deterioration of internal security in Nigeria, evidenced by increase in violent crimes and conflicts. The Boko Haram insurgency is probably the most devastating security threat that has confronted Nigeria since the civil war. The North East region has borne much of the impact of the insurgency. Borno State being the epicentre of the conflict has been the worst hit. As at July 2017, the State has lost about 27,167 people and some 1.4 million people have been displaced, most of whom are currently living under excruciating circumstances.\(^1\) Even before the outbreak of Boko Haram insurgency, the state witnessed high levels of insecurity in the form of armed banditry, cattle rustling and different forms of organised crime especially in the state capital, Maiduguri. The response of state security forces, especially the approach employed by the military, has largely been viewed by the average citizen of Borno State as defective, inefficient and counterintuitive. Communities in the state have therefore been left to devise local responses to deal with the growing level of insecurity, deploying a large pool of human resources (including youths) and small and light arms to fight insurgents. While community responses to insurgency has ensured quick gains and relief in the short term, they also seem to present new challenges and threats to the northeast region and indeed Nigeria in the long term. There is the urgent need therefore for a nuanced understanding of the diversity of Non State Armed Groups (NSAGs) operating in the state, their roles, composition, organisation, operational methods, and gender roles.

More importantly, it is necessary to recognise the extent to which they may pose threats to future security in the state. Much more importantly, however, is the need to explore opportunities for leveraging the groups for the overall security of Borno. This study maps the activities of NSAGs in Borno State, Nigeria.

**CONTEXT: A PROFILE OF BORNO STATE**

Borno State is geo-strategically located in the North-eastern part of Nigeria, bordered by three French speaking countries – in the north by Niger Republic and east by Cameroun and Chad Republics. As at 2006, the population of the state stood at 4.1 million.\(^2\) The state was created in 1976. It was the nucleus of the former Northeastern State when Nigeria operated the 12-state structure between 1967 and 1976. Borno today remains the relic of the historically famous Sudanese empire, Kanem-Borno, whose territory included the Chad Basin and beyond. This historical reality facilitated a high level of trans-boundary socioeconomic and cultural interaction despite past colonial division of the peoples of the region. The state is Nigeria’s gateway to Central Africa with significant implications for her security and economy. For instance, the Chadian civil war of the early eighties and the Darfur conflict that happened much later brought about a proliferation and small and light arms that had serious repercussions for the security of the state.\(^3\) Additionally, the state’s 650km long international border with Niger, Chad and Cameroun presents great immigration difficulty.

**METHODOLOGY AND JUSTIFICATION**

The methodology used for this study was essentially the qualitative research protocol. This was deemed appropriate because the focus of the research required data that would allow a nuanced assessment of the typologies of NSAGs, their structure and activities, and how they are perceived by the people. Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, three with communities in the three senatorial zones of the State and one with the Vigilante Group of Nigeria. One LGA each from the north, central and southern senatorial zones were selected.

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\(^3\) A.J. Oluwadare, Boko Haram Terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin Region: Implications for Sub regional security, Journal of International and Global Studies, vol. 8 no 1
Galtimari ward, a community within Maiduguri Township (but administratively in Jere LGA) was selected in Borno Central due to the incessant attacks it had experienced in the past. This community was selected to unpack the extent to which NSAGs and their activities are perceived by local people living in vulnerable urban communities. An Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) community from Gubio LGA (Borno North) living within the host community in Maiduguri was also chosen to gain insight into how NSAGs in Northern Borno operate and are perceived. Security was the primary consideration for limiting it to the IDPs living in Maiduguri. In Borno South, Biu was selected for being the most important town and for having recorded high number of youth restiveness in the past. The FGDs in Galtimari (Jere) and Gubio communities were entirely with men between 25 and 40 years while that of Biu consisted of women only, between the ages of 20 – 30 years. The latter was so designed to obtain a gendered perspective of the nature and activities of NSAGs in the state. FGD with VGN members were with men between the ages of 40 and 65 years.

To complement data from the FGDs, key informant interviews were held with the leadership of the main NSAGs identified in the state, namely the Civilian JTF, Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) and Borno State Hunters Association (Maiduguri Metropolitan Chapter). Additionally, interviews were held with two traditional leaders (district heads) in Jere Local Government Area and two senior officials of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), one each in Biu and Maiduguri. Personal experiences of the researcher working on conflict in the area were also used to triangulate the data.

In a rapid mapping exercise of this nature, it would be important to bear in mind certain limitations that impinge on aspects of the data collected. This would help to situate the overall picture of the NSAGs within the limits of what data was generated. First, it is necessary to bear in mind that due to the presence of large numbers of International NGOs currently working in the state, some of which have been alleged to be aiding Boko Haram, some respondents were not comfortable with discussing details about Boko Haram.4

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Haram as a group; rather other NSAGs were more preferred. Secondly, all the NSAGs interviewed were more open in discussing their challenges than their weaknesses and so the researcher was left to deduce from their responses to other questions. Thirdly, the study occurred at a time when there was a push for the recognition of VGN by the Federal Government, which may have led respondents to think that the interview was an assessment of their activities. This, despite assurances that the interview was not a government assessment, probably made the respondents less forthcoming with information. To address possible gaps arising from these limitations, the study sought information from secondary sources. Precautionary measures were taken to ensure the safety of the researcher and of respondents who were carefully selected from among state and non-state actors. The CLEEN Foundation provided introductory letters that explained the purpose of the study, which helped with recruiting respondents.

OVERVIEW OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN BORNO STATE
Based on the data generated, four major NSAGs were identified in Borno State. These are Jama’atuahlu Sunna Lida’awatiwal Jihad (Boko Haram), Civilian Joint Task Force, Vigilante Group of Nigeria and Borno State Hunters Association, and these are discussed subsequently.

Jama’atuahlu Sunna Lida’awatiwal Jihad (Boko Haram)
The emergence and activities of the Boko Haram provide a unique context for understanding the activities of other NSAGs currently operating in Borno State and the entire North East region of Nigeria. Even though some NSAGs predated Boko Haram, the insurgency both gave rise to new actors such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and shaped the mandate of the older groups like the Hunters group. Boko Haram was first spotted in Knanamma, the headquarters of Yunusari Local Government Area in Yobe State in 2002 under the name Nigerian Taliban. It came to the limelight in December 2003 when it attacked the local government secretariat and police station in Kanamma. Boko Haram is anti-establishment; it pursues the ideological objective of implementing sharia in Nigeria. Marchal outlines five reasons for Boko Haram’s insurrection, first, as part of a long history of resurgent radical Islamic movements in northern Nigeria and secondly as a
result of deep rooted social and economic grievances. The third reason he offers is the violation of the human rights of its members, which the group feels obligated to avenge and fourthly, the manipulation of the groups by the political elite to fulfil political objectives. Lastly, Marchal affirms that the group’s connections with external terror groups like al-Qaeda and al-Shabab have had a radicalizing effect.5

Estimating the size of Boko Haram’s membership because the group is splintered, with each embracing different shades of the radical ideology and approaches to recruitment. While some join as voluntary fighters, others are forced to join as fighters, or become sympathizers, or are forced to live in territories controlled by Boko Haram. Also, because they group is reclusive, the research resorted to proxy variables to inform presence. Areas (LGAs) that were attacked in the last one year were selected as proof of Boko Haram presence and activity. The proxy variable indicated that Boko Haram was active in all LGAs of the state except Shani, Bayo, Hawul and Kwaya Kusar. At the height of its notoriety in early 2015, Boko Haram controlled an area of about 20,000 square miles, an area the size of Belgium, carved out of the three North-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.6

The group is overwhelmingly a male terrorist organisation although women have played significant roles since its formative stage. As the conflict evolved, the role played by women in radicalizing their fellow women has varied. Women have acted as recruiters, spies, fighters/combatants, and as forced or willing suicide bombers.7 In a bid to actualise its mission of establishing sharia law, confront government forces and force people into its fold, the group has resorted to various weapons including Kalashnikovs, armoured tanks, rocket launchers, and improvised explosive devices, which are believed to be externally sourced. The latter is as a result of Boko Haram’s link with terrorist organisations outside Nigeria including


IS. While Boko Haram has terrorised countries of the Lake Chad region, the most devastating attacks were in Nigeria.

In 2016, the group splinted along three main factions; the Abubakar Shekau-led faction operates in and around the Sambisa Forest and northern Cameroun, while the second group is led by Abu Musab al Barnawi (son of its slain leader and founder Mohammed Yusuf) and is affiliated to the Islamic State (IS). The third group, Ansaru, is led by Mamman Nur. These two factions operate from Borno’s northern territory to Niger Republic and the area around the Lake Chad Basin.\(^8\) The three factions differ ideologically. While Shekau’s is purely Jihadist and believes that non-members of his group and Muslims deserve to be killed, the Al Barnawi and Mamman Nur groups share the belief that Muslims can coexist with non-Muslims and that government and the security forces must be fought.\(^9\)

Before the Boko Haram splintered into different factions, the group was described as a ‘terrorist group with a decentralized organizational structure’ governed by a 30 man committee called *Shura* or Consultative Council.\(^10\) It operated within a network of specialized cells that reinforce each other in terms of what the group requires to sustain itself including medical supplies, welfare, combat roles, manufacture of explosives and intelligence and surveillance.\(^11\) At the peak of the crisis in 2014, the group overran the Nigerian military detachments on various occasions, seizing weapons. The inability of state security services to contain Boko Haram led to the emergence civilian counter insurgency groups like the CJTF. Successful counter-insurgency collaboration between the military and the CJTF resulted in wilful surrender by some Boko Haram members.

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11 [op cit](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat_pdf/Boko%20Haram-02172017.pdf)
Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)
The CJTF is the youngest of all NSAGs in Borno State whose emergence was traced to May 2013 in Maiduguri. It emerged out of the frustration faced by youths in Maiduguri when they suffered double-edged tragedy from Boko Haram fighters and the Nigerian military. On the one hand, Boko Haram members were killing civilians, including youth who did not join their movement. On the other, many youths suffered brutality from the Nigerian military personnel who wrongly accused them of being Boko Haram members or sympathisers during the early stages of the insurgency. Consequently, the military engaged in indiscriminate detention, torture and killing of suspects, many of whom are youth. Faced with this harrowing experience, a handful of youths from Hausari ward of Maiduguri under the leadership of Lawan Ja’afar collaborated with the military in order to rid their neighbourhood (being the commercial nerve centre of Maiduguri) of Boko Haram elements. Since then, the group has attracted a growing number of members across Maiduguri and were successful in routing Boko Haram from its stronghold in Bulabulin Ngarannam outside the city. Thus, the emergence of the CJTF was aptly described by its state Coordinator as a ‘child of necessity’. At present CJTF is present in LGAs in Borno State except Bayo, Kwayakusar and Shani all in southern Borno. These are the LGAs that have recorded the least attacks from Boko Haram. At present, CJTF operates in LGAs such as Abadam, Marte and Guzamala where there are high numbers of displaced communities and an ever-present threat from Boko Harams. The rise of CJTF is symptomatic of the state’s inability to respond effectively to the increasingly complex challenges that insurgency poses for safety and security.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of CJTFs is how they operate and define themselves. Currently, there are two main types of CJTF: the 1,850-strong well-trained and kitted Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme (BOYES) formed in 2013 and the less formal Youth Vanguards comprising of the remaining members of CJTF that were not absorbed into BOYES.

12 Interview with Abba AjiKalli, CJTF State Coordinator, Maiduguri, 9/7/2017
13 Abba Aji, Op cit
The BOYES is the state government’s attempt to harness, organise and streamline the activities of restive youths that had helped to drive Boko Haram out of Maiduguri, before they turned to social vice or become new threats to security. Members were selected from highly volatile LGAs and given basic training in self-defence and crowd control by the military. They are paid a monthly stipend of ₦15,000 naira (roughly USD 40). In principle, both BOYES and Youth Vanguards operate under the umbrella organisation called Borno Youth for Peace and Justice (BOYPAJ), which is registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. But BOYPAJ is better known as the CJTF, a nomenclature that the leadership appears more comfortable with. BOYPAJ struggled for the passage of a Bill into law by the Borno State House of Assembly seeking formal recognition but this is yet to come to fruition. While the Borno State government has supported BOYES financially since its formation in 2013, it has been less supportive of the Youth Vanguards, who are often left at the mercy of top ranking government officials and politicians for which reason the relationship between the two groups is sometimes strained especially when viewed against the backdrop of the roles each performs. Since BOYES and Youth Vanguards were drawn from the same group of youths who fought Boko Haram in 2013, the two groups call themselves CJTF sharing the same leadership structure. The basic line of distinction between BOYES and Youth Vanguards however lies in the fact that the latter are not on government payroll. BOYES members are easily recognisable by the sky blue khaki shirt, trouser and face cap they wear while on duty, often seen attached to the military carrying out joint patrols or deployed to public functions for crowd control.

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16 For example, in a former engagement with CJTF, it was disclosed to me by a leader of one of the sectors that because BOYES waits for instructions from government to play combat roles, they are regarded as women by the Youth Vanguards. At some point the Youth Vanguards was also factionalised into ‘Senate’ and ‘House of Representatives’ on account of how much resources was made available by government and controlled.

17 It appears the name CJTF is preferred by both groups because the name suggests a relationship with the military which uses often the name JTF in many conflict affected areas of its operation.
Probably aware of its critics and transient nature, as well as the questionable character of some of its members, the CJTF embarked on an ambitious project of developing a database of genuine members. Recently, the database showed the group had 24,000 to 26,000 members, down from 32,000 as previously reported.¹⁸ Many were purged because they could not provide proper identification or were believed to be of questionable character by the CJTF from the Youth Vanguards. In terms of gender, CJTF is almost entirely male; total female members constitute not more than 100 for both BOYES and Youth Vanguard. Operationally, females do not have combat roles; rather they are used for surveillance and searching of fellow women in high risk communities.

In terms of organisation, the CJTF is much like a community-based association. Thus, it has a president, vice president, secretary, assistant secretary, public relations officer, treasurer and legal adviser and so on. Operationally however, it mirrors how the military Joint Task Force (JTF) in Maiduguri is organized to function. Like the JTF, the CJTF is divided into eleven sectors; sectors 1 -10 take charge of the security of a group of wards in Maiduguri. A Special Force of 850 CJTF members have been trained by the military to handle weapons and are usually deployed to play combat roles alongside the military during counter insurgency operations. In addition, the Special Force is responsible for gathering intelligence in the community and beyond.¹⁹ Each sector is headed by a Sector Overall Commander who oversees the day-to-day security of the sector in unison with other security operatives within the Sector. A spokesperson is also appointed to speak on behalf of the group.

Youth Vanguards are differentiated from BOYES by the uniform they wear. Members from each of these groups are distinguished by the colour of the T-Shirts worn. T-Shirts appearing in red, blue, green, purple, and brown, among other colours with the inscription ‘Youth Vanguard’ are worn by the members. Lately, a new uniform, much smarter than the one used by BOYES and Youth Vanguards described above - a black trouser, shirt and a face cap sewn in military-style fashion was introduced to the CJTF Special

¹⁸ This figure was disclosed by CJTF leadership at a workshop organised by Herwa Community Development Initiative on behalf of NSRP on 25th June, 2016 at Barwee Luxury Hotel Maiduguri.
¹⁹ Based on a tip off, CJTF have gone to as far as Lagos to arrest alleged Boko Haram fighters who escaped Borno State to other states.
Force by the state government which appears to confuse some residents. The provision of adequate uniforms appears to be a huge challenge to the state government as CJTF has called on the state government to provide more uniforms in order to help distinguish members. For now, all verified members of Youth Vanguards and CJTF may be identified by the official identity card issued by the group.

CJTF members use a variety of weapons when fighting Boko Haram. These include conventional military grade weapons such as AK 47 rifles, self-propelled anti armoured tanks and pump action guns which are used only by the CJTF Special Force members and are often provided by the military. Majority however use locally made weapons obtained from markets and artisans within the state, such as Dane guns, bows and arrows, machetes and sticks. Overtime, the CJTF has transformed from a modestly armed group in 2013 using sticks (hence the name yangora) into a more compact force that partners with the military and can use sophisticated weapons. The need for sophistication in the capabilities of the CJTF may have arisen from Boko Haram’s sophistication and the scale of attacks it launched across the state and region. In 2014, the CJTF requested and was granted permission by the Federal Government to bear arms like other Para-military organisations in Nigeria.

Since its formation, CJTF has been encumbered by perceptions about its image and relevance as a NSAG in the overall security landscape of Nigeria, by state actors and the communities it seeks to protect, prompting the State Government - with support from North East Regional Initiative (NERI) - to

20 A member of the VGN alleged in an interview that these are secretly used by Borno State Government as state police.
22 In 2015, about 850 members of CJTF were given special training to handle certain military hardware and have been variously engaged to fight Boko Haram side by side with the military.
23 The name ‘yangora’ literally meaning people who fight with sticks in Hausa was ascribed to them immediately after the group was formed in 2013. It describes how simple their weapon was then and has continued to be used till date to refer to members of the CJTF.
design a plan for its demobilization and reintegration. Its relationship with state security actors appears to have waxed and waned over time. Overall, of all the state actors in the state, CJTF’s relationship with the military is strongest. The military absorbed 250 former CJTF members into its fold in 2015 as recruits. Recently, both the leadership of CJTF and the military were alleged to have been involved in cattle rustling and complicity in recent Boko Haram attacks which has strained the relationship further. On the other hand, the relationship of the CJTF with the police was poor until recently. The major reason for this according to the police is their initial closeness to the military, which made them overzealous and seemingly above the law. But their relationship improved dramatically, perhaps due to two main factors: NERI’s and NSRP’s DDR interventions in the group made it adopt a more civil response to conflict than the hitherto militarised approach it was known and reproached for. Recent strained military/CJTF relations at the leadership level which led to mutual suspicion on both sides may also have facilitated police-CJTF relations. In all police stations in Maiduguri at present, there is a CJTF desk to ensure closer working relationship with the police.

In terms of the overall public perception of the CJTF, there is general consensus that the youths have been instrumental in returning peace to the state. Governor Kashim Shettima summed up public opinion when he publicly announced that “the emergence of the Civilian-JTF is a game changer in the fight against Boko Haram.” This was also recognised by most of the participants in the FGD conducted. Male participants in the FGD who were from Galtimari (Jere LGA) were unanimous about the efforts of CJTF.

28 CJTF leaders have complained several times that the Nigeria Police has refused to absorb any of their members even though the military and the Department of State Security Service have done so.
29 Borno State Police PRO DSP Victor disclosed this at a workshop organised by Herwa Community Development Initiative on behalf of NSRP on 26th June, 2016 at Barwee Hotel Maiduguri.
30 Interview with Abba Ajikalli, CJTF Coordinator, 7th July 2017
31 Op cit, Centre for Investigative Journalism
We see no fault of these boys in our area. A day to the attack on Giwa Barrack (2013), the military quietly withdrew, some even moved their families to other places. It was when Boko Haram attacked the barrack that we knew the military had foreknowledge of the attack. Thanks to the CJTF who chased the insurgents away.32

Nevertheless, some participants pointed out the excesses of the group as a fundamental problem that needs to be addressed quickly. In the FGD with VGN a participant observed that:

Some months back, a CJTF member came to my neighbour’s house to settle a problem between a landlord and his tenant. The tenant was given three months notice to vacate which had expired, and was about to be forcibly ejected with the connivance of the CJTF until I insisted otherwise.33

In Biu, women raised the issue of their involvement in politics as a major concern as they were sometimes alleged to be working for politicians who give them money.34 But perhaps the most serious allegations came from some FGD participants from Gubio LGA, who claimed that the CJTF in Bama connived with the military to loot people’s property when they liberated Bama in 2015.35 It was also alleged that CJTF, with its large pool of uneducated and untrained youths, project a perception of superiority to other groups, which probably explains why they infringe people’s rights with impunity. But the CJTF also has its own challenges in helping to fight insurgency. Apart from the 900 members it lost in its counter insurgency effort, it is currently embroiled in several legal battles with members of the public who are suing for wrongful arrests and trumped up allegations by the CJTF. A handful of CJTF members are also in detention for alleged offences and insurgencies that were made by relations of Boko Haram members that they had arrested.

32 FGD participant #1, Galtimari ward 7/7/2017
33 FGD participant #5 with members of VGN in Maiduguri 4/7/17
34 Biu LGA FGD participant # 8
35 Gubio LGA FGD participant # 1
Despite criticisms of CJTF, however, it is important to recognise their gallant confrontations with Boko Haram. Their knowledge of the actors and the terrain are an important intelligence to leverage. Also, the composition of the largely youth-driven group may be amenable to other socially and economically productive causes should they be demobilized. Nevertheless, the poor education of members of the group may well be the greatest challenge of dealing with it. It places huge expectations on the Federal Government as opposed to Borno State Government. CJTF leadership asserts that the state government has provided logistical support, stipends to some members and modest finances to deceased members’ families while the Federal Government has shown neglect for their welfare. Specifically, it was pointed out that while thousands of militants in the Niger Delta (despite their subversive activities) were remunerated and trained abroad, the CJTF members are yet to receive any assistance from the Federal Government even though they fought for the nation.36 These complaints represent a serious challenge that needs to be managed well in the interest of overall national security.

**Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN)**

Of all the NSAGs mapped, the VGN is the most widespread, having branches in most states of the country. The formation of VGN in the state dates back to 1983 when cases of rape, murder, burglary, vandalisation of public property and other crimes became rampant in Maiduguri. With the approval of traditional rulers, residents in some affected wards of the city established vigilantes to secure their communities. Most of the members were middle aged men and some were local hunters.37 Each ward or neighbourhood had its own vigilante. The vigilantes were not necessarily linked to each other and such ward mobilized resources to pay for the service provided. The wards later found this practice to be difficult to sustain. The upsurge in violence in the late 1980s through 1990s - perhaps arising from the negative backwash of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria - brought the need for a

36 For instance, it was pointed out by an FGD participant in another engagement by the researcher on 1/8/2017 that in the recent ambush on an oil exploration team by Boko Haram in northern Borno the CJTF lost 27 members, while the University of Maiduguri and NNPC lost only few of . To their surprise, when the Federal delegation came for condolence visit, only the University of Maiduguri and NNPC staff were mentioned as if their lives did not matter even though those killed fought to protect national interest.

37 Interview with Mohammed Abass, Borno State VGN Assistant Commander (Administration)
more coordinated approach to community security. This further necessitated the recruitment of more local vigilantes and better coordination especially at Local Government level where rudimentary support also came. A great deal of effort was made by the late Maiduguri based businessman, Alhaji Zanna Bukar Umaru Mandara, towards reorganising the Group at both the state and national levels. He later became the self-appointed President-General of the Group in the late 1990s. In 2004, the VGN’s activities at the state level were scaled up with parallel efforts in other states to give rise to a nationally recognised body.

The role of VGN in Borno does not differ from what it seeks to achieve as a nationally registered voluntary organisation. VGN aims to reduce criminal activities, protect lives and property and assist victims of accidents and disasters. Others include the arrest and hand over of criminals to police and gathering intelligence.\(^{38}\) The VGN bears the structure of a typical paramilitary organisation. It has a Board of Trustees, a Commander-General at the national level and State Commanders in all the states of the country. In Borno State, the Group is headed by the State Commander who is assisted by a Deputy Commander. Other officers include Assistant Commanders in charge of Administration, Operations, Intelligence and Finance. There is a Provost who is in charge of the discipline of erring volunteers. The structure at the LGA level is similar to the state structure. LGA VGN structures are headed by LGA Commanders.

Members include middle aged men and women as well as sizeable number of retired military and police officers. VGN is present in all LGAs in Borno except in the LGAs that suffered huge displacement of persons due to the insurgency. How the Group organises around the recruitment of volunteers is interesting. The term volunteer is preferred in this context because members are not paid by the community any longer. Recruitment follows a specified procedure. It involves endorsements by community and security officials at different stages and background checks. Forms are obtained for free at local VGN offices and prospective volunteers are required to obtain endorsements on the from their Village and District Heads, and Divisional Police Officer. Additional endorsements are required from the Local Government, State Security personnel and Chairman of the Local

\(^{38}\) [http://vigilantegroupnig.com/about-us](http://vigilantegroupnig.com/about-us)
Government of the candidate’s origin. Candidates are then interviewed by the VGN prior to recruitment. However, a few forms that this researcher sited did not have all the required endorsements. This may have been due to the bureaucracy involved in processing the forms at some of the offices.

At present, there are 4,500 vigilante volunteers in the state with Maiduguri Metropolis having the highest number at 2,500. At 50, Abadam LGA has the least. As with the CJTF, women form only a small proportion of the volunteers and their main role is to act as informants. There are currently about 250 women volunteers but numbers keep fluctuating for a variety of reasons. These include poor motivation due to lack of payment, old age, the withdrawal of permission to serve as volunteers and alleged infidelity by husbands.

Volunteers wear uniforms - maroon coloured trouser and jacket with a beret to match- when on duty to distinguish themselves from other NSAGs. The uniforms are self-provided. Volunteers serve in patrol teams along highways in the state or are deployed to high risk areas to help in the fight against insurgency. They carry simple weapons like Dane guns, bows, arrows, machetes, and double-barrel rifles, among others. An important distinction with other NSAGs is that some volunteers also double as artisans who make the weapons. Despite its volunteer nature, poor motivation and the crude nature of weapons, the combat support provided by VGN to the military in counter-insurgency is tremendous. This has gone largely unnoticed, if not unrewarded by authorities. As expressed by one of the volunteers during a FGD:

‘We engaged Boko Haram insurgents in the Lake Chad area (together with the military) in the middle of the month of Ramadan and arrested 22 of them. Initially, as the fighting intensified, the soldiers withdrew but I asked my men not to. On seeing our commitment to fight on, the military came back and joined us and together, we killed about 1,200 insurgents in Chiku Ngudowa. When we came back to Monguno, the Commanding Officer was happy with our efforts and gave us N50,000 (USD 140). There

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39 Interview with Mohammed Abass, Borno State VGN Assistant Commander (Administration)
40 Interview with Mohammed Abass, Borno State VGN Assistant Commander (Administration)
were 250 of us in all. When I complained to him about logistics being our main challenge, he promised to help fix that whenever we needed. 41

A distinctive character of VGN is that its volunteers consist of an admixture of hunters, retirees from the military and police, and ordinary community members with strong conviction in collective destiny and dogged fighting spirit. Some of their successes (in their perception) are attributed especially to their possession of charm, details of which are understandably personal and outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the revelation during the FGD that one VGN volunteer once arrested 20 armed Boko Haram fighters without firing a single bullet deserves mention if only to underscore their belief.42

Meanwhile, the VGN is often confused with Hunters Association by some people in the state. This was witnessed during the FGD with participants from Gubio LGA when some argued that the two associations were indeed one. The large number of hunters in the VGN may have been responsible for this. Also, some members previously belonged to both Hunters Association and VGN. To sort this confusion, hunters with dual membership were later requested to belong to only group, and many of them chose the VGN. Their choice of VGN may have been informed by the anticipation of the group’s recognition by the Federal Government as a Para military organisation. The group has been lobbying the National Assembly for recognition and funding.43

At the moment, there appear to be no major concerns about VGN’s volunteers as there have been with for the CJTF. However, the composition of VGN’s membership largely by volunteers in their forties and fifties may be the group’s most significant challenge. In Borno State, VGN relates well with state security actors. Its relationship with CJTF is however weak and probably informed by rivalry. VGN sees CJTF as not only acting outside the law but highhanded, overzealous and pampered by the government. For instance, while CJTF receives modest funding and logistical supplies

41 Participant # 6, FGD with VGN volunteers, Location and Date?
42 Participant #13, FGD with VGN volunteers
43 See for instance, Recognition for the Vigilante Groups available at This Day Live https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/06/01/recognition-for-the-vigilante-groups/
from the state government, VGN is largely ignored and its problems remain unattended to. Official records indicate that the Group lost 40 officers including its State Commander and a female Assistant Commander (Child Trafficking) and 310 volunteers of other ranks to the insurgency. Regrettably, this huge loss did not seem to capture the attention of the state government as was with the case of CJTF in the recent past. This can be seen in the following comment by one of the officials:

If a vigilante is killed, it is as good as planting chaff……… Our State Commander was killed but nobody said anything to us but when a CJTF member is killed, the Governor will give money and food items to the family of the deceased.

VGN volunteers are not very much present in the IDPs camps in the state, as their presence was limited to only three camps – NYSC (for Bama IDPs), Women’s Teachers College (before it was closed) and Teachers Village camp (for Marte IDPs) all in Maiduguri.

**Borno State Hunters Association (BoSHA)**

This group is a truly traditional association with a long history that is difficult to trace because hunting as a traditional sport is old in most African societies including Borno. Even before the advent of formal hunters groups and the deterioration of security in Borno state, hunters were traditionally organised as a professional group under a ruler who bears the title of mai or emir who has official recognition by the Shehu of Borno. Being a traditional group, ascension to the throne of the mai is by inheritance.

As far back as 1985, were drafted to protect businesses in Maiduguri against burglars in return for monthly monetary incentives. These efforts were later scaled up following the rampant armed robbery attacks along major highways especially the notorious Maiduguri – Damaturu and Maiduguri –

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44 For instance, CJTF currently has over 20 patrol vehicles donated by the state government for patrol and these vehicles are maintained at government cost. However, despite its modest efforts in fighting the insurgency, VGN is without a single patrol vehicle in the state. The VGN in the state has written 18 different letters to the state Governor for audience in order to discuss this and other problems but has yet to be granted.

45 Interview with Mohammed Abass, Borno State VGN Assistant Commander (Administration)

46 Interview with Mohammed Abass, VGN Assistant Commander (Administration) in Maiduguri
Biu roads. Local government councils provided modest monetary incentives while passengers also gave voluntary contributions for protection. The group became registered in the early 2000s.

There are two parallel structures i.e. one at state level led by Maigana Mai Durma, and several other lower mais cadres appointed for the LGAs by the Maigana. In one LGA there can be as many as three or four mais. Formalisation of the hunter’s group is more apparent at the LGAs. Nonetheless, the traditional character or structure of the group is retained, which suggests that formalisation is a requirement of state authorities that want official structures they can engage with, for the purpose of transforming the groups. Thus, the Chairman doubles as mai which is more preferable as it connotes royalty. Under the mai are several kachallahs or commanders appointed by the mai based on performance and recognition.

Typically, BoSHA is a male organisation though the female title of maira may be conferred on the wife of the mai. Her role is purely ceremonial - that of overseeing the feeding of guests during festivals which regularly take place, including the annual thanksgiving. Membership into BoSHA is through initiation or by birth. Prospective hunters begin by attaching themselves to a master under whose tutelage a young hunter would be initiated. After undergoing training which starts with running errands and acting as a porter during hunting expeditions – for a period that is set by the master, the prospect undergoes an initiation rite and thereafter, becomes certified as a young hunter who can also initiate others into the association according to the same tradition. Since Borno State is large and multicultural, differences may be expected between each group which may be informed by which part of the state the group comes from. BoSHA is self-sustaining and receives no funding from government and is not present in any of the IDP camps in the state.

Hunters in Borno use local weapons or arms such as bows, arrows, sticks, Dane guns, rifles, and machetes, among others. Their uniform is a dark green shirt, trouser and a green beret. Since the upsurge in violent attacks by insurgents on communities in the state, the hunters have responded modestly. The Association has offered to fight Boko Haram in the Sambisa Forest but was not heeded by the authorities concerned. For instance, early in January
2017, the Emir of hunters in the state Maigana Mai Durma held a press conference in Maiduguri to request permission from military authorities to fight Boko Haram insurgents in the Sambisa forest.47 The relevance of engaging the hunters in the fight against Boko Haram was recently re-echoed when the CJTF called on the government to allow hunters in the state to join forces with them and the military to further secure the state.48 This call indicates the cordial relationship between CJTF and hunters in the state, further lending credence to the argument of the Chairman of Maiduguri Metropolitan Hunters Association that “the two organisations coexist in a parent – child relationship”.49 The group also relates very well with all state actors in Borno state, and it is well respected by the general public who believe on the efficacy of charms possessed by these hunters, many of whom are herbalists. The issue of government delaying to grant the hunters’ request to fight Boko Haram in Sambisa has only led to more suspicion on the government. This is especially so as similar efforts were used in Adamawa and Yobe states to boost the fight against insurgency.50 If the use of supernatural power by this group could be proven as being effective, it offers a largely unexplored traditional approached that could be leveraged to bring the insurgency to an end in the state. Apart from the organisation being largely old, the traditional nature of this group may present a significant challenge to its engagement by humanitarian actors.

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49 Interview with Mai Umar Bukar, Chairman, Maiduguri Metropolitan Hunters Association.
50 One of the FGD participant from Gubio was so emphatic on this that he believes the reluctance by the military to allow hunters is because the military is benefiting from the continued conflict.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
In this study, four NSAGs namely *Jamaatu Ahlu Sunna li daawatiwal Jihad* (Boko Haram), CJTF, VGN, and Hunters Association were identified in Borno State. While the advent of Boko Haram led to the birth of CJTF, VGN and Hunters Association predated Boko Haram, but were forced to reposition themselves by Boko Haram threat. The study noted that the Boko Haram is ideologically divided into three factions that are led by Abubakar Shekau, Abu Musab al – Barnawi and Mamman Nur. The CJTF is an ensemble of two outfits, the BOYES and Youth Vanguards. All the NSAGs are present in almost all parts of the state with the exception of four LGAs in southern Borno (for Boko Haram) and in the three volatile LGAs of northern Borno whose population is displaced in the case of VGN and BoSHA. A common feature of all the groups is that women constitute only a small fraction of their membership. While CJTF, VGN and BoSHA all fight Boko Haram in their own ways, both VGN and CJTF seem to complain of poor equipment to fight the insurgents. BoSHA seems willing to take the fight to Boko Haram but has been restrained by the government. Cordial relationship exists between the military and all the NSAGs, although the relationship between the CJTF and the military appears to have waned quite recently. As NSAGs, there is rivalry between CJTF and VGN owing to perceived preferential treatment or support to the CJTF from Borno State government.
RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- The sheer number, strength, poor education and militarised nature of CJTF appear to make it an interesting group for immediate engagement than all others. In particular, its recent problems with its benefactor, the Nigerian military and improved relationship with police present both challenges and opportunities for engagement.

- Despite the large numbers of NSAGs in the state, there is the total absence of a legal framework that would regulate their activities. It is important that the bill before the Borno State House of Assembly is passed into law in order to hold members of NSAGs accountable for their actions.

- In view of the large number of youths that have acquired sufficient military training based on their association with the Nigerian military, there is urgent need to strengthen the implementation of the DDR plan articulated by the Borno State government. A strong emphasis on the livelihood component would be particularly useful.

- Since the insurgency appears to relapse lately, there is need to explore the claims of the BoSHA in deploying spiritual powers to combat Boko Haram threat.

- The need to logistically enhance the operations of the VGN in particular is paramount while paying equal attention at least to the families of all family members of vigilantes who have paid the supreme price in the fight against insurgency.
CONCLUSION
Boko Haram represents the most violent NSAGs in Borno State whose activities have produced one of the largest vigilante and counter insurgency groups in West Africa – the CJTF. NSAGs in Borno State are few and varied, but they have had significant impact on the security situation in Borno State, especially in fighting the Boko Haram insurgency. Even though most of the NSAGS use crude and simple weapons, they have played a huge role in filling the vacuum created by the ineffective police and military forces. Overall, they seem to have won the hearts of ordinary people in the state. Nevertheless, questions persist over their future post-insurgency role. Women, though they constitute an insignificant proportion in the membership of all the NSAGs, have played significant roles in the ongoing counter insurgency activities in the state.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Formation/History</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Membership/Size</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Mode of Operation</th>
<th>Area of Coverage</th>
<th>Functions/Scope</th>
<th>Gender Status</th>
<th>Source of Arms</th>
<th>Arms/Weapons Used</th>
<th>Source of Arms</th>
<th>Funding Source(s)</th>
<th>Relation with State Actors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Civilian JTF</td>
<td>May, 2013</td>
<td>Lawan Jaafar (Chairman)</td>
<td>24,000 – 26,000</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Patrols, arrest and detainment, combat roles (with military)</td>
<td>All LGAs except Bayo, Kwaya, Kausar &amp; Shani</td>
<td>Informants, Patrol Provide security services</td>
<td>99% male, &lt; 1% female</td>
<td>Military, private</td>
<td>Machetes, AK 47, pump action</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Good with police, soaring with military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VGN 1983</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Muhammad Tar</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Patrols, Arrest informants</td>
<td>All LGAs</td>
<td>Security/guard services, informants</td>
<td>99% male, &lt;1% female</td>
<td>Private, local blacksmiths</td>
<td>Dane guns, bows, arrows, machetes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Good with police, NSCDC, not good with military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BoSHA</td>
<td>Long history but registered in 2010</td>
<td>Mai gana Mai Durma (Borno) Mai Umar Bukar (MMC)</td>
<td>&gt;5,000</td>
<td>Voluntaryinitiation</td>
<td>Patrols, arrest</td>
<td>All LGAs</td>
<td>Security/guard services</td>
<td>Almost exclusively men, female as ceremonial members</td>
<td>Private, local blacksmiths</td>
<td>Dane guns, bows, arrows, machetes, charms</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Good with all state actors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Boko Haram 2002</td>
<td>Factionalised: Abubakar Shekau; Al Barnawy &amp; Mamman Nur</td>
<td>Difficult to ascertain</td>
<td>Voluntary &amp; conscription</td>
<td>Suicide, conscription, illegal attacks</td>
<td>All LGAs except Bayo, Kwaya, Shani &amp; Hawul</td>
<td>Insurgency</td>
<td>Largely male</td>
<td>Foreign, seizure</td>
<td>Foreign, seizure</td>
<td>Kalashnikov, APC, pump action, rocket launchers etc.</td>
<td>Foreign and local</td>
<td>Nil but military being suspected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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*Source: Author’s Compilation*
INTRODUCTION

The insurgency in the North East region of Nigeria associated with the group Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awatiwal-Jihad (JAS), widely known as Boko Harm, resulted in massive loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, displacements of people and social dislocation. The extreme violence affected over 15 million civilians with over 32,000 conflict related deaths in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States between May 2011 and May 2017.\(^1\) In addition, 2.5 million people have been forcibly displaced internally or across international borders while between 2,000 and 7,000 people have gone missing, including women and children believed to have been abducted by the insurgents.\(^2\) The Recovery and Peace-Building Assessment study determined that a significant number of towns in North-East Nigeria have been reduced to ashes. Over 400,000 housing units were destroyed while most of the few schools and hospitals were partially or fully destroyed.\(^3\)

The violence was particularly intense in 2014, when, with an estimated 7,512 casualties, the Boko Haram surpassed the Islamic State (IS) as the world’s deadliest violent extremist organisation.\(^4\) This heightened the desperate need to bring every security apparatus on board. In 2011, the Nigerian government deployed a military Joint Taskforce (JTF) to contain the insurgency, but was soon forced to invite the governments of Niger,
Chad and Cameroon to help contain JAS’ trans-border attacks. This led to the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) that contributed to dislodging the insurgents from large swaths of territories it had taken.

The deteriorating security situation also prompted the conscription of non-state actors to complement the efforts of the JTF. This led to the creation of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in neighbouring Borno State. In Yobe State, already existing vigilante groups joined with volunteers to form the “Yobe Peace Group and vigilante Operation”. Vigilante groups in Yobe State played significant roles in driving out JAS from the state capital, towns and villages. The insurgents were uprooted from their abode and driven out to the bushes, leading to a decline in the frequency and intensity of attacks. Collaboration between the Nigerian military forces and vigilante groups contributed hugely to the success of military operations against the insurgents. Vigilante groups became the eyes and the ears of the military, providing critical intelligence that made the military’s counter-insurgency responses precise and effective. Indeed, vigilantes have been essential in turning back the tide on the insurgency not only in Yobe state but the North East region as a whole. However, there have been repercussions: JAS has launched retributive attacks on civilian populations in what it called “an all-out war” that punishes the youth of Maiduguri and Damaturu for “forging an alliance with the Nigerian military and police to fight our brethren”.

As JTF and vigilantes piled the pressure on JAS, the group resorted to isolated guerrilla warfare, targeting civilian populations everywhere. JAS launched several reprisal attacks against vigilantes, traditional and religious leaders and their communities, frequently using suicide attacks in Mosques, markets and motor parks. However, following a succession of military successes against JAS in recent times, the security situation in Yobe State became relatively calm. Thus, while the insurgency continues to evolve with JAS still very resilient, the role of vigilantes groups appears even more essential especially in the area of community policing and detecting early warning signals.

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5 International Crises Group Africa Report: Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram N°244, 23rd February 2017
Despite the important roles of vigilantes, there are concerns about their activities and what roles they should play in the future security set up of the state. For instance, vigilantes have often been accused of taking the law into their own hands through arbitrary arrests and summary judgments on suspected insurgents. Thus, to ensure that vigilantes do not become a source of insecurity in the future, there is need to properly understand their current structure and roles in the security architecture of the state.

Understanding the roles of non-state groups (NSAGs) through a mapping study would provide relevant information for the design of interventions such as the MCN programme, which is focused on intervention at the community level. The findings of the study will equally be used for project design and setting of baselines for monitoring and measuring interventions at regional, state and in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Yobe State. Specifically, the study would reveal opportunities for programme engagement that will contribute to the process of streamlining, regulating and if need be formalising the activities of NSAGs to subject them to effective state control in order to mitigate the security threat they could pose to the society or state in future.

CONTEXT: A PROFILE OF YOBE STATE
Yobe State is located in the extreme North East region of Nigeria, between latitudes 10.5° and 13.11° north and longitudes 9.5° and 13.5° east with a total land area of 47,153km². It was carved out of former Borno State on the 27th of August 1991 by the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida and is bordered to the east by Borno State, Gombe State to the south, Bauchi and Jigawa States to the west. In the north, it shares international border of 323 km with Niger Republic. Yobe State comprises of 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and three senatorial districts. It is the sixth largest state in terms of landmass with a major portion of its land area located in a semi-arid environment characterized by low potentials in terms of agriculture productivity (low rainfall, limited topsoil; scarce water resources).

The current population of Yobe State is 3,294,173 million based on the 2006 National Census. The state is composed of people with diverse

7 International Crises Group Africa Report: Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram N°244, 23rd February 2017
historical, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The largest tribe is the Kanuri while the Fulani, Kare-Kare, Bade, Bolewa, Ngizim and Hausa are also found in significant numbers. Similar to other parts of Northern Nigeria, Hausa language is a common medium of communication among the people. Majority of the population are Muslims while Christianity is also practiced by a significant number of people among the minority Kare-Kare, Ngizim and Ngamo tribes. Religious identity plays a major role in the history and politics of the area such that it is very common for people to identify themselves first and foremost as Muslims or Christians.

Yobe state is largely agrarian with 80% of the population engaged in subsistence farming. The state also lacks any significant revenue generating potentials, depending largely on statutory allocations from the Federal Government which accounts for over 80% of the state’s revenue. Human Development Indicators in the state (literacy, health and life expectancy), compare unfavourably with other states of the Federation. The prevalence of poverty is 73.3% in the North East region, the highest compared to other zones of the country. It is estimated that 2.1 million people – 78% of Yobe’s population of 3.2 million people live below the poverty line and this means that 78% of the population survive on less than a dollar per day. Widespread poverty and poor governance contributed to experiences of and social injustice that led to the outbreak of Boko Haram insurgency in 2009.

Other factors that exacerbated the crises include extreme religious ideology, environmental degradation and increasing populations which undermine food security. These drivers acted with one another in several different ways to generate the violence and destruction that continues to plague Yobe State and the North-East. A study of former Boko Haram combatants in Nigeria by Mercy Corps found that pull factors related to poverty, illiteracy and endemic violence played a crucial role in the recruitment of many individuals.

8 “Yobe State: People, Population and Settlement” www.onlinenigeria.com>yobestate accessed online on 10th July 2017
Many women joined because their husbands became members of Boko Haram, or because they wanted to learn the Qur’an. Many men joined either because the hoped membership would give them access to economic prosperity, or they joined out of fear for their own survival.10

One of the most far-reaching impacts of the insurgency is the widespread displacement and destruction of private and public infrastructure that it caused.11 Yobe has been the state most affected after Borno State. The RPBA found that Yobe sustained 13% of all infrastructure and social service damages in the North-East. The agricultural sector was the most severely affected.

The incessant killings by Boko Haram combined with the Army’s atrocities of indiscriminately targeting innocent civilian resulted in a mass exodus of people from the state capital to other parts of state and beyond. Gujba and Gulani LGAs completely fell under JAS occupation and the people relocated to other parts of the state. Yobe hosts more than 131,000 IDPs, and nearly 95% of IDPs live in host communities, causing significant strain on the state’s economy, service delivery and social fabric.12

Indeed, the displacement left the social fabric of the North east has been deeply damaged. It eroded social relations between citizens and government, ethnic groups, communities and even within extended families.13 The separation of households and the loss of family members through conflict and displacement also cause significant economic, social and psychological trauma. Women and girls were reportedly abducted and forced into marriage, used as sex slaves or subjected to sexual violence. The conflict impacted negatively on the economic situation of women, limiting their access to livelihoods and increasing the number of women-headed households.14

12 International Organization for Migration (IOM), Displacement Tracking Matrix, Round VII December 2015
14 See 13
Overall, the Yobe State government has revealed that while the exact number of casualties from the violence is unknown, the figure runs into thousands with 1,098 health centres, 5,162 vehicles and 109,267 livestock destroyed. Hundreds of villages and towns were sacked and destroyed.\(^{15}\)

**METHODOLOGY AND JUSTIFICATION**

The primary data for the study was generated through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders in state institutions, vigilante groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), traditional and community leaders. Secondary data was obtained from desk reviews of relevant documents.

The sites selected for the research include the state capital Damaturu and two LGAs namely; Potiskum and Geidam. The study was carried out during on-going conflict. Thus, security concerns and accessibility of possible respondents played a major in the selection of the LGAs. Among the areas viewed as safe for travel, consideration was given to LGAs that have experienced several insurgent attacks in the past and had a prominent presence of vigilante. Potiskum was selected because it is the largest city, is the commercial capital of the state has the largest cattle market in West Africa. Its strategic location as a vital economic nerve centre and a melting pot of the ethnic groups in the north east made it a special target of the insurgents. Major insurgency attacks on the town included the Potiskum International Cattle Market attack on May 3\(^{rd}\) 2012; the suicide attack on Government Secondary School Potiskum of 10\(^{th}\) November 2014 (leaving 46 pupils dead) and the February 2015 attack on the GSM market. In June 2015, the vigilante office in Potiskum came under a twin bomb attack, leading to the death of a unit commander and six of his men. The second LGA selected, Geidam, is located 180km from Damaturu the state capital. It has a population of 157,295 people based on the 2006 national census. As the border town with Niger Republic, it has suffered incessant insurgency attacks such as the attack on the police station in the early days of the insurgency, and on local churches, the LG complex, the High Court and a bank.\(^{16}\) The town was briefly occupied by the insurgents in 2014 when some residents fled across the border to Maine Soroa in Niger Republic.

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\(^{15}\) AFP May 17, 2016 www.dailymail.co.uk

\(^{16}\) IRIN News, Timeline of Boko Haram Activity. www.irinnews.org
The researcher encountered challenges while conducting the field survey. Some respondents provided clues and deep insights on many issues of interest, but some did not feel comfortable with questions about the activities of Boko Haram. It took some time to explain the objective of the research and convince them. Overall, three FGDs (one in each location) and 15 KII interviews were held in the various locations. Other limitations of the study border on the fact that a field based study in a conflict zone is cumbered by a lot of mistrust, which made it hard to obtain informed consent and get the representatives of the various vigilante groups to discuss their activities. They insisted the research team must first obtain clearance from the Military. Indeed, most felt uncomfortable discussing issues about security. Furthermore, many respondents could not identify Boko Haram as a NSAGs similar to vigilantes as most local residents view the group as evil compared to the positive view they hold about vigilantes that contribute to community security. A staff of Yobe State University in Damaturu who is well known in the state had to facilitate our contact with the vigilantes and community leaders through the Secretary of Yobe Peace Group and Vigilante Operation (YPG). Subsequent introductions to the group’s officials in Potiskum and Geidam were done through by the Secretary. The vigilante officials in the LGAs served as “gatekeepers’ that facilitated our introductions into the communities. Overall, despite the delay that initial respondent’s apprehensions caused to data collection, the fieldwork was worthwhile and productive.

OVERVIEW OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN YOBE STATE
There are two broad categories of non-state armed groups in Yobe State namely the extremist group Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awatiwal-Jihad (JAS), widely known as Boko Harm and the numerous vigilante organisations. The vigilante groups are the Yobe Peace Group and Vigilante Operation (YPG), and the Vigilante Association of Nigeria (VAG). There are several other groups and units that belong to one or both of these two categories. The Hunters Group (Sarkin Baka) for instance has several affiliates (Tela Group, Oga Philip unit, Takashuka Group, the Bogobiri Group and the Bunu Gabai Group) and its members are found in YPG.
It is also a member of the VAG. The Kandira Group, also affiliated to the Hunter’s Group, is found in Geidam LGA and it is part of the YPG. Except for the YPG, these vigilante groups, now somewhat dormant, have been in existence for a long time. The invitation by the government for the group to join counter insurgency operations, as well as the major role they played in driving out insurgents from Yobe State, brought them to limelight.

**Jama’atuAhlis Sunna Lidda’awatiwal-Jihad (JAS)**

The JAS is one of the deadliest organisations that have terrorized the North East of Nigeria and the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon. It was in Yobe state that Boko Haram launched one of its earliest terrorist attacks in 2003, when it raided Geidam and Kannama LGAs targeting the Local Government headquarters and Police stations. Thereafter, the group went into hiding and resurfaced in 2009 when Several hundred militants attacked Police Stations, Churches and other security outlets in Maiduguri in an all-out war against the state. Its vaunted objective was to outlaw democracy and Western education and impose Sharia law. The Nigerian military forces stormed the headquarters of JAS in Maiduguri and captured its founding leader, Muhammed Yusuf, who was later killed while still in police custody.17 The failure to prosecute the security personnel responsible for the extra-judicial killing of its leader represents one of the primary grievances of the Boko Haram. It fanned the embers of the group’s terror campaign against Nigerian security forces and authorities.18 Starting from 2010, the group renewed attacks on different targets that included offices of the Nigerian Prisons Service, worship centres, government structures, and media houses in Kaduna, Kano, and Abuja.

While Boko Haram claims its mission is to impose Sharia law, it was appalling to most that its mode of operation characterized by random killings is alien to the very religion that it seeks to propagate. Thus, none of the respondents in the various interviews could agree that the mission of Boko Haram had anything to do with Islam. According to a traditional ruler in Damaturu, most of the youths that voluntarily joined Boko Haram are unemployed idle youths, political thugs and drug addicts; those with sound

religious background had already left the group when they realized its deceptive ideology.\textsuperscript{19} In addition to voluntary recruitments, the interviews reveal that a significant number of Boko Haram members are forcefully conscripted through abductions and kidnappings. This is particularly true for under aged children, women and young girls. Indeed, all the FGD respondents in Geidam revealed that they know someone or have relations abducted by the Boko Haram. Other paths of recruitment into Boko Haram include proselytisation, economic inducement, social and commercial links (marriage, family, and business associates), grievances against government inadequacies and security abuses, and the need to stay safe and protect one’s family. Indeed, these paths have varied, place, gender and individual, making it difficult to generalize, or even make a clear distinction, between those forcefully conscripted into the group or those that voluntarily joined the movement.\textsuperscript{20}

The predominant narrative from the analysis of the study indicates that means of funding for JAS initially was by kidnappings, bank robberies, looting, threats and intimidations. A KII respondent reveals that “at the peak of the insurgency, most senior civil servant were being compelled or harassed to pay certain sums of money on periodic basis; only few individuals were revealing what they were going through”.\textsuperscript{21}

Overall, Boko Haram attacks revealed Nigeria’s structural weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This is particularly true in the face of the inability of the security agencies to make any meaningful headway in their fight against the sect, which has actually intensified and extended its activities to states outside its stronghold in the North East including Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi, Gombe, and Abuja.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} KII with Traditional ruler, Damaturu. 11\textsuperscript{th} July 2017
\textsuperscript{21} KII with Government official, Damaturu. 11\textsuperscript{th} July 2017
Yobe Peace Group and Vigilante Operation (YPG)

YPG is a counter insurgency vigilante group created by the state government as a response to the JAS insurgency. The group came into existence in 2012 in response to a call by the state government to people who are willing to confront Boko Haram to join in the fight.

Members are recruited from the already existing vigilante groups and the Hunter’s Group found in most communities in the North East region of the country. There are also volunteers recruited based on character references from the local traditional institution (i.e., the ward or district head). As an official puts it:

if you are living in any of our community and you want to join, you go to the ward head for reference, and if it is discovered that you are person of good character, of good behaviour and you don’t have any criminal record, we will just write down your name and once there is opportunity for engagement, we employ you. The most important element is a person of good character and you must be a person that has no relation with members of Boko Haram for whatever reason.\(^{23}\)

Members of YPG are attached to military battalions and deployed to flash points where army battalions are stationed. Conversations on why people join YPG revealed varied responses from FGD participants in the study areas, but all the respondents identified the desire to protect communities from Boko Haram atrocities as the single most important reason. Young men joined out of fear because they were the primary target of Boko Haram or have had family members killed. Although there are female members in the group, the gender dimension with respect to recruitment is a challenge as women representation remains very marginal within the group.

The core mandate of the organisation is to contribute to the security of Yobe state by working hand in hand with the JTF in securing towns and villages from JAS attacks. Hence, they are deployed to all the army battalions in the

\(^{23}\) Interview with Secretary YPG, Yobe State in Damaturu 10\(^{th}\) July 2017
state. As noted by a respondent, “we are a grassroots community policing organisation and the eyes and the ears of the JTF; we have an edge in getting vital information; the army would not have achieved any success without our assistance” FGD respondents also corroborated this viewpoint, noting that “the success of the army in driving out Boko Haram from Damaturu can never be complete without a mention of vigilantes because they are the sole reason behind the success”

The state government is wholly responsible for the funding, allowances and maintenance of the YPG. It pays a monthly allowance of ₦50,000 (naira) to members in addition to providing other logistics. The relationship of the organisation with government is described by most KII respondents as “extremely cordial”. A respondent attests to the fact that the government attends to issues regarding vigilantes with utmost sense of urgency. As he puts it, “if we table any issue, it gets treated in less than three days; even when the state governor is out of town, he attends to our problems through emails”. Community members observe that the government is supportive of vigilante groups particularly in the area of funding but still cite cases of corruption within the ranks of vigilantes where captured insurgents are set free upon paying bribe to vigilantes. This issue however appears to be isolated as none of the respondents in the other interviews could confirm it.

Discussions with community members in Potiskum on perceptions about vigilantes indicate that prior to the insurgency, people generally considered vigilantes as a group of down trodden neglected and unemployed persons that have nothing else to do. However, such perceptions have changed dramatically as a result of the role they played in countering Boko Haram insurgency. They are now more respected, people feel happy and secure around them and are able to interact more easily with community members.

The Hunters Group (Sarkin Baka)

The Hunters Group is a branch of the Nigerian Vigilante Association under the Sarkin Baka or the “Head Hunter” and are found all over the North East

24 Interview with State Secretary, YPG Damaturu 10th July 2017.
25 FGD with youths in Damaturu 11th July 2017
26 KII with State member, YPG Damaturu, 11th July 2017
27 FGD with Youths in Damaturu, 11th July 2017
region of the country. The Hunters Group with its headquarters in Gombi, Adamawa State, has been in existence for a long period of time working primarily as hunters and in community policing. Prior to the insurgency, the group played a major role in liberating Yobe State from armed robbery and banditry. As the security situation began to deteriorate from 2010, the group was contracted by the state government in 2014 to assist the military in the fight against the insurgency. The same group was similarly contracted in Adamawa state where they succeeded in recapturing Mubi and Maiha from JAS. Equipped with different types of locally made guns, machetes, knives and charms, the hunters group played a huge role in helping to push back insurgents and reclaim captured territories. Indeed, the military benefited tremendously from their vast knowledge of the terrain, as they helped to gather intelligence and provide early warning and other forms of assistance. The hunters group is also known to use charms and amulets believed to embody magical powers that perform several functions in confrontations with the enemy. Such functions include the power to incapacitate or disable the enemy and prevent him or her from seeing his opponents or fleeing, as well as the powers to activate bullets and bombs among others. The efficacy of such charms is of course, open to debate. In addition to providing security, vigilantes also provide early warning and information on the movement of insurgents.

The strategies for recruitment appear to be very formal for the hunters group. Membership is drawn from the local communities mostly among families with generations of hunters going back through the years. Potential recruits apply through the ward/village heads and are forwarded to the Sarkin Baka to undergo fitness test with bows and arrows”. The local Sarkin Baka, after conducting a successful background check, accepts the candidate who then undergoes an initiation programme during the annual “salala” festival to fortify him with voodoo skills and powers. The initiation process would also inculcate discipline, boldness and self-confidence in a newly admitted member. During the festival, older members renew their oath and spiritual powers with commitment and determination to continue to defend their communities. As a community leader explains: “mostly we don’t have

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28 FGD with youths in Damaturu. 10th July 2017
29 KII with Sarkin Baka, Damaturu 10th July 2017
30 KII with Vigilante Male Geidam 16th July 2017
problem with the vigilante, because of the way they are admitted in the
group where they fill a form and attach it with their passport photographs
all their details are there”. The process of recruitment also includes
a consideration of people with fetish or “natural powers”. A respondent
in the FGD held in Damaturu explains that “with regards to recruitment,
vigilantes often look for a person with some knowledge of ‘juju’ within the
community.” The possession of juju is important to the group’s operation
against the insurgents. In addition, they rely on their members “who know
their way so well in the bush where the Boko Haram are.” The hierarchy
of the organisation flows downwards from the chairman, the vice chairman
to the advisers and ordinary members.
The *Sarkin Baka* Potiskum explains that their strength as a group lies in
the fact that “We live and work in the communities; we understand the
local language, culture and the environment and people are not afraid to
approach”. The *Sarkin Baka* in Damaturu also remarked that

> Some people see us as a group of unenlightened, uneducated fetish people but we are not; we have
> men with God’s wisdom and we employ that
> knowledge to protect and defend ourselves and to
> also defeat the enemy. Sometimes, even the police
> call us to assist in arresting armed robbers.

Such local knowledge has proven vital in their operations against the Boko
Haram insurgents. As another respondent explains further: “the insurgents
are part of the local community with no form of identity that they are
insurgents but we know them, we have the native intelligence

The *Sarkin Baka* explains that there has been a lot of interactions between
the state government and the group before the emergence of Boko Haram
and when the insurgency began to take its toll, they were invited by the
government in 2014 to join in the fight under the supervision of the military.
The area of coverage for the hunters group is confined to Yobe State and

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31 Interview with community leader in Damaturu 11th July 2017
32 FGD respondent 4, Damaturu, 11th July 2017
33 KII with CBO leader, (Communal Support Group) Damaturu Yobe state. 10th July 2017
34 Interview with Sarkin Baka leader, Potiskum. 14th July 2017
35 Interview with Sarkin Baka leader, Damaturu. 10th July 2017
36 Interview with Vigilante Male, 2 Potiskum. 14th July 2017
attached to army battalions but they emphasize that they do not interfere in conflict issues in the communities and have no issues with community members.

The major achievement of the group is the fact that they succeeded in driving JAS out of the state. Indeed, the leader claims that there is no territory currently occupied by JAS in Yobe state but acknowledged that the insurgents transit between Adamawa and Borno State and come to launch attacks in Yobe state. The challenges of the group include shortage of uniforms, arms and ammunitions for their members. The Sarkin Baka Leader in Geidam elaborates: “we are always in short supply of ammunitions; also, the enemy’s weapons are superior to our own, we need better weapons and that makes us more motivated”.37 Most respondents also reported that they do not receive any form of training from the military and that impacts on their performance.

The bravery and success of the hunters group in chasing out Boko Haram is widely recognised not only in the North East region but the country as a whole. However, there are some FGD participants in Potiskum describe them as “uneducated, unskilled and arrogant” group38. Another respondent explains that the influx of new members due to the insurgency has compromised the structure of the organisation and led to indiscipline.

**The Vigilante Group of Nigeria**

The Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) is a registered voluntary organisation with headquarters in Abuja and branches all over Nigeria. It provides security and surveillance services in communities, and assists apprehending and handing over criminals to the Police, while also providing intelligence to the security forces. The organisation was established 20 years ago. In Yobe State, it has branches in Damaturu and Potiskum. The recruitment process of the organisation involves series of test to determine whether the individual is qualified to join the group or not. The candidates must be above 18 years and possess a minimum of first school leaving certificate. Successful recruits are posted to their respective communities to serve. Women are also recruited, and they work in areas where men are not permitted to go such as

37 Interview with sarkinbaka, Geidam. 16th July 2017
38 FDG with community leaders, Potiskum 14th July 2017
private homes. A female member of the organisation observes that although there are very few women in the Potiskum branch of the organisation, they actively participate in the activities of the organisation. According to her, funding is one of the major challenges currently facing the organisation and only those who were recruited into the Yobe Peace Group (YPG) are beneficiaries of Government assistance.\(^\text{39}\)

The Potiskum branch of the organisation is made up of members from within the very community where it operates, which helps members remain connected to their communities. The operate under the supervision of the Police and the Military, in most cases accompanying them on patrols. However, they inform the Police area commanders whenever they conduct operations alone. Members are recruited from different religious and tribal backgrounds,

The areas covered by the Potiskum command include Potiskum, Nangere, Fika and Fune LGAs of Yobe State. The command successfully worked with the Nigerian military to secure the area from JAS attacks and people now go about their normal routines in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere. This development has encouraged all the farmers to return to their farms.

The major challenge facing the organisation is the lack of adequate funding. Each of the LGAs under the command previously contributed a monthly stipend of \(₦400,000.00\) to the funding of the organisation but this abruptly ceased a few years ago. The organisation currently depends on donations from well-meaning individuals and organisations. The challenges faced by the group therefore largely border on inadequate funding, the lack of a functional vehicle, shortages of arms and ammunitions, and inadequate uniforms.

The FGD interviews indicate that there is a harmonious relationship between community members and the vigilantes. People generally appear to be appreciative of the role the play in securing their communities. As observed by a respondent “the vigilantes are part of us, they live with us in the community while the soldiers are strangers; their assistance to our communities has been tremendous”.\(^\text{40}\)

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39 Interview with Female Vigilante Member, Potiskum, 14\(^\text{th}\) July 20
40 FGD respondent 5; male potiskum 14\(^\text{th}\) July 2017
However, another respondent maintains that “although they succeeded in riding Potiskum of gangs, addicts and thugs, they sometimes have conflicts with civilians; they like to show people that they are powerful and fearless”.

**Kandira Vigilante Group, Geidam LGA**

In addition to the local unit of YPG and the Hunter’s group, there is a local armed vigilante group in Geidam known as Kandira that is funded and supported by the LG council. The YPG membership is drawn from the Kandira members. The Chairman of Kandira explains: “In every community, we recruit individuals above 18 years; after recruitment, we test them for fitness; we don’t post our members out of their community.”

They operate hand in hand with the other vigilante groups in the area, and their operations are largely under the supervision of the army. They are largely involved with community policing and patrolling government properties. With regard to their relationship with government, the LG council pays them a monthly allowance and provides finance on logistics. They also appear to have the support of the local community and respondents to the FGD composed of IDPs in Geidam view membership to Kandira as more of a privilege. Thus, individuals voluntarily join for a wide range of reasons. Being a member of vigilante or having a vigilante identity confers a kind of super hero identity and a belief that the brave are revered. FGD participants view participation in vigilante activities as “empowering and emboldening to belong to a vigilante group because it furthers one’s personal ambitions.”

Some of the challenges of the organisation include lack of adequate training, vehicles, ammunition and security equipment.

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41 FGD respondent 11 Potiskum 14th July 2017.
42 Interview with Kandira official, Geidam 16th July 2017
43 FGD with IDPs in Geidam 16th July 2017
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
The spate of violence caused by Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in some NSAGs playing increasingly prominent roles in the security sector of the state. There are several vigilante factions with allegiances to different unit commanders spread across the length and breadth of the state; thus the distinction between the different vigilantes groups appears somewhat blurred. Although the relationship between them is currently peaceful and harmonious, chances of rivalry and potential conflicts over supremacy or similar issues cannot be precluded as evidenced by the violent conflict that occurred between two factions of the Hunter’s group in Adamawa State in March 2016 over control of local branches.44

The emergence of vigilante groups that are armed and sponsored by the state has both positive and negative consequences for the state. For one, although they are highly effective and continue to play important roles in community policing, there is little oversight of their activities by traditional rulers and local authorities and this has created concerns about their conduct and future roles. There are also questions about what happens when the salaries and allowances of vigilantes cease, which is a matter that deserves serious attention. Vigilantism has been a way for some people to regain a form of control in a situation of extreme uncertainty and powerlessness. Indeed, vigilantes have also developed their own interests with the power to pursue them. This is a source of grave concern when conflict management mechanisms in communities have become weakened by the Boko Haram insurgency. Other key findings of the research include.

- Vigilante groups continue to play increasingly an important role in the security apparatus of the state, but their role is sometimes ambiguous. There are many poorly trained and ill-equipped vigilante groups with overlapping functions with little community or government oversight for accountability.

- While vigilante groups describe the remuneration from the state government as adequate, it is believed that many of them are not on the government’s payroll. This means that a significant proportion is not remunerated but still participates in counter insurgency operations. This breeds a lot of dissatisfaction and discontentment.

The emergence of vigilantes no doubt played a significant role in turning the tide of the insurgency but there are genuine concerns about the future role of vigilantes from every sector of the population. There are suggestions on the need to either slowly disband them or to formalise and regulate their activities.
RECOMMENDATIONS

With the insurgency gradually winding down, the top priority in Yobe State and the North East in general is to ensure sustainable peace, reconstruction and development through good governance. To achieve this, there is firstly the need to meaningfully address the underlying structural drivers of the conflict and this requires an urgent focus on improving governance capacity at all levels through a recourse to the rule of law, reduction of unemployment, and creation of useful career opportunities for the youth. It equally entails the provision of social services such as quality health care, quality schools and other social amenities such as roads, potable water and electricity. To this end, the following specific recommendations are made:

- The MCN program should ensure that its activities contribute to the resolution of the core drivers of conflict if sustainable development and peaceful co-existence are to be achieved. It should engage with grassroots organisations such as local Government authorities, NGOs and women organisations like the FOMWAN in peacebuilding through community dialogue activities that aim to counter violent extremism.

- There is need for effective oversight and accountability of NSAGs particularly the CJTF and Hunter’s group. In this regard, the state government needs to draw up a legal framework for regulating their activities in other to hold members accountable for their actions. It is equally important to strengthen communications between some of these actors and the communities they serve.

- Regarding the future roles of vigilantes as the insurgency winds down, most members expect compensation from the state government in the form of provision of employment, skills acquisition programs and educational sponsorship. Disbanding vigilante groups should be matched by sustainable employment opportunities, and possibly supported by donors. The MCN program can contribute by working with local NGOs in measures that support livelihood systems, skills acquisition projects and entrepreneurship development.

- The vigilante groups interviewed revealed that despite the combined operations they conduct with the military, they have not received
any form of training. There is need for the military to extend some basic instructions on practical skills, human rights and legal binding responsibilities.

- Injury and death suffered by members of NSAGs such as the CJTF, Hunters groups and other vigilante outfits in counter insurgency operations have fractured many families. Therefore, families of vigilante members that were killed or those that were injured in operations need to be supported.

- The MCN programme in collaboration with local civil society organisations can provide training and assistance aimed at assisting NSAGs towards identifying and reporting early-warning mechanisms linked to both the police and civil society organisations. This would be very useful particularly in rural areas where vigilantes have become important linkages between the state and communities.
CONCLUSION
In the meantime, it is widely understood that JAS is currently on the run, and some semblance of normalcy has returned to the state with 85% of IDPs back in their communities. The state government has also initiated large-scale reconstruction activities targeting the devastated towns and villages, a signal of the improving security situation. However, one key aspect of the insurgency has been the ability of the Boko Haram to adapt and rebound. The federal and state governments and indeed humanitarian actors must remain aware of this threat, as some elements of the insurgents will continue the fight in every possible way. Their activities still pose significant threats to the safety of people living in the state as well as the successful execution or completion of projects designed to rebuild communities and livelihoods. This means that some NSAGs such as the CJTF, Hunters groups and other vigilante outfits would continue to play significant roles in the security landscape of Yobe state. Opportunities and risks therefore exist in engaging these armed actors in efforts at enthroning sustainable peace and security in Yobe state in particular and the North East region in general.

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Table 4: **Dashboard of NSAGs in Yobe State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Membership/Size</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Mode of Operation</th>
<th>Area of Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yobe Peace Group (YPG)</td>
<td>Started in 2012</td>
<td>Bukar Adamu (Secretary)</td>
<td>About 125</td>
<td>Recruited from other vigilante groups only</td>
<td>Attached to Military units</td>
<td>Operates only with military at battalions; in IDP camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hunters Group (Sarkin Baka)</td>
<td>Long ago Contracted in 2014 by Yobe Govt</td>
<td>Umar Tela</td>
<td>200 (Govt Sponsored) &amp; 300 Volunteers Geidam and Potiskum: (440)</td>
<td>Lineage; local Sarkin Baka in communities</td>
<td>Attached to Military</td>
<td>Attached to military. Anywhere there is conflict with military permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN)</td>
<td>20 years ago</td>
<td>Ibrahim Mohammed (Commander Potiskum)</td>
<td>Community Volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteers are recruited, trained with assistance of police</td>
<td>Work with police, make arrest and hand over to Police</td>
<td>Potiskum, Nangere, Fika &amp; Fune LGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kandira Group Geidam</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Tujja Abdu Geidam</td>
<td>From hunters group, VGN, and volunteers</td>
<td>Volunteers; hunters group</td>
<td>Operate with army; Surveillance; arrest and hand over to Police</td>
<td>Geidam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jama’at-ulAhlis Sunna (JAS)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Abubakar Shekau</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Forceful conscription Abductions voluntary</td>
<td>Terror attacks Targeted killings Arson Sexual violence</td>
<td>Nigeria and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions/Scope</td>
<td>Gender Status</td>
<td>Source of Arms</td>
<td>Arms/Weapons Used</td>
<td>Funding Source(s)</td>
<td>Relation with State Actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary services to military</td>
<td>Male (90%) Female 10%</td>
<td>State Government provided</td>
<td>Dane guns, machetes, bows and arrows, knives</td>
<td>State Government</td>
<td>Cordial; work Together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist military operations; provide intelligence</td>
<td>Male 80% female 20%</td>
<td>Govt provided to those recruited. Locally made/ purchased</td>
<td>Single barrel; dane guns, machetes, knives, bows and arrows</td>
<td>Government(State and Local); private donations Membership dues</td>
<td>Cordial All work together with the military Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist police Community Policing; provide intelligence</td>
<td>Male 80% Female 20%</td>
<td>self</td>
<td>Single barrel, dane guns, Knives, Machetes</td>
<td>No funding from government. Used to gey but stopped</td>
<td>Belong to the community and assist community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP camps, Government Property Security at Functions</td>
<td>Male 90% Female 10%</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Locally made guns, knives and machetes</td>
<td>Geidam LGA</td>
<td>cordial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killings; annihilation; destruction; carnage assasination</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Stealing; vandalization of security outlets</td>
<td>AK 47, double barrels bombs, RPGs</td>
<td>Attacks on bank; ransoms; banditry</td>
<td>Diabolical animosity Hate fear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s Compilation
MAJOR FINDINGS
The proliferation of NSAGs is a development that seriously defines the security landscape of the North East region, especially with the outbreak and escalation of Boko Haram insurgency. This study has examined this phenomenon as it manifests in three states that were the hardest hit by the insurgency. Across the states studied, there are several key observations or findings that are specific to them, much as there are others that cut across the states. The key findings of the study are highlighted and discussed subsequently, focusing essentially on crosscutting issues in the three states.

The emergence of Civilian Joint Taskforce provoked a backlash
As highlighted in the three targeted states, the activities of the Boko Haram were the key factor in the rise of the CJTF in the North East. Since their emergence, they have contributed a great deal in the fight against the insurgents. Their achievements in turn triggered a backlash from the Boko Haram evident in increased brutal attacks on civilian population and targeted killing of youth who form the bulk of the CJTF. The Legal Adviser to the CJTF recently disclosed that about 680 members of the CJTF in Borno State have lost their lives to the Boko Haram insurgency from 2014 to June 2017.¹ While the exact figure on death casualty is debateable, what is very much clear however is that many other members have sustained various degrees of injuries since the group joined the campaign to end insurgency in the North East region. For every married member of the CJTF or other vigilante group killed in combat, there may be other family members who must cope with the psychological, physical and economic effects that

endure in its aftermath. Also, those exposed to violence almost always have high rates of traumatisation and usually display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The hazards of combat, such as injury or death, suffered by members of some NSAGs involved in community protection call for programme interventions that will help the survivors to cope with several challenges while those bereaved can be supported with empowerment opportunities for a family member to cushion the effects of loss of loved ones.

Lack of mechanism for effective oversight and coordination of some non-state armed groups
Generally, the involvement of some NSAGs in counter-insurgency operations in the North East has contributed to improving security in most affected communities across the three states. Although relationship between some of these NSAGs and state actors as well as among themselves have been largely cordial, there are few instances of perceived rivalry between them that is not too healthy for security in state. This is particularly the case between the VGN and the CJTF in Borno State, partly engendered by the perceived preferential treatment accord to the CJTF by the state government. In addition, there are cases of confusion on the part of the members of the public regarding the true identity of members of different NSAGS. For instance, VGN is often confused with Hunters Association by some people in Borno state. This situation has implications for reporting excesses of members or holding them accountable for their actions. There is therefore the need for the institutionalisation of a framework that would ensure that these groups operate in a synergised, cooperative and collaborative manner, not only among themselves but also with other state actors in their respective states.

Absence of critical guidelines and operational frameworks
There is no clear cut and officially designed relevant guidelines or standard operating procedures, code of conduct or rules of engagement that regulate the operations of NSAGs that work in concert with the state. This has partly accounted for ambiguity in their operations and excesses in their conduct. This situation makes accountability a challenge for security sector governance.
Low level of Gender representation in non-state armed groups
A common feature of all the NSAGs across the three states is that women constitute only a small fraction of their membership. This is particularly and verifiably the case with those NSAGs committed to assisting state security forces in providing security. The disparity in gender is not only evident in the nature of membership but also in role performance. Most female members do not play active combat roles. Rather they are mostly used for surveillance, intelligence gathering and searching fellow women in high risk venues or communities. There is however few cases where women have played leadership and combat roles within these groups, such as the case of a female hunter named Aisha Bakari Gombi, who was honoured by her community as Sarauniyan (Queen Hunter). She now leads a band of hunters who patrol the town and defend it from the Boko Haram insurgents. There is therefore the need to frame interventions that promote better gender representation especially in the light of the gendered nature of victimisation in several communities and the unique needs of women in conflict environment.

Genuine concerns over current and future threat posed by non-state armed groups
Although some NSAGs particularly the CJTF, the Youth Vanguards, YPG and hunters groups have played huge role in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency and criminality in general, there is widespread allegation that some of the members of these groups are involved in human rights violations and other excesses. Examples include extortion, illegal detention, collection of bribery to free arrested suspects, extra-judicial killings, and looting of property of those who fled Boko Haram attacks. In addition, their seeming closeness with the military, especially the CJTF in Borno State, is making some of their members to believe and behave as though they are above the law. In the long run, it is feared that they could pose a threat to state and society given their vulnerability to being politically manipulated or the potential for some to take to criminal ways having been exposed to weapons handling.
Disparity in state government relations with some non-state armed groups
This study has shown that there are noticeable differences in the ways that state governments relate with or treat some NSAGs that contribute to the maintenance of peace and security in the states. While some groups have been supported with logistics and remunerated for their efforts, others have largely been neglected. In Yobe state, for instance, the YPG has finding and logistic support while the hunters group does not get such support. Similarly, while CJTF receives modest funding and logistic supplies from Borno state government, VGN is largely ignored and never supported by the government. Such differential or preferential treatment breeds a lot of dissatisfaction, discontent and envy with negative effects on relations among state and non-state actors in the provision of security.
RECOMMENDATIONS
The foregoing discussion has highlighted some of the critical issues of concern regarding the existence and activities of NSAGs in the region. In the light of the findings of this study and for the purposes of programme engagement with pro-state NSAGs, the following recommendations are proffered.

Comprehensive Demobilisation, Disarmament, Rehabilitation And Reintegration Programme
There is the need to support interventions in the Demobilisation, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme (DDRR) for ex-combatants in the North East region. In this regard, attention should be paid to the two broad categories of ex-combatants in the region. The first category is the ex-Boko Haram members who have been captured or wilfully surrendered to state forces. The second category are members of other NSAGs such as the CJTF, the Youth Vanguards, YPG and hunters groups, who have been exposed to weapon handling as well as traumatic experiences associated with combat. Fortunately, opportunities exist in this regard for programme intervention by the MCN. For ex-Boko Haram members, the MCN could consider programmes that will strengthen the rehabilitation and reintegration component of the ongoing Operation Safe Corridor programme of the government. It can also partner with other state institutions such as the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in leveraging the stories and experiences of ex-Boko Haram members in developing counter narratives (stories, documentaries, audio messages) against violent extremism and promoting positive messaging. In relation to supporting ex-members of the various vigilante groups, the Operational Strategic Plan for Demobilisation and Reintegration of the Civilian Joint Task Force (2017) developed by the Borno State Government could be supported by the MCN, and lessons from the pilot phase of the project leveraged in strengthening, scaling up and adapting it in other states such as Adamawa and Yobe. This will be crucial in effectively reintegrating these actors in the society in the event that government decides to disband them in the future.
Institutionalisation of frameworks for regulation of activities of some non-state actors

The government and local community have acknowledged the huge contributions of some NSAGs like the CJTF, the Youth Vanguards, YPG and hunters groups in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency and criminality. However, the absence of a robust framework for regulation and oversight has created room for excesses on the part of these NSAGs. In order to maximise the opportunities created by their existence, there is the need for government to institute legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms that will compel them to operate within the law and established rules of engagements. To this end, the MCN can partner with Office of the Attorney General to convene expert workshops to brainstorm and articulate a draft policy or legal framework for the regulation of the activities of pro-NSAGs.

Emplacement of Mechanism for Operational Coordination and Synergy

There is the need for the establishment of a platform or forum for coordination that will bring together the leadership of these diverse NSAGs, community representatives and other state actors to optimise information sharing, early warning alerts, and promotion of best practices. This platform could serve other useful purposes as an avenue for addressing operational lapses, confidence building, and redressing of excesses. Such a framework will equally serve as a good platform for sharing lessons learned which will be relevant in articulating or fine-tuning standard operating procedures. It can also serve as a vehicle for coordinating joint capacity building programmes for the NSAGs. Working with other stakeholders, the MCN can facilitate the creation and operationalisation of this forum.

Conduct of capacity building programme

Poor educational background and ignorance about human right principles by some members of NSAGs are impediments to effective and accountable security service delivery by them. In view of this, the MCN could support the implementation of bespoke capacity building and training packages to expose NSAGs members to human rights and international humanitarian law principles. The training programmes should have group-specific and inter-group components for both the leadership cadre and low-level members of the various groups in order to promote mutual understanding,
cordial relations and optimal performance of their tasks in ways that are responsive, accountable and transparent.

**Articulation and implementation of gender policy**
Violence across communities in the North East region has seen widespread targeting of women and girls. In view of this reality and in recognition of the potential roles that women play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, there is the need to formulate a policy to mainstream gender into the structure and operations of NSAGs. This will promote greater women participation in the operations of these actors. Efforts to mainstream gender into the operations of NSAGs should leverage the provisions of the revised National Action Plan (NAP) that seeks to domesticate the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 to promote inclusive security sector in Nigeria. The MCN could partner with state governments and CSOs in the design and implementation of the gender policy, taking into account the concerns of women in the overall security sector governance.

**Empowerment scheme for affected vigilante members and families**
Some members of NSAGs, particularly the CJTF, the Youth Vanguards, YPG and hunters groups, have either lost their lives or got injured as a result of the insurgency. There is the need, therefore, for the design and delivery of empowerment programmes that will ensure that survivors become self-reliant, or gainfully employed should they want to disengage from their current engagement. To this end, the MCN could support programmes that train members of these pro-state NSAGs in various vocational skills like carpentry, tilling, bricklaying, block moulding, panel beating, and tailoring to make them self-employed in gainful enterprises. The MCN could partner with state governments and credible civil society organisation in the design, delivery and monitoring of this empowerment programme in order to enhance transparency in determining beneficiaries, accountability in disbursing funds, and effectiveness in monitoring or measuring participant’s performance. It can equally support the floating and disbursement of special empowerment fund that can offer start-up or seed money for business proposals submitted by injured members of the NSAGs or the family members of a deceased fellow.
State-owned blueprint for engagement with non-state armed groups
The diversity of NSAGs have seen state governments evolve different means of recognising, appreciating and supporting them. The disparity in the nature and level of support extended to these groups is now a source of inter-group disaffection. There is, therefore, the need for state governments to articulate a blueprint for relating and supporting them to serve as safeguard against the politicisation of their activities. The MCN could support and encourage with technical and material input in the process of initiating and articulating this blueprint. This is vitally important to ensure that governments’ support to NSAGs are tailored to the peculiar needs of the various groups in ways that promote fairness and a sense of belonging.
CONCLUSION
A common thread that runs through the analysis of the mapping study is the contention that weak state capacity in governance and security provision was a major factor in the rise of Boko Haram insurgency. The attainment of sustainable peace in the region therefore demands concerted efforts that address the underlying structural drivers of the conflict. This requires an urgent focus on improving governance capacity at all levels of government in Nigeria. Evidently, the eight-year insurgency has caused serious devastation in the North East region. The emergence of the Boko Haram coupled with the vulnerability of the North East region to criminality and other forms of organized crimes, created a background for the emergence of other NSAGs in the region. Thus, this report examined the emergence and activities of NSAGs in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, with specific references to the implications of their operations for security and stability as well as opportunities for programme engagement in the states.

Apart from the Boko Haram which is manifestly an insurgent group that opposed the Nigerian state and its citizens, other NSAGs like the CJTF, the Youth Vanguards, YPG and hunters groups emerged or elected to support state security forces (military, police and intelligence/law enforcement agencies) in the fight against the insurgents. While groups such as the hunters association and the VGN predates the emergence of the Boko Haram, the emergence of others like the CJTF and the Youth Vanguards were necessitated by the brutality of the insurgents. Their emergence has demonstrated that under situations where state security forces proved incapable of effectively confronting security threats, communities turn to NSAGs in search of security and protection. This is a trend that is certainly not new in Nigeria. However, it does portend a growing shift in loyalty of communities from the State to NSAGs.

Although most of these groups have made significant contributions to peace and security in the region, they largely operate under conditions of weak control, monitoring and oversight. Consequently, allegations of human rights violation and other excesses by their members are rife, and constitute a matter of growing concern to the members of the public and government. In the long run, ensuring that these category of NSAGs do not exacerbate current security threats or constitute new dangers entirely in the region is
a matter of policy and programming challenge for the state and federal governments. While their contributions to community protection, crime control and counter-insurgency hold great promise in preserving peace and security, failure of the Nigerian state to effectively structure, shape and limit the scope of their involvement in the fragile security landscape could amount to an abdication of its primary responsibility of ensuring sustainable national security. From a programme engagement standpoint, there are several strength and opportunities for critical interventions, just as weaknesses and threats abound. A cursory SWOT analysis of NSAGs for programme engagement by stakeholders such as the MCN reveals opportunities and risks. As highlighted in the box below, some of the strengths of pro-state NSAGs include the youthfulness of most members, their knowledge of the community, and popular support by members of the community where they operate. Others are the commitment of members to serve their community and their vast presence in most communities. Major weaknesses evident in these group include lack of standard operating procedure to guide their actions, poor knowledge of human rights laws, low level of gender representation, and occasional rivalry between groups due to dynamics of patronage politics in the state.

**SWOT Analysis of Non-State Armed Groups Contributing to Security in the North East**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTH</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youthfulness of most members</td>
<td>Ignorance of human rights laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good knowledge of the community</td>
<td>Lack of standard operating procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wide acceptance by community members</td>
<td>Low level of gender representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeal and commitment of members</td>
<td>Poor educational level of most members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive presence in local communities</td>
<td>Inter-group rivalry/distrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordial relationship with most state actors</td>
<td>Absence of legal/poliy frameworks</td>
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**Table: Opportunities vs. Threats**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of sizeable donor funding</td>
<td>Corruption and vested interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special initiatives in the NE (e.g PCNI)</td>
<td>Targeting by Boko Haram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of CSOs/CBOs</td>
<td>Poor economy and revenue base of states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction and rebuilding programmes</td>
<td>Donor preferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opportunities that exist include the relatively sizeable donor funding for supporting interventions in the region, some targeted government initiatives in the region (such as the Presidential Committee on North-East Interventions -PCNI), the presence of civil society organisations and community based organisation which could serve as veritable platforms for capacity building interventions, and ongoing reconstruction projects in the region. A donor-supported skills acquisition programme in the area of bricklaying, plastering and carpentry can help members of the NSAGs earn livelihoods from the ongoing reconstruction works in some communities in the region.

The threats associated with working with these groups in fragile environment include the issue of corruption or vested interests that could lead to diversion of funds, insecurity due to Boko Haram attacks, poor revenue base of some states which could pose a challenge to counterpart funding or the sustainability of projects, and the issue of donor preferences in terms of choice and locations of projects.

The existence and activities of NSAGs are current realities that communities, governments and other stakeholders in the North East region would have to cope with, if not critically engaged with, in other to construct a new order of peace and stability. What is needed is for government and major stakeholders to creatively design and vigorously implement robust interventions, leveraging the strengths that exist within the NSAGs and the opportunities in the wider environment to mitigate the weaknesses inherent in these groups and the threats that are evident in the environment.
## CLEEN FOUNDATION’S PUBLICATIONS

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