

CONFLICT BRIEFING NOTES

CONFLICT BRIEFING NO. 16, September 2014

KEY MESSAGES	PAGE
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS & CONFLICT PROFILE	2
3. POLITICAL	2
4. SOCIAL	4
5. ECONOMIC	5
6. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT	5
7. NIGERIAN SECURITY FORCES HOLD THEIR OWN AGAINST INSURGENTS	5
8. JAS ACTIVITIES PERSIST IN NEIGHBOURING NIGER AND CAMEROUN	6
9. UPDATE ON HOSTILITIES IN MILITARY CIRCLES	6
10. UPDATE ON CHIBOK GIRLS	6
11. IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING IN NSRP STATES	6
12. RECOMMENDATIONS	8

*Disclaimer: The contents of this briefing note do not necessarily reflect the views of DFID or the UK Government.

** All reports are based on anonymous NSRP sources.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September 2014 witnessed nine attacks in different communities in Borno and parts of Adamawa states while Konduga town alone witnessed 11. Unlike previous encounters, this month saw the insurgents suffering significant casualties. The Catholic Church in Maiduguri issued a list of 25 towns in three North-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, allegedly under the control of JAS. In all the towns occupied, JAS is reported to have declared an Islamic Caliphate and installed Emirs.

The political atmosphere is heating up in Plateau State with no fewer than 10 candidates indicating interest for the Governorship primary contest in the ruling PDP. The bid to secure an unchallenged return to the Government house by the incumbent Governor seems to have failed completely as candidates from the southern zone are contesting with the Governor within the PDP. While most of the Plateau State remains calm, there are pockets of tension arising from public discussions on zoning arrangement for the Governorship election.

In Kaduna, the political scene is increasingly more competitive presenting a challenge to the usual advantage of incumbent Governors in the state. The hurdles in Governor Yero's way to return to Government house in 2015 are on the increase as the opposition continues to gain more support in both the Northern and Central Senatorial districts. This is made worse by the waning support for the Governor from the PDP-dominated Southern Zone where the political elites have insisted on completion of late Governor Yakowa's tenure. The fact that communal violence and attacks in the area have continued unabated is being interpreted by many as failure of the incumbent's administration.

The month of September witnessed increase in security challenges in Kano due mainly to signals of the return of insurgent activities to the metropolitan city. September 17 saw multiple bomb blasts and sporadic shooting of students and staff of Federal College of Education Kano by the insurgents leaving 15 people dead over 60 injured. The incidence threw residents (especially staff and students of other tertiary institutions) into panic with residents living in perpetual fear of impending JAS attacks.

On the political scene, tensions have begun to rise following the lifting on September 11 of the ban on party politics as aspirants jostle for patronage from fellow politicians and the Kano populace.

In the Delta, intense rivalry between the APC and PDP continues to dominate the political scene while kidnapping for ransom remains a significant security challenge. Massive proliferation of weapons is also evident and this is fuelling incessant cult activities in the region.

Context Analysis/Conflict Profile

Political

On-going rift among politicians in Borno state has continued to deepen amidst speculations that Governor Kashim Shettima may defect to PDP. This is coming at a time when Australian hostage negotiator Stephen Davis, seemingly frustrated by continuous acts of sabotage from persons close to government, announced that Lt. Gen. Azubike Ihejirika the former Chief of Army Staff and former Governor of Born State, Sen. Ali Modu Sheriff were initial supporters and sponsors of JAS. These are persons with very close personal and official relationship with the President. The subsequent visit of President Goodluck Jonathan to his Chadian counterpart in the company of one of the alleged JAS sponsors has not helped matters. This allegation of JAS sponsorship has posed a major setback to the former governor's 2015 ambition as Maiduguri youths who have sworn to work against his candidacy have begun pulling down all campaign posters of the former governor in the city.

In Kano, the September 11 lift of the ban on party politics by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has set the arena of politicking in motion. The recent visit of former head of state General Muhammadu Buhari to the Palace of the Emir of Kano has raised speculations that the relationship between General Buhari and Governor Kwankwaso has turned sour. This is because the General left the state without his usual visit to the Governor. This may not be unconnected to rumours that Governor Kwankwaso is gearing up to contest the presidential party primaries alongside the retired General.

In a related development, a Kano based campaign group called 'Nigeria Project 2015' said to be sponsored by Governor Kwankwaso, undertook a nationwide tour to sell the presidential aspiration of the governor in the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The tour was conducted by all political office holders, national and state house legislators and key Kwakwasiyya political group stalwarts. The tour has generated concerns within the state opposition PDP and the Kano citizenry amidst allegations that state funds are being used to finance the Governor's presidential ambition.

In Kano, the planned coronation ceremony of the new Emir Lamido Sanusi has been postponed. The ceremony was allegedly postponed by the Kano Emirate on security grounds. However, it was gathered that the ceremony was actually stalled by the Federal Government – an offshoot of the frosty relationship between the two parties.

The political environment in Plateau has remained relatively calm amidst declarations of interest in the Governorship seat by several politicians whilst uncertainly persists over the flag-bearers for the PDP and the APC tickets in the state. There are over 10 candidates with posters indicating interest in contesting PDP Governorship primaries in the state while about four candidates have declared their interest to contest on the platform of the opposition party – APC. The keen contest within the PDP stems from popular belief that the winner of the party ticket will invariably emerge as the state Governor.

In Kaduna state, three candidates have indicated interest to contest on the platform of the PDP, a development which threatens incumbent Governor Mukhtar Yero's re-election bid. Speculations are that the planned LGA elections in the state will be stalled by the incumbent who is alleged to be compiling a list of candidates for a caretaker committee to replace the current office holders. The import of this lies in the fact that LGA officials are delegates with voting rights at party primaries and will be key in determining the party's flag bearer for the Governorship position.

In the Niger Delta, Bayelsa State Governor Henry Seriake Dickson openly accused his political rivals who he tagged 'Abuja-based politicians from the state', of creating disaffection between his government and the presidency. This comes amidst growing speculations that the governor is secretly against his Kinsman President Jonathan's 2015 bid. Meanwhile, the mainstream socio-political organisations of the Urhobo and the Anioma people alike have been issuing inflammatory statements for and against zoning of the governorship position in Delta state.

In Rivers state, the intense political rivalry between Governor Rotimi Amaechi and the presidency wages on. A planned meeting at the Rivers State High Court of alleged 'anti-Amaechi' Judges was forcefully aborted by pro-Amaechi youths who wielded iron bars and erected a barricade across the entrance to the court premises. Attempts by the Judges to gain entrance erupted in a near violent demonstration. The timely intervention of the police is said to have prevented violence at the scene.

Social

The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is on the rise as insurgent activities continue unabated in Nigeria's North-east. Reports claim residents of affected LGAs in Borno state are trooping into Maiduguri to occupy all available public buildings especially schools. United Nations human rights experts have called on the Government of Nigeria and the international community to make a swift and stronger response to the plight of some 3.3 million people displaced due to violence since 2010 in the country - one of the highest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world.

In Borno state, the Maiduguri Airport remains closed, with no sign of re-opening nine months after its closure. Nigeria's 500 pilgrims attending this year's Haj in Saudi Arabia were driven in a heavily armed convoy of large busses to Jigawa state where they boarded the plane to the Holy land while the rest of Maiduguri with constant fear of JAS attacks in a town that has been without electricity for over three months now.

In Plateau state, incidences of violence were recorded in both North and South senatorial districts with significant loss of lives and property. The village of Gyamba under Lamba District of Wase LGA was attacked by gunmen suspected to be from Taroh ethnic group early in the month. 6 persons were reportedly killed, including the Traditional ruler of the village. Similarly, Mbar village in Bokkos LGA was attacked by unknown gunmen with the resultant death of five persons and burning of farm lands, houses and vehicles. Members of the Special Task Force in Plateau succeeded in arresting a man of Fulani origin suspected to have master-minded the attack.

Kano state witnessed a seeming return of insurgency attacks on Wednesday September 17 with multiple bomb blasts and indiscriminate shooting at the Federal College of Education. The incident led to the death of over 15 people, many of whom were young female students with more than 60 people injured. Residents of Kano state now proceed with caution when approaching educational institutions and staff and students of other tertiary institutions have been left in a state of perpetual fear.

In a separate event, the Shiite leader - Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky who lost three sons along with thirty-one other members of the sect has instituted a case against the Federal government and the Nigerian army at the International Criminal Court. Sheikh El-Zakzaky had earlier rejected the report from the Military investigation panel and the apology from President Jonathan for the wrongful killing insisting that the responsible officers be made to face justice for their crime.

In Kaduna state, the persistent fear of outbreaks of violence is hinged not just on recent activities of JAS insurgents but also on persistent sectarian tension in the state heightened by the commencement of campaign activities. The pattern of settlement in a significant portion of the state remains polarised along ethno-religious divide. This month, several residents of Kafanchan and neighbouring villages in Jama'a LGA have begun relocating to areas perceived to be safe in the event of an outbreak of violence.

In an unrelated event, armed robbery and petty crimes have become fairly regular occurrences in Kaduna. This month, a bureau de change operator was killed in the city while unknown gunmen attacked Karshi town and Karshi Daji in Sanga LGA. Over 30 people were killed by the attackers who were said to have been shooting at any moving object in sight. Several days after the attack, youths from Fadan Karshi blocked the road in search for travellers of Fulani origin with an attempt at reprisal killings. Governor Mukhtar Yero's commiseration visit to the area was greeted with anger as scores of irate women and youths attacked the Governor's convoy in protest against the numerous attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen in the area.



In the Niger Delta region, armed violence and organised crime continues to pose serious challenge to security operatives. This month, the Bayelsa state security outfit foiled a kidnap attempt on the 73 year old mother of Mr Innocent Nwokoya - a personal aide to Nigeria's Petroleum Minister, Diezani Allison-Madueke. The Abua/Odual LGA of Rivers State equally remains a hotbed of cult activities and crime in spite of peace efforts. The police and members of the Greenlanders cult clashed at the divisional police headquarters in the area leading to the arrest of a member of the gang on allegations of robbery and illegal possession of fire arms.

Following a series of protracted protests against the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) by communities in the Ughelli North LGA of Delta state over neglect of their communities, the oil company's facilities has been shut down. In Warri South LGA, beneficiaries of the Presidential Amnesty Programme of Itshekiri origin marched through major streets of Warri metropolis protesting alleged victimization and discrimination against them.

Across the country, the Ebola outbreak has affected school resumption for the 2014/2015 academic session. This has generated tension between the federal government and several state governments as well as between the government and the National Union of Teachers (NUT). The federal government's switch from October 13 to September 22, 2014 as schools' resumption date met with stiff opposition from several quarters as many felt that schools were ill-equipped to prevent the spread of the virus. In the end, schools across the country adopted varying resumption dates in relation to their state of preparedness to combat the spread of the dreaded virus.

Economic

The incessant activities of JAS in the North-east have continued to take its toll on the region's economy. The security situation has significantly impeded movement hence traders are unable to ferry their wares with resultant rise in food prices. In Kano state, the patronage of the city's major markets was visibly low in the aftermath of the September 17 multiple bomb blasts at FCE Kano. The waning movement of traders from neighbouring states is attributable in equal parts to fear of renewed insurgent attacks and the on-going construction work in several parts of the city which makes transportation difficult.

The delay in the payment of salaries of civil servants in Plateau state is fast telling on economic activities in the state with some workers being owed salaries for as much as six months. The impact of this cannot be overstated as the commercial sector is largely dependent on patronage by civil servants.

Youth unemployment remains a major issue in the Niger Delta with significant effect on the region's economy. Early this month, Bayelsa youths barricaded the entrance to Federal University, Otuoke over jobs and admission slots. The protesters disrupted students' examinations stating that provision of youth employment remains a major pre-condition for peace in the President's hometown.

The National Context

Nigerian Security Forces Hold Their Own Against Insurgents

This month saw gallant efforts by Nigerian forces in the fight against JAS insurgents. Recent attempts by the insurgents to advance from Konduga into Bama were repelled by over 500 Nigerian troops with scores of casualties on the insurgent side. The tide seems to have turned against the insurgents with the relentless onslaught by troops resulting in the recovery of armoured tanks, arms and ammunitions. As at September 20, rumours were rife on the alleged killing of JAS leader Shekau and some of his commanders and the rescue of several abducted women. The alleged rescue of the abducted women is yet to be confirmed and it remains to be seen if Shekau has indeed fallen at the hands of the Nigerian troops.

JAS Activities Persist in Neighbouring Niger and Cameroun

The 2014/015 academic year began in Cameroon this month. Thousands of students and teachers are reported to have deserted schools in towns along the border with Borno state. With several schools either destroyed or occupied by the militants, Cameroon officials have begun efforts to relocate affected persons to more secure areas.

Update on Hostilities in Military circles

In September, 12 of the accused soldiers court-martialled on charges of Mutiny, were sentenced to death by firing squad. This sentence has dampened the spirit of Nigerian troops and attracted reactions from human right groups and activists. Early this month, Voice of America reported that about 400 Nigerian soldiers have fled into neighbouring Cameroon to escape intense fighting with Boko Haram in the border town of Banki. The station attributed the report to Cameroon's state radio but gave no further details. This comes on the heels of last month's incidence in which nearly 500 Nigerian troops crossed over into Cameroon following fierce fighting with JAS at Gamboru-Ngala. The affected Nigerian soldiers have since returned home to their duty posts.

Update on Chibok Girls

A total of 17 parents of the abducted Chibok girls have died since the unfortunate incident. 15 girls who had managed to escape from their captors have been awarded scholarship at AUN Academy, the secondary school arm of American University of Nigeria in Adamawa State. This was announced by the University's proprietor, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. The Governor of Borno state equally announced that about 51 girls alleged to have escaped would be sent to schools in other parts of the country stating that government has voted N1.2million for education of each girl.

Implications for Programming in Select States (Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta)

JAS' hold on occupied territories and establishment of unofficial authority continues to present challenges to peace and security programming in the Northeast

JAS continues to control several territories in the northeast. In recent weeks, JAS has declared Islamic Caliphate's in 25 towns across Borno, Yobe and Adamawa (Damboa, Buni Yadi, Madagali, Gwoza, Gujba, Gulak, Bama, Gulani, Shuwa, Marte, Kukawa, Michika, Dikwa, Bularafa, Bazza, Gamboru Ngalla and Buni Gari. Others are Banki, Bara, Pulka, Bumsa, Ashgashiya, Gulak, Madagali, Bazza, Michika, Garkida, Gombi and Uba) where they claim to control both ingress and egress routes. Maiduguri, still under Federal and State government control, have witnessed curfews to curtail JAS plans, as they advance towards the northern capital city of the State. This is also due to pillaging of rural communities in LGAs around Borno by JAS including attacks on traders and marketers traveling on the Maiduguri-Damaturu highway. This instability is quickly becoming a humanitarian issue due to the movement of rural communities into Maiduguri city - one of the few cities that have not fallen to the insurgents. It however remains to be seen if the government possesses the necessary capacity and infrastructure to cater for the rising number of IDPs. For programmes operating in the northeast, the insurgency continues to pose challenges to programme implementation. However, community needs require continued humanitarian assistance and psycho-social support for residents of Borno and Yobe whose communities are overrun by JAS insurgents.

Deteriorating Security in Kano State Gives Rise to Caution and Continues to Present Challenges to Sustainable Peace and Security

The security situation in Kano state had unexpectedly turned to violence with multiple bombs exploding at the Federal College of Education recently in Kano State. The incident occurred around 2:00pm at the new campus of the college and led to the death of over 15 people (many of whom were young female students) and

left as many as 60 people injured. The public has expressed fears that the security situation in Kano state remains uncertain and fears of further attacks has created a sense of panic among the population.

Violence among politicians illustrates lack of political stability and non-violent resolution mechanisms for grievances in the Niger Delta

Conflict between political parties has continued to escalate to levels of physical violence. This was the case in Rivers State during the Save Rivers PDP Group meeting at the Delta Hotels in Port Harcourt recently. The PDP meeting was disrupted by suspected supporters of Nyesom Wike- the Minister of State for Education and the incident escalated to violence leaving several casualties including the Rivers State Commissioner for Education. It is alleged that the members of the Save Rivers PDP Group are angry that some members of the PDP are opposing Wike's emergence as the PDP governorship candidate, which can give him absolute control of the party. Some of them are also suspected sympathisers of Governor Amaechi and are accused of acting the script of the governor to neutralise the influence of Wike and his grip on the party. Electoral violence of this nature is more likely in the future due to the lack of legal recourse to manage conflicts non-violently attributable to the paralysed and therefore, dysfunctional judicial system in Rivers State. Programming in all sectors including governance, peacebuilding, and infrastructure in the Niger Delta can be negatively impacted by the insecurity in the region.

Potential for exploitation of grievances of unemployed youth remains high in Niger Delta

Due to the high rate of unemployment in the Niger Delta, youth in search of purpose and financial prosperity may be mobilized around initiatives of violence in the run up to the elections. In the month of September, there have been protests of young people against government agencies and oil and gas facilities. For example, on Thursday, 4 September, 2014, youths of Otuoke community in the Ogbia LGA in Bayelsa State, hometown of Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan, barricaded the entrance to the Federal University, claiming that they needed jobs and that the admission process was biased against them. These protesters disrupted student's examination and stated that employing them remains a major pre-condition for sustainable peace and security in the community. To date, this issue remains unresolved, and as the election period draws closer, the protests of youth with grievances of unemployment and favoritism will likely gain in momentum and have the potential to escalate in levels of violence as well. The potential for electoral period violence to affect programming in all sectors in the Niger Delta remains high. It is important for programmes operating in LGAs where political contest remains highly volatile to understand the potential negative impact of their activities on the context as well as the risk the context poses to activity implementation.

Plateau State shows signs of improving peace and security although small incidents remain

The political atmosphere has started picking up with no fewer than ten candidates for the Governorship primary contest in the ruling PDP. The wrangling within the All Progressive Congress state executive committee remains unresolved as about four candidates have indicated interest to contest for the Governorship position on the platform of the party. Communal violence was recorded in the village of Gyamba under Lamba District of Wase LGA and Mbar village of Bokkos LGA. In both cases, lives were lost and property destroyed. The menace of armed cattle theft was reported in Mabudi village in Langtang South LGA during the month. Although these small-scale incidents of violence have occurred, the nature and occurrence rate of these incidents are lower than the rate of occurrence in previous months. This may be an indication of peace processes in Plateau state having a positive effect on the state. Programming in Plateau state that focuses on addressing or mitigating on inter-communal violence at the state and LGA level remains highly necessary through this electoral period.



Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Federal Government should continue to be pressured to provide strong and just security responses to insecurity in the Northeast. The risk to long-term sustainable peacebuilding in the region remains high. As JAS continues to encroach on Maiduguri and leave surrounding communities paralyzed by fear, the humanitarian dynamics that are emerging will continue to present a challenge for those providing assistance to the region. International organizations and donors should continue to support efforts to rebuild trust in peace and security as well as humanitarian assistance to IDPs that continue to relocate as the security situation persists.
- It is recommended that the international community should leverage its relationship with a number of Nigerian political leaders to de-emphasize politics of personal relationships and nepotism in the upcoming election process. Political parties and leaders should be encouraged to run on issues and platforms of development, particularly in cases such as the Niger Delta where there have been a series of violent incidents in public places between politicians. Incentives for not only voter non-violence, but non-violence amongst politicians in the election period should be encouraged.