

Information Gathering in Conflict Situations in North-East Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: The North-East of Nigeria has been bedevilled with security challenges ranging from farmers-herders conflict to terrorism. These conflicts have increasingly threatened lives, economy and livelihood in the region. The lack of adequate and timely information has exacerbated threat thresholds. Extant studies have identified a dearth in intelligence gathering and a corresponding ineffectiveness of the information gathering chain. This gap has been underscored by incidences experienced in the North-East region of Nigeria. Engaging secondary sources of data, majorly through literature search, the paper posits that information gathering in the North-East of Nigeria is a four-tier function which resonates around the local population, the non-governmental organisations (NGO)/Civil Society Organisations (CSO), the media and the Government. The challenges bedevilling effective information gathering were identified. The paper concludes and recommends that there is a need for synergy between the media, INGOs/NGOs, the Government and the local population and, to calibrate information gathering with action in North-East Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Security, Information-gathering, Conflict, Northeast Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The North-East of Nigeria is one of the largest food-producing regions in Nigeria. The region boasts of food and cash crops, commerce as well as tourism. However, the increasing activities of the Boko-Haram group have become a threat to the economics of the region and, the country at large. Today, as postulated by Maryah, (2012), the region can only produce about half of its yearly net production across the board. The security situation in the region has created a situation where the environment necessary for sustainable socio-economic development is untenable. Lives and livelihood, of all and sundry, most especially among the most vulnerable groups has been eroded. More so, values such as human rights, basic freedom of movement and association as well as access to basic human needs (food, shelter and clothing) are now alien in the region. The need to plug this gap has seen the intervention of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) in the North-East region of the country.

NGOs have a key role to play in lending a helping hand to State actors regarding various issues ranging from diplomacy and humanitarian interventions to correcting social misnomer. Interventions by NGOs need visible staff at conflict zones for effectiveness (Mohanani, 2000). Thus, the staff of these NGOs are exposed to insecurity also and many have fallen victims of insecurity in the region and paid in some instances, with their life. Information on happenings in the regions are key to the survival of the staff and to the general success of the interventions. Information and intelligence gathering are, therefore, the backbone of successful humanitarian aid operations in the North-East region.

NGOs are voluntary organizations and have been in operation as far back as the ancient times. Inamdar (1987) noted that volunteerism operated freely and exclusively in the education and cultural promotion fields in ancient and medieval times. Furthermore, volunteerism, as it was then referred to, acted as a service provider during violent crises in terms of attacks and war. Banky-moon (2011), former UN Secretary-General, noted that the involvement of NGOs in decisions making regarding concerns on the environment, sustainable development and human rights, among others, has increased the legitimacy and transparency of inter-governmental deliberations. They have played a progressively prominent role in developmental programmes and are able to work and gather information at the grassroots level. The best practice regarding information gathering is thus premised on the effectiveness of NGOs to gather local information and process the same for successful interventions. This can be successful through public-private documentation.

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Private-public documentation and evidence collection precedes and drives accountability mechanisms (Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005). Ensuring information gatherers, NGOs/CSOs in this case, know the rules of procedure and evidence that govern the information collected is key to prevention against crossing fundamental lines. Those who accept such information from others are expected to ensure that the most basic and fundamental rules pertaining to evidence collection are adhered to. Notably, there exist no single, widely accepted set of rules of procedure and evidence governing information gathering. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2379 centred on the use of evidence however, it does not include these issues surrounding the collection of information in the absence of rules of evidence. According to Vamos-Goldman (2017), obtaining information through torture, the fabrication of information, and obtaining information without regard to the danger that its collection poses to victims, witnesses, survivors and those collecting the information – the “do no harm” principle, are an anathema to the key rules and standards of information gathering. Vamos-Goldman noted that the judgement of those collecting, or accepting information will determine the authenticity of gathered information.

Consequently, collection and acceptance of information are largely based on the judgement of relevant parties. This puts the responsibility of the information gathering process at the feet of the judgement of both the gatherer and the synthesizer. The chain often comprises the locals, the State (and its agencies), the media and the NGOs. The importance of the information process in a conflict situation can therefore not be overemphasized.

The State and intelligence gathering

Nigeria's bid to grapple with the problem of threats to her internal security as a result of the pervasive state of insecurity in some parts of the country has thrown up interesting challenges for the intelligence community in the country (Ngboawaji, 2013). Lack of effective intelligence gathering and synthesis has been identified as one of the major reasons for insecurity. While evaluating the insecurity in Nigeria, Ngboawaji (2013) posits that intelligence gathering and management has not been effectively deployed to support security operations.

In defining intelligence, Ngboawaji (2013) notes that the term is largely relative and not absolute. This suggests that the term can be dynamic in meaning(s). However, it is used to describe the process of information gathering, analysing and usage. Intelligence is generally defined as collection, refining and narrowing of gathered information to meet the stated needs of policymakers. Policymakers in this sense refer to the government. To protect national security, State actors keep track of internal and external threats (Lowenthal, 2000). Keeping track is done using various means and while some scholars have identified external threats as key threats to a nation's sovereignty, some such as Ngboawaji (2013), postulate that internal threats are a major threat to a nation's security. To keep track of these threats, nations require certain instruments to contain these threats. Enahoro (2010) posits that nations adopt diverse strategies and policies such to enable them respond appropriately and safeguard the territorial integrity of a State. One of such strategies is the need to be up to date with information through intelligence gathering.

As a tool of statecraft, intelligence gathering acts as a tool for early warning on imminent threats. It provides timely information through the acquisition of covert information by covert means on the actions, policies and capabilities of non-state actors and, other nations. Such information is collected, analysed and disseminated for early response. This is explained by Lowenthal (2007) as support activities that may be deemed necessary in the furtherance of national interests. Apart from military reasons, intelligence gathering is a critical element in the success of all human endeavour including for governance and business.

Intelligence gathering methods in situations of armed conflict primarily focuses on the identification of military targets. According to Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck (2005), Article 57 (2)(a)(i) of the Geneva Convention envisages that attackers will use intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance resources to identify the character of the proposed target in order to ensure that only lawful military targets are attacked. The article notes that the rule is binding to all parties to the conflict in both International Armed Conflict (IAC) and Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC). Furthermore, additional Protocol I, articles 51 (5)(b), 57(2)(a)(iii) and 57(2)(b) prohibits attacks "which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated". These articles underscore the importance of prior information gathering before an attack is sanctioned in a conflict zone. The emphasis of the articles and conventions are mainly on military and non-military targets and leaves a wide gap with regards to other kinds of information.

The major sources of information in conflict zones are through governments, the media, international agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals and academia. The information-gathering subsequent analysis and final dissemination are expected to lead to action. Furthermore, the process is said to be a circle which, in turn, leads to the need for more information. Thus, information gathering is a continuous process. Government is said to be the largest and most important source of verified information in conflict zones (Dorn, 2001). This communication can be in written or oral form (the oral form, in this case, will more or less be formal). Furthermore, official speeches are also admitted as a regular and important source of information. Although, Dorn (2001) noted that official speeches are important but often redundant despite being a source of current policies, government views and breaking news. Oral communications are often through informal discussions in the offices and frequently referred to as "Corridor diplomacy,"

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According to Baginski (2007), there has always been a rather healthy tension between the producers of intelligence and the users of intelligence. This is premised on the fact that intelligence operations are not carried out for their own sake as a stand-alone operation, but act as a backdrop for decision making in lieu of community safety/national security. Notably, gathered intelligence is more valuable in the eyes of the users, not the producers. Thus, intelligence usefulness can only be judged by the level of integration with the users. There is, however, a non-collaboration gap that has been championed by competition, such that security management and national security are being attenuated. Furthermore, Ngboawaji (2013) noted that there is a general alienation of the intelligence community in information/intelligence gathering. Nigeria has, over the years, had to contend with the challenge of inadequate intelligence sharing amongst its security and law enforcement agencies and this has been attributed to inadequate human and technical intelligence capabilities. Iogho (2006) identified three schools of thought on intelligence gathering among the Nigerian armed forces:

- i. Intelligence, as practised in Nigeria, is not real-time and therefore has no operational value
- ii. intelligence management in Nigeria lacks analytical skills and is therefore unable to predict events correctly
- iii. intelligence in operation is unreliable and therefore not needed

An in-depth analysis of Iogho (2006) stance shows a dearth in intelligence gathering and a corresponding ineffectiveness of the information gathering chain. This gap has been underscored by incidences experienced in the North-East region of Nigeria.

In the thought of Bennett (1996), intelligence may be easier to appreciate at the operational level than at a strategic level. He further noted that it may be more difficult to use due to the fact that it depends on variables such as command and control, availability of military might and the commander's attitude. To carry out the task intelligence gathering, the Nigerian government set-up dedicated agencies saddled with the task of intelligence gathering. These include the Department of State Service (DSS), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). Other security agencies have intelligence units saddled with the responsibility of intelligence gathering. Despite these, as opined by Ngboawaji (2013), there has been a noticeable lacuna in the information chain.

Information gathering and dissemination in the Media Age

The media is an important source of information in a conflict zone, most especially for current events. Despite concerns over accuracy, emphasis and bias of the media, the importance of media reportage cannot be overemphasized. There is a growing perception among the countries in the global south of an "information hegemony". This has led to the rise in calls for a "new world information and communication order." Aside the concerns raised by the developing world, scholars such as Dorn (2001) noted that countries from both divides agree in principle that the media can be susceptible to considerable external influences, from both governmental and non-governmental sectors. In addition, it is widely accepted that the media can more or less indulge in self-serving sensationalism. Dorn (2001) however noted that for decisions which are crucial and, in some instances time-sensitive, media information is more or less insufficient. However, Dorn's stance did not take into account social media age where information can be gotten at one's fingertips. Scholars, such as Kendie (2007), have raised concerns over the attendant problems of information overload and underuse. Social media and internet search engines have made information retrieval faster thus, adding enormously to the pool of information. This leads to organisations being overwhelmed with data such that the natural tendency to overlook important information may arise.

Owing to their ability to reach and influence a great number of persons, the media is said to be empowered and capable of shaping the course of any given conflict. Thus, the role of the media cannot be overemphasized. Media reportage that builds confidence and counteracts misperceptions may have potentials in both conflict prevention and transformation (Mensah, Boasiako & Acquah, 2017). The reportage must therefore be balanced, well researched and devoid of conflict escalating contents. A skewed reportage has the potential of escalating tension and brew suspicion whereas, a balanced reportage has the potential of de-escalating conflict. Kendie (2007) reiterated this fact by positing that the media is a powerful tool that can be employed to change the course of development of any given country. For Wolfsfeld (1997), the importance of the media is underscored by the scramble by diverse actors to control or, in some instances, influence the media. Jakobsen (2011) argues that what constitutes news is based on the selection of certain facts and the overlooking of others by the media noting that in-depth reporting is largely marginal. On the far-reaching power of media, Robinson (2002) theorized that the media, most especially international media, have shown tremendous ability to put pressure on governments. This connotes that apart from shaping rhetorics and public discourse, the power of the media reaches as far as being able to put pressure on governments regarding diverse issues.

The coverage of a given conflict will determine the interest it stirs in the public, most especially among international donors and non-governmental organisations. There is, therefore, a notable correlation between media coverage and funding levels in humanitarian emergencies. The higher the international media attention, the higher the conflict visibility and humanitarian intervention. In the words of Wolfsfeld (1997), there is a preference for 'sensationalist' events and "infotainment" such that at the latent stage or emerging state of conflict, the probability of it being overlooked is high if it is not sensational enough. The information that flows out of a conflict zone, such as the North-East region of Nigeria, is thus key. The responsibility of the media revolves around the manner in which issues are presented and the underlying tone adopted for the reportage. Accordingly, the media are expected to report issues of conflict in a meaningful context.

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The conventional media have lost the monopoly of news coverage due to trends in technology which has resulted in an increasingly diverse, decentralised and multi-channel environment such that more and more channels have emerged in the digital, online and social media realms (Hoover, 2008). According to Culbertson (2014), citizen journalists have provided real-time descriptions of events. Thus, social media allows citizens to develop their media literacies in new and creative ways. It makes people becoming more engaged, active and raises critical viewers, readers and listeners (Meikle & Young, 2012). Summarily, offline occurrences can be reported in real time through the social media thereby reducing the time in-between information gathering and dissemination. Therefore, opportunities for cross-cultural communication expand dramatically through online venues (Ess, 2009). Scholars such as Hinton & Hjorth (2013) argue that citizen journalists do not possess requisite skills to get stories and report them accurately. The stories, in some instances, do not meet the minimum requirement expected of gatekeepers and do not filter between propaganda and news.

In summing up reportage, McQuail (1992) notes that the media is the 'oxygen of publicity' that bestows legitimacy to some political aims of terrorism which may ultimately undermine, by criticism, the forces of order while failing to convey the enormity of terrorist acts. Accordingly, reportage of insurgents and terrorist activities may encourage insurgency and terrorism by way of aligning with the main terrorist strategy of public demoralisation and this is easily and swiftly done using the social media. More so, the terrorist group, Boko Haram, understands the workings of social media and utilises same for publicity. (Eguiluz, 2018)

The group's constant threat to journalists to report its attacks and the granting of interviews as well as sending of recordings to international media shows that the group is conscious of the importance of media and publicity to its goals. The media has a duty, as the fourth realm, to provide an information platform for the general public and State actors, on the one hand, and terrorist groups, on the other. The open line between the media and the NGOs is key to the success of interventions. There is little scholarly attention given to the synergy between the media and the NGOs in North-East Nigeria. Although the international media has often aired expose on events and happenings in the North-East, little attention has been beamed on the possible source of the information and the synergy that exists, if any, between the international media, the NGOs and local actors.

Non-Governmental Organisations and information gathering

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and individuals have been identified as one of the most capable hands when it comes to gathering information in unusual ways, most especially information that would be out of bounds for the government (Diddams, 2011). Some NGOs, due to their acceptable thematic areas of intervention in a nation-state, can use conscientious citizens to provide them with information. Violations of human rights are attendant consequences of armed conflict, therefore, human rights NGOs can be especially valuable sources of information in this regard. NGOs whose thematic areas focus around humanitarian aid have also been identified as valuable sources of information. This is due to the fact that such NGOs have a visible presence in the conflict field thus, they can obtain first-hand reports/investigation of events in conflict areas. Additionally, there exists a moral right to make inquiries of the host governments on the government's policies and activities that may have a bearing on their interventions.

In reiterating the number of NGOs operating in the North-East, a National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) 2016 report noted that 263 NGOs are currently operating in the region due to Boko-Haram terrorists attacks. According to Campbell and Harwood (2018), over 20,000 people have been killed, over 2 million displaced internally, and over 200,000 have fled to neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad since the conflict began. Eguiluz (2018) work pointed out that approximately 8 million people in the North-East of Nigeria are heavily dependent on humanitarian aid while an estimated 823,000 people are out of the reach of aid organizations. The submission by Eguiluz (2018) shows the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in the North-East and raises concerns. Till date, there exist ongoing hostilities, pervading threats of attacks by armed non-state actors, constant violence targeted at civilians, remnants of mines and other explosive devices. The prevalent insecurity has increased the number of internally displacement people while at the same time hinders the free movement of humanitarian workers. Similarly, the transportation of commodities from one place to another has become challenging to not just the citizenry but, also the humanitarian aid workers. International Committee of the Red Cross (2018) posits that the only way some of these areas are accessed by NGOs is through moving with the escort provided by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) or the Nigerian military.

Notably, right to movement or access to certain areas is subject to approval from the military and this makes information flow difficult. The constraints and bottlenecks encountered in gaining access translate to humanitarian actors working on a limited scale in the conflict zone. The deployment of military escort to aid humanitarian interventions may send a signal pointing to the aid workers being aligned with the military thereby putting a question mark on their neutrality. Momoh (2018) noted that the very essence of humanitarian assistance is the impartial, independent and neutral provision of support to those in immediate danger. Once the three principles are perceived to be tainted or questionable, the aid becomes questioned. Balancing the need for security and, the need to stick to these principles is quite challenging in the North-East. Interestingly, as posited by Olojo (2019), the military authorities and the government are suspicious of the actions of the non-governmental organisations and do not perceive the NGOs as neutral. The government has complained of not being sufficiently aware of the interventions being carried out by humanitarian workers in some areas in the North-East. The Economist (2018) noted that staff of some organisations were being threatened with

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arrest and prosecution under Nigeria's counterterrorism laws. This is premised on the fact that the government suspects the staff or organisation has ties with Boko Haram.

Eleven years of terrorism and violence perpetrated by Boko Haram has turned Nigeria's North-East into a conflict hotspot for various aid organisations. The conflict opened service delivery gaps that are being plugged by the different aid organisations. According to Olojo (2019), the conflict has led to the displacement of about two million people. Furthermore, the adverse impact of climate change has exacerbated the humanitarian situation. The camps that house the internally displaced persons (IDP) are thus dotted with humanitarian agencies. At least 150 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), whose intervention is humanitarian-based, were represented in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital as at 2018. Olojo (2019) postulated that more than half of the NGOs were operating without due legal registration. This puts a dent on their credibility and ultimately hampers information sharing.

The multiplicity of NGOs offering humanitarian aid in the North-East leaves in its wake a wide range of socio-economic effects on the society. Olojo (2019) posits that the attractive financial rewards offered by the NGOs have led to a number of government employees resigning their official positions particularly in the public sector for better pay. Furthermore, local entrepreneurs have seen an upsurge in business at hotels, business centres, transporters and restaurants. This has led to an inflationary effect on the local economy. Socio-economic effects may have an effect on information flow most especially in the area of the authenticity of such information. Information about a number of victims, casualties and death are majorly sourced from the media who in turn source for such information from the local population who remain conscious of the socio-economic effects of the conflict (Momoh, 2018). However, the authenticity of such news is often questionable despite it being the information the NGOs work with.

Consequently, there is a need for synergy between the INGOs/NGOs, the Government and the citizens. This synergy is marked by seamless information flow. Given that the humanitarian aids of the NGOs are targeted at improving the social status of the poor, displaced and the North-East society, there is a need to track information on the success, or otherwise, of such aids in reaching its target. Their extensive knowledge of local conditions places them at the top of the ladder with regards to information gathering. More so, the prevalent Local Government system in North-East States, especially Borno State, in which many Local Governments systems have become comatose and non-existent, in some cases, has led to lack of credible information from the lowest cadre of government (Kallon, 2017).

Ideally, the local government system is the closest to the grassroots among the tiers of government and are often the first responders. In a situation where the system has been eroded due to conflicts, getting adequate and timely information from the system becomes impossible. Such a situation makes NGOs the most knowledgeable with regards to local circumstances. Although Nigeria INGO Forum (2018) argued that the Joint Task Force (JTF) are the most informed, the local population in some instances prefer to speak to a third party than the military. This suggests, therefore, that NGOs are the most likely source of information and are important to the information flow circle.

Impediments to smooth information flow in the North-East have been identified by Kallon (2017) to include socio-cultural barriers, culture and belief system as well as language barrier. According to ISCG (2018), a humanitarian actor's engagement with local communities is majorly carried out through the support given to community committees. The committee structures are employed to inform and engage with communities such that information flow becomes seamless.

Early warning and response systems in the North-East

The Nigeria government has a complex structure for humanitarian coordination institutional wise. The North East Development Commission (NEDC) advises and coordinates all humanitarian and development efforts in the North-East region. Furthermore, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), which is directly under the Office of the Vice President, is saddled with the responsibility of emergency intervention, policy development, monitoring of the policy implementation as well as overseeing the various state emergency management agencies. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning is the main interlocutor for humanitarian and development actors in Nigeria and oversees the Emergency Coordination Centre, which hosts the Humanitarian Coordination Working Group. In addition to these, the inter-ministerial task force was established in 2016 by the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to oversee the coordination of all humanitarian response in the North-East and in the whole country. These structures rely heavily on information for their activities.

There have been major challenges in accessing data and information for humanitarian planning and action in Nigeria due to insecurity. The existing difficulty in getting a clear picture of the number of displaced persons. This is largely owing to the fact that concerted efforts to register IDPs in the region has been limited to IDPs in camps or camp-like situations. Meanwhile, 80-90% of IDPs are not in the camps rather, they have taken shelter with members of their extended family in urban settings. Similarly, accurate data on the number of children and women in conflict is not available for all crisis-affected areas. It is therefore clear that there are no monitoring systems for tracking humanitarian situations in inaccessible areas of the North-East. Although this has been largely put at the feet of the insecurity and volatile nature of such areas, it is also as a result of poor access roads to the hinterland which is exacerbated during the rainy season.

The information systems are allegedly not optimised to effectively track internal and cross-border displacement in the North-East (McIlreavy and Schopp, 2017). In countering this narrative, MacLean (2018) noted that INGOs and NGOs have created permanent forums and information channels across multiple levels of governance. These organisations combine community-level peace

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monitors, who are tasked with identifying emerging security threats, with platforms that bring together key stakeholders at the community or Local Government level. In the same vein, search for common ground (SFCG) in their 2017 report, state that SFCG has a functional early warning (EW) and early response (ER) system in place in the North-East. These systems were strengthened in 2017 with the aim to build a local information sharing system that will aid the fight against terrorism and strengthen information flow from the conflict zones. The general objective of the system was to reinforce and expand a community-based EW/ER system, strengthen engagement between State and Local actors to secure communities and, strengthen partners' capacity to support and monitor EW systems. This was however premised on mutual trust among all parties, that is the INGOs/NGOs, the governments and the people. (SFCG, 2017)

According to NSRP (2017), the existing EW/ER systems in the North-East are the government-led security monitoring and response mechanism, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP), British Council Early Warning System and the Search for Common Ground (SFCG) Early Warning System. The Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) plays a significant role in the Nigerian Government conflict early warning and response system most especially in gathering, analysing and disseminating to other agencies. The NSRP EW/ER system is done through multi-level and multi-sectoral dialogue platforms from the communities to the State level. Selected community volunteers are saddled with collating security reports, threats and tensions, which are analysed for severity and reported to the community traditional leaders and council for further actions.

This early warning and response system are implemented through a local partner- "Herwa Community Development Organization", who plays the vital role of community EW/ER systems facilitator, building capacities of volunteers and community leaders to promptly identify and discuss security concerns and responses. This same local partner is employed by the British Council to drive their EW/ER system under a concept referred to as "Know Your Neighbour". The Search for Common Ground (SFCG) system is an integrated community-based EW system optimised for collection of data on violent incidents, tensions, and threats, at the different level of the community, Local Governments, and the State. Collaborative platforms have been created for affected communities and stakeholders of security agencies, civil society, government MDAs and the media. The system is coordinated by a team of SFCG trained Community Volunteer Observers and a Community Response Network (CRN) of community and religious leaders, representatives of the security agencies at the community and LGA levels, the community observers and representatives of the local government authority and community vigilante groups.

The EW/ER system serves as a tool for information gathering in the North-East and is supposedly accessible to both the government, media and all interested parties. The system apparently takes into account the need for information verification from the grassroots in principle. However, EW/ER system is yet to achieve the desired goals practice. Thus, the information chain remains largely inefficient and is it best a semi-redundant.

Challenges of effective information gathering in North-East Nigeria

Information gathering and management involves employing technology and human resources to identify, generate, gather, process and eventually deploy or store information for eventual retrieval and dissemination (Akinsola, 2019). The description above highlights the processes involved in effectively gathering and managing information. The processes are methodical and are expected to be effective in achieving the overarching goals. However, the security and socio-economic situations of the North-East have posed challenges to achieving these goals. These challenges range from the point of identifying the information to the point of using or storing the gathered information. In the words of Ngwodo (2017), information gap exacerbates security challenges thus, plugging the information deficit and ensuring effective information gathering and management will go a long way in tackling the insecurity in the North-East.

One major challenge bedeviling information gathering in the North-East is the unwillingness of the public to share viable information with the security agencies and other relevant bodies. Phenson, Ojie, Esin and Atai (2014) posited that the indifference and reluctance of citizen's to volunteering relevant security information to law enforcement agencies has contributed to part of the lapses evident in critical security elements application. This is due to fear and lack of trust in the security agencies. According to Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpan-Robaro (2013) some information given to relevant agencies are not acted upon in a timely manner and in some instances are discarded. This has led to confidence by the public in the ability of the security agencies to synthesize and act on given information. This is aside the fact that the public are afraid of being indicted by law enforcement agencies for the information they provide or, for their identity being revealed.

Safe and timely delivery of gathered information is crucial. To achieve this, modern technology such as information technology and telecommunication equipment must come into play. However, destruction of telecommunication masts will surely hamper such smooth communication thereby creating a gap between the information gatherer and the information synthesizer. In the same vein, the public and information sharers/givers may have no access to the rights gadgets to relay the information they have, most especially if they stay in remote areas where telecommunication masts are absent. Furthermore, lack of adequate power supply will hamper the functions of the technological equipment. Access to power will enable information technology equipment such as phone gadgets, printers, photocopiers and more to function at optimal.

SFCG (2017) report underscored the importance of human personals to information gathering. The report further highlighted the lack of adequately trained personnel in the field who are equipped to gather information in diverse climes. Thus, lack of adequately

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trained personnel is a challenge to information gathering in the North-East. The prevailing circumstances in the region often makes working in such zones unattractive to the trained personnel thereby leaving the onus on the locals to gather and transmits information as and when due. However, the locals are not adequately trained to carry out the function thus leaving a big gap in the information gathering process.

Lastly, culture barrier as well as lack of trust for outsiders has been said to hamper effective information gathering. The North-East is predominantly guided by the culture of silence imposed on females, and in some instances, children. Similarly, some locals do not respond to inquiries from people who are perceived as foreigners. According to Momoh (2018), this underlying suspicion is majorly due to not knowing who to trust with information. More so, some communities have been threatened by the Boko Haram terrorist to not divulge information to security agents or foreigners. To this end, eliciting information from locals proved a gargantuan task.

CONCLUSION

Despite the diverse information-gathering systems, processes and chain, there is a growing concern that information dissemination and response have not worked effectively or fulfilled the purpose of creation. The scholarship has identified the government, media, local population and NGOs/CSOs as important arms of the information process in the North-East. However, the synthesis, dissemination and ultimate usage of the gathered information gathered in the region, if adequately gathered at all, is yet to be fully optimised.

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