IMPACT OF BANDITRY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GVB) IN ZAMFARA STATE, NORTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

Not ample scholarly attention has been given to the issue of banditry and its impact on women in Zamfara state and the broader Northwestern region in current academic discussions. This study investigates the phenomenon of violence against women and children in Northwest Nigeria, with a specific focus on the impact of banditry and gender-based violence (GBV) in Zamfara state. This study posits that the activities of bandits in Zamfara state has led to a deliberate transformation in the roles of women and children in the state. Consequently, this has contributed to an enhanced gender-based violence which they have historically endured at the hands of their oppressors. This article posits that the Northwestern region has had the most severe impact from these societal vices, with particularly devastating consequences for women and children that are difficult to articulate. The researcher employed a historical research methodology, incorporating both primary and secondary materials in the evaluation process. The study employs a descriptive and analytical approach in its presentation of facts and evidence. The report asserts that in order to address the issue effectively, it is imperative for regional entities like ECOWAS, national agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to undertake robust measures to curb the activities of bandits

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in Zamfara state and the broader Northwestern area. Failure to do so may result in the persistence of this problem.

Keywords: Banditry, Children, Gender Based Violence, Women

Introduction

The vulnerability experienced by women and children in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Northwestern Nigeria, has been compared to that of an "endangered species" facing daily challenges for survival. This region is known for its unfavourable characteristics, such as poverty, low levels of education, high rates of unemployment, political instability, and more recently, severe violations of women's and girls' rights. Gender inequality, along with various forms of injustice, is widespread within the communities of this region, resulting in the economic, political, and sexual exploitation of women and girls. These inequalities persist in various manifestations of their customs, traditions, and religious practices, which are also evident in most developing nations and to a lesser extent, developed nations. (Nnam, Arua, & Otu, 2018).

Some scholars have held the view that this has been so from time immemorial. Consequently, this biased and prejudicial stance has manifested in various forms such as female feticide, female infanticide and sexual abuse. Women and girls have also experienced discrimination in nutrition, health care and education Sudha, S. S. I. R., & Rajan, S. I. (1999). There are records of violent prejudices against women and girls in other aspects of life such as social, political, and economic spheres especially in African and Asian Countries True, J. (2012). There are many research articles on the state of the average woman and girl child in Northern Nigeria especially the North-western part of Nigeria Kalu-Umeh, N. N., Sambo, M. N., Idris, S. H., and Kurfi, A. M. (2013). This region of Nigeria, predominantly Hausa-Fulani Muslims, is notorious for its poverty level. There are millions of out-of-school children, and children on the streets begging at times referred to as the Almajiri. The practice of the prebendal system, conspicuous

hegemony and patriarchy are found there, as the elites perpetually dominate the masses.

Of recent also, the scourge of banditry which has become a hydra-headed monster that has impacted the status of women and children in the North-western part of the country. As most women become rape victims and the victims of bandit atrocities in the states of North-western Nigeria. This is accompanied also, by the gender-based violence that has been entrenched in the Northern Nigerian Society of late, especially in North-western Nigeria. This paper, therefore, is an assessment of the nature of violence against women and children in Zamfara state in the light of the incessant bandit attacks and perpetrated gender-based violence (GVB).

Conceptual Clarification

In this section of this work, the concepts of Banditry and Gender-based violence shall be examined as they are the two salient concepts that will be used in the paper.

Banditry

The conception of "banditry is traceable to the 16th century from the Italian word bandito, which means banished man. In addition, a bandit means an outlaw, a marauding band, or a person or group who indulges in taking unfair advantage of others (Quadri, & Oladejo, 2021). Brenner (2021) defined banditry as an organized crime that incorporates kidnapping, armed robbery, murder, rape, cattle rustling, and environmental resource exploitation. Banditry is a type of organized crime conducted by outlaws that usually involves the threat or use of violence. A bandit is someone who steals, raids, and primarily performs crimes such as extortion, robbery, and murder, either alone or as part of a group. (Okoli, & Nwangwu, 2023).

Politics isn't what drives bandits; rather, money is what drives them. These are true descriptions of bandits operating in northern Nigeria and travelling in small groups to other parts of the country to maraud, extort, or kill. In modern Nigeria, there has been an increase in the number of bandits operating in the northern region, similar to well-

known terrorist organisations. They do, however, represent a problem for Nigerians and international observers, as their behaviours are strikingly similar to those of terrorist groups. Because their actions change on a daily basis, no one knows what their group's identity or name is, and no one knows what their principal objectives or ideals are. Bandits have been spotted attacking mosques and murdering Muslims, this is because they operate mainly in the Muslim-dominated areas of northern Nigeria and the northwestern part of the country in particular. (Nwangwu, 2023).

But they all have one thing in common: a drive for financial gain. Recently, the eastern region of Nigeria has been subjected to a form of political banditry that resembled guerrilla warfare but was later revealed by the Nigerian Joint Task Force to be nothing more than cannibalism and banditry. Similarly, ritualists in the Southwest earn a profession by plundering and killing commuters in order to sell their body parts for money (Okoli, & Nwangwu, 2023). The political or religious component of banditry is not as visible as it is in terrorist actions in Nigeria. However, both bandits and terrorists pose a threat to human security. The conceptual definition is important to minimize identity confusion and to explain the goal or purpose of each of the aforementioned groups.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of abuses that range from sexual threats, exploitation, humiliation, assaults, molestation, domestic violence, incest, involuntary prostitution, torture, insertion of objects into genital openings to attempted rape. Female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices, including early marriage, which substantially increases maternal morbidity and mortality, are forms of gender-based violence against women that cannot be overlooked nor justified on the grounds of tradition, culture or social conformity (Raguz, 2021). Gender-based violence has been defined as "any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in

public or private life" (World Health Organization, 2014). This definition, which emerged from the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, represents an international consensus on how to conceptualize the dynamics of gender-based violence and encompasses child sexual abuse, coercive sex, rape, stalking, and intimate partner violence.

The term "gender-based" is used because such violence is shaped by gender roles and status in society. Gender-based violence against women does not encompass every violent act a woman may happen to experience (being threatened by a weapon during a robbery, for example). A complex mix of gender-related cultural values, beliefs, norms, and social institutions implicitly and even explicitly have supported intimate partner violence and provided little recourse for its victims Russo, N. F., & Pirlott, A. (2006). In particular, gender roles and expectations, male entitlement, sexual objectification, and discrepancies in power and status have legitimized, rendered invisible, sexualized, and helped to perpetuate violence against women.

The Nexus Between Banditry and Violent Extremism

Despite the fact that the causes of banditry and terrorism differ, both phenomena thrived in the local context by leveraging the fragile state capacity manifested in human rights violations, inequality, inadequate service delivery, and unemployment. While banditry is more prevalent in the North-West than violent extremism in the North-East, both share the overlapping nature and characteristics of organised crime, as well as its mirrored impact on peace and human security in the afflicted countries (Ismaila, Ibrahim, & Mohammed, 2022). Furthermore, it poses considerable obstacles to targeted counter-violent extremist measures, which are increasingly requiring larger initiatives to confront organised crime. Cattle rustling attributed to bandits, for example, is a method used by Boko Haram to fund their operations. Furthermore, robbery and kidnapping are major criminal enterprises that are comparable in nature to bandit and extremist operations (Dami, 2021). Another recurring theme is the tactical use of tough and frequently inaccessible operational terrains, such as Boko Haram's usage of Sambisa Forest and

bandits' claimed use of Falgore, Kamara, Kunduma, Sububu, Kamuku, and Kiyanbana woods. Within the axis of their activities, it provides a possibility for swift withdrawal and a buffer for their strikes. As a result, the demands of banditry, insurgency, and counter-insurgency have turned the forests into highly militarised and securitized zones, halting socioeconomic progress in the affected states (Adeniji, 2015).

Banditry and Gender-Based Violence in the Northern Region

The double conundrum of gender-based violence and banditry has affected Women and Children in the northwestern region over time. Violence has a unique multitude of impacts on women and children. In situations of violent conflict, infrastructure such as health facilities, markets, water supply, sewage systems, and roads may be damaged or otherwise inaccessible Agbalajobi, D. T., and Ngom, S. (2023). According to the World Bank, for a variety of reasons, including tribal wars and conflicts, many African countries remain among the poorest in the world, resulting in a human rights disaster. Women and children are the ones who suffer the most in these tragic circumstances. Many are abducted and sold as sex slaves, raped, and even used as weapons of war. Others are trafficked and kidnapped victims, or trafficked and kidnapped victims, or sold as sex slaves, raped, and even used as weapons of war World Bank. (2012).

This touches on the core of their basic human rights as persons, as guaranteed by the UN Declaration on Human Rights. The development of the Islamist group, Boko Haram in the Northeast has had a significant detrimental influence on Northern Nigeria's health indicators. Boko Haram, which means "Western education is prohibited," was founded in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state and the main city in Northeast Nigeria, in 2002. The police execution of the group's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, sparked an armed struggle with the government that devolved into the group's extensive terrorist actions. Attacks on civilians (soft targets) and the kidnapping of women, girls, and children are among its strategies (WHO, 2012). We have seen the abduction of Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls numbering close to 400 schoolgirls. Although some have been released through the

government's negotiation with the group, many of them are yet to regain their freedom. Additionally, the insurgents have used the girl-children forcefully kidnapped from their families as instruments of weapon when they were in captivity. It is on record that between January and July 2017, Boko Haram used 145 girls for suicide attacks across the Northeast. (WHO, 2012).

Bandit operations in the North-western region have harmed the odds of women and children surviving. Women and children are particularly affected by bandit operations in north-eastern Nigeria. Meanwhile, gender-based violence (GBV), which has been on the decline in this region, has been the most prominent source of concern for women and children. The menace of banditry, which has evolved into a hydra-headed monster in the northern region, with its attendant effect on women and children, is the present bone of contention in the region. Women have changed from victims to perpetrators of crime and partners to bandits in the region in recent years, giving this a new dimension. (Nagarajan, 2020).

Impact of Banditry on Women and Children in Zamfara State

Impact on Education

Education deprivation in the North-West region has been exacerbated by armed banditry due to the mass displacements in affected communities. However, the escalation of banditry contributed to a high number of out-of-school children in the region. Out of the 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria, 30 per cent are in the North-West (Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano) and Niger States in the North Central region (Abdulrasheed, 2021). Besides, insecurity in the communities had a negative impact on young boys and girls, as school activities in vulnerable areas were disrupted. The few existing schools were unable to operate properly for fear of kidnapping of students or attacks and killings by bandits (Abdulrasheed, 2021). Parents prevented their children from attending schools due to insecurity on major roads. This in turn increased the job turnover of teachers in these communities. A failed attack by bandits in schools was recorded on May 1, 2019, at the Government Girls Secondary School in Zuru LGA of Zamfara State

(Abdulrasheed, 2021). Also, a 'threat note' to shut down a Government Day Secondary School at Talata Mafara LGA of Zamfara State had further created tension as students and teachers stayed away from the school (Dami, 2021). This situation further exposed children to the risk of exploitation and violence.

Impact on Livelihood and Food Security

The insecurity in the North-West region also impacted negatively on the exploitation of environmental resources (e.g., gold mining), thus affecting the livelihood and development potentials in the affected States. The presence of lucrative gold deposits in Zamfara State attracted artisanal mining activities, as bandits and families depended on it for livelihood sustenance. Nevertheless, the gold is smuggled and traded in the global market constituting a loss of revenue for the Nigerian economy. The erstwhile Minister of Mines and Steel Development, Alhaji Abubakar Bawa Bwari, had revealed that between 2016 and 2018, Nigeria lost 353 billion naira from the illicit activities of gold miners and smugglers. (Abdulrasheed, 2021). Though artisanal mining has been linked to economic benefits including informal employment, the poor standards of extraction resulted in land degradation, pollution of water sources and health risks. In 2010 and 2013, the State recorded an outbreak of 'lead poisoning' epidemic due to illicit mining activities resulting in a death toll of 734 children below the age of 5 years old. (Abdulrasheed, 2021).

Given the fact that farming is the mainstay of the local economies, the disruption in farming due to bandit attacks affects agricultural productivity with serious implications for food security. The majority of the farming communities were forced to abandon their farms especially areas in proximity to the forest areas, as bandits exploited these locations to attack communities. Few farmers who stayed behind were subjected to taxation by the bandits before accessing their farms. (Ojo, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023). About 30% of agricultural land in Kaduna State was abandoned by affected communities, while farming activities in Zamfara and Katsina States were restricted to a few areas thus resulting in a decline in food

production by 60%. (Ojo, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023). In Kebbi State, over 350 rice farmers were affected with farmlands abandoned as a result of bandit attacks. However, the dwindling income of local farmers and other vulnerable groups especially women, also affects their capacity to support children's education and household income (Ojo, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023).

The flow of illicit firearms in communities of the North-West region is also a cause for security concerns. Apart from the fatalities recorded, bandits' attacks on communities increased social risks, discouraged investment and triggered economic crises for individuals and communities. The conflict is causing a spillover effect on other neighbouring communities and local government areas of Niger State in the North-Central region, hindering inter-communal and inter-state trade. The insecurity has a significant impact on other economic activities in the region, as a number of major local markets such as IIella, Dandume, Maidabino, Kankara (Katsina State) and Bardoki, Shinkafi (Zamfara State) markets have been shut down due to incessant attacks. (Muoemenam, & Okafor, 2022).

The strategic nature of the trading locations made them attractive to major merchants from across other regions of the country for foodstuffs including maize, millet, guinea corn and beans. However, the proximity of these markets to the forest reserves made them vulnerable to attacks. This had an adverse effect on trading activities, as revenue generation and market sales/supplies in the markets declined. A revenue officer in Katsina State had revealed that 'trailers of foodstuff at the market reduced from eight (8) trailers weekly to half a truck in two months', while the revenue earning reduced from 500,000 naira to less than 100,000 naira. (Obomanu, 2020). According to the 2019 report on food insecurity and market by Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the Shinkafi market, a major cross-border town in Zamfara State, functioned between 30 to 40 per cent within the reviewed period, while the Dandume market in Katsina State functioned lower by 15 to 25 per cent relative to normal trading projections (Obomanu, 2020).

Social Dislocation and Internal Displacement

One of the most visible impacts of armed banditry in the North West involves the internal displacement of community residents. According to a 2019 report issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Nigerian Government, over 200,000 persons were internally displaced in several communities of Zamfara, State between January-August 2019. Majority of these IDPs were women, children and the elderly taking refuge in the neighbouring Republic of Niger, Cameroun and Chad. (Ojo, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023) The Zamfara State Government revealed that banditry led to an estimated 22,000 widows and 44, 000 orphans in Zamfara State since 2011. (Ojo, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023).

The provision of humanitarian assistance for the displaced persons and communities in the North-West was a complex humanitarian challenge due to the enormity of communities affected. Factors arising from irregular and/or zero food distribution, inappropriate shelters, and poor medical services and facilities, among others, were evident in some internally displaced camps in the host States. A survey conducted in some assessed locations in Zamfara State has revealed that 70% of the displaced population expressed irregular food distribution at the IDP camps Abdulrasheed, A. (2021). Nevertheless, the interventions of local and international agencies in the provision of relief materials and health care delivery further complemented Government efforts for displaced persons (Abdulrasheed, 2021). As affected States continue to record a decline in violent attacks, as shown in the graph above, an estimated 25,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) out of the 37,000 IDPs in Zamfara State had reintegrated into the communities as of August 2019. According to the Zamfara State Emergency Management Agency (ZEMA), the remaining 12,000 IDPS were in host communities in Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto and some parts of Niger Republic (Abdulrasheed, 2021) A challenge for these outstanding IDPs is how to return to their communities having lost their properties and livelihood from violent attacks and fears of reoccurrence.

Impact on Human and Community Security

Armed banditry, facilitated the emergence of a complex informal security sector in the region, including the growth of armed local vigilante groups established to protect communities against bandits. Many of these groups lack adequate security training and often compete against one another. They have been implicated in acts of criminality including human rights abuses, armed robbery, extortion and appropriation of livestock and other properties from both bandits and their victims, which led a public commentator to label their activities as 'legalised armed banditry' (Vande, 2023). Also, accusations have been levelled against some traditional rulers for providing protection and intelligence support to bandits in exchange for financial gratifications. (Vande, 2023).

In April 2019, the Nigerian Military arrested two traditional rulers in Zamfara accusing them of collaborating with bandits to undermine the effort of the Government to end banditry in the State (Vande, 2023). Four others were also suspended by the Zamfara State Government. An investigative committee set up by the Zamfara State Governor, Bello Matawalle in July 2019 revealed that five traditional rulers (Emirs), 33 district heads and several village heads were complicit in the wave of banditry that spanned from June 2011 to May 2019 (Vande, 2023). Illegal activities perpetrated by these non-state actors contributed to heightened insecurity in many communities of the North-West region and had impacted the lives of women and children in the states.

Banditry, Gender-Based Violence and the Changing Roles of Women in Zamfara State

Bandits' illegal activities in the state exacerbated the vulnerability of women and girls. Some women in the impacted areas endured early widowhood or the death of their children, while others were left orphaned and forced to escape their homes in search of safety. This is still a major human security issue, as they are also subjected to various forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Several incidences of bandit rape have been documented in Zamfara state. (Dami, 2021).

There were reports of GBV amongst the displaced. In an oral interview conducted in Zamfara state, community members and leaders had highlighted the high incidence of GBV including rape and forced marriage specifically targeted at women and young girls due to the presence and activities of bandits in rural areas' (Abubakar, 2023). Further reports have revealed that the highest risk faced by children in the affected communities is abduction, as the majority of the children are abducted for ransom while female children are abducted for sex and others for child labour. This mostly occurred when collecting firewood, on the way to the market or during village attacks. (Yushau, 2023). Despite being victims of violence, women were also perpetrators. They disguise themselves as food vendors to provide bandits with information and are also suppliers/carriers of weapons, drugs and other basic needs for the bandits. (Haruna, 2023). In May 2019, the Zamfara State Police Command arrested four women serving as informants and cooking for bandits in the State (Matawalle, 2023). The peace dialogue initiated by State Governors in the North-West region however yielded positive results, as kidnapped women and children were released by the bandits in Katsina and Zamfara States (Hamisu Na'Allah, 2023). In a report issued by the Zamfara State Commissioner of Security and Home Affairs, the peace and reconciliation initiative led to the release of 525 hostages including women and children (https://www.pressreader.com/nigeria/thisday/20190916/281934544653031).

Impact and Challenges of Curbing Banditry in Zamfara State

To begin, the mitigation of banditry in the state requires a combination of conflict management methods such as consultation of players and communities impacted, conversation, community policing, amnesty, reconciliation, and security changes by the respective State Governments. Peace initiatives such as the Zamfara State Government's Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) endeavour, are commendable efforts. However, beyond the amnesty and the DDR process, these lacked solid security and alternative conflict management techniques that would have assured security stability. The initial

positive results from the peace initiative succeeded in convincing several herdsmen and bandits to surrender arms to the State Government in return for amnesty while a large weapons withdrawal and destruction program occurred in Zamfara State in 2018 with 6,000 manufactured guns destroyed (https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/zamfara-govt-houses-over-100-rescued-kidnap-victims/ffcq345)

Armed banditry, livestock rustling, kidnapping, culpable homicide, and other connected crimes, nevertheless, continued with a higher level of intensity in the same year of 2018. The small results achieved have persuaded the afflicted state governments to reconsider their strategy for dealing with this issue, which necessitates multi-stakeholder engagements as well as inclusive security efforts. (Obinna, 2012). In July 2019, the governments of Zamfara, Sokoto, and Katsina formed a dialogue/amnesty committee to develop a suitable strategy for dealing with banditry in their respective states. In exchange for the surrender of their weapons and the release of prisoners, the concerned State Governments agreed to release reformed bandits in their custody, as well as offer social amenities, rehabilitate, and reintegrate them into their communities as part of a negotiated deal. (Obinna, 2012).

Second, the Federal Government's counter-banditry interventions in the North-West were based on the deployment of Police and Military operations to the troubled States under a variety of operational codenames, including 'Operations Puff Adder,' 'Diran Mikiya,' 'Sharan Daji,' 'Hadarin Daji,' 'Thunder Strike,' and 'Exercise Harbin Kunama III.' Despite this, the security response has yielded a mixed bag of results. Even though security forces have successfully repelled bandit attacks, demolished several hideouts, and killed or imprisoned hundreds of bandits, bandit-related deaths and kidnappings have continued in states such as Zamfara, Katsina, and Niger (Obinna, 2012).

Many of the damaged areas have remained deserted, with some of the displaced unable to return home for fear of a resumption of attacks and a perception of unguaranteed safety due to security forces' capacity issues in combating armed bandits. The government's anti-

banditry activities in the region have been accompanied by other non-militarized actions. In May 2019, the Nigerian Army banned the use of motorcycles within the hinterland and forests in Zamfara, state. (Sambo & Sule, 2021). In addition, the Federal Government halted all mining activity in Zamfara State to allow it to focus on illicit gold mining, which is said to be at the root of the state's indiscriminate killings. Cattle colonies and the creation of a National Livestock Transformation Plan were offered as long-term remedies to cattle rustling and constant confrontations between farmers and herders beginning in 2018. Though the government claimed that the programme would reduce cattle rustling, resolve agro-pastoral conflicts, and boost agricultural output, its execution has been impeded by ethno-religious and politically charged objections and complaints from some sectors of the country. (Sambo & Sule, 2021).

However, in order to broaden the scope of the peace measures, the afflicted state governments enlisted the help of traditional institutions, community watch groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other grassroots structures. This reflects the importance of non-state actors in promoting peace and development, as well as community policing, intelligence collecting, and conflict resolution. Cooperazione Internationale (COOPI), Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), and Pastoral Resolve, among others, have been actively involved in conflict prevention, community reconciliation, and resilience building in some of the North West's most devastated villages. Pastoral Resolve (PARE), for example, had undertaken a mediation and enlightenment programme in Zamfara State's Birnin Magaji LGA to reduce hostilities. (Sambo & Sule, 2021).
Interventions by the Nigerian Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and National and State Emergency Management Agencies were also important in restoring human security in the impacted areas. Communities had also enlisted the help of teenagers to form community watch groups to supplement those set up by the state government to secure particular areas. Consolidating the peace process, however, will necessitate long-term engagement forums, stronger community policing, and multi-stakeholder dialogues. As a result,

conflict prevention, management, and peacebuilding will be strengthened at the community, state, and national levels (http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosrjhss/papers/Vol.%2022%20Issue11/Version12/I2211126172.pdf)

A Holistic Approach to Curbing Banditry and Lessening the Impact of GVB on Women and Children in Zamfara State and the North-Western Region

ECOWAS: ECOWAS should implement the recommendations arising from the Ministerial meeting of 2018 on transhumance which will complement ongoing National efforts at addressing herder-farmer conflicts as well as cross-border banditry Krätli, S., & Toulmin, C. (2020).

Federal/State Governments: To improve existing community-based peace infrastructures and conflict early warning systems, the federal, state, and local governments, through their relevant agencies, should strengthen partnerships with traditional authorities, faith-based institutions, women and youth groups, civil society organisations, and the media. These should be incorporated into national/state security architectures to respond to and mitigate the effects of structural causes of violent conflicts as well as the many threats to human security in the region. It should be aided by better technology to trace, monitor, and control the entry of organised crime in the region. State governments in the North-West should take specific steps to establish and implement land and agro-based policy programmes and projects that consider the interests of pastoralists, farmers, and other land users. The negotiation processes facilitated by State Governors, the Nigerian Police Force, Civil Society Organizations, Traditional and Religious Leaders, and others, among others, must be strengthened and sustained to address the root causes of conflict in the States to maximise the utility of dialogue and sustain peace and security. (Krätli, & Toulmin, 2020).

Security Agencies: In the North-West, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), with the help of local community watch organisations and state governments, should increase community policing to address banditry threats, including

tracking and regulating local small arms production. (Krätli, & Toulmin, 2020).

Civil Society Groups and Other Development Partners: Civil society organisations should work constructively with traditional/religious leaders, representatives of farmers/herders groups, the media, community leaders, and other relevant interest-based groups to give legitimacy to the ongoing peace dialogue process and ensure that competing interests are properly addressed. (https://www.wanep.org/wanep/files/2020/feb/policy_brief_on_armed _banditry_in_nigeria 18022020.pdf.**)**

Conclusion

This paper discussed banditry, gender-based violence and the changing roles of women and children in Zamfara State of Nigeria, the paper clarified the concept of banditry and gender-based violence, the paper also traced the nexus between banditry and violent extremism and the nature of banditry and gender-based violence in the Northern region. The paper further discussed the impact of banditry on women and children in Zamfara state and the changing roles of women and children. It discussed the impact and challenges in curbing banditry in the state and the way forward in lessening the impact of banditry and disengaging women and children from the act of banditry in the state. The paper submits that unless vigorous efforts are taken by regional bodies such as the ECOWAS and other national bodies and even NGOs towards curtailing the activities of bandits in Zamfara state and the North-Western region in general, the problem may persist

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