

Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM): Tools for Enhancing Sustainable Peace for National Development in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Nigeria, renowned for its rich diversity in ethnicity, religion, and resource distribution, contends with enduring conflicts that present formidable barriers to both sustainable peace and national development. These conflicts have perpetuated challenges such as widespread education deficits and economic underdevelopment. Given these circumstances, this study explores the pivotal role of conflict early warning and response mechanisms (CEWRMs). Employing content analysis and integrating insights from game theory through a comprehensive literature review, the study seeks to elucidate how CEWRMs can effectively bolster sustainable peace and national development. The findings underscore that strengthened CEWRMs possess the capability to preempt, mitigate, and manage the escalation of violent conflicts, thereby safeguarding sustainable peace and fostering national development. Moreover, the study reveals the profound impact of these conflicts on sustainable peace and national development, underscoring the imperative of integrating CEWRMs within a cohesive framework. However, the efficacy of these early warning systems faces substantial challenges due to pervasive socio-economic disparities, educational deficiencies, and systemic governance failures. Conclusively, CEWRMs emerge as indispensable tools capable of aggregating and analysing crucial information to prevent conflict escalation, thereby enhancing sustainable peace and national development. The study recommends that governments at all levels and non-governmental organizations implement comprehensive CEWRM strategies. These strategies should encompass diverse data sources, including social media monitoring, traditional media analysis, community reports, and expert assessments, to effectively detect potential conflicts that threaten sustainable peace and national development.

Keywords: Conflict, Early Warning Response. Sustainable Peace, National Development & socioeconomic disparities.

Introduction

In contemporary times, conflict prevention and peacebuilding require the use of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms (CEWRMs). However, many contemporary EWER systems are built to address the “if” but fail to answer the “how” and “when.” (Madut, 2020). That is to say, early warning focuses on the collection and dissemination of early warning data and information to stakeholders with the intention of informing decision makers on if an intervention is called for, but the process often fails to include guidance on how (and when) that information should be used for preventive interventions. Thus, to strengthen mechanisms, of CEWRMs the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in their consolidated report (2002) suggested that the federal government should establish a data base of conflict triggers in IPCR to monitor and mitigate factors contributing to the escalation of conflict instead of over-relying on military responses, which almost always fail to resolve conflict and may, in some cases, exacerbate it. Given that, they stated that Nigeria lacks early warning systems and there is no systematic provision for preventive responses. However, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) creates initiatives to strengthen CEWRMs such as Community Security Architecture Dialogues (CSADs) and Peace Architecture Dialogues (PADs), respectively, to convene and train community leaders to engage in dialogue processes at the local and state

levels in order to promote increased collaboration among community members, civil society organizations, and government agencies and improve the capacity of and greater confidence in governmental and non-governmental security structures in volatile areas (Walwa, 2021).

The aspiration of the project was to allow these communities benefit from early warning responses to potential violence in order to effectively mitigate these threats. Thus, the creation and operationalization of CEWRMs have received a great deal of attention without lack of funding over time due to the political will and interest of the stakeholders (Walwa, 2021). This situation has contributed to the recurrent issue of conflict with complex interplay factors such as ethnic tensions, religious differences, economic disparities, resource utilization, and political rivalries, among others (Walwa, 2021). Also, the conflicts exert detrimental effects on various aspects of society, including the social fabric, economic stability, sustainable peace, and national development (Madut, 2020). Thus, sustainable peace and national development efforts in conflict-affected states are frequently disrupted, leading to compromised socioeconomic activities and essential services such as education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Similarly, the repercussions of such conflicts extend beyond immediate disruptions, often resulting in the displacement of populations, loss of lives and properties, increased poverty, and social fragmentation. Furthermore, environmental degradation, infrastructure destruction, and the breakdown of institutions essential for sustainable peace and national development exacerbate the situation (Liebovitch, Coleman, & Fisher, 2020).

Also, women and girls are disproportionately affected by these conflicts, facing heightened risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and displacement (Liebovitch *et al.*, 2020). They encounter numerous challenges, including inadequate housing, limited access to food and water, and restricted opportunities for employment or education, impeding human development and hindering sustainable peace and national development efforts. In conflict-affected areas, interruptions in education and healthcare further compound the long-term consequences for the well-being of women and girls. For instance, a report from DAILY POST on May 18, 2024, reported that 285 schoolchildren were abducted at a primary and junior secondary school in Kaduna State as a result of banditry that ravaged the area, destroying lives and properties and hindering free movement, exacerbating high levels of school dropout. Similarly, the Punch Newspaper of March 17, 2024 reported how members of Boko Haram terrorist group kidnapped women sheltering in Maiduguri, Borno State. This highlights the widespread impact of violent conflicts on communities across Nigeria. For instance, the distressing incidents of kidnapping, banditry, farmer-herders conflict and other violent conflict are not isolated occurrences but rather widespread phenomena affecting several states of the Federation with severe impact that undermine the drivers of sustainable peace and national development, necessitating concerted efforts to address the root causes and mitigate their devastating effects through conflict early warning response mechanisms in order to enhance sustainable peace and national development in Nigeria (Smith *et al.*, 2020).

In discussing the repercussions of conflict on sustainable peace and national development, Fund (2015) highlights the profound impact of conflict and violence on various aspects of sustainable development, such as peace, justice, and institutional strength, particularly affecting vulnerable groups like women, children, and displaced persons. Given this, Fund (2015) emphasizes the interdependence between peace and sustainable development, asserting that one cannot exist without the other. This sentiment is echoed by Akintoye and Opeyemi (2016), who added that sustainable development is compromised in the absence of peace, leading to a cycle where conflict impedes sustainable peace and national development and vice versa. As a result, Modibbo, Ali, and Ahmed (2021) stress the importance of establishing effective CEWRMs mechanisms to detect, prevent and response to conflicts in early stage before escalating to violent conflict that can hampered sustainable peace and national

development. They emphasize the significance of CEWRMs in this context, highlighting their role in facilitating proactive intervention to minimize destructive impacts of conflict that can hinder the promotion of sustainable peace and national development. Similarly, Oleribe and Taylor-Robinson (2016) underscore the significance of conflict early warning systems, which involve systematic data collection, analysis, and dissemination to identify potential conflict triggers that can breach sustainable peace and national development.

By detecting early warning signs, such as rising tensions or resource disputes, these systems enable stakeholders to take preventive measures before conflicts escalate (Lawrence, 2018). However, Echendu (2022) presents a differing perspective, suggesting alternative variants of CEWRMs, including mediation and dialogue, community-based approaches, and early response and reconciliation foster sustainable peace and national development. Echendu (2022) added that mediation and dialogue provide platforms for conflicting parties to negotiate mutually acceptable agreements, fostering understanding and reconciliation that facilitate sustainable peace and national development. On a different perspective Lawrence (2018) explain that CEWRMs not only foster understanding and reconciliation but also enhance community-based approach that empowers local communities to participate in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, acknowledging their unique position in addressing underlying tensions as well as swift interventions to deescalate conflict and prioritize post conflict reconciliation and social cohesion that can bring sustainable peace and national development.

In light of these perspectives, it becomes evident that CEWRM is an essential tool for enhancing sustainable peace and national development in Nigeria. Effective implementation of these mechanisms requires strong political will, institutional capacity, and collaboration among various stakeholders. It is imperative for policymakers, academics, civil society organizations, and the international community to support and invest in CEWRM to achieve a harmonious, inclusive, and prosperous Nigeria. Through collective efforts, sustainable peace and national development can be realized (Akinloye, 2018). On this premise, the paper will conceptualize CEWRM using content analysis and the application of game theory to examine peace, national development, and the challenges Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM) faces in enhancing sustainable peace for national development, as well as demonstrate the potential of CEWRM as instrumental tools in fostering sustainable peace and driving national development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM)

The concept of the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM) emerged with the primary objective of averting violent conflicts to safeguard human lives. As highlighted by Idris (2019), the root of CEWRM can be traced back to the 1950s. It initially focused on intelligence and military reconnaissance. Subsequently, CEWRM systems expanded to encompass various domains such as natural disasters, humanitarian crises, human rights violations, disease outbreaks, and economic downturns. Hassan (2017) underscores that the core essence of CEWRM lies in proactive conflict prevention through diligent monitoring of escalating tensions and implementing measures to forestall potential conflicts from intensifying.

Hassan (2017) further delineates CEWRM into two components: early warning and early response. Early warning entails a process of alerting decision-makers to potential outbreaks or escalations of violent conflicts by continuously monitoring and analyzing conflict indicators. This process generates actionable insights and response options that are communicated to

decision-makers for timely intervention. Conversely, early response refers to initiatives undertaken promptly upon identifying threats of potential violent conflicts, utilizing various preventive measures such as fact-finding, mediation, dialogue, negotiations, or sanctions, among others.

Despite its potential efficacy, Abdalzaher, Elsayed, Fouda, and Salim (2023) caution that the effectiveness of CEWRM hinges on its seamless integration with responsive actions. However, the linkage between early warning and early response has often proved inadequate. To address this gap and enhance responses to violent conflicts, Abdalzaher et al advocate for strengthening this connection, suggesting the following measures:

- i. Promoting stronger interactions between warners and responders and exchanges to discuss strategies for response
- ii. Timely and quick responses to warnings
- iii. Monitoring the impact of responses to conflicts to inform decision-making and strategies
- iv. A better understanding of the value-added of EWS among institutions, the proximity, and the quality of the interface between early warning and response mechanisms
- v. Designing evidence-based response instruments to adequately respond to warnings
- vi. The design of nuanced response actions to take into account changes in the conduct of warfare.

Certainly, Rød, Gåsste, and Hegre (2024) have underscored the indispensable role of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms (CEWRM) in fostering sustainable peace and national development worldwide. They argue that these tools play pivotal role in mitigating and preventing conflicts, thereby facilitating the conditions necessary for sustainable peace and development to flourish. Similarly, Abdalzaher *et al* (2023) assert that CEWRM is universally recognized as a fundamental requirement for sustainable peace and national development. Moreover, Zhao, Ding, Du, Shi, Su, and Yu (2023) further emphasize the consensus among scholars regarding the critical link between governance failures and the democratization of CEWRM. They argue that the failure to democratize these mechanisms can lead to an escalation of conflicts, posing significant challenges to sustainable peace and national development, as evidenced by the rise in insecurity and violent conflicts.

Yeboah and Okoro (2024) highlight the undeniable importance of CEWRM in the context of sustainable peace and national development, especially considering the devastating consequences of violent conflicts. They point out that such conflicts have resulted in setbacks to both peace and development within various regions. Echoing these sentiments, Obeka and Nwigwe (2024) posit that the presence of conflicts within a nation directly hampers efforts towards sustainable peace and national development. They argue that these conflicts have adverse effects on various aspects of society, including human lives, property, and the political and socio-economic institutions essential for national development. Consequently, the absence of threats to peace and the political will to establish CEWRM within a nation are crucial for sustaining peace, which, in turn, fosters development. However, Luxman (2024) presents a contrasting view, suggesting that sustaining peace and national development requires more than just the implementation of CEWRM. Luxman argues for the elimination of poverty and hunger, the provision of universal education and healthcare, and economic, social, and technological progress in harmony with nature. Furthermore, Ogonnaya (2024) highlights the significant challenges posed by violent conflicts in Nigeria since its return to civilian rule in 1999. Despite initial hopes for development, the country has been plagued by issues such as

Boko Haram terrorism in the North, banditry in various Northern states, and unrest in the Niger Delta and Southeast regions. These conflicts have severely hindered Nigeria's peace and development aspirations. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, several non-governmental organizations and the federal government have implemented successful CEWRM projects to address these challenges (see table 1) below:

Table: 1 Some conflict early warning and response mechanisms successfully implemented by NGOs States, and Federal Government

S/N	Coordinator	Target	Objective	Date
1	<u>Dr. Kamari Clarke,</u>	Northern Nigeria Communities	To prevent and mitigate violence against civilians in at-risk areas of northern Nigeria by strengthening and expanding early warning and early response (CEWRM) capabilities including through access to near real-time alerts of village burning incidents.	2021
2	The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP)	Expanding the boundaries of conflict early warning and early response mechanism in north-west Nigeria	The Conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWRM) system was established to address and identify threats at an early stage and facilitate a rapid response towards conflict mitigation	2022
3	UNDP was the first organization to support the KSPC to develop the (CEWRM) system and framework	The Kaduna State Peace Commission (KSPC) Supported by UNDP	Conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWRM) to effectively tackle the persistent conflicts in Kaduna State.	2023
4	The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	Targeting Nigeria and other ECOWAS Country	To engage in data collection and analysis, and the drafting of up-to-date reports on possible emerging crises, ongoing crises and post-crisis transitions	2024
5	World Bank Initiative: A CEWRM) Pilot in Nigeria	To provides enhanced support to mitigate increasing risks of Fragility, Conflict and Violence	Conflict early warning and response mechanism (CEWRM) pilot in Nigeria will focus on prevention and local conflict resolution, by supporting locally-owned solutions to conflicts.	2024
6	Nigeria Centre For Disease	Disease Surveillance Systems: Covers	These systems monitor the occurrence and spread of diseases in real-time or near real-time.	2021

	Control (NCDC)	all states of the Federation		
7	National Emergency Management Agency NEMA	Flood Early Warning Systems: Covers all state of the Federation	Given Nigeria's susceptibility to flooding, particularly during the rainy season, early warning systems for floods may have been implemented	2024
8	Security Agencies	Conflict Early Warning Systems	Involve monitoring social media, gathering intelligence, and analyzing socio-political dynamics to predict and prevent violence.	2024

Source: 2024 Compiled from various internet sources by the authors

Despite the implementation of various conflict early warning mechanisms outlined in the table above, the persistence of conflict continues to exact a toll on lives and properties while disrupting the institutions crucial for sustaining peace and national development. In a study conducted by Obeten (2024), highlighted that the responses of stakeholders to these early warning signals are often insufficient and ineffective, largely due to a lack of coordination among key stakeholders such as policymakers, civil society, and local actors. As a result, there is an urgent call to action to establish comprehensive conflict prevention and management strategies, backed by political will and collective effort, aimed at fostering political stability, peace, and human security to sustain peace and national development in Nigeria.

Peace

The concept of peace derives its origin from the Latin term "pax," signifying a pact or agreement aimed at resolving conflicts or disputes between individuals, nations, or opposing groups (Bamidele, 2024). It encompasses a state devoid of war or violence, often characterized by tranquility within a region or country. Ogonnaya (2024) further elaborates that peace embodies a state of harmony, marked by the absence of hostility and the adoption of nonviolent principles in societal interactions. Additionally, peace can symbolize the cessation of violent conflicts, tranquility, or the absence of agitation (Mohammadi, 2024). Beyond the mere absence of conflict, peace also entails fostering relationships built on respect, justice, and goodwill among people (Obeten, 2024).

Ibrahim, Uke, and Dauda (2014) added that peace is a concord or amicable resolution aimed at cultivating friendly relations. They emphasize the necessity of certain human behaviours, such as moral uprightness, patience, and perseverance, in sustaining peace. Consequently, behaviours like hatred, selfishness, and deceit must be eschewed by all parties to maintain peace effectively. Egugbo (2016) underscores the importance of individuals actively seeking peace and being willing participants in peace-building endeavours, thus safeguarding their own interests.

Contrary to this optimistic perspective, Johnson (2023) argues that the challenge of sustaining peace and fostering national development stems from the inadequacies of conflict early warning mechanisms (CEWRM). Johnson posits that bolstering CEWRM through modern socio-economic and political frameworks is crucial to averting conflicts and establishing a conducive environment for peace and development. Similarly, Nnani and Muoneke (2023) contend that an efficient CEWRM, coupled with the commitment of elected officials, plays a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable peace and national development. Nnani and Muoneke stress the significance of governance structures in determining the viability of peace initiatives and their impact on national progress. Furthermore, Ogonnaya (2024) advocates not only for

governmental reinforcement of conflict early warning response mechanisms but also highlights the importance of aligning with Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring access to justice for all, and building accountable and inclusive institutions, which are essential for sustaining peace and fostering national development across all levels of society.

Confirming these concerns, Uzoigwe (2023) highlighted the profound impact of heightened levels of armed violence and insecurity on sustainable peace and national development. Such conditions often give rise to prevalent issues such as sexual violence, crime, exploitation, and torture within conflict zones. To address these challenges, Ogunsakin and Orobisi (2023) advocate for collaborative efforts between governments, civil society, and communities. They propose the need to bolster the rule of law, promote human rights, and demonstrate political will by establishing early warning response mechanisms tailored to reducing the proliferation of illicit arms, combating corruption, and ensuring inclusive participation. These measures are essential for advancing the objectives outlined in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (Ogunsakin et. al., 2023). Furthermore, in order to foster and maintain lasting peace conducive to national development, it is imperative to establish mechanisms capable of mitigating and preventing the escalation of conflicts. Additionally, policies should be implemented to enhance the welfare of citizens. Without such strategies in place, achieving sustainable peace essential for national development would lack meaning.

National Development

National development is an indispensable cornerstone crucial for the sustenance and advancement of any nation. A country earns the status of "developed" when it can ensure a high quality of life for its citizens. Despite Nigeria's possession of vast human, material, and natural resources since gaining independence, the nation has grappled with developmental challenges (Iorkpen, 2022). However, numerous erudite scholars have endeavoured to conceptualise development. Iorkpen (2022) perceives development as a continuous societal progression, wherein the enhancement of people's well-being is fostered through robust collaborations among various sectors, corporate entities, and societal groups. It is imperative to recognise that development transcends mere economic pursuits, encompassing socio-economic and political dimensions that permeate all facets of societal existence. Similarly, Atakpa and Akpan (2023) contend that development entails not only economic expansion but also principles of equitable resource distribution, the provision of healthcare, education, housing, and other essential services, all aimed at enhancing both individual and collective quality of life. Abdulkareem, Jimoh, and Shasi (2023) articulate development as a comprehensive ideology striving to ameliorate human conditions across all spheres while also enhancing the material well-being of all citizens in a sustainable manner that safeguards future generations. This necessitates addressing poverty and inequality and ensuring that access to essential resources is equitable and sustainable. Consequently, development endeavours seek to enhance personal security and livelihoods and broaden opportunities for individuals. In essence, development signifies the holistic transformation of all sectors within a nation's economy. This entails transitioning these sectors from their current states to new, more functional, and competitive states (Iorkpen, 2022).

On the contrary, national development according to Chiakaan and Tsafa (2022) encompasses a multifaceted approach to alleviating poverty, fostering prosperity, and safeguarding the environment, lives, and property. This holistic approach not only ensures peace but also lays the groundwork for sustainable national advancement. One crucial aspect of this developmental

endeavour is the pursuit of a decent standard of living for all citizens without compromising the needs of future generations. As articulated by Abdulkareem, Jimoh, and Shasi (2023), national development entails meeting present needs while safeguarding the ability of future generations to meet their own. Johnson (2023) further underscores this perspective, defining national development as the harmonious interplay between economic progress, social justice, and environmental preservation, all of which are indispensable for maintaining peace. In practical terms, this orientation towards national development vehemently opposes activities that degrade the environment, advocating for their cessation. Consequently, national development prioritizes eco-friendly practices and policies aimed at rejuvenating and enhancing the environment, thereby fostering conducive conditions for peace to thrive. Moreover, a crucial aspect of national development involves empowering local stakeholders with the tools to identify and mitigate potential risks to sustainable peace and development through capacity-building initiatives in conflict early warning response mechanisms.

Expanding on this notion, Iorkpen (2022) characterizes national development as the comprehensive advancement of a nation across social, economic, political, and even religious domains. He posits that national development can be synonymous with national transformation, signifying a profound shift in the nation's character, departing significantly from past configurations. Abdulkareem *et al* (2023) echo this sentiment, emphasizing that national transformation entails fundamental changes in a nation's foundational elements, spanning social, economic, infrastructural, and political spheres. In line with these perspectives, Iorkpen (2022) underscores the pivotal role of development planning in achieving national development and transformation. Thus, development planning, as he describes it, constitutes a collection of government strategies meticulously designed to meet the country's needs. Consequently, national development strategies aim to ensure sustained improvements in living conditions, eradicate poverty, preserve the environment for present and future generations, and foster inclusive development processes that benefit all members of society.

Building upon this foundation, Akenbor (2023) emphasizes the importance of analyzing various facets of Nigeria's development, ranging from its economic vitality to its standard of living and social progress. As a prominent force in Africa, Nigeria's developmental trajectory garners significant attention, with notable milestones reflected in key indicators such as GDP, unemployment rates, poverty levels, and the human development index. Refer to Table 2 for an overview of Nigeria's current development status and key indicators.

Table 2: Key Indicators of Nigeria's Current Development Status

GDP: Gross Domestic Production	\$1.115 trillion
Poverty Rate	46% (2023)
Unemployment Rate	5.0 % (2023)
Human Development Index	0.530 (2023)
Life Expectancy	55.7 years (2023)
Literacy Rate	69 % (2023)

Source: Doris, D.S, (2023), Insights and facts across 170 industries and 150+ countries. *Statista online*.

The aforementioned statistics reveal a mixed picture. While Nigeria has exhibited potential and growth, it has yet to fully capitalize on its vast resources and optimize its booming population for maximum development. Also, Atakpa *et al* (2023) discuss that, interestingly, despite Nigeria's impressive GDP, the country's infrastructural development does not match up. Be it

transport networks or public utilities, the infrastructure needs significant upgrade and expansion, which, if addressed effectively, could unlock new vistas for enhanced national development (Akenbor, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Game theory, credited largely to the groundbreaking work of mathematician John von Neumann and economist Oskar Morgenstern in the 1940s and further developed by numerous scholars in the 1950s, plays a pivotal role in understanding Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanisms (CEWRM) and their significance in fostering sustainable peace for national development in Nigeria. Providing a structured framework for analyzing strategic interactions among diverse stakeholders within a conflict scenario, game theory facilitates the identification of optimal strategies for conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution. By delving into the incentives and behaviours of various actors involved in conflict dynamics, game theory enables the modelling of strategic interactions among entities such as government agencies, civil society organizations, local communities, and international stakeholders. In this strategic landscape, each player operates with its own set of preferences, objectives, and constraints, thus highlighting the complexity of conflict scenarios.

Game theory not only examines the incentives and deterrents shaping the behaviour of conflicting parties but also enables CEWRM to assess the effectiveness of incentivizing peaceful resolutions versus the costs of perpetuating conflict. By discerning the strategic motivations underlying the actions of different actors, CEWRM can tailor interventions to foster cooperation and deter violence effectively. Involving multiple stakeholders collaborating to prevent or manage conflicts, CEWRM employs game theory to analyze coordination and cooperation challenges among these entities, identifying opportunities for mutual gains through negotiation and cooperation. Concepts such as Nash equilibrium and cooperative game theory guide the design of mechanisms aimed at encouraging collaboration and collective action in conflict situations.

In scenarios characterized by imperfect information and uncertainty regarding the intentions and capabilities of other actors, game theory equips CEWRM with tools for analysing decision-making under such conditions. By incorporating probabilistic models of uncertainty, CEWRM can make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and intervention prioritisation, thereby enhancing its capacity to prevent conflicts, mitigate their impact, and foster sustainable peace and national development in Nigeria. Leveraging insights from game theory, CEWRM anticipates emerging threats, navigates complex strategic interactions, and designs effective intervention strategies promoting cooperation, trust, and resilience within conflict-affected communities.

Challenges of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM) to Enhancing Sustainable Peace for National Development in Nigeria

For the fact that conflict early warning mechanism remains the building block for sustainable peace and national development, there are still many challenges confronting it. These challenges can be viewed from different dimensions ranging from social, educational, political and economic factors.

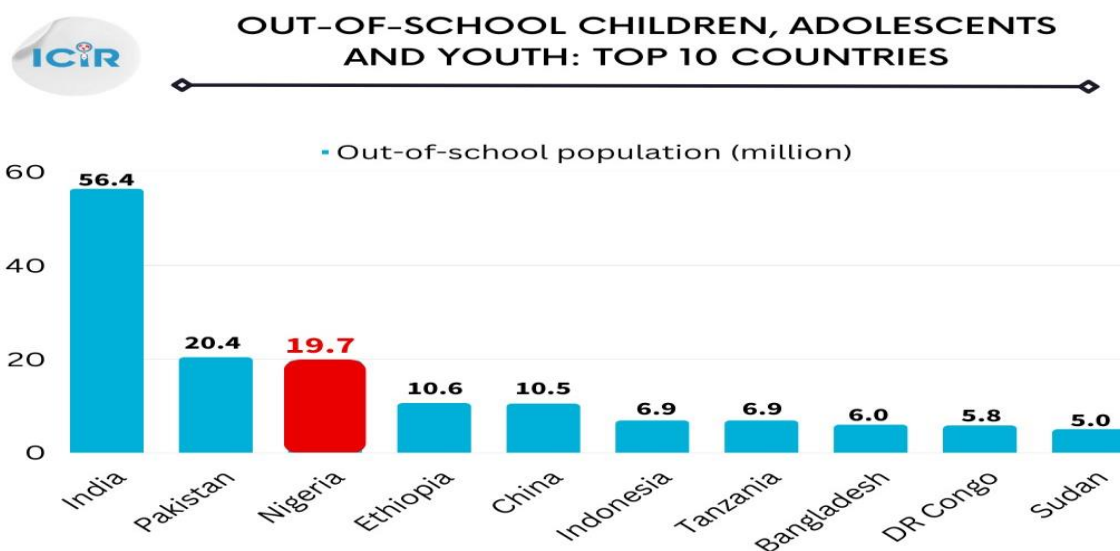
Social Challenge

Social challenge occurs when people, tribes, and different societies agitate and cause opposition in social interaction, preventing rivals from accomplishing their goals (Iorkpen, 2022). This situation usually culminates in the disruption of mechanisms put in place to sustain peace and national development. Thus, this can also manifest in the form of social vices

resulting in assassinations, violence, riots, and demonstrations; hence, attempt to collate, analyze, and take proactive measures to prevent the escalation of conflict are disrupted. Social conflict such as banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, boundary disputes, cultism and violations of human rights pose social challenge to the sustainability of peace and national development, as well as inadequate provision of social amenities for citizens. This has often threatened peace and also affects development (Atakpa *et al*, 2023).

Educational Challenge: The total collapse of the educational sector, continued attack on schools and the resultant effect of low admission of school children in the northern part of the country and elsewhere, is worrisome. This has inarguably contributed to a high level of dropouts among schoolchildren and a high rate of illiteracy. Eli-Chukwu, Igbokwe, Ifebude, Nmadu, Iguodala, Uma, and Akudo (2023) state that aside from insecurity, the inability to empower citizens with the knowledge and skills to overcome ignorance and poverty makes them vulnerable, which in turn affects peace and national development. Also, Osoba, Aramide, and Oyesiku (2023) revealed that some of the most pressing challenges in Nigeria's education system are the lack of adequate infrastructure, learning materials, and other educational resources. Thus, many schools across the nation are poorly equipped, lacking classrooms, libraries, and even basic amenities like electricity and running water.

In addition, Osoba *et al* (2023) pointed out that inadequate funding, mismanagement, and corruption have resulted in dilapidated education facilities, impeding the smooth learning process and discouraging both students and teachers alike. As a result, this situation has increased the rate of out-of-school children in schools in Nigeria when compared with some other African countries (Figure 1)



In Nigeria, out-of-school rates among adolescents and youth of secondary school age increased to 10 million. The number of out-of-school children of primary school age also increased to 9.7 million.

Source : UNESCO (2020 Model Estimates)

Infographics by:
Ibukun Ajayi

theicir

icirnigeria.org

Infographics date:
January 2023

Source: UNECO 2023

Political Challenge

The inability to fairly distribute power and resources among communities and the call for agitations among the citizens do escalate to conflict and thus negatively affect peace sustainability and national development, Adamu (2023). Thus, the failure of governance in

Nigeria manifests in the declining capacity of political leaders to recognize systemic risks such as election fraud, terrorist attacks, farmers-herders conflict, armed banditry, kidnapping, and human rights violations and put in place the necessary measures to navigate these challenges to establish CEWRM (Omotosho, 2023). In contrast with these challenges, the lack of transparency and accountability of political office holders, leadership illegally attained, intimidation, and violence, do contribute to the weakening of CEWRM (Adamu, 2023). Consequently, the failure of governance in Nigeria manifests in the declining capacity of political leaders to recognize systemic risks such as the high rate of insecurity that disrupt the conflict early warning response mechanism.

Economic Challenges

Inflation, high standards of living, unstable exchange rates, and an unfriendly environment for investors pose serious challenges to sustainable peace and national development. Apart from the challenges discussed above, Onungwe, Hunt, and Jefferson (2023) examined other challenges to sustainable peace and national development as a result of the economic incapacity of the teeming population and the high rate of unemployment and poverty, which led to armed conflict, banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, and insurgency, to name a few.

Conclusion

This discourse underscores the pivotal role of Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWRM) as a vital instrument in nurturing sustainable peace and fostering national development within Nigeria. Its essential capability to amass and analyze pertinent information renders it indispensable in averting the escalation of conflicts. However, the effectiveness of this early warning system has been severely compromised by pervasive socio-economic disparities, educational deficiencies, and systemic governance failures, among other factors. The prevailing landscape, marked by escalating conflicts and heightened insecurity across the nation, highlights the urgent need for concerted action. It is evident that socio-economic and educational challenges such as corruption, poverty, widespread illiteracy, inadequate policies, and a lack of transparency and accountability have impeded the successful implementation of proactive measures aimed at conflict prevention and management through early warning mechanisms. As such, addressing these underlying issues is paramount to realizing enduring peace and fostering national development through the effective utilization of early warning systems. In light of these considerations, a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of conflict, including socio-economic inequities and governance deficiencies is imperative. By prioritizing initiatives aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and equitable socio-economic development, Nigeria can fortify its resilience against conflicts and pave the way for sustainable peace and national advancement, facilitated by robust conflict early warning response mechanisms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings by the study, the following are recommended;

- i. Government and non-governmental organizations should implement a comprehensive early warning mechanism that incorporates various data sources, such as social media monitoring, traditional media analysis, community reports, and expert assessments, to detect potential conflicts at an early stage.
- ii. The government should foster community participation in conflict prevention and resolution processes by establishing community-based early warning and response

committees. These committees should include representatives from diverse ethnic, religious, and social groups to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.

- iii. The government and relevant stakeholders should enhance inter-agency collaboration to facilitate coordination and information sharing among relevant government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners involved in conflict prevention and resolution efforts, as well as establish clear protocols for communication and collaboration during crisis situations.
- iv. The government should invest in technology and data analytics to leverage technological advancements such as machine learning algorithms and geospatial analysis tools to improve the accuracy and timeliness of conflict early warning systems, as well as allocate resources for the continuous development and maintenance of these technologies.
- v. Government and non-governmental organizations should promote conflict-sensitive development policies that will integrate conflict-sensitive approaches into national development plans and policies to address the root causes of conflicts, including poverty, inequality, and marginalization, and prioritize investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities in conflict-affected areas.

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