

The Socio-economic implication of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Benue State

By

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Abstract

The proliferation of small arms and lights weapons in Nigeria has not just heightened insecurity but, has also brought untold hardship to many communities who are affected by conflicts and criminality. The research assesses the effect of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the socio-economic development of women in Benue State. To achieve this, the research sought to ascertain the factors that influence the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and determine the implications of this on the socio-economic development of women in Benue State using Makurdi Local Government Area to represent Benue State. The research utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Multi stage sampling technique was used in the selection of 375 respondents. In-depth interview and questionnaires were used as methods of data collection. The data obtained from respondents were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The research identified political struggle as a major factor facilitating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the study area. And that conflicts and criminality associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons halts and destroys business and farming activities in the Area. The study therefore recommended that efficient border control while stiffer penalties and effective enforcement of laws should be embarked upon to deter persons engaged in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Keywords: Proliferation, Small Arms, Light Weapons, Socio-economic Development

Introduction

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation has posed a severe challenge to human existence especially to women and children everywhere in the world. Since the Cold War ended, the availability of existing small arms together with the illicit trade in weapons has exacerbated conflicts all over the world. The phenomenon has destabilized peace, development and threatening the national security of sovereign nations. The availability of these small arms and light weapons fuels insurgency, sea pirates, kidnapping, communal conflict as well as encouraging political, ethno-religious and inter-communal crises hence posing threats to security of women, children as well as socio-economic and sustainable development in the world. In Nigeria, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has contributed to the alarming level of armed crimes such as, youth

violence, hostage taking, militancy, oil bunkering and general threat to peace and security (Ngboawaji 2011). This impacts negatively on development as it undermines the efforts of government and non-governmental organisations in obtaining sustained security and delivering on development programmes.

This is why Barman (2014) in highlighting the security implications of small arms and light weapons succinctly posited that small arms and light weapons has the capacity for stimulating a number of backlashes which include; undermining socio-economic development; weakening government ability to function; hampering peace and provoking humanitarian disaster. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is often used to forcibly displace civilians, prevent socio- economic progress and delay development. When conflicts end or subside, the small arms and light weapons often remain in circulation, which lead to additional violence and suffering due to the incessant use of these weapons.

The struggle for political power in particular has heightened the acquisition of SALW in Nigeria like other countries in the Africa. According to the Small Arms Survey (2007), there are estimated 7 million SALW in the West African Sub-region alone which majority are in the hands of private individuals and major insurgent groups. In Nigeria, this does not only increase insecurity, but has also led to wanton destruction of lives and property and threatened the very foundation of her corporate existence and survival. Despite the fact that some regional organizations like the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the South African Development Community (SADC) among others and the international community in general have condemned the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the menace has remained unabated in Nigeria. It is in recognition of this ugly development that this research is conceived to assess the socio- economic implications of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on women in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State with the hope that conclusions reached here will bridge the literature gap on the subject, and the recommendations will contribute to policy options to curb the menace of proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Benue State and Nigeria.

Concept of Socio-Economic Development

Lawal and Abe (2011) conceive socio-economic development as the overall or collective well-being as well as religious advancement in the personal and professional lives of a group of people at a given point in time. It also has to do with progress that meets the needs of the entire society reducing the negative indicators of poverty like hunger, illiteracy and unemployment. Socio-economic development therefore, entails that meeting the needs of the entire society depends on how well we balance and harnessed social, economic, religious, political, and all the environmental variables. This implies that there must be cohesion, unity, balance as well as societal equilibrium amongst all the sections and elements of the society for development to be achieved.

Proliferation

Hazen and Horner (2007) define proliferation as the growth or numerous multiplications of illegal arms and weapons in the country. Aver, Nnorom and Ilim (2014) define proliferation as sudden increase in the number of small arms and light weapons beyond those needed for legitimate national security. This implies that when state supplier recipient does not exercise restraint in the production, transfer and acquisition of such small arms and light weapons beyond those needed. This act is done by unidentified groups either for economic or political purposes. This small arms and light weapons get easily in the hands of private individuals especially politicians. Also, Oke (2002) asserts that proliferation is increase or widespread of something around a defined geographical entity. When used in relation to arms, it means the illegal widespread of arms around a geographical entity. Obasi (2002) define proliferation of small arms as “the spread of weapons from one group of owners and users to others”. He posited that small arms proliferation could be vertical in case of different actors within states already possessing weapon or horizontal where the acquisition involves a spread to state not previously possessing them. Proliferation of small arms is defined as a method in which small arms are sold to private citizens especially in the conflict zones.

Small Arms

Fundamentally, there is no universally and internationally accepted definition for small arms. However, the United Nations (UN 1997) defines small arms as “those weapons designed for personal use. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention (2006) define small arms as firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as exploding bombs, incendiary bombs or gas bombs, grenades, rocket launchers, missiles, missile systems or landmines; revolvers and pistols with automatic loading; rifles and carbines; machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns. The United Nations General Assembly (2006) defines small arms as any portable lethal weapon that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive. Wezeman, (2003) defines small arms as those weapons intended for use by individual members of armed or security forces, they are weapons designed for personal use. They include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and local pistols, Dane guns, hand grenades and light machine guns. Small arms are a subcategory of conventional weapons and range from pistols and rifles to mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, and man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADS. Stohl and Hogendoorn (2010) simply put small it, arms are revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns. Small arms’ are weapons designed for personal use, including: light machine guns, sub-machine guns, including machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles, and semi-automatic rifles (Saferworld 2012). International Crescent and Red Cross (ICRC) (2006) defines small arms as assault rifles, machine guns, hand grenades and other weapons designed for military use by an individual combatant. The definition also includes commercial firearms such as handguns and hunting rifles. In the

context of this research small arms is defined as revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns acquired for personal use.

Light Weapons

The United Nations (UN) (1997) defines light weapons as “those weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. ECOWAS (2006) defines light weapons’ as portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team, and which include heavy machine guns, portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted portable anti-aircraft cannons; portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers; and mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimeters. Adetiba (2012) defines light weapons as those weapons intended for use by several members of armed or security forces serving as crew. They include heavy machine guns; hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers. Some of these can be concealed in small bags and can be operated by anybody even without formal training (Adetiba, 2012). Stohl and Hogendoorn (2010) describe light weapons as military weapons or commercial firearms that can be carried by one person or a small crew or mounted to a vehicle.

For the purpose of this research, light weapon means heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibers of less than 100mm, some of the light weapons are locally made.

Factors Influencing the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the society is attributed to a number of factors. The end of the cold war for instance led to a decline in control over these weapons in many parts of the world, resulting in a significant increase in their circulation worldwide. Small arms and light weapons can also be moved from one place to another by a single person or by a light vehicle (Nte, 2011). They can thus be smuggled quite easily from one place to another. They are sometimes disguised as non-lethal cargo or as humanitarian supplies and are often discovered only after the trafficker fails to bribe police and customs officers or when a plane crashes and reveals the hidden nature of its cargo (Boutwell and Klare, 1999). Small arms are sometimes imported into Nigeria hidden in clothing, vehicles or kitchen utensils (Ayissi and Sall, 2005).

Africa is the second largest continent in the world and the second most populated as well. The sheer size of some of its countries, alone constitute a chronic problem of border security. Arms traffickers exploit this situation to smuggle small arms and light weapons into the country. It is also interesting to observe that the large African countries like Sudan, Cameroun, the Congo DRC, Chad and Nigeria have been experiencing instability and armed conflict. Their size and their porous borders make it easy for weapons to be smuggled inflaming and protracting violence (Nte 2011). The obvious fact that Africa and indeed Nigerian borders are abysmally porous explains the massive cache of small arms and light weapons in these areas. Conservative estimates

indicate that there are about eight million small arms and light weapons in West Africa alone (Nte 2011:52). The 640 million small arms circulating in the world, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa (Nte 2011). Ogundare and Elijah (2010) maintain that porous borders both in the North, West and the Niger Delta regions where there is access to international water ways are tell-tale signs of the permissive Nigerian system that condones non-state actors dealing and trafficking in arms hence the free flow of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.

Operating from the same premise, Adetiba, (2012) affirms that political (electoral) violence and the various ethno-religious and civil unrests fuels proliferation of small arms and light weapons (Adetiba, 2012). These weapons help in prolonging conflicts, induce huge internal population displacement, undermine social peace and devastate the economic livelihoods of individuals and communities (Onouha 2013). The result of this menace is recurrent violent conflicts Nigeria is faced with the herculean task of responding to a fluctuating but always sizeable number of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Another major complexity in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is linked to historical social, political and economic processes that have shaped the country since independence in 1960 (Adetiba, 2012). It must be noted that, on the 15th of January 1966, the first military coup in Nigeria brought General Aguiyi Ironsi to power but his tenure was short lived six months into his government through another coup that eventually brought General Yakubu Gowon to power in July 1966 (Adetiba, 2012). The ethnic and religious differences associated with this coup sparked off the Nigerian civil war. The civil war arguably commenced the militarization of Nigeria society. In essence, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons escalated during and after the war. Both dealers, some state personnel and corrupt state officials all contributed to blossoming the small arms and light weapons market linking neighbouring states as well as those in the Niger Delta area through the sea (John; Mohammed; Pinto and Nkanta, 2007). The return to democratic rule in 1979, suffered a shaky foundation, coupled with abuse of political offices and direct theft of public funds. Political office at this point has become a lucrative business where election victory is by any means. This has characterized democracy in the fourth republic and the availability of arms that continue to be in use even after elections.

Closely linked above is the factor of ethnic militancy. Rotberg (2002) states that failed states are deeply conflicted, dangerous and bitterly contested by warring factions. The state faces multi-faceted civil unrest, differing degrees of communal discontent, massive deterioration in the standard of living, decay in infrastructure and greed. Leaders are overwhelmed by their socio-political responsibilities to better the lives of their people and their surroundings forcing people to turn to their ethnic affiliations for safe help and protection. In a multi-ethnic state like Nigeria, conflict is driven by the fear of socio-political and economic domination, which stimulates and fuel hostilities between and among the various groups in the country coupled with avarice that easily pushes for antagonism, particularly when discoveries of resource wealth drives that greed (Adetiba, 2012). This translates to the presence of ethnic militias in Nigeria which is a threat to development as every militia acquires small arms and light weapons. These groups in Nigeria include Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta

(MEND), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger-Delta Avengers, the Boko Haram Sect, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) and many other groups operating undercover (Adetiba 2012).

Unemployment and poverty is also considered to be a major issue in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons because of its negative impact on the sustainability of development in Nigeria. Adetiba (2012) argues that unemployment and poverty are considered to be at the base of the proliferation of small arms and light weapon in Nigeria. There are many jobless, poor and disgruntled able bodied young men and women who are readily available to be trained and armed to presumably defend the interest of their groups.

John et al. (2007) contends that poverty and enormous economic disparity between the rich and the poor within the country has been identified as the driving force behind the use of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Nigeria is a leading producer of crude oil but only a few have benefited from it. The socioeconomic disparity in the polity has aided the enormous increase in insurgencies and crime which has indirectly turned out to be a safety haven for the teaming poor and unemployed youths who seem to be earning a living through it (John et al. 2007). The precarious high rate of poverty, unemployment and lack of fair distribution and management of the nation's resources as well as the absence of genuine democratic values for people to express their concerns in the country has made it necessary to join one form of ethnically based social group within which they can struggle for their own share of the resources (John et al. 2007).

One peculiar group in the northern part of the country whose activities and mode of operation is peculiar and well linked with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons are the Almajiris (Adetiba 2012). These are mostly young, poor and unemployed men mostly found in northern cities like Kano, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Katsina etc. Their mode of operation is anomic and do not possess a particular pattern of operation. Since the northerners are predominantly Muslim, it makes it easier for the politicians who offer them money for their destructive services to mobilize them. They are not only armed with dangerous traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, machetes but also with sophisticated small arm and light weapons, thus, the number of casualties recorded in some of the violence (Adetiba 2012). For example, over 500 lives were lost in the crisis that greeted the presidential election of 2011 where these groups were used (Agenzia, 2011).

Again higher Profitability and its socio-economic utility fuels proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, the economic profitability of small arm and light weapons underpins its extensive proliferation and culture of violence in Nigeria (Adetiba 2012). This is characterized by a substantial trade in simple weapons that can be handled by virtually anybody than other types of conventional arms. This trade has a significant impact on the socio-political and economic climate in Nigeria thus enhancing the culture of violence across the country (Adetiba 2012). The quest for easy profits has encouraged the growth in the arms market in Nigeria. Those engaged in the production locally have made profits from the business which to them is rewarding. The increased availability of small arms and light weapons, some of which come through porous borders and their diffusion to non-state actors is as a result of its trade, thus exacerbating the intensity of violence in the country (Adetiba 2012).

Cultural practices also influence proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in some part of Nigeria, to be precise the south west. Some types of weapons are used for traditional ceremonies such as coronations and sometimes while welcoming their illustrious sons and daughters home (Adetiba 2012). For instance, in Ekiti, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun and part of Edo state, Dane guns are used for such occasions. According to Yacubu (2005) some communities use dynamite and others use modern explosives on these occasions. The attachment of cultural practices to weapons has encouraged the use and proliferation of locally manufactured small arms and light weapons

The rise in insecurity in Nigeria also fuels demand for small arms and light weapons. Individuals use arms as a means of personal defense. One major source of such arm is through the illegal market. For instance, it can be through the police and military officers who are by one way or the other poorly paid (Adetiba 2012). Most Nigerians living in areas prone to violence seem to be in a permanent state of fear, hence their quest to possess small arms for protection, thus deepening the gun culture in Nigeria.

Another pathetic dimension to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is the growth of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Yacubu 2005). The mainstream of who are children of wealthy politicians whose parents have inculcated gun culture in them. Others who are not children of politicians are sponsored by the patrons who use them for their own selfish end. According to International Alert (2007) in addition to the terror which they unleash on campuses, they are also known to maintain ties with gangs of armed robbers and other criminals. Thus, they represent a major threat to lives and investment, and a glaring manifestation of the criminal dimensions of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria. Small arms and light weapons are cheap, readily available, easy to transport and difficult to monitor. Their portability and simplicity allow them to be used even by ill-trained people (including children

Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria

The exact origins and transit countries of the illicit small arms and light weapons flows and their ammunition into Nigeria is not known or well documented. While countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Serbia are often mentioned (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Countries such as Gabon and Guinea-Bissau are also known to be countries through which illegal weapons transit to Nigeria (Ojudu, 2007 Rebel groups operating in the Niger Delta such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) take their small arms and light weapons deliveries through Nigeria's Atlantic borders (IRIN, 2006). Smugglers, profiting from the lack of effective control of the long maritime borders, use speed boats to obtain guns from ships far in the high seas (IRIN, 2006). On land, weapons are said to be smuggled in through Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon (IRIN, 2006). Weapons have also made their way southwards from conflicts in Chad and Niger and some have also come from the west through the Lagos-Benin coastal axis from as far off as Sierra Leone and Liberia (IRIN, 2006). Naagbantou (2010) observes that the international trade in small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta is dominated by ruthless

Ukrainian and Russian dealers who over the past few years have swapped thousands of automatic weapons for illegal bunkered oil. It is also believed that weapons from Turkey, Indonesia and South Africa play a crucial role in arms flow into the Niger Delta (Naagbantou, 2010).

It can be acknowledged that, there are numerous footpaths crisscrossing Nigeria's borders to neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger with links to Mali, Libya and Sudan. These paths are mostly unknown by security agencies and remain unmanned and open to illegal immigrants who also perpetrate illegal trafficking in arms, ammunitions drugs and humans among others into Nigeria. In the same vein, some cows and grains merchants also device means of hiding cache of arms and ammunition inside bags of grains mostly undetected by security agencies at the affected border posts. Other means of transportation to Onuoha (2013) is the hiding of these small arms in improvised compartments of vehicles designed to evade detection by security agents. Cars used for such operations are constructed with chambers for concealing arms or additional fuel tank to minimize the rate of refueling. The use of tunnels to traffic small arms, light weapons, drugs and other substances is not a new tactics among terrorist groups (Lichtenwald and Perri 2013). Boko Haram has used such tunnels for arms trafficking, especially in Borno State.

In addition to weapons smuggled into the country, Nigeria also has its own small arms and light weapon industry, the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON), which is the only legal producer of arms and ammunition in the country (NISAT Doc., 2008). Its products are destined mainly for police use (NISAT Doc., 2008). In the same vein guns have also been produced locally by illegal craft gunsmiths but there is hardly any information on the type, quality and scale of craft production. For instance, **Agbanusi (nd) reports that** the Guards Brigade Nigeria Army uncovered a gun manufacturing factory in Takpa, Nasarawa State and arrested two suspects. Other discoveries have also been made by the police of gun factories in states of Niger, Benue, Kaduna, Abia state among others (Aluko, 2015, Hanafi, 2015, Nwankwo, 2015).

One will infer that sources of small arms and light weapons are made available in the intractable supplies from past to current conflict zones. Such sources as stolen arms and small weapons from armory of the state security service, and leakage from government armories' in which corrupt law enforcement and military personnel sell them. There is also a growing domestic artisan production scattered across the country.

The Implications of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons generally encourages violence which leads to destruction of lives and property. Obinne (1999) posits that proliferation of small arms and light weapons creates abject poverty and frustration leading to economic misfortunes and vice-versa. The amount of money that government spend on security during such crises and their aftermath are huge. For instance, in the aftermath of the Jos crisis in early 2010, the federal government assisted the Bauchi State government with ₦135 million (US\$900 000) to help resettle or integrate about 30, 000 Internally Displaced People from neighbouring Plateau State who sought

refuge in Bauchi State (Onuoha, Gaiya, and Namiji, 2010). These are scarce resources that would be otherwise used in providing basic services that promote human security and development, such as clean water, education and healthcare, among others (Onuaha 2013).

Echoing in the same vein Yecho (2006) postulates that when conflicts take place farmlands, buildings, markets, roads and other institutions crucial to the smooth operation of the economy are destroyed. There is monumental loss of human and material resources. This retard developmental efforts of both the people and government. Funds and resources which are supposed to be used to boost agricultural productivity and other developmental projects are channeled towards rehabilitating displaced persons and buildings destroyed structures (Yecho 2006). Coming from the same position but more comprehensively, Akpan (2011) highlights that, the statistics, as a result of the mini-civil war in the Niger Delta, show that the country lost about \$1.6 billion or N8.84 trillion between 2006 and 2008. This is why Fleshman, (2001) maintained that proliferation of small arms and light weapons constitutes the greatest costs to development, such as deferred investment, reduced socio-economic activity and loss of productivity due to injury and insecurity. A large proportion of agricultural activities are affected by injury on victims and insecurity. The proliferation of small arms and light has contributed significantly to the proportion of the labour force particularly women who abandon agricultural activities for fear of loss of their lives. Indeed, this portends a great threat to food security in Nigeria and Benue state in particular (Aver 2014). Looking particularly at the socio-economic implications of small arms and light weapons, we can attest that conflicts or violence displaces indigenous populations from their normal socio- economic activities (Gandu 2011). Some of the local population is forced to migrate, others become restless and destitute especially women and children (Gandu 2011).

Methodology

The research adopts a survey method where opinions and beliefs of groups of people were sampled and analyzed to reach conclusions on their perception on the effect of proliferation of small arms and light weapons on the socio-economic development of women in Benue State. The choice of Benue and Makurdi Local Government Area in particular is influenced by the fact that Benue is an agrarian state where women constitute a major part of the labour force. Makurdi is also the state capital hosting various markets, businesses outfits and institutions of higher learning. These exist side by side with the farming activities taking place particularly along the river banks where majority of the conflicts are concentrated. The river also serves as a major transport route for illegal arms and weapons. The population of the study consists of all residents of Makurdi Local Government Area which stand at about 500,797 inhabitants (National Population Census 2006). The sample size was calculated based on Taro Yamane (1967) and 400 respondents were sampled.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = finite population

e = level of significance

1 = unity

n = 4,253,641

$$\frac{4,253,641}{1 + 4,253,641 \times (0.05)}$$

= 4,253,641

4,253,641

$1 + 4,253,641 \times 0.0025$

= 4,253,641

409.12

n = 399.99

n = 400

The research made use of questionnaire and in-depth interview to generate data. Though 380 respondents were administered with questionnaire, only 375 were returned. 15 members of the police force were also interviewed. The data collected is subjected to both quantitative (statistics) and qualitative (descriptive) analysis as presented below.

Presentation and Discussion of findings

Factors that Influences the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.

Tables 1: Distribution of respondents according to the factors that Influences Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State

Factors	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Unemployment	164	43.7
Land Disputes	27	7.2
Political struggle	184	49.1
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 1 above reveal that two major factors of political struggle and unemployment influences proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the study area. Political struggle leads with 184 (49.1%) of the respondents' while unemployment has 164 (43.7%).

The views of police officers interviewed however significantly differ from those of the members of the public. The interviewed officers blamed it on porous borders. According to the police officers, the leftover of weapons in conflict regions or communities can find their way through clandestine networks involving rogue arms brokers, private military companies, shady airline companies and local smugglers. One of the police officers in "C" Police Division North Bank Makurdi, put it thus:

The entire middle Belt region and the North Eastern part of Nigeria have been engulfed in serious inter-ethnic and communal conflict through this source. The small arms used in such crises easily find their way into surrounding communities. He further stated in Benue State for instance the arms and weapons used here normally come from neighbouring states like Nasarawa, Taraba and Kogi state through the borders adjoining Benue state through the river banks (A police officer "C" Division North Bank, Makurdi, May 22, 2017).

Deducing from the respondents views and the in-depth interview held with the officials of Nigeria Police Force one will conclude that the nature of porous borders facilitate the desire of the unemployed persons who are engaged for political struggles and other crimes to acquire arms.

Table 2: Distribution of Responses According to why Small Arms and Light Weapons are used in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State

Why Small Arms are Used in Makurdi.	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Political Struggle	119	31.7
Illegal Financial Gains	199	53.1
Cultism/Gangstarism	57	15.3
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 2 indicates that majority 199 (53.1%) of the respondents stressed that illegal financial gains such as armed robbery and kidnapping are the major reasons while people illegally acquire small arms and light weapons in the study area. While the second major factor is political struggle 119 (31.7%)

This is confirmed by the in-depth interview. A significant number of the officers interviewed agreed that small arms and light weapons are used in Makurdi Local Government Area for political activities. A senior officer in “A” police division Wadata, Makurdi explained further that: “In the quest for party supremacy and dominance, political parties and politicians are in the habits of distributing arms to thugs to harass, intimidate, moles, threaten and sometimes assassinate opponents” (A police officer “A” Division Wadata, Makurdi, May 23, 2017). One will conclude that the major reasons for acquiring small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area is politics and other illegal financial interests.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents views on the sources of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.

Sources	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Local Black Smith	204	54.4
Smuggling	108	28.8
Don't know	63	16.8
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

The data presented in Table 3 reveal that small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area are sourced majorly through local black smiths. 204 (54.4%) respondents confirmed this. Findings from the police through in depth interview also aligned to this view that majority of the arms and weapons found in Makurdi Local Government Area normally come from local black smiths or middlemen around Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi, and Taraba States.

Socio-Economic Implications of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on Women in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to the economic implication of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area

Economic implication.	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Disruption of farming activities	147	39.2
Destruction of Petty Business	104	27.7
Increased government spending on security	124	33.1
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 4 shows that majority 147 (39.2%) of the respondents indicate disruption of farming activities, this is followed by government spending on security which 124 (33.1%) averred to. A police constable in an interview also attested that: “these crimes takes place mostly along the river

banks where significant farming and other business activities are carried out. (A police officer “E” Division Akpehe, Makurdi, May 25, 2017). We can conclude that the economic implication of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area is mostly felt on farming activities, government increased spending and disruption of business activities.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to the social implication of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on women in Makurdi Local Government Area

Social Implication.	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Armed Robbery	274	73.1
Kidnapping	39	10.4
Rape	27	7.2
Assassination	35	9.3
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

The major social implication of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area is frequent occurrence of armed robbery cases in the local government area. Table 5 revealed that 301 (80.3%) confirmed this.

The police were of the view that criminal elements and groups acquire small arms and light weapons and use it to terrorize people. This is evident in the frequent cases of armed robbery, kidnapping and assassinations which were not common occurrences in the past.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to obstacles against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State

Constraint	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Corruption	174	46.4
Porous Borders	100	26.6
Poor Legislation	85	22.7
Poor Law Enforcement	16	4.3
Total	375	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 6 revealed that the two major obstacles are corruption 174 (46.4%) and porous borders 100 (26.6%) However, a good number, 85 (22.7%) of the respondents attribute it to poor law enforcement. Findings from the police through in-depth interview revealed that government lack the political will to control the illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons because politicians in particular are complicit in it.

Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that the phenomenon of proliferation of small arms and light weapons is high in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Interestingly, the major source of these arms the research identified as the activities of local blacksmiths within and around the research area. Political struggle and unemployment aided by porous borders were discovered

to be the major factors that influence the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government Area.

The major socio-economic implication according to the study is that the availability of small arms and light weapons induce crimes and conflicts that lead to disruption of economic activities particularly trading and farming. There is also increased cases of armed robbery and assassinations in the Local Government leading to government increased spending on security. Women and girls are also subjected to sexual molestations leading to unwanted pregnancies, diseases, and even death. Factors like corruption and porous borders, are also discovered to be the major stumbling block towards efforts made at eradicating the phenomenon of illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons in the study area. There is therefore no doubt that the proliferation of small arms and their diffusion into society have negative socio-economic implication in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made in order to address the menace of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and facilitate women socio-economic wellbeing.

Security should be strengthen at the borders: one of the major factors found by the research influencing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria was porous borders. Most of the small arms and light used in the research area are smuggled across porous borders as such security needs to be strengthen at the borders to check the smuggling of these arms into the country. Security agencies saddled with this responsibility such as the Nigerian police, customs and immigration should be provided with adequate logistics to curtail the influx of these arms into country.

Job Creation: Youths who are unemployed usually employ illegal means to make ends meet with the use of small arms and light weapons either as thugs, armed robbers or cultist. In this regard the research recommends the creation of jobs or conducive investment atmosphere that could provide and sustain the youths to be engaged meaningfully and consequently refrained from engaging in armed robbery and thuggery.

Criminalization of political violence: The research also discovered that the major factor that facilitates the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Makurdi Local Government is political struggle. This research thus recommends that political violence should be criminalized and stiff penalties meted out to perpetrators

Legislations: Similarly, this research reveals the apparent gap in efficient gun control measures in Nigeria. Thus it behooves on the legislature to review these measures and come out with more workable ones based on current realities particularly to handle the issue of local blacksmiths.

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