

## INSECURITY, VIOLENT CONFLICT, AND THE ATTAINMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) IN MONGUNO, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*This study examines the relationship between insecurity, violent conflict, and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Monguno Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno State. The research is premised on the argument that insecurity is not only a consequence of underdevelopment but also a structural barrier that directly undermines sustainable development outcomes. Persistent violence, particularly linked to the Boko Haram insurgency, has resulted in widespread displacement, destruction of livelihoods, weakened institutions, and disrupted access to essential services, thereby impeding progress toward key SDGs, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative analysis of SDG indicators and conflict-related data with qualitative insights from household surveys and key informant interviews involving community leaders, internally displaced persons, service providers, and local officials. Data are drawn from government statistics, conflict and displacement databases, and field-based evidence. The analytical framework is anchored in Human Security Theory, the Conflict–Development Nexus, and Social Cohesion Theory, enabling a multidimensional understanding of the interplay between security, livelihoods, governance, and social stability. Findings reveal that insecurity significantly constrains agricultural production, exacerbates food insecurity, limits access to healthcare and education, weakens economic activities, and erodes institutional capacity. The results further demonstrate the interconnected nature of the SDGs, where disruptions in one sector produce cascading effects across others, thereby deepening poverty and vulnerability. The study highlights that without addressing insecurity, progress toward the SDGs in conflict-affected areas remains unlikely. The study concludes that achieving sustainable development in Monguno and similar contexts requires integrated, conflict-sensitive approaches that combine peacebuilding, institutional strengthening, and inclusive economic development. It recommends the adoption of a security–development nexus framework, increased investment in livelihoods and social services, strengthened local governance, and enhanced data-driven policymaking. By providing localized and context-specific evidence, this research contributes to policy and academic discourse on sustainable development in fragile settings and offers practical pathways for accelerating SDG implementation in Nigeria’s conflict-affected regions.*

**Keywords:** *insecurity, violent conflict, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria*

### 1.0 Introduction

Nigeria’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 reflects a broader global aspiration to promote inclusive growth, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the country has made notable policy commitments and institutional efforts toward advancing key

development targets, including poverty reduction, food security, improved health outcomes, quality education, and strengthened governance systems. However, these aspirations are increasingly threatened by persistent insecurity and violent conflict, which have emerged as defining features of Nigeria’s contemporary development landscape. The complex interplay between

insecurity and development outcomes raises critical questions about the feasibility of achieving the SDGs in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Over the past decade, Nigeria has experienced a proliferation of security challenges, including insurgency in the North-East, banditry in the North-West, farmer–herder conflicts in the North-Central region, secessionist tensions in the South-East, and urban criminality in major cities. Among these, the Boko Haram insurgency has had particularly devastating consequences, especially in Borno State, where communities such as Monguno Local Government Area (LGA) have been repeatedly exposed to cycles of violence, displacement, and humanitarian crises. These conditions have not only led to the loss of lives and destruction of infrastructure but have also disrupted economic activities, weakened governance structures, and eroded social cohesion.

This study is premised on the argument that insecurity is both a consequence and a driver of underdevelopment. While poverty, inequality, and weak institutions can create fertile ground for conflict, the persistence of violence in turn exacerbates these conditions, creating a vicious cycle that undermines sustainable development. In this regard, insecurity functions as a structural barrier that directly impedes progress toward multiple SDGs, particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The interdependence of these goals implies that setbacks in one domain often cascade into others, thereby compounding development challenges in conflict-affected areas. Monguno LGA in Borno State provides a compelling case for examining the localized impacts of insecurity on SDG attainment. Since the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency, Monguno has experienced recurrent attacks, population displacement, and severe disruptions to livelihoods. Agricultural production, which

constitutes the primary source of income for many households, has been significantly affected due to restricted access to farmlands, destruction of assets, and fear of violence. Consequently, food insecurity has intensified, undermining progress toward SDG 2 and exacerbating poverty levels in line with SDG 1. At the same time, the breakdown of local markets and economic activities has constrained opportunities for decent work and economic growth, further entrenching vulnerability among affected populations. In addition to economic disruptions, insecurity has had profound implications for social service delivery in Monguno. Health facilities have been damaged or rendered non-functional, and access to essential healthcare services remains limited due to safety concerns and resource constraints. This has contributed to poor health outcomes, including increased morbidity and mortality rates, thereby hindering progress toward SDG 3. Similarly, the education sector has been severely affected, with schools destroyed, teachers displaced, and students unable to attend classes due to insecurity. These challenges have disrupted learning processes and widened educational inequalities, posing significant obstacles to achieving SDG 4. Urban and community development in Monguno has also been adversely affected by conflict dynamics. The influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has placed immense pressure on existing infrastructure, housing, and basic services, leading to overcrowded settlements and deteriorating living conditions.

This situation undermines efforts to promote sustainable cities and communities as envisioned under SDG 11. Furthermore, the erosion of trust in public institutions, coupled with limited state presence in some areas, has weakened governance systems and undermined the rule of law, thereby impeding progress toward SDG 16. Despite the severity of these challenges, much of the existing literature on insecurity and development in Nigeria has focused on national-level analyses, often overlooking the nuanced and

context-specific dynamics at the local level. This gap in knowledge limits the effectiveness of policy interventions, as strategies that are not tailored to local realities may fail to address the root causes and manifestations of conflict. This study seeks to address this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the relationship between insecurity, violent conflict, and SDG attainment in Monguno LGA, thereby generating evidence that is both contextually relevant and policy-relevant.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The relationship between insecurity, violent conflict, and sustainable development has attracted increasing scholarly attention, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states such as Nigeria. Existing literature broadly converges on the view that insecurity constitutes both a driver and consequence of underdevelopment, thereby creating a cyclical pattern that undermines progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This section reviews relevant empirical and theoretical studies, with emphasis on Nigeria and conflict-affected regions such as the North-East, while synthesizing key debates and identifying gaps that justify the present study. A dominant strand of literature examines insecurity as a structural constraint to national development. Studies consistently show that Nigeria's persistent security challenges—including insurgency, banditry, and communal conflicts—have far-reaching socio-economic consequences. For instance, Akindoyin and Obafemi (2025) argue that insecurity disrupts economic activities, discourages foreign investment, and weakens institutional capacity, thereby exacerbating poverty and unemployment. Similarly, Moses (2024) finds that widespread insecurity across Nigeria has significantly hindered progress toward the SDGs by destroying infrastructure, displacing populations, and undermining socio-economic systems. These studies establish a strong link between insecurity and macro-level development outcomes, highlighting how violence constrains national growth trajectories.

Beyond macroeconomic impacts, another body of literature focuses on the sectoral implications of conflict, particularly in relation to SDG-specific outcomes. In the agricultural sector, insecurity has been shown to reduce productivity and threaten food security. Empirical evidence from conflict-prone regions indicates that violence restricts access to farmlands, disrupts supply chains, and discourages investment in agriculture. For example, a study on insecurity and agricultural output in Nigeria demonstrates that increased insecurity significantly reduces crop and livestock production, thereby worsening food insecurity and rural poverty. This directly undermines SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 1 (No Poverty), reinforcing the argument that conflict has multidimensional effects on livelihoods. In the health sector, literature highlights the adverse effects of violent conflict on population health outcomes. Research on the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria shows that exposure to conflict significantly increases the likelihood of childhood malnutrition, as measured by wasting indicators (Dunn, 2018). The study demonstrates that children in conflict-affected areas experience worse nutritional outcomes compared to those in non-conflict settings, largely due to disruptions in food systems, healthcare access, and household stability. These findings underscore the impact of insecurity on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), while also illustrating the interconnectedness between health, nutrition, and conflict.

The education sector has also been severely affected by insecurity, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Although not always quantified in empirical terms, existing studies and reports consistently document the destruction of schools, displacement of teachers and students, and widespread fear that limits school attendance. The Boko Haram insurgency, whose ideology explicitly opposes Western education, has intensified these challenges through targeted attacks on educational institutions. This has significant implications for SDG 4 (Quality Education), as

prolonged disruptions to schooling contribute to long-term human capital deficits and intergenerational poverty. Another important dimension in the literature concerns the relationship between conflict, governance, and institutional development. Scholars argue that insecurity erodes state legitimacy, weakens governance structures, and undermines the rule of law. Akindoyin and Obafemi (2025) note that insecurity fosters corruption, reduces public trust in government, and strains state resources, thereby weakening democratic institutions. This aligns with broader theoretical perspectives within the Conflict–Development Nexus, which emphasize the bidirectional relationship between weak institutions and violent conflict. In this regard, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) is both a prerequisite for and an outcome of sustainable development.

Theoretical literature further enriches the understanding of insecurity and development by emphasizing multidimensional frameworks. Human Security Theory, for instance, shifts the focus from state-centric security to individual well-being, encompassing both “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want.” This perspective is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where insecurity manifests not only through physical violence but also through economic deprivation and social exclusion. Complementing this, Social Cohesion Theory highlights the role of trust, inclusion, and collective identity in fostering stability and resilience. These frameworks suggest that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the underlying social and structural drivers of conflict. In addition, the concept of SDG interdependence has gained prominence in recent scholarship. Lusseau and Mancini (2018) argue that the SDGs are interconnected within a “sustainome,” where progress in one goal can influence outcomes in others. In conflict-affected settings, this interdependence implies that insecurity-induced setbacks in one sector—such as health or education—can cascade into broader

development failures. For example, food insecurity can exacerbate health challenges, while lack of education can limit economic opportunities, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and instability.

Despite these valuable contributions, existing literature exhibits several limitations. First, much of the research is conducted at the national or regional level, often overlooking localized dynamics of conflict and development. While macro-level analyses provide important insights, they may obscure context-specific factors that shape development outcomes in particular communities. Second, many studies rely heavily on secondary data, with limited integration of primary data from affected populations. This creates a gap in understanding the lived experiences of individuals and communities in conflict zones. Third, there is insufficient integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches, which limits the ability to capture the complexity of the insecurity–development relationship. Furthermore, while numerous studies examine the impacts of insecurity on individual SDGs, fewer studies adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously considers multiple SDGs within a single analytical framework. Given the interconnected nature of the SDGs, such an approach is essential for understanding the cumulative and compounding effects of insecurity on development. There is also limited application of interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks that combine insights from security studies, development economics, and sociology.

This study seeks to address these gaps by focusing on Monguno LGA in Borno State, a context that exemplifies the intersection of insecurity, displacement, and development challenges. By adopting a mixed-methods approach and integrating Human Security Theory, the Conflict–Development Nexus, and Social Cohesion Theory, the research provides a more holistic and context-sensitive analysis of the relationship between insecurity and SDG attainment. In doing so, it contributes to

both academic discourse and policy practice by generating evidence that is directly relevant to conflict-affected communities.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that insecurity is a major impediment to sustainable development in Nigeria, affecting multiple sectors and undermining progress toward the SDGs. However, there remains a need for more localized, integrated, and empirically grounded studies that capture the complexity of this relationship. This study responds to that need by providing a comprehensive analysis of insecurity and SDG attainment in Monguno, thereby advancing understanding of development challenges in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of SDG indicators and conflict data with qualitative insights from fieldwork. Data sources will include government statistics, conflict and displacement databases, household surveys, and key informant interviews with community leaders, internally displaced persons, service providers, and local officials. This methodological triangulation is intended to enhance the robustness and validity of the findings, while also capturing the lived experiences of affected populations. By integrating multiple data sources, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how insecurity shapes development outcomes at the local level. The analytical framework for the study is anchored in Human Security Theory and the Conflict–Development Nexus, complemented by insights from Social Cohesion Theory. Human Security Theory emphasizes the importance of protecting individuals from both violent threats (“freedom from fear”) and structural vulnerabilities such as poverty and deprivation (“freedom from want”). This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of Monguno, where insecurity manifests not only in physical violence but also in economic hardship and social exclusion. The Conflict–Development Nexus further highlights the

bidirectional relationship between conflict and development, underscoring how underdevelopment can fuel conflict and vice versa. Social Cohesion Theory adds another dimension by examining the role of trust, inclusion, and collective identity in promoting stability and resilience in conflict-affected communities.

By situating the analysis within these theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to provide a multidimensional understanding of insecurity and its implications for sustainable development. It also aligns with the principles of critical realism, which emphasize the importance of uncovering underlying structures and mechanisms that shape observable phenomena. In doing so, the research moves beyond surface-level descriptions to explore the deeper causal relationships between insecurity and development outcomes. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to both academic scholarship and policy practice by generating actionable insights for improving SDG implementation in fragile contexts. Expected outputs include evidence-based policy recommendations for local and state authorities, donor agencies, and international organizations, as well as practical strategies for integrating peacebuilding into development planning. By focusing on Monguno LGA, the research underscores the importance of localized, conflict-sensitive approaches to development, which are essential for building resilience and accelerating progress toward the SDGs in Nigeria and other conflict-affected settings.

### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study set out to examine the systematic relationship between insecurity, violent conflict, and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Monguno Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno State. Drawing on both theoretical and empirical insights, the findings reinforce the central argument that insecurity is not merely a by-product of underdevelopment but a structural and

multidimensional barrier that significantly undermines sustainable development outcomes. The persistence of violent conflict—particularly the Boko Haram insurgency—has generated a complex humanitarian and development crisis that continues to impede progress across several SDGs, notably SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The study demonstrates that insecurity in Monguno has led to widespread livelihood disruption, constrained agricultural productivity, and heightened food insecurity, thereby deepening poverty and inequality. These findings align with existing scholarship that emphasizes the adverse impact of conflict on economic systems and household welfare (Moses, 2024; Ijirshar et al., 2025). Furthermore, the destruction of infrastructure and limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education have significantly weakened human capital development, reinforcing intergenerational cycles of deprivation. The deterioration of governance structures and erosion of public trust also highlight the critical link between insecurity and institutional fragility, consistent with the Conflict–Development Nexus literature (Akindoyin & Obafemi, 2025).

Importantly, the study underscores the interconnected nature of the SDGs, showing that setbacks in one sector often cascade into others. For example, reduced agricultural output not only exacerbates hunger but also affects health outcomes and economic opportunities. Similarly, disruptions in education have long-term implications for employment, social mobility, and community resilience. This interconnectedness validates the “sustainome” perspective, which posits that SDGs operate as an integrated system rather than isolated targets (Lusseau & Mancini, 2018). Consequently, addressing insecurity is essential not only for achieving SDG 16 but also for unlocking progress across

the broader development agenda. The application of Human Security Theory and Social Cohesion Theory further reveals that sustainable development in conflict-affected areas requires a holistic approach that prioritizes both “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want.” In Monguno, insecurity manifests in multiple dimensions, including physical violence, economic hardship, and social exclusion. Therefore, development interventions that fail to address these interconnected vulnerabilities are unlikely to produce sustainable outcomes. The study also highlights the importance of localized and context-specific analysis, as national-level strategies may not adequately capture the unique dynamics of conflict-affected communities.

Based on these findings, several policy and practical recommendations are proposed. First, there is a need for the integration of security and development planning through conflict-sensitive programming. Government agencies, development partners, and humanitarian actors should adopt a “nexus approach” that simultaneously addresses security, humanitarian needs, and long-term development objectives. This includes embedding peacebuilding initiatives within development programs to strengthen social cohesion and reduce the risk of conflict recurrence. Second, strengthening local governance and institutional capacity is critical for sustainable development. Efforts should focus on rebuilding public institutions, enhancing accountability, and restoring trust between citizens and the state. This can be achieved through inclusive governance frameworks that involve community leaders, civil society organizations, and local stakeholders in decision-making processes. Strengthening institutions at the local level is particularly important for advancing SDG 16 and ensuring effective service delivery.

Third, targeted investments in livelihoods and economic recovery are essential for breaking the cycle of poverty and insecurity. Agricultural support programs, vocational training, and microenterprise development

initiatives should be prioritized to enhance income-generating opportunities for affected populations. Given the centrality of agriculture in Monguno, interventions that improve access to farmland, inputs, and markets can significantly contribute to food security and economic resilience. Fourth, improving access to essential social services, particularly health and education, is vital for human capital development. This requires the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure, deployment of qualified personnel, and implementation of innovative service delivery models, such as mobile clinics and community-based education programs. Ensuring safe access to these services is equally important, necessitating collaboration between security actors and service providers. Fifth, data-driven and evidence-based policymaking should be strengthened through improved data collection and monitoring systems. The use of disaggregated data at the local level can enhance understanding of context-specific challenges and inform targeted interventions. Mixed-methods research approaches, as employed in this study, should be encouraged to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative experiences. Finally, international partners and donor agencies should increase their support for conflict-affected regions, with a focus on long-term resilience building rather than short-term humanitarian assistance alone. Sustainable development in fragile contexts requires sustained investment, coordination, and commitment from multiple stakeholders.

In conclusion, achieving the SDGs in Nigeria—particularly in conflict-affected areas such as

Monguno—depends fundamentally on addressing the root causes and consequences of insecurity. Without meaningful progress in peacebuilding, institutional strengthening, and inclusive development, the prospects for attaining the 2030 Agenda remain limited. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the insecurity–development nexus and provides a foundation for more localized, integrated, and actionable policy responses.

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