

# **Livelihood, Crime and Cross-border Security in Africa: Nigeria and the Republic of Benin**

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## **Abstract**

Urban centers in Nigeria served as the sites of enchanting challenges and diverse spectacles. In this regard, the city of Lagos became the site of diverse experiments and strategies in urban livelihood. Though there is an assumption that livelihood is about the ways and means of “making a living”, it also about creating and embracing new opportunities. While gaining livelihood, or attempting to do so, people may, at the same time have to cope with risks and uncertainties, such as a wide range of forces, social , economic, political, legal and environmental and institutional both within and outside the locality in which a household lives. It is within this conceptualization that this paper examines human smuggling and traffic-in persons, migration, sexual trade, currency trafficking, armed robbery and forced labour between Nigeria and Benin Republic. These are global problems, not limited to Nigeria and Benin, since the criminal networks cut across nations. Poverty, unemployment and corruption, no doubt, are known triggers, contributing to observed cross-border security challenges in both Nigeria and Benin Republic. This study interrogates the neglected aspects of cross-border security challenges, especially those connected to livelihood and survival. It raises posers as to why and how the criminalized livelihood means are sustained? What can be done to transform or reverse this trend? The study relied on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data included oral interviews, newspaper and archival materials. Secondary sources were obtained from university libraries and research institutes spread across Nigeria. Data were historically analyzed. This study concludes that inequalities, deprivation, poverty and corruption in Nigeria and Benin Republic served as impetus to the emergence and development of cross-border security challenges. Thus, it proffers that good governance through human security approach, equitable distribution of income and social security, rather than the law enforcement is a preferred solution to the problems of unlawful migrations, cross-border prostitutions, currency trafficking, smuggling and armed robbery.

### **Introduction**

Historically, cities have developed and evolved as vehicles for socio-economic interaction, growth and social change. The lives and livelihoods of millions of people are constructed, affected and modified by what is done in the cities. Urbanization or city creation predates colonialism in many African countries.<sup>1</sup> Apart from Egypt, where urban civilization dates back 5,000 years, several cities in other African regions have centuries old histories.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 20th century, a second generation of cities started to emerge in Africa. These were urban formations that can be characterized or categorized as colonial cities. Such cities either began as pre-colonial formations before being transformed into colonial cities, or were established by colonial officials. Either way, the character and the contexts of such cities became defined by western parameters. In fact, the current international border between Nigeria and Benin was first established as an inter-colonial border between British and French territories in 1889.<sup>3</sup> Besides, the construction of railways and roads, coupled with new economic activities and improvements in agricultural methodologies introduced by colonial administrations helped create many new urban centers that served as administrative, commercial, industrial, mining and transport nodes.<sup>4</sup> Examples of these second generation cities include colonial Lagos, Jos, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, Jebba, Lokoja, Dakar, Conakry, Accra, Niamey, Cotonou and Monrovia. The European objectives of using them as administrative and economic hubs, expanding export production and distribution of their manufactured goods facilitated the urbanization process in such cities.

In the post-independent era, regional economic integration had been canvassed as a major tool of change and development.<sup>5</sup> The infrastructure of trade and the improvement in the capacities of these cities served as impetus for the promotion of economic regional integration in West Africa. This inevitably led to the establishment in the mid 1970s of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The treaty, which established ECOWAS, was signed in Lagos, Nigeria on 28 May, 1975. It was an economic union designed to promote cooperation and integration in economic, social and cultural activities; integrate the sub-region into big market and serve as a veritable tool to create better conditions for development.<sup>6</sup> It also envisaged a greater economic integration by harmonizing the markets of the various countries and pooling their resources in ultimately establishing an economic and monetary union. It has also been affirmed that despite the economic imperatives of integration, the outcomes have fallen short of the lofty intentions and ambitions of the founding fathers.<sup>7</sup> One of the shortcomings of the liberalization of trade along the West Africa region has been cross-border security challenges.

It is within this framework that this work seeks to understand urban livelihood in the city of Lagos, with special focus on how the search for livelihood means has promoted cross border crime and security challenges between Nigeria and Republic of Benin. Nigeria shares land borders with the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroon in the East, and Niger in the North. Its coast in the South lies on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>8</sup> In the West, there are two central border

towns with utmost proximity to Republic of Benin. Idi-Iroko in Ogun state of Nigeria, and Seme border in the Badagry axis of Lagos state. One of the main objectives of this paper is to articulate the specific characters of cross border security challenges between Nigeria and Benin, especially those connected to livelihood and survival. In this study, Seme border in the Badagry axis of Lagos shall be the focus. However, the key concepts germane to this discourse are livelihood, border, crime and security. It is important to attempt a brief conceptual clarification of these concepts in order to enhance our understanding of the focus of this paper.

### **Livelihood: Conceptual Clarification**

The concept of livelihood is dynamic, recognising that the conditions and compositions of people's livelihoods changes, sometimes rapidly and also overtime. Livelihood are complex with households in the developing world undertaking a wide range of activities, as they are not just farmers, or labourers, or factory workers, or fisher folk, but engage in self- sustaining activities formally and informally.<sup>9</sup> Livelihood has been discussed extensively among scholars and development practitioners, but there is an assumption that livelihood is about the ways and means of 'making a living'. However, the most widely accepted definition of livelihood stems from the work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway. They affirmed that, "a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living"<sup>10</sup> To Wallman, an anthropologist, livelihood is an umbrella concept, which suggests that social life is layered and that these layers overlap (both in the way people talk about them and the way they should be analysed). Thus, livelihood is more than just a matter of finding or making shelter, transacting money, and preparing food to put on the table, or exchange in the market place.<sup>11</sup> He opines further that it is a matter of the ownership and circulation of information, the management of social relationships, the affirmation of personal significance and group identity, and the inter relation of each of these tasks to the other.

Livelihood is also about creating and embracing new opportunities. While gaining livelihood, or attempting to do so, people may, at the same time, have to cope with risks and uncertainties, such as a wide range of forces, social, economic, political, legal, environmental and institutional, both within and outside the locality in which a household lives, that are beyond the family control.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the binding feature of these definitions and interpretations is that 'livelihood' deals with people, their resources and what they do with these. Therefore, livelihoods, essentially, revolve around resources, but these resources cannot be disconnected from the issues and problems of access and changing political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances. It is therefore, within this context, that this study historicizes livelihood in Lagos by analyzing the nexus between coping strategies of survival adopted by the people, (natives and immigrants) in connection with cross border crime and security challenges. Thus, the main argument of this paper is that poverty, unemployment and corruption are known triggers that have been

contributing to persistent cross-border security challenges in both Nigeria and Benin Republic.

### **Concept of Border**

Borders are political membranes through which people, goods, wealth and information must pass in order to be deemed legitimate or illegitimate by a nation. Thus, borders are agents of a nation's security and sovereignty, and physical record of a nation's past and present relations with its neighbours.<sup>13</sup> Nations and states establish borders to secure territories, which are valuable to them because of their human and natural resources, or because these places have strategic or symbolic importance to them. Borders are therefore signs of the eminent domain of a nation.<sup>14</sup> Border by its very nature performs various political and social functions, a greater dimension of which, are the formation of legal, economic, ideological, psychological identities and the security of a nation.<sup>15</sup> Though extant literature exists on borderlands in Africa, Anthony Asiwaju for instance, has been one of the leading scholars of borderlands in Africa (1976, 1985; 1983). In fact, much of the available researches on borders in Africa focus on Nigeria's borders and Nigeria-Benin border in particular (e.g Dioka 1988, Gonsallo 1988; Igue 1976, 1989; Igue and Soule 1992). Meanwhile, these studies were concerned with official and international cooperation between states, but neglected the important aspect of livelihood and cross-border crime. Therefore, this study argues that inequalities, deprivation, poverty and corruption have served as impetus to the emergence and development of cross-border security challenges in West Africa. Thus, unlawful migrations, cross-border prostitutions, currency and human trafficking, smuggling and armed robbery are notable features of Lagos-Seme border located within Nigeria and Benin.

Crime is conceptualised as something that threatens serious harm to the community, or something generally believed to do so or something committed with evil intent, or something forbidden in the interest of the most powerful sections of the society.<sup>16</sup> Further, this study defines crime as an action prohibited by law or a failure to act as requested by law. It is within this purview that this study classifies and analyses the changing trends in crime and criminality along the Nigeria-Benin border, but with special focus on Lagos - Seme border within the larger context of livelihood and coping strategies of survival of both immigrants and the citizens.

### **Concept of Security**

The meaning of the concept of security is still evolving and so historians cannot just talk about security whimsically. What constituted "security" in the pre-colonial Nigerian states would definitely be different from what constitutes security today.<sup>17</sup> The pre-colonial nations/states were formed by the people across ages; Nigeria as a political entity was imposed on the people by the colonial masters. Hence, in the pre-colonial Nigerian state, security would mean the protection of the state against external aggression or anything that could injure the unity of the people.<sup>18</sup> But security in the present Nigerian state is more than a task of keeping the people together under same political umbrella. The point being

emphasised here is that the problem of inequality in terms of size of population, land resources, and the like, must be dealt with in a manner that assures all of justice.

Meanwhile, it has been argued that the new thinking is that any intellectual discourse on security should accord priority to human beings, since without reference to individual humans, security makes no sense.<sup>19</sup> It is within this framework that the concept of human security emerged. The concept was popularized by the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report (HDR). It has two elements: “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear”. Calling attention to the uniqueness of the concept, Mahbub ul Haq argues that: ‘the world is entering a new era in which the very concept of security will change and change dramatically. Security will be interpreted as: security of people, not just territory, security of individuals, not just nations, Security through development, not through arms, Security of all the people everywhere, in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment.’<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, late Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations once observed that, “Human security, in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment. These are the interrelated building blocks of human- and therefore national security.”<sup>21</sup> However, it is very important to delineate which particular security is germane to this discourse out of the seven key dimensions of the concept as seen below:

These are (a) *Economic security* (an assured basic livelihood derived from work, public and environment resources, or reliable social safety nets); (b) *Food security* (ready physical and economic access to basic food); (c) *health security* (access to personal healthcare and protective public health regiments); (d) *environmental security* ( safety from natural disasters and resource scarcity attendant upon degradation); (e) *personal security* (physical safety from violent conflict, human rights abuses, domestic violence, crime, child abuse, and self-inflicted violence as in drug abuse); (f) *Community security* (safety from oppressive community practices and from ethnic conflict); (g) *political security* (freedom from state oppression and abuses of human rights).<sup>22</sup>

In view of the above positions, the paper argues along the populist school of thought on security that livelihood and resource flows cannot be adequately secured unless citizens, and more specifically, the poor and marginalized peoples of the globe, have a voice in the matter. To ensure their security, the world needs to be governed in different ways than the way we have been used to in the past. In fact, the populist school calls for ways of linking analysis of livelihood, security,

and governance in new ways.<sup>23</sup> It is thus within this argument that this paper analyses the nexus between livelihood and security challenges, with special focus on Seme border located between Nigeria and Benin Republic.

### **Poverty, Unemployment and Trans-border Crime in Nigeria**

Poverty in Nigeria is said to have been on the increase in the last few decades. The World Bank Reports show that Nigeria has a significant number of her populations categorized as poor people. For example, the World Development Report, 1999 shows that Nigeria ranks 40<sup>th</sup> among the world's poorest countries, while the World Development, 2001 indicates that the share of Nigerian population below the poverty line increased from 42.8 per cent in 1992 to 65.6 per cent in 1996.<sup>24</sup> Poverty is pain. Poor people experience physical pain that comes with too little food and long hours of work; emotional pain stemming from the daily humiliations of dependency and lack of power; and the moral pain of being forced to make choices.<sup>25</sup> When poverty is coupled with high levels of economic and social aspirations, the stage is set for criminal activities-particularly official corruption, robbery and dealing in illegal goods and services. People, who are thwarted in attaining desired social and economic goals legally, may seek to obtain them illegally.<sup>26</sup> Growing crime and violence, especially in the urban areas, where there is a good concentration of the poor, is a concern as it affects economic growth. A survey of poverty incidence in Nigeria between 1980 and 2010 illuminates on the connection between population increase, low income, deprivation and inadequate livelihood means in the urban centers. Thus, it made inevitable seeking livelihood illegally by engaging in cross-border crime as a panacea to sufferings. Below is the summary of the poverty incidence within the aforementioned period.

**Table 1: Poverty Incidence in Nigeria, 1980-2010**

Year	Poverty Incidence (%)	Estimated Population (million)	Population in Poverty (million)
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2010	69	163	112.47

**Source: National Bureau of Statistics HNLSS, 2010**

Apart from the above survey of poverty by the National Bureau of statistics, the Central Bank of Nigeria(CBN) views poverty as “a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food , clothing and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment,

skills, assets and self esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure, such as education, health, portable water, sanitation; and consequently, has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities.”<sup>27</sup> Besides, the World Bank defining poverty inductively states that: poverty is “the lack of what is necessary for material well being, especially food, but also housing, land, and other assets. In other words, poverty is the lack of multiple resources that lead to hunger and physical deprivation.”<sup>28</sup> Statistical data from the Federal Office of Statistics indicate that by 1960, poverty covered about 15 percent of the population of Nigeria and by 1980 it grew to 28 percent. By 1985 the extent of poverty was about 46 percent and then dropped to 43 percent by 1992. By 1996, poverty incidence in Nigeria was estimated to be about 66 percent in a total population of about 110 million. Currently with over 150 million people, poverty incidence in Nigeria is estimated to be around 70 percent.<sup>29</sup> Though there have been many attempts aimed at measuring poverty in Nigeria, but poverty line in the view of the CBN represents the value of basic food and non-food needs considered essential for meeting the minimum socially-acceptable standard of living within a given society. Thus, any individual, whose income or consumption falls below the poverty line is regarded as poor.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the most common poverty lines for international comparisons are US\$1 a day for low-income countries, US\$2 for middle income, and US\$4 for transition economies. In this regard, Nigeria indeed, ranked 151 out of 173 on the Human Development Index, with over 70% of the population living below the income poverty line on less than \$1 per day.<sup>31</sup>

In Nigeria, unemployment is one of the major features of poverty; which is assuming a crisis level. Though there are no reliable data for ascertaining the exact number of unemployed Nigerians, it is evident that unemployment rate is growing at geometric progression based on the number of graduates and secondary school leavers without job.<sup>32</sup> The first evidence of unemployment came not from statistical data, but from reports about the appearance in various towns of people who have had no jobs. They came in increasing numbers, and lived in shanty towns in desperation and poverty. Street children as beggars who simply walk on the streets but are without families or homes are increasing in number in Sub Sahara Africa’s major cities-Addis Ababa, Dakar, Lagos, and Nairobi (Moore, 1994). These cities no doubt have witnessed increasing rural-urban migration of people in search of livelihood means. For instance, in the city of Lagos, there were 7,937,932 inhabitants in 2006, according to the 2006 census, making it the 14<sup>th</sup> most populous city in the world.<sup>33</sup> It would be recalled that after the 1970s Nigerian oil boom, Lagos underwent a population explosion, untamed economic growth, and unmitigated rural-urban migration as well as transnational migration from neighbouring countries. These caused the outlying towns and settlements to develop rapidly, thus forming the greater Lagos metropolis seen today.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Lagos has been a home to the very wealthy and the very poor, and has attracted numerous young entrepreneurs and families seeking a better life.

Against this background of high rural-urban migration, unemployment and poverty, appreciable number of Lagos inhabitants and Nigerians found succor in the informal sector of the economy. An extension of this sector is the trans-border

trading platforms created by the regional economic integration in West Africa. The need to accelerate the process of economic integration proceeded apace with the recognition that ECOWAS should institute a trade liberalization scheme in four phases as from 1979.<sup>35</sup> The highlight of the liberalization scheme is as follows:

- Immediate and full liberalization of trade in unprocessed goods and traditional handicrafts;
- Consolidation of customs and charges of equivalent effect and non-tariff barriers;
- Liberalisation of trade in industrial products originating in member states; and
- Establishment of a Common External Tariff (CET) as ECOWAS finally transforms itself from a free trade area into a custom union.

In July 1993, a revised ECOWAS treaty, designed to accelerate economic integration and to increase political cooperation, was signed.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the fact that West African states were interested in forging development using regional trade as a vital tool, the implementation of the above highlighted objectives have been confronted with so many challenges, of which cross border security remains an important one. The evolution of the colonially-induced boundaries ultimately led to the development of two distinct market conditions.<sup>37</sup> The variety of goods and services available on different sides of the borders and differences in price as one moves from one side to the other made trans-border trade in the colonial and post-colonial periods an irresistible proposition.<sup>38</sup> Not only that, Nigeria has one of the most uncertain business environments in the sub-region. From Cotonou, Nigeria has become the greatest destination for goods such as rice, wheat flour, textiles, second-hand clothing, second hand cars and tyres, sugar, spirits, tomatoes (tinned and paste), second hand fridge and air conditioning units, sorghum, vegetable oil, and frozen turkey and chicken. Others are footwear, cosmetics, and medical equipment, computer and telecommunication products.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Adesina argued that in spite of the fact that Nigeria had slapped a ban on a variety of these goods; the items are still imported and shipped to the Nigerian border. Besides, Cotonou ports have been identified to handle some 350,000 second-hand vehicles imported from Europe into Nigeria every year.<sup>40</sup>

It is on this premise that the paper argues further, that the attempts by Nigerian businessmen to evade tariff on the imported goods facilitated the emergence of smuggling as a mode of bringing goods into the ready made Nigerian markets. Meanwhile, trans-border crime has transcended smuggling goods into Nigeria, it has extended to trafficking in human beings, illegal importation of arms and ammunition, trans-border prostitution, currency trafficking, money laundering, transportation of stolen vehicles across borders, illegal immigration and armed robbery. It must however, be said that the border communities are not exempted from this carnival of illegalities.<sup>41</sup> Owing to the porosity of our borders as a result of the greed and corrupt nature of border security agents, as well as their poor state of preparedness, criminals utilizing them as transit points or staging posts



for their criminal activities constantly invade communities in the vicinity of these borders. It is within this purview that this paper examines the security challenges at Seme border, a border community in the Badagry axis of Lagos State between Nigeria and Benin Republic.

### **Seme Border and Security Challenges**

Seme border in the Badagry axis of Lagos state, which links the country to Benin Republic has been one of the busiest borders in the country in terms of the volume of cross border trade and movement of persons, as well as vehicular movement. In the Seme border, the major items traded across border include textiles, second-hand clothes, and shoes, rice, frozen chicken and turkey, vehicle spare parts, alcoholic drinks, vegetable oil and other consumables. A visit to Seme border reveals beehive of activities of both locals and immigrants. Traders abound at the border such that it is difficult to distinguish foreign from locals, because there is always free movement of locals across borders. Agbara, Okokomaiko and Badagry are the closest towns to Seme border. It is important to state that there are many families in Nigerian border communities that have relations in the neighbouring countries through inter-marriages, which is very common among the border communities. In fact, borders are no barriers to socio-economic relationship with their counterparts at the other side of the border. Because Nigeria is an import dependent nation, many importers over the years have formed the habit of bringing into the country all manner of goods through the Cotonou seaport in Benin Republic without payment of appropriate tariff. This marked the beginning of smuggling across the border. Smuggling of goods has become the most lucrative business across West Africa. Nigeria for instance, has a very unstable list of goods banned or allowed. Despite this, individual drivers are not averse to devising coping strategies based on prevailing circumstances; rather they augment their incomes by carrying 'cargo' -illegal goods smuggled in or out of Nigeria in the underbelly of their cars or where extra tyres are normally kept.<sup>42</sup> This illegal trade across the border has been sustained over the years by the cooperation and participation of different parties namely: transporter, border residents, custom officials, immigration officials, licensed and unlicensed clearing agents, the physically challenged i.e cripple, and the police force as well as other security agents.

At Seme border, research findings reveal that, in the case of smuggling, between 12 midnight and 3am, rickety cars with raised shock absorbers, stuffed with smuggled goods, move in convoys into different parts of the South-West including Lagos and Oyo.<sup>43</sup> In their attempts to evade customs and duties on transported goods, they often times result in hot chase and exchange of gun fire; which has resulted to loss of lives in most cases. This of course, has constituted a serious security challenges to Nigeria border, especially the Seme border. Besides, these transporters over the years have established relationships with customs, majority of who out of greed have devised the strategy of collecting money from smugglers, and by so doing turning their back to trailers of cargo bringing into the country contraband goods. Over the years, the Nigerian Customs Service has been accused of taking bribes from cross-border traders, including market women. The cash and carry

approach of the service has been responsible for the inability of the country to stop smuggling in the axis or achieve reasonable trade efficiency. For instance, an interview with Patric Onyekwachi- a second hand clothes trader reveals that he has been doing the business of bringing into the country contraband goods for over ten years because of the cooperation from the custom officials. He explained that between the Seme border and Mile 2, he normally spends between 2500 and 5000 naira to settle custom officials.<sup>44</sup> Corroborating this, Chibuzor- another Trans border trader also recalls that:

Much of the profit I make goes to them referring to the Nigerian customs Service (NCS). On a particular night- about two weeks ago, we had to gather 50,000 naira to “settle” those (custom officials) in a week.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, while Chibuzor might be trading in contraband, those who convey pineapples, apple and other agricultural produce originating from Benin, Togo and ECOWAS countries also pay through their nose to secure a “pass” whereas the regional economic body’s protocols says such items should be duty free.<sup>46</sup> In the case of second hand vehicles, illegality and smuggling has provided livelihood means for both the young and old in both Benin Republic and Nigeria. It has been observed that youths in border communities abandon classroom for smuggling. In Badagry, for instance, some of them specialize in helping to bring into the country vehicles purchased in Cotonou, the commercial city of Benin Republic without the payment of custom duties. Their mode of operation has been in two categories. Firstly, there are those who had entered into agreement with customs officials operating on the coded platform known as COD-meaning Customs on Duty. In this situation these border middlemen charges between 25 and 30 thousand naira to cross vehicles across to Seme border. The implication of these is that for the 7 customs post between Cotonou and Seme border, the middleman would drop at least 2000 naira per duty post before crossing the vehicle to Lagos.<sup>47</sup> On the average the middleman would have paid 14000 Naira to custom officials for a car that would have attracted about 80,000 naira duties. If the middleman collected 30,000 Naira from the car owner or dealer, he would have made a profit of 16000 Naira on a vehicle.

Similarly, in the “crossing” business, a smuggler who claimed anonymity explained how his group usually raises one million Naira every night they are on the road to “settle” customs. The money according to him is usually from the car owners on charges of between 50,000 and 100,000 Naira depending on the value of each car. Also, a car dealer gave an insight to a syndicate in Agbara –a border town near Seme, which specializes in forgery of different number plates, including customized ones to smuggle cars. This according to him usually cost between 5,000 and 10,000 naira. They usually patronize this syndicate to enable them move the vehicles freely within Lagos.<sup>48</sup> This is also in addition to car crossers who have devised the strategy of co-opting officers of the armed forces-the Nigerian army, the Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Air force in this illegal business. Another version of the double dealing of the customs has to do with undervaluation. This

is an arrangement that favours all parties in the government, customs, and vehicle importers. The rule of the game is that a car age is reduced in the course of processing the duty. An example of this method is explained thus:

A Honda CRV 1999 model, which was supposed to attract 146,000 Naira duty value was to be reduced to 1997 model, with the owner asked to pay 100,000 to a designated account. He would pay extra 55,000 unreceipted amount that would be shared between the agent and his principal (customs). While he paid total of 155,000, the clearing according to a custom agent would have cost him about 200,000 Naira if he opted to pay the stipulated fee.<sup>49</sup>

Secondly, there are those middlemen that comprised border community residents and those from outside Lagos, who would not engage the customs in any negotiation or settlements but would prefer to smuggle into the country vehicles and goods through illegal routes. This category engages customs in shoot out in their bid to forcefully and illegally bring into the country contraband goods and vehicles. Most times, the contraband goods are textile materials, tin tomatoes and occasionally light weapons. The customs, it has been alleged encourages smuggling by engaging in illicit deals with the importers and drivers of trailers loading contraband goods. According to one of the transporters, on many occasions the customs would allow trailers, trucks and other vehicles with different sizes of containers being loaded from different warehouses on both sides of Nigeria-Benin border.<sup>50</sup> These trailers, trucks and other vehicles would pass through all the security agents without any stress into the country. In other words, there would be no problem with the importers, agents, drivers or owners of the goods if he had done the booking of the security agents, especially the customs.

The customs however, have refuted all the allegations of colluding with smugglers to deprive the nation revenue, as well as encouraging insecurity through the porosity of the borders. This was hinged on their performance analysis in terms of revenue generated within a certain period and the number of seizures made by their Seme border command. The Customs Area Controller, Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Seme Command, Comptroller Abdul Saleh, has told smugglers and fraudulent importers to steer clear of the command or be summarily dealt with. The controller revealed that the command has recorded cumulative revenue of ₦6,585,859,656.05 out of the ₦8.4 billion set as the command's 2012 revenue target.<sup>51</sup> He warned that his command would not tolerate smuggling in any disguise, falsification, fraud, dishonest, or under declaration, and all forms of anti-social activities. It is however, important to state that security challenges in the Seme border transcends smuggling of goods and vehicles but also includes light weapons proliferation, human trafficking, currency counterfeiting, cross-border prostitution and armed banditry.

According to the United Nations, it is estimated that about eight million illegal light weapons are in circulation in West Africa and a substantial percentage somehow finds its way into Nigeria.<sup>52</sup> Nigeria's illicit light weapons trade can be

traced back to the failure to execute a comprehensive arms collection programme after the 1967-70 civil war. It has subsequently become fuelled by growing crime, endemic corruption and ethno religious conflicts. There have also been widespread leakages from government armouries.<sup>53</sup> It has been observed that the various laws and acts, internally and externally formulated are not well implemented in Nigeria. For instance, the Nigerian firearms acts (1959) were the main legal instrument addressing the production, import and export of light weapons. This law was reviewed in 2001, partly because, of the 12,000 people arrested in relation to arms trafficking or illegal possession of weapons between 1990 and 1999, fewer than 50 were successfully prosecuted.<sup>54</sup> In spite of these, transnational criminal groups have thrived in West Africa, and neither the ECOWAS moratorium nor UN sanctions have had much impact on arms proliferation.

In 2002 the Nigerian customs service reported that it had intercepted in the first six months of that year small arms and ammunition worth more than 4.3 billion naira (US\$34.1 million). Much of this material was intercepted at the land border crossing into Benin, but some was taken from boats and smaller amounts were also coming from Niger, Chad and Cameroon.<sup>55</sup> Although, some of these weapons were earmarked for political intimidation, many were destined for regular crime. Thus, the weapons are used by armed robbers, in communal conflicts, kidnapping, militancy activities, assassinations by cult members and a host of other usages that contributes to daily lives and fear of becoming a victim of crime in Nigeria.<sup>56</sup>

### **Human Trafficking and other Trans-border Security Challenges**

The United Nations “Trafficking Protocol” defines human trafficking as, “A transnational and internal recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth (above) shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth (above) have been used.<sup>57</sup>

The majority of West African states, despite their huge and enviable natural resources, have failed to develop their economies. Empirical evidence demonstrates West Africa’s peripheral role in the world economy.<sup>58</sup> For example, West African countries have in common the lowest standards of living in the world. Eleven out of the fifteen members of the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) are among the bottom thirty countries in the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI) compiled by the United Nations Development Programme.<sup>59</sup> Though the causes of transnational human trafficking in West Africa are multiple, the rapid growth of West African populations, the uncontrolled urbanization in the region, poor security, and economic hardships associated with wide inequalities in the distribution of wealth contribute to an increased salience of human trafficking as

an available option to break out of poverty.<sup>60</sup> Besides poverty, West African cultural patterns fertilize the expansion of human smuggling. For example, in the context of the extended family, tribal, and religious affiliation, children are often placed outside their biological family with the objective of securing better education and working opportunities for them.<sup>61</sup> Parent's ignorance of the risk involved in entrusting their children to other persons in this era of a greedy race for economic achievement associated with the desire of young people for emancipative adventure, contribute inexorably to the growth of transnational trafficking in persons.<sup>62</sup> For instance, in Nigeria and Benin Republic, family solidarity is sometimes over-valued that parents usually do not pay much attention on inquiring on the morality of the relatives to whom they entrust their children.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), backing the statistics of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), between 200,000 and 300,000 children are trafficked each year for forced labour and sexual exploitation in West and Central Africa.<sup>63</sup> In addition, a 2001 survey on child labour in West and Central Africa reveals that about 330,000 children were employed in the cocoa agricultural industry in Cameroon, Cote'd'ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Out of the 230,000 children working in Cote'd'ivoire, around 12,000 had no family connection to the cocoa farmer or any local farm in the country, and 2,500 were recruited by intermediaries in Nigeria and Cote'd'ivoire.<sup>64</sup> The alarming rate however, is that girls are more frequently the victims of child trafficking than boys.

Nigeria over the years has been serving as a source, transit and destination country in the human trafficking phenomenon. As a source country in cross-border trafficking, West African destination countries for Nigerian trafficked women and children are Republic of Benin, Togo, Cote d'ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon and Guinea where trafficked persons are destined to work mostly as domestic servants and on farm plantations.<sup>65</sup> In fact, it has been discovered that Nigerian women and young girls were also trafficked to Benin for prostitution, and that most of these trafficked persons found themselves deceived into believing that their destinations would be Europe.<sup>66</sup> Also, as a transit country, Nigeria is the centre for distribution of trafficked persons to West Africa, Gabon and Cameroon. Importantly, Nigeria also serves as point of transit for trafficked persons from Republic of Benin to Europe and the Middle East.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, as a destination, Nigeria receives Togolese women, young girls and children from Benin, Liberia, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana.<sup>68</sup> Either as a source, transit or destination country, human trafficking between Nigeria and Benin and other African countries has been made possible due to the porosity of the borders. The maps below illuminate on the transnational human trafficking routes in West Africa.

### The Case of Nigeria



### The Case of Benin



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006

A careful study of the trafficking routes in the two countries indicates that there is some indication of a link between sending and receiving countries. These links are influenced by a number of factors, such as the ease in crossing borders<sup>69</sup>, the traffickers use the local customs, key locations or weaknesses in border or migration control<sup>70</sup> or expatriate population in the country of destination. Besides, on both sides of the Nigeria-Benin border, the long, unguarded border and the rural setting of these states facilitated the trafficking in children into quarry mines. For instance, child trafficking in the region gained international attention with the discovery and rescue of more than 200 Beninese children forced into slavery in seven granite mines in the Western states of Ogun, Oyo and Osun in the fall of 2003.<sup>71</sup> The children (all male) rescued from the quarry were between the ages of 4 and 17. The children were forced to work under slave like conditions, were often beaten and were refused food.<sup>72</sup> Apart from porosity of the borders, recruitment practices of the traffickers also reveal why and how this ignoble livelihood means is sustained. Children are either recruited through their parent's consent or adult intermediaries or individually. Promises to these children vary from educational or training opportunities for children, to good paying jobs for both children and adult victims. Children who are recruited without parental consent are often promised material goods such as bicycles, radios or handset.<sup>73</sup> For instance, empirical evidence reveals that in Cotonou young boys and girls were recruited by traffickers a time in collaboration with vehicle importers into Nigeria for domestic use. There was a case of a woman who willingly gave her daughter out to stranger from Nigeria on the mere promise of mobile phone gift in Cotonou.<sup>74</sup> This, however, raise a poser to the efficiency of the border personnel i.e immigration officers, Gendarmes in Benin and the Nigerian policemen at the border? A comparison between the patterns of trafficking in both Nigeria and Benin would illuminate on the extent of poverty, deprivation, and the endemic nature of corruption among the border officials in the two countries.

In a study of 400 trafficked children, 147 children (37%) were recruited by a family member, in the case of 190 children (48%), a person unknown to the family was involved in the recruitment. Also, in Nigeria, there are also cases of family members bringing the traffickers into contact with the parents of the child (7 of the 19 child victims).<sup>75</sup> A similar pattern can be found in the data presented in the Benin study. In a study involving 167 trafficked child victims discussed in the Benin interim report, 25% of the children departed their village with one or both parents, while 31% of the children departed with a friend (of the family). A smaller percentage (9%) departed alone, while 21% of the children departed with a stranger.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, over half of the children departed with someone known to them and whom they would have trusted.

### **Conclusion**

Regional economic integration no doubt has provided livelihood means for Nigerians and immigrants in the West African region, but the criminalization of this opportunity has been a daunting challenge for African leaders. In the case of Nigeria and Benin, particularly Seme border, endemic corruption, systemic failures,

inadequate networking among security agencies, lack of central data base, shortage of personnel, ineffective implementation of border control laws and poor equipment have all contributed to the porosity of the border. This is in addition to the pervasive poverty in both Nigeria and Benin has made the trans-border criminals to see themselves as seeking livelihood means. Therefore, majority of these trans-border offenders considers their option of survival as coping strategies, and not as committing crimes.

However, the implication for Nigeria has been enormous. In the case of smuggling of contraband goods, illegal drugs and light weapons, the country has been exposed to consumption of counterfeit goods, the weapons are also used by armed robbers, in communal conflicts, kidnapping, militancy activities, assassinations, and has promoted general insecurity of lives and property. On the hand, human trafficking has made Nigeria a base for transnational crime syndicates for their operation and collection point. The consequence of this has been increase in murder rates, violence and destabilizing effect on the national economy and security. In fact, international image has been dragged in the mud.

This study concludes that inequitable distribution of income, unemployment, deprivation, poverty and corruption in Nigeria and Benin Republic served as impetus to the emergence and development of cross-border security challenges. Thus, it proffers that good governance through human security approach, equitable distribution of income and social security, rather than the law enforcement is a preferred solution to the problems of unlawful migrations, human trafficking, and currency trafficking, smuggling and armed robbery across the borders.

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