



**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF PRESIDENTIAL
INITIATIVES FOR NORTH-EAST (PINE): AN INCLUSIVE
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY
AND RECONSTRUCTION OF NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA**

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Abstract:

In recent times, the Northeastern region of Nigeria has engulfed into pocket of insecurity and political conflict. The insecurity ranges from bomb blast, kidnapping, rapping, to other related crimes including insurgency by Boko Haram elements. This has affected the economic ability and socio-political capability of the region to a maximum level. The development prompted the government to put more efforts and different palliatives measures in order to restore back hopes, peace, confidence, security of lives and property as well as to regain back lost livelihoods and reconstruction of all infrastructure damaged during the conflict in the region. These strategies include the Presidential Initiatives for North-East (PINE) Development, the various States Development Strategies, the Foreign Intervention Development Strategies, and the latest North East Development Commission Bill assented to restore hopes and reconstruct the economy of the region. The PINE in particular was founded by the administration of President Goodluck E. Jonathan to provide basic human needs and services for restoring livelihoods and confidence in the nation and its economic system. In spite of this strategy, the region still and largely lag behind in terms of infrastructural development, thousands of children still roams around the street at the expense of schools, people are still dying by bomb blast, internal displaced camps are overcrowded than ever, access to basic healthcare delivery in the camp is far from sight than ever. It was on this premise that the paper desires to assess prospects, challenges and operations of the PINE in the region. The paper also examines the existing strategies adopted by the PINE for the economic recovery and reconstruction of the region. Using

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documentary data gathered from official reports from governmental institutions both national and international such as World Bank, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as well as books and Journals both hard and internet versions, the paper was analyzed through analyzing tool of content analysis. The paper argued that PINE as a strategy has help in ameliorating the suffering of the people but much is still needed. It is on this basis that the paper recommends inclusive strategy for the restoration of peace, hopes, and confidence as well as long lasting security in the region.

Keywords: development, economic, insurgency, northeast, reconstruction, recovery, security and strategy

1. Setting the Context

The north eastern region is popularly known as one of the most productive regions amidst other regions in Nigeria economically. The region has contributed immensely toward food production in the country. Its huge cattle market was a hub to many African countries for patronization. The trend, however, change since when the region began to experience the attacks of the deadly and brutal terrorist group called Boko Haram which made lives unbearable for the people of northeast region. Boko Haram is estimated to have killed more than 20,000 persons but the unofficial number is much higher, also, this number does not include those killed by security agencies and those in unidentified mass graves (Shettima, 2017). The States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) have been, particularly, hard-hit triggering a State of Emergency that has involved more intense military presence in those States (Oluwale et al., 2017).

These attacks created extreme poverty, destitutions, loss of lives and properties, infrastructural decays among other myriad of problems in the region. All efforts to thwart the conflict seem unabated not until retired General Muhammadu Buhari became elected president of Nigeria in 2015, who immediately, after taking oath of office, demonstrates actions with relative serious commitment to restore peace and development to the region. For instance, The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) reported that, as of November 2017, the sum of #8.352 billion was released to the region for the purpose of economic recovery and reconstruction (UNDP, 2017). These are in addition to the state's support reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts which most often comes through the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). The underlying economic problems led to the administration of President Goodluck E. Jonathan to introduce Presidential Initiative for the North-East PINE in 2015.

Paradoxically, the northeast seems to defy and abate all strategies for economic recovery and reconstruction. The region suffered destruction of virtually from all indices of a developed society. At the present, northeastern region advancement has been put several decades backwards following massive destruction of their social and economic infrastructures. It is against this background that this paper attempts to examine the prospects and challenges of the Presidential Initiatives for North-East

(PINE) as an Economic recovery and reconstruction strategy for development in the North eastern part of Nigeria. In addition, the paper proffers an inclusive strategy as a means of tackling the challenges confronting the PINE and as a future economic recovery and reconstruction plan for the development of North eastern Nigeria.

1.1 Conceptual Clarification

Reconstruction and economic recovery are two different concepts that are most often interchangeably used as one. Reconstruction is a step, aimed at rebuilding the basic physical infrastructure and shelter to enable people begins afresh (Nathaniel, 2014). Economic recovery and reconstruction strategy have to do with inputs of reinstating lost livelihoods, introducing new economic opportunities and improving land and water management processes so as to reduce people's vulnerability and enhance capacities to handle future calamities (Nathaniel, 2014).

In this sense, reconstruction and economic recovery are attempts to rebuild and reform the northeastern region politically, economically, and socially as a result of the unquantifiable damages and destruction caused by Boko Haram insurgents (Oluwale et. al, 2017). These are synonymous with post conflict recovery, referring to the process of rebuilding degraded, damaged or destroyed political, socio-economic, and physical infrastructure of a country or territory, disarming and reintegration of combatants, resettling internally displaced persons, reforming governmental institutions, promoting trauma work and reconciliation, delivering justice, and restarting the economy in order to create the foundation for long-term development (Snodderly, 2011). Reconstruction differs from construction, in that whilst reconstruction seeks to restore and possibly upgrade facilities, infrastructures and social services that have been degraded as a result of conflict, construction entails developing new infrastructure which had been required previously but not provided up till current time (Snodderly, 2011). In some cases, new construction is required arising from the needs of new populations and settlements, or owing to improve a new technology. Reconstruction and economic recovery are restorative process that may in turn lead to development, whilst construction on its own is developmental, without the element of restoration (Snodderly, 2011).

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), reconstruction and economic recovery refer to measures that help restore the livelihoods, assets and production levels of emergency-affected communities. These measures rebuild essential infrastructure, institutions and services; and restore the means of production destroyed or made non-operational by a disaster. Economic recovery and reconstruction assistance are geared towards limiting the need for relief and allowing development activities to proceed. These include measures which help increase the resilience of food systems in case of future disasters and emergencies (FAO, 1996).

Presidential initiatives for Northeast economic recovery and reconstruction strategy is therefore referred to in this paper as a mechanism or techniques designed purposely to reintegrate the Northeastern region of Nigeria and people back to their

normal way of life after the much destruction and damaged experienced as a result of Boko Haram insurgents' attacks. It embodies various assistance the Federal Government, states governments and humanitarian organizations gave towards rebuilding war ravaged northeast region. This assistance comes through a systematic and strategies pattern which involved the use of certain bodies. These bodies are to implement the architecture plan toward ensuring that quality of life return back to the affected regions.

2. Socio-Economic Realities of Northeastern Nigeria

The North East (NE) Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria covers close to one-third (280,419 km²) of Nigeria's land area (909,890 km²). It comprises 6 states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe (PINE, 2015). According to projections for 2011 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), these States have 13.5% (i.e. 23,558,674) of Nigeria's population which was put at 173,905,439, (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Additionally, the zone shares international borders with three countries: Republic of Cameroon to the east, Republic of Chad to the North east and Niger Republic to the north (PINE, 2015). Though, the zone has been a major contributor to national net food production, the region was renowned as a bastion of commerce and trade with prominent local enterprises and well-established trade routes across the Sahara. It was known for its large agricultural potential, with 80% of the population engaged in farming and contributing significantly to the regional and national GDP (NBS, 2010). In addition, the region was host to communities of religious scholars and largely regarded as the historic center for Islamic learning on the continent. Yet, the NBS (2010) statistics showed that North eastern part of Nigeria has the worst socioeconomic conditions in the country, it characterizes the zone as having the highest rate of poverty in Nigeria. The region for sometimes has regressed with low education levels, access to healthcare/ other basic amenities and low GDP per capita. A once promising zone now trails the other regions of Nigeria across all socio-economic indicators.

Education suffered one of the most devastating losses as a result of the insurgents' activities, and in terms of physical infrastructure it was in near ruins. Many schools had been razed to ground through air raids. Virtually all schools lost their library collections and equipment to looting and bombing during the conflict. Education levels in the region become well below the national average. This has significantly contributed to the progressive decline in the prosperity of the region. The medical needs of the northeastern Nigeria at the moment are quite high and urgent. There are many insurgents' victims that seriously need adequate medical attention. But many hospitals, health centers, maternity homes and dispensaries in the region were in ruins and needed to be rehabilitated and re- equipped to cater for the needs of patients.

Statistics such as those presented in the table below document the poor State of health care delivery in the North East. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are living in squalid conditions characterized by overcrowding and limited access to safe, sanitary

and dignified accommodation. IDPs and returnees in Nigeria hosted in camps and displacement sites are often living in congested shelters or isolated in insecure or inhospitable areas, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Oluwole, 2017).

Similarly, over the past two years, farmers in North eastern part of Nigeria, particularly Adamawa, Yobe and Borno states are no longer able to farm for security reasons especially for fear of attacks by the dreaded Boko Haram sect who continued to unleash untold havoc in that part of the country ((Oluwole, 2017). This insurgent activity has in turn affected food production and consequently raised prices of foods that are majorly cultivated in these places. This same part of the country has been known for mass rearing of cattle, which made meat available to other parts of the nation but today, the story is not the same. Some 5.2 million people are facing acute food insecurity in north-east Nigeria, an increase of 50 per cent since March 2016, (NEMA, 2017). According to the food security sector's *Cadre Harmonisé*—a regional initiative that assesses the food security across the Sahel—from March 2017, affected households have had consecutive years of restricted income levels, destruction of assets and livelihoods, and reduced food access, leading to an increase in negative coping strategies. With insecurity in northern Nigeria disrupting traditional cross-border trade and herding, market prices in neighbouring countries have increased, further affecting livelihood opportunities. This buttress a statement issued by former Gombe State Governor, Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo as thus:

"It will take the North-east 20 years to rehabilitate its economy after the five-year terror unleashed on it by the Boko Haram. The governor pointed out that generations yet to be born may have to struggle to be able to overcome the devastation that the Boko Haram has done to the people of the north eastern states" (Oluwole, 2017).

2.1 Role of the Presidential Initiative on Northeast (PINE) in the Economic Recovery and Reconstruction

The economic and social situations in the Northeast prompted the government of Nigeria to come up with a robust plan, with clearly defined strategy through which the region can regain its lost comparative advantages. In strategic response, the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) launched a multi-dimensional soft approach to tackle the persistent insecurity issues in the North-east, which is called Presidential Initiative for the North-East PINE. The PINE Economic reconstruction and redevelopment plan is an intervention plan designed to mobilize targeted resources to jumpstart the economies of the North-eastern states while strategically repositioning the region for long-term prosperity (Oluwole et al., 2017). According to the PINE (2015), its main Objectives include the following:

- Provide basic human needs and services while restoring livelihoods and confidence in the nation and its economic system.
- Leverage clear understanding of the socio-economic challenges and needs of the North-east, the critical assets and comparative advantages of the region,

opportunities facing the region, and existing activities of Federal/State/local Government and development partners to develop new creative and impactful programs.

- Provide a framework of guidance for intervention by Government and non-governmental partners as well as build a compelling case for local, state, national and global support for North-east Nigeria.
- Set a policy direction for economic growth, enhance inter-governmental coordination for economic inter-dependence and create and maintain a strong, vibrant local economy.
- Develop the educational, agricultural and health sectors and systems in the region.
- Develop and maintain infrastructure in the States.
- Improve human capacity through entrepreneurial development, skill acquisition and talent attraction programs.
- Improve and maintain the state of security in the region.

The PINE's program strategies have short-term, as well as medium to long-term components. The short-term program, which is called the Emergency Assistance and Economic Stabilization program (EA-ES), was implemented within 24 months, depending on the types of intervention activity. It has accelerated components which were completed in one (1) month. The medium to long term program which is called the Economic Redevelopment and Reconstruction program (ERR) is expected to span for the period of 6 to 60 months (PINE, 2015). Presidential Initiative on the North-east (PINE) works in collaboration with agencies such as: National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Presidential Committee on Distribution of Relief Materials; Victims Support Fund; Safe School Initiative; Special Committee on the Resettlement and Rehabilitation of the IDPs to mention but few.

PINE as an economic recovery and reconstruction strategy had been active and consistent in providing relief to internally displaced persons since its creation. The 103-page UNDP/NHRC report revealed that over N8.352 billion were released by PINE in 2016 alone. The Director General of NEMA, Muhammad Sani-Sidi, indicated that there were 981,416 internally displaced persons in the country as at January 2015. Out of this, 107,997 were living in established camps for IDPs while 804,732 live with the host communities and relations. About 66,087 of the IDPs were displaced by natural disasters while 915,329 were affected by the insurgency in the North-east (Oluwole et al, 2017). There were 20 IDPs camps across the northeastern part of the country. PINE had been providing relief service since then such as deployment of ambulances at strategic locations to support and evacuate victims to hospitals and to provide first aid, it also provided comprehensive humanitarian support to many victims in the IDPs at its secure facility at Teachers Camp, Maiduguri, it sets up and finance feeding and sanitation centers in IDP Camps, it partnered with bilateral and multilateral agencies, US Government and others in providing relief to the IDPs. News Agency of Nigeria (2015) reports that the Presidential Initiative for the North-east in collaboration with

National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), has distributed relief materials to over 100,000 IDPs in the zone. This agency signed a N5 billion contract for the construction of rehabilitation centers for survivors of flood disasters, communal clashes and insurgency in some parts of the country (Voice of Nigeria, 2014).

The agency also provided assorted food to many households through the Food for all Initiatives, in addition to the relief efforts statewide; the agency took initiatives on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of destroyed towns and communities with over 500 units of houses completed for victims of insurgency of Bulabulin-Ngarnam community in Maiduguri. The units were handed over on March 21, 2015. New housing units have also been built and delivered in Bama, Konduga, Gwoza, Yoyo in Monguno, some parts of Hawul, Kaga, to resettle victims of insurgency attacks. Schools, markets and hospitals have been rebuilt in local government areas. The agency also worked with partners to provide safe water and life-saving health services, restore access to education by creating temporary learning spaces and deliver therapeutic treatment to malnourished children (UNICEF, 2015)

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2015), the United States government donated the sum of \$2 million to support PINE'S Safe Schools Initiative—a project aimed at meeting the education needs of thousands of children affected by the conflict in northeast Nigeria, specifically in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. The Safe Schools Initiative aims at improving and refurbishment of infrastructure and furnishings, provision of teaching and learning materials, community-based preventative planning, and support for double-shift scheduling to accommodate more students. Activities under the initiative include increasing the resilience of affected communities and building the capacity of children, teachers, and parents to prevent, reduce, and cope with challenging situations that affect children's education. Other aspects include multi-level communication/advocacy efforts and special measures, such as transferring students from schools in high-risk areas to schools in safer areas. Similarly, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reported that presidential initiatives for northeast development worth of billions naira projects were disbursed aimed at providing all necessary supports for ensuring that the rescued women, young girls and children receive all social, health, psychological and other related support before they re-join their communities (UNDP, 2016).

2.2 Challenges of PINE to the Reconstruction and Economic Recovery

Taking a look at the marvelous content and intent of the presidential initiatives for the northeast, especially considering the huge amount of money involved in running its affairs, it is expected that majority of the citizens in the affected region most have regain their lost livelihood by now. Paradoxically, the region still wallops and gallops in a deep and unimaginable miserable life as people overseeing the implementation and prosecution of the agency plans are not helping the situation in any way; in fact, they keep strangulating all the efforts of the agency toward enhancing and returning the

region back to normal life. For instance, case of former Secretary to the Federal Government (SFG) Babachir David Lawal was a good case in point.

Of recent, a report was published by the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP, 2017) and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2017) indicting the former SGF which act as platform further justifying the sack of the former SGF, over the scale of alleged corruption in catering for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the North east. The fresh damning report demands urgent action to bring the alleged profiteers in human misery to justice. The new report covering the period 2015 to 2017 catalogues the spate of thievery and criminal diversion of funds, food and other items meant to alleviate the plight of innocent Nigerians displaced by the Boko Haram insurgents by officials of the Presidential Initiative on the North East (PINE). The report said,

They paid less attention to the critical needs of IDPs in the areas of housing, food, education and healthcare, but rather used the bulk of the resources on contracts that were found to have immensely benefited some public officials, including the now sacked SGF, Babachir Lawal. The report also contained that corruption and conflict of interests led to gross breaches of public procurement rules; companies where public officials had personal interests were paid for jobs not done or completed and featured brazen kickbacks. It added that out of 249 trucks carrying 10, 000 metric tons of maize released by the Federal Government for the benefit of the IDPs in the six states of the North east, 65 trucks were diverted and did not reach their intended destinations (UNDP & NHRC, 2017).

This report is obviously a vindication of the investigative effort of the Senate Committee on Humanitarian Crisis in the North east headed by Senator Shehu Sani. It indicted Lawal and led to his eventual removal from office after protracted foot-dragging by the Presidency. This profiteering on human tragedy is not only evil, but an indication of a crippling insouciance and the height of man's inhumanity to man. The 103-page UNDP/NHRC (2017) report revealed that out of the N8.352 billion released by PINE in 2016, only N6.326 billion was spent, leaving N2.026 billion unaccounted for. This alleged diversion led to the deaths of thousands of infants due to malnutrition, which was reported to President Buhari by international humanitarian groups working in the North east. The infrastructure and wellbeing of the victims was never as miserable as it is at present in the region.

Nigerian armed forces have used schools as military bases; leading to more Boko Haram attacks on schools (HRW, 2015). Schools buildings are also used to host IDPs, further limiting children's access to safe learning spaces (NEMA, 2015). The conflict has displaced a large number of teachers, and has led to a lack of qualified teachers in the affected areas (UNICEF, 2015). Children in displacement camps also have limited access to education. The Displacement Tracking Matrix in June 2015 found that in 19 out of 42 displacement sites, children did not have access to education. Where schools are available in nearby host communities, parents are reluctant to send their children outside of the camps due to security concerns (UNICEF, 2017). Lack of temporary

learning spaces for displaced children is of concern in host communities, schools are overcrowded and struggling to deal with the influx of IDPs children. Between January 2014 and December 2017, more than 300 schools were severely damaged or destroyed and at least 196 teachers and 314 school children were killed and up to the moment, most of these schools have not been renovated and no any noticeable attempts that such an effort will be embark upon (Shettima, 2017).

In Borno state in particular, overcrowding in camps led to the spread of communicable diseases such as cholera and measles in 2017. According to a Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) survey of the humanitarian crisis in Borno, shown to The Cable by a presidency source, 3.7 per 10,000 children under five years old died per day between December 2015 and September 2016 (MSF, 2017). The sheer scale of this crisis forced the federal government, in June, to belatedly declare a nutrition emergency in Borno, belatedly because the United Nations recommended emergency threshold is 2.1 deaths per 10,000 under-five children per day, and also because it took a survey by a foreign aid agency for the government to take the step.

The lack of shelter is, therefore, a major and persistent challenge and one of the main barriers to returnees (Oluwole, 2017). Displaced people in the region also face precarious health conditions and have poor access to health services. The number of IDPs in Adawana, Borno and Yobe states are estimated at 1.7 million as assessed by the IOM-managed DTM, more than 56 per cent of the displaced are children (UNHCR, 2017). With the Government-run IDP camps seen by many as an option of last resort, over 63 per cent of IDPs reside in host communities, sometimes in 'camp-like' conditions clustered around schools, churches and mosques (HRW, 2017). In mid-June, 2017, after 1,200 people, mostly women and children, were evacuated by the army from Bama to the Nursing Village camp in Maiduguri, MSF screened 466 children from six months to five years of age; it was discovered that 59% of them were suffering from severe acute malnutrition (World Health Organisation, 2017). Also, in Bama, a rapid nutritional screening of more than 800 children showed that 40% were suffering from severe acute malnutrition. All these statistics point towards a population of IDPs in severe pains, due particularly to lack of medical facilities and shortage of staff crisis. Sadly, accusations revealed that NEMA officials masterminded and architecture the suffering of the victims by deliberately diverting all the required health facilities into black market.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper was an attempt to interrogate the prospects and challenges of the presidential initiatives for northeastern Nigeria as an economic recovery and reconstruction strategy. Concepts such as economic recovery and reconstruction were clarified as used here and outlined prospects and challenges of the strategy. It was indicated that the challenges to the successful implementation of PINE are too numerous and pose a serious threat to the economic recovery and reconstruction efforts

going on in the region. However, the identified challenges are not insurmountable to overcome if necessary measures are taken.

It is glaring that in spite of the present of the presidential initiative for North east development, the region still dwells amidst miserable untold hardships. Much has not been desired while much is expected and this is not only affecting the economy of the North east, it is also affecting all the economic facets of the Nigeria States. It is in view of these, the following recommendations proffered;

- **Inclusive Approach:** by inclusive approach, the government should use those affected insurgents victims to run and manage these affected states. They should be carried along on all projects and give them sense of belonging. This particular act will no doubt restore back confidence and hopes on those affected victims.
- **Small and Medium Enterprises Assistance:** There is the need for the government to extend their hands of assistance in the area of entrepreneurial empowerment to the people of the North east Nigeria. It is clear that most of those affected victims have lost their entire livelihoods which render them vulnerable to all sort of hardships. Finances should be given in form of long-time loan payable within 5-10 years depending on the volumes collected.
- **Need For Oppeness and Transparency:** Huge amount is yearly allocated through PINE for running the North east region economic recovery and reconstruction efforts but nothing much is on the ground to show for it. The case of former SGF was an indication that serious fraud and embezzlement was and still going on by those managing the budgetted capital for this region. There is need for oppeness and transparency in their expenditure such as publishing of funds appropriated for procurement based, at least, every month.
- **Instituting Anti-graft Agencies and other relevance security agencies within the IDPs Camp:** From the data above show that up to this moment, they are a lots of victims of insurgency living within the Camps and evidences also show how these victims have been exploited, abuse and harassed amidst many other terrible things. Government should establish agencies such as EFCC, ICPC, Nigeria police post within the camp to augment the transparency efforts of all other agencies managing IDP affairs.
- **There should be provision of adequate security as there still pocket of bombings, kidnappings and killings of the inhabitants of the region and this will only take away the little hopes and confidence already gain by the people.**

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