MAINSTREAMING THE MASS MEDIA IN EARLY WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE SYSTEMS

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Abstract

Humans are always in the habit of exploring and adapting to the physical and social realities around them. Such adaptations are basic steps to development and survival. Social institutions are often necessitated by societal needs for services, harmony and response to emergencies. The media are part of the social institutions established by modern civilization and empowered by law to hold other social institutions to account as well as to monitor, and to conscientize the institutions about important conflicts and developments. Unfortunately, while traditional media reporting in developing countries are not often well (economically) adapted to early warning and response systems, conflicts are emerging at a very fast pace, and reporters are struggling to cope. The present position paper explores the role of the media in early warning and early response systems towards anticipating and stemming conflicts and emergencies. It underscores the need for the media to extend traditional reporting role to anticipating and issuing early signals to avoid conflicts or to manage them. At no other time in human history is this more imperative.

Keywords: Media, Early Warning, Early Response, system, conflicts

Early Warning

According to the Collins CoBuild Advanced Learners Dictionary, Early Warning means advance notice of some impending event or development. It warns people that something bad is likely to happen. Early warning (EW) as defined by United Nations (UN) is a process that (a) alerts decision makers to the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of violent conflict; and (b) promotes an understanding among decision makers of the nature and impacts of violent conflict. The UN further notes that early warning systems generate sets of products based on quantitative and qualitative analytical methods that help to formulate scenarios and response options that are communicated to decision makers and as result links to response instrument (Defontain2019). It is an initiative that arises as soon as the threat of potential conflict is identified and aims to manage, resolve, or prevent a violent conflict. The response could be fact-finding, mediation, peace- making, dialogue, negotiations, preventive diplomacy or a more serious mechanism such as sanctions (Defontaine 2019).

Early Warning Early Response (EWER)

Response refers to elicited reactions aimed at plans or actions which have either negative or positive impacts on groups or individuals. Response always precedes plans or actions. There are many response actions that can be taken either to prevent or tackle a conflict. Early response is therefore a proactive action that can

stem or prevent planned actions that could lead to violent conflicts (Defontaine 2019). EWER is one of the operational strategies of dealing with conflicts. The earliest sources of EWR were from disaster preparedness action of gathering information on the causes of natural calamities and military intelligence. Around the 1950s, attempts were made to forecast drought, famine, other environmental disasters and crises arising out of political causes Matveeva (2006).

Open sources (e.g., media reports and available statistics) provided the information needed for the initial EWER system. In the 1990s, organisations involved in crisis/conflicts management began to make early warning information a basis for their programming and this led to the emergence of integration of early response. According to Matveeva (2006), there are three levels or generations of early warning system, namely, those based outside the conflict region; those based in the conflict zone, but with the analysis occurring outside the region. In the third generation, early warning and early response are integrated, and they within the conflict region.

Many countries in contemporary times use their bilateral ties to share information about conflict, emergencies and security. EWER helps to assess situations that threaten peace and prepares action based on information on natural disasters and political indicators (Ozoani-Ene 2022). The main aim of early morning is to prevent or facilitate the prevention of conflicts. Matveeva (2006) further identifies six core mechanisms for EW system – data collection, data analysis, assessment for warning or identification of different scenarios, formulation of action proposals, transmission of recommendations, and assessment of early response.

Experts have however warned that early warning systems can in themselves be the cause of panic and conflict, especially when warnings become false, wrong, alarmist or empty accusations. This calls for thorough crosschecking of information and tact in information sharing. This is where the media and stakeholders such as security agencies are called upon to be professional in information management. Bansal (2018) warns that sensational and hyped news can cause panic, chaos and fears resulting to more losses.

The Media and Early Warning and Early Response Reporting

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 22 (as amended) confers on the media the rights and obligations to hold other social agents like government to account. In stable societies, social agents normally help to generate ideas and solutions to society's ongoing problems as well during emergencies. In less stable and developing societies, the media majorly play the role of moderators, surveyors and coordinators of parts of society to set and interpret social agenda, achieve stability, assure safety and to issue early warning signals to conflict and violence.

While many media practitioners receive formal education on various reportorial activities, many are rarely adequately prepared for emergencies which occur from time to time. School curricula are also seldom adapted to practical courses in reporting emergencies. This explains the need to explore ways to adapt to new realities in violence and conflict. Terrorist attacks, health emergencies, natural disasters, political upheavals and outburst of civil and armed conflicts are some of the emergencies that have tasked the wits of journalists. This is not as much in terms of how to report them as it is with how to anticipate them and issue early signal to avoid them or to manage them.

Unfortunately, the reality is that the spate of emergencies is alarming, almost far more than reporters can cope with. In line with the close association between social change and social problems, humanity is currently grappling with the fallouts of its own technological and scientific advancements. For example, the fourth industrial revolution and its upsurge in the knowledge industries have triggered stress in society generally. New media revolution has caused a lot of deviance on the internet, and the spate of fake news is causing a whirlwind of problems for the media and governments. By implication, emergencies and conflict are often related to institutions and this means that as institutions evolve, emergencies and social problems will continue to unfold, if not multiply, and will therefore require a continued effort at predictions and solution seeking.

As already noted, the problem lies in the character of the media to become alarmist, which can be worsened when predictions fail to materialize such as during the Ebola Virus

Disease and Covid-19 pandemic, which didn't see massive human causalities in Nigeria as projected. Beyond this, the new economic models of the media (profit seeking) and political pressures (to report propaganda) force the media to pay an overly undue attention to breaking news, leaving out developing news and unreported flashpoints.

Theoretical Perspectives

The paper uses the tipping point and critical transition theories as an anchors to explain early warning and response systems. The tipping theory stipulates that all evolving complex social systems have their tipping points, that is, those point when systems move to a totally different state (Gladwell, 2002). Gladwell defines a tipping point as "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, and the boiling point." While it is often hard to be totally accurate about when social changes occur, there are often some clear pointers. Such pointers grow gradually, and can be marked.

The critical transition theory helps to explain the process of marking the pointers. The theory describes the sudden changes in a complex evolutional system leading to the tipping point (Scheffer, Carpenter, Foley, Folker & Walker, 2001). The theory takes note of the gradual social occurrences that induce change, but also notes that at times the changes become sudden, and may not respect the natural order of changes because the sudden change may not appear to have been caused by the gradual changes. For example, incremental temperature changes, may be linked to climate changes, but at times scientists are cautious in attributing extreme weather events completely to incremental temperature changes. However, there are often early warning signs, which are the gradual or incremental changes, and will vary according to type of systems (economic, financial, health, political, educational, etc.).

The structure media is often along the assembly line, which means that media firms are arranged according to different reportorial duties or desks, e.g., news, feature, politics, economy, etc. These desks focus on the day-to-day occurrences reported as breaking news, which can become developing news (when an occurrence continues) in some cases.

The structure may not support the kind of arrangement needed to track warning signs, because emergencies usually do not immediately give signals. However, the various desks can study the movement of the systems or subject matter they report, given that news reporting is, in itself, an undedicated system of history making and historiography. A system of using social markers to denote incremental changes can be adopted. This will necessarily involve studying systems and tipping points to understand how events unfold and graduate from progress or problems to emergencies. This implies creating a system or path to tracking possible emergencies.

For instance, the number of hospitals per capita, the state of health facilities/resources, the housing system, citizen health literacy, quality and governance of the health information system, food safety/storage, availability of local expertise in developing vaccines and in understanding viral diseases can be tracked by a health desk to make predictions on the possible emergency readiness of the health and social systems during health emergencies.

In essence, the expertise and facilities available in any system as well as the readiness of the policymakers to respond to social markers of conflict will be a good measure of the likelihood of conflict and emergency readiness. In light of some of these social markers, for instance, the media, after the Ebola and Covid-19 outbreaks, ought to have flashed headlines such as: Is Nigeria ready for another health emergency?

During breaking news (Figure 1), reporters should take note of the behaviour of individual and group social actors. These are critical social markers, and should form the base of the information system for tracking emergencies. This is necessary because the unpredictability of human and systemic behaviours can make predictions difficult. Cash scarcity in a certain bank may not be enough to predict an eventual downfall or recession, but parallels can be drawn, and the state in other banks investigated. This is why most of the predictions about the Naira redesign and Covid-19 appeared hollow judging from the ways the anomalies ended. But can't one assume that those predictions made the authorities to do certain things that averted the predicted catastrophes? But why did another cash scarcity happen in late 2023

unpredicted? However, it is not often easy to measure the status of social systems in just the same way one can measure food security and disease prevalence.

Figure 1: From Breaking News to Early Warning and Solution Responses

Modelling Nigeria's Emergency and Conflict Situations towards Early Warning

Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the country has witnessed myriad cases of sectarian conflict, political and economic turbulence. The country has witnessed armed conflicts, terrorism, farmer-herder conflicts, environmental disasters, health emergencies, a changing climate and dire political and economic problems. Social watchers say that such problems has increased exponentially since 2010, with over 500 incidents involving violent conflicts, disasters and health emergencies. A combined average of more than 2000 lives have been lost annually to the problems since 2010 (Defontaine, 2019).

While some of these problems and emergencies were somewhat predictable, some of them like viral diseases were plain emergencies. The conflicts and other problems have however been exacerbated by deep ethnic divisions, gross inequality and exclusions, religious intolerance, mutual suspicion, resource governance and control and climate change (Defontaine, 2019).

The beginning point of early warning reporting is to be detribalized in alerting the authorities to these for policy making and implementation. Here lies the definition and understanding of early warning and its rationale. Reporters are expected to collect information on the

flashpoints, track the paths to the tipping points and alert citizens and policymakers to the social markers. In this wise, the media can leverage the early warning systems of reputable global bodies such as the UN. The following bodies have been mentioned by experts as helpful in a system for early warning:

Civil society organisations such as the West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP), Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and, Inter Faith Mediation Center (IMC) have been involved in sensitization, capacity building, design, and implementation and reporting of EWER programmes in Nigeria. For example, WANEP established a Nigeria Civil Society early warning-response mechanism, and SFCG runs a participatory EWER system in Plateau State.

Stine (2013) reports that a Pilot SMS-based conflict early warning system was deployed by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Community Action for Popular Participation to test run their early warning system in Jos, one of the serial conflict zones of the country since the turn of democratic rule in Nigeria (Figure 2). A central system and a 'Crowd map website' were used to collect SMS and incident reports from citizens respectively. Key stakeholders (security, government and NGO partners) were alerted when reports filtered in.

Incident reports are subjected to verification at various levels by stakeholders. The system was said to have helped the security agencies (Joint Military Taskforce, the Army, the Police, Civil Defense, Nigeria Custom Service, the NDLEA) to track and arrest bandits, kidnappers, terrorist and other troublemakers.

Accordingly, a good early warning and early response reporting will be a systematic interlink between sharing information to and with the public, public oriented bodies, non-governmental, non-profit organizations and policy makers. Unlike in cases of military intelligence, information so shared is not treated in the context of enemy vs. enemy, but for social cohesion and conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention therefore takes into account the need for methodical monitoring of possible sources of tensions, risk analysis, prompt information sharing, especially on the warning signs, causes of impending problems, solutions and preventive measures for the future. Note

that experts have lamented the near absence of media-based systems for early warning and early reporting beyond normal journalistic reporting, which is often pressured by political interests and the profit motive.

Note also that the major stakeholders in early warning reporting are the media and the social information system, policymakers, the general public, relevant bodies and agencies, civil society, and major local actors. It is widely believed that the weak relationship between the media and these stakeholders and among the stakeholders vis a vis important changes in the governance of the system for public communication makes early warning and reporting difficult in the Nigerian context. This is the story of the 2023 general elections, where the media, at best. Reported incidents or social markers to election rigging and violence. There was no systematic way of tracking the social markers or interlinking with election monitors to warn major stakeholders about a likely electoral conundrum. This is not to say that the markers were not highlighted, but the manner of reporting them was not markedly different from ordinary reporting such as one detailed report in the Nation newspaper on December 19, 2022 (12 weeks before the polls) about a series of incidents tracked from 2019, which were capable of truncating free, fair and credible polls.

To this end, experts have highlighted that "role of traditional and local leaders, community-based organizations, and faith groups, especially in being linked to the system for early warning and early reporting. It has been noted that conflicts usually happen or emanate from local communities in the Nigerian context, with farmers, animal herding, local resource exploitation and land ownership as major sources of conflict. Happily, the traditional systems that can be leveraged already exist in Nigeria since many communities have town unions, women and youth groups that can collect and share information on warnings signs and potential sources of conflict.

The problem is usually that early response is sequel to early reporting. In fact, that part of the early reporting and early response will also be to report the laxity of policymakers to warning signs because in the case of Nigeria, kidnappings, farmer-herder conflicts and impending environmental disasters were

sometimes reported with little or no action from government (refer to serial building collapses, terrorist activities, etc. in Nigeria in light of reported cases of unsafe highways of flooding of the markets with substandard building materials). The biggest problem of insecurity in Nigeria has been attributed to response to early warning signs, although alarmist, unsubstantiated reporting has been blamed in some measure for government's suspicion of early warning reports.

This leads to the definition of early response as follows: Early response refers to "any initiative that occurs as soon as the threat of potential violent conflict is identified and that aims to manage, resolve, or prevent that violent conflict," by using preventive instruments and mechanisms. Different types of response exist, ranging from fact-finding, mediation, peace-making dialogue, negotiations, preventive diplomacy or more robust mechanisms such as sanctions (Defontaine, 2019).

Where there are common platforms or means reaching major stakeholders, there is a need to make direct contact with information written to enhance understanding, with clearly spelt out actions to avert disaster. On average, the world experiences over 300 different disasters, over 100 million people affected in various ways, and over 200 million dollars in losses. The ILO estimates that "An effective early warning is capable of saving many lives and reducing damage by 30% if activated 24 hours before the event. However, today, one-third of the world's population, mainly in the least developed countries, is still not covered by early warning systems" (Stine, 2013).

Early warning systems aim to preempt disasters and their impacts, including the factors that predispose people to the worst impacts of disasters. All the factors (disasters themselves, warning signs, vulnerable people, and predisposing factors) are parts of the reporting. As noted by the United Nations Office for Disaster and Risk Reduction, the components of an early warning and early reporting systems "must be people-centred, end-to-end, and multi-hazard".

Countries, regional bodies, continental bodies and civil society organisations have different EWER systems, which journalists can find,

leverage and use to crosscheck information the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS – African Union) has designed the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN - The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN - ECOWAS).

Figure 2: Civil Society organisation SMS-based conflict early warning system

The Media in Early Warning Early Response (EWER)

The absence of the media in the EWER could spell doom for the system. Media's active role in EWER can help the communication of plans and actions reach all stakeholders simultaneously across borders and locations. By the active participation of the media in the system, all information regarding an impending conflict/outbreak is made publicly available and quickly adapted to a wider audience, with a resultant effect of wider opinions and views included in the response plans and actions. Apart from providing information in the system, the media also serve as a pointer to where relief /help can be available for the public. Campaigns that can lead to nipping the danger in the bud is also disseminated by the media. Undisputed benefits of media involvement in EWER system abounds. First there has to be communication among the key players, partners and stakeholders in a conflict situation.

Then communication to the public in order to garner trust, cooperation and commitment for social mobilization. This is where the media has to step up and become more responsible in the surveillance role in the society. Being among the major stakeholders network of groups who must have a collaborative linkage for EWER to

be beneficial, the media is expected to champion a consistent and well planned action communication to other key players and the public. Timely and accurate information are required for the different parties to make an informed decision. The media have to integrate the whole players in the system such as the NGOs, government army forces, volunteers and others so that all complements each other in the EWER system.

Many cases abound where the absence of the media in the EWER system resulted into huge loss of lives and properties. In Andre Pradesh – India, about 10,000 persons were killed from the 1977 cyclone but with a repeat of the disaster in with early warning 13 years later, only 910 lives were lost. (Dave 2020). Bansal (2018) opined that the media not only provides information on data management and analysis technique, but has also increase the knowledge towards origins and behaviours of hazards. He further noted that the media has important role to play before, during or after disasters/conflicts. During the warning stage, the media can be a channel of awareness about the potential disaster, safe camps/shelters, even government evacuation tactics and relief and rehabilitation activities.

In America, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) requiring satellite and direct digital broadcast providers provide information capability for the president to address the citizens on national emergencies and for important local emergency information.

In Africa, the Ebola virus cases were able to be controlled and managed when information about the disease and risk factors were communicated, thereby averting what would have been one of Africa's pandemic. In 2019, the absence of EWR led to the world's greatest pandemic in recent times with the emergence of COVID-19. With proactive measures currently in place, early warning response information is helping to curb the second variant Covid-19 outbreak from spreading. Currently in Nigeria, there is always a well-planned and regular communication by the media on early warning about floods in risk prone areas. Although the nonchalant attitude of the government and even the non-adherence to stipulated measures to curb the incidence by those in the prone areas, make the effort of the media seem ineffective in tackling the reoccurrence of this disaster.

Modern communication technologies for various classes of natural hazards especially, has facilitated the work of the media in providing reasonably early warning information (Dave unpublished work). Irrespective of the location, the media as an active participant in the EWER system, can offer its services in various ways. Dave identified four of these ways; aid prioritization of disaster Risk issues, creating early warning system, increase international donations and improve coordination of risk assessment activities.

The Mass Media and Early Warning System for Nigeria's Conflicts

Riesman et al. (1950, p.50) describe the mass media as a diverse array of media that reach audience via mass communication. Mass media are media, which are used to communicate and interact with a large number of audiences. Be it the pictorial messages of the early ages, or the high-technology media that are available today, one thing that we all agree upon, is that the mass media are an inseparable part of our lives (Manohar 2011). On the other hand, Conflict is a global social issue of an intense concern that has kept national and international organizations in perpetual need of finding means of combating its eruption, escalation and resurgence (Ozoani-Ene, 2022). Thus, I'm trying to assess the rapidity of the mass media to respond or play two of its main important roles of informing and educating the Nigeria citizens against an intending conflict; thereby tactically douse, ameliorate and pacify the conflicts.

To this end, Ozoani-Ene (2022) in the study titled, "Conflict, Conflict Management and Early Warning System in Nigeria" therefore explores early warning system early response (EWSER) in explaining the causes of conflict in a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria to avert the tendencies of conflict eruption, escalation and resurgence.

The study finds that early warning and response interventions are less effective if they fail to address the underlying causes of conflict, this study further finds that institutionalized internal and external oppression triggered early warning signs, which breeds natural resistance against endemic structured inequality and create avenue for struggle, competition, high rate of crime, disrupts peaceful co-existence and peace-building in Nigeria.

The researcher concludes with this proposition, that there should be state autonomy to enhance grass root empowerment and development which will help in alleviating poverty, monitor early warning and stimulate prompt response in mitigating eruption into conflict. The researcher also recommended the followings that:

There is need to decentralize Nigeria and empower state resource control to enhance grass root social development which will enhance poverty alleviation and encourage self-emancipation thereby reduce the tendency for conflict eruption.

State autonomy and state policing as necessary tool to compliment early warning system. This will help in the development of various states in Nigeria without unnecessary interferences that causes animosity, competition and rivalry that give rise to sense of inequality and marginalization.

There is an urgent need to uphold the rule of law and the will power to respond to warning signs and prosecute anyone who violates the law or incite people into creating disharmonious situations as well as eliminating social contract and caber entanglement with internal and external actors whose primary objective is violence.

Search for Common Ground (2017) carried out a study on Baseline Evaluation of Early Warning/Early Response Mechanisms in Northern Nigeria – Phase III. The overall aim of the research was to expand and strengthen early warning and early response processes to enhance community and state actors' ability to protect citizens. The purpose of the evaluation was to collect, analyze, and present the baseline information related to Early Warning/Early Response (EW/ER) systems that are not known, or only partly known to Search For Common Ground (SFCG) in Adamawa and Borno States.

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design collecting both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including desk review, surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and in-depth interviews were also employed for the

evaluation. The data was gathered from 10 communities, in five Local Government Areas (LGA), across Adamawa and Borno States. The data collection covered all the communities that were participating in the project implementation in Adamawa and Borno States. Data collection was carried out between 19th April and 4th May 2017.

The findings of the evaluation are discussed in line with the baseline objective questions as follows:

The evaluation found that although ongoing efforts are yielding results for early warning and early response to conflicts, they nonetheless remain fragmented across multiple partners, who are operating in isolation with varying scopes and coverage, and under limited collaboration or coordination.

The evaluation found that traditional ways of dealing with EW/ER are deeply rooted in the traditional and religious leadership systems of the communities. This system revolves around community leaders, ward heads, district heads, religious leaders, elders, and youth leaders, who often receive reports about conflicts and initiate actions on them.

The evaluation found that traditional leaders and selected community volunteers are included in the existing EW/ER systems, at community and LGA levels. The community respondents were not conversant with the exact mechanisms of the EW/ER system. This suggests a weak engagement with the general community by EW/ER system at the community level, and a gap in the mechanism of selection, deployment and coordinating the roles and functions of the EW/ER system.

Moreover, the study recommends that there is need to:

Improve on engagement with communities to deepen their understanding and integration of the mechanisms of the community EW/ER systems, ownership and sustainability as much as expected for the community EW/ER system.

Integrate all critical institutions and sectors in the EW/ER systems.

Strengthen analytical capacity and evidence-informed programming in the EW/ER system.

Enhance feedback loops between levels of EW/ER systems.

In a related study, Chinwokwu (2015) conducted a systematic study specifically looking at Community Based Early Warning in Conflict Management and Peace Building in Nigeria: An Analysis of Internal Security Issues and concluded that the myriad of conflict situations in Nigeria has made international communities to perceive the country as unsafe for investment. The situation is worsened by government seeming insensitivity to early warning signals or rather security intelligence reports which tend to portray the potential for security breach, unless prompt action is taken by government to contain the situation.

This study examines community based early warning as a means of conflict management and peace building with a focus on the internal security issues. It also interrogates the causes of conflict and insecurity in Nigeria focusing on the theoretical assumptions that act as impetus to them. The paper notes that there is no conflict situation and insecurity emanating in the country without the foreknowledge of government but the management of the early warning determine to a great extent the intensity or other words the dimension, pattern and dynamics of the conflict.

The study holds this recommendation at high esteem, that there should be effective communication between government and stakeholders, proper enlightenment at the grass root, quick response to early warning signals, building synergies across all stakeholders and prompt action against defaulters.

Similarly, another study carried out in the department of Computer Science, Adamawa state Polytechnic, Yola, by Afrifa, Ishaya & Lami (2016) was of the opinion that Security in secondary schools is a growing concern in Nigeria. The cases of student unrests have been on the rise especially over the recent years that the country is facing security challenges owing to insurgency in the north eastern part of the country. The study focuses the on role of ICT as early warning security system for schools. The introduction of ICTs into many aspects of everyday life has led to the development of the modern concept of the information society. Afrifa, Ishaya & Lami (2016) examined the Role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Early Warning System in School Security Based System in North

Eastern Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to highlight the state of insecurity in the country, and the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the development of an early warning security system in tackling these security challenges,

The researchers recommended the following:

The federal government should implement the use of RFID security-based system to identify intruders and terrorist outside and inside the school premises.

The federal government should install early warning ICT systems in schools in north east region of Nigeria to provide security and safety of students and staff.

The federal government should pay more attention to founding of ICT, so that it can be of greater help tools in monitoring security system.

The school host community people should be encouraged to support school on security issues as to disseminate information to the security forces via ICT.

Case Study: The early warnings signs for the 2023 elections: The social markers and call to action: By Watching The Vote Project of Yiaga Africa

The Nigerian Army was said to have cried out that they were under pressure to manipulate the elections

Reports of bribery of electoral officers to manipulate the process and several attempts to hack the INEC result viewing portal (IREV)

Also, the recent litigation to stop the commission from deploying the bimodal voter accreditation system (BVAS), a device tried and tested to minimize electoral manipulation,

Premeditated and coordinated attacks on the offices and facilities of INEC in different parts of the country.

Between 2019 and 2020, close to 50 INEC offices were either burgled, ransacked, attacked or set ablaze across different parts of the country leading to the destruction of permanent voter cards, ballot boxes and other election properties

Other security concerns like banditry, kidnapping, and insurgency.

Yiaga Africa through its WTV project, warned that the 2023 elections may be shaped by insecurity and executive impunity.

The major indicator of this impunity is the rampant restrictions on the use of public facilities, especially by incumbent governors across political parties against opposition parties.

Amidst all these challenges is the economic realities of growing poverty showing over 133 million (63%) Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty according to the 2022 multidimensional poverty index.

Reports of rampant voter inducement.

Yiaga Africa's pre-election report revealed that there were ongoing vote buying and selling in at least 33 states in Nigeria with the situation more prevalent in Abia, Bauchi, Borno, Delta, Katsina, Kano, Oyo and Sokoto.

The leverage of 12 weeks for the Inter-Agency Committee on Election Security (IACESS), to develop a practical framework to address potential threats to the process.

Calls on INEC, CSOs, National Orientation Agency and even political parties to protect the integrity of the 2023 general election.

Action sought: The need to intensify voter education engagements across the country especially targeted at women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Call to action: Security is indispensable

Security agencies should deploy intelligence and employ preventive measures

If this trend is not curbed, voters will be disenfranchised

The Partnership Approach to Emergency Response: Some Recommendations

The media can, as a matter of social responsibility, establish a general early warning system through their unions.

It is a polling of corporate establishments such as the firms in the media, and relevant stakeholders

Professional media associations can set up bodies within their institutions with identified journalists to link up with government and other institutions.

It can be called 'communication emergency response team' for any emergency or conflict situation

Addressing Controversies: A Conclusion

Controversies in the news often rest on the assumption by journalists that public officials are bent on hiding something. Public officials, in return, see journalists as always bent on exposing the dark sides of government and causing embarrassment. With the partnership, however, journalists can promptly reach out to relevant sources to clarify issues of controversy, challenge or constraint or even complaints. In return, public officials, operating from a position of trust, will volunteer information. Journalists can reach out to a relevant institutions like hospitals directly without government intrusion, thereby preserving the essential gate-keeping role of the media as the professional institution of society best equipped to handle social information.

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