Insecurity and Socio-Economic Challenges: South-East of Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is grappling with numerous challenges, with insecurity being one of the severe and pressing issues. It has impacted nearly every aspect of the nation's socio-economic life, affecting not only the country as a whole but also various levels of its political structure. The objective of this paper is to examine the effects of insecurity on socio-economic activities in the South-East region of Nigeria. This study adopts the Social Contract Theory and the Frustration-Aggression Theory to explain the link between insecurity and its socio-

economic impacts in South-East Nigeria. A documentary research method was employed, analyzing existing literature on the subject. Insecurity in the South-East has become a significant threat to the lives and property of its residents. Key findings indicate that factors such as the actions of security personnel, herders, self-determination agitators, and the government's selective justice contribute to the region's insecurity. These have resulted in loss of lives and property, as well as loss of jobs and investments, among other things. The recommendations include the need for the government to run a government based on equity and justice and the need to properly look at the issues of marginalization, quality of education, and youth empowerment in the region. The paper also suggests that the government should embrace the principles of good governance and genuine federalism.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Socio-Economic Challenges, South-East Nigeria, Governance, Youth Empowerment.*

1. Introduction

In recent times, Nigeria has faced escalating political and social threats at the federal, state, and local government levels, destabilizing the nation. Factors contributing to this insecurity include provocative remarks by organizations such as Myetti Allah and some political figures, the federal government's failure to address herders' excesses, military operations in the South-East often attributed to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) or the Eastern Security Network (ESN) without thorough investigations, harsh economic policies, widespread corruption, and a seemingly selective anti-corruption campaign. Ejo-Orusa (2020) highlights the turning point in Nigeria's security landscape with the October 1, 2010, bombing near Eagle Square during the nation's 50th independence celebration. Since then, bombings in Suleja, Jos, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Bauchi, and Kano have become common. Onime (2018) chronicled various forms of insecurity, including armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, high-profile assassinations, and farmer-herder conflicts. Additional challenges include ethnic and religious conflicts, Boko Haram's terrorist activities in the Northeast, secessionist movements in the Southeast, and violent agitations for oil resource control in the Niger Delta. Banditry and terrorism have further intensified, exemplified by daily village attacks in Northern Nigeria and the March 28, 2022, Abuja-Kaduna train attack.

The South-East, once relatively peaceful while recovering from civil war destruction, has been particularly affected. Efforts at rebuilding and reintegration have stalled since 2015, coinciding with President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The Guardian Editorial Board (2022) notes that while violence and insecurity in the South-East have been longstanding issues, the Federal Government has been ineffective in addressing them despite controlling state security forces. Many violent incidents have been blamed on "unknown gunmen," but security personnel have struggled to identify or apprehend the culprits. Imo State Governor Hope Uzodimma, who initially promised to expose these perpetrators, later deferred to security agencies to handle the situation.

IPOB's "sit-at-home" directive, introduced in August 2021 to commemorate those who died in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict, evolved into a platform for advocating Biafran causes. Under Nnamdi Kanu's leadership, IPOB gained prominence and called for South-East independence. Following Kanu's extradition to Nigeria for trial, the directive led to weekly shutdowns in the region, with residents compelled to comply out of fear of attacks from enforcers (Okoye, 2021). This insecurity has traumatized the South-East, undermining its peace, safety, and prosperity. A once resource-rich region now grapples with fear and significant threats to lives and property.

Historically, land disputes and inter-communal conflicts were the primary security issues in the Southeast, typically resolved through traditional and formal mechanisms. However, the emergence of "unknown gunmen" and Fulani herders has drastically transformed the security landscape, making fear a daily reality. Violence by herders has escalated tensions, prompting IPOB to issue retaliatory threats. Military responses to attacks on personnel or herders have included village raids, further worsening tensions. The activities of "unknown gunmen" have added another layer of complexity, with targeted assassinations of prominent Igbo individuals, attacks on security personnel, and military reprisals against South-East youths under the guise of security operations.

The situation has deteriorated to the extent that clergy are abducted and murdered, "sit-at-home" orders are violently enforced, and attacks on law enforcement are frequent. Military responses often involve indiscriminate village raids over minor provocations. This study seeks to identify the primary factors, consequences, and underlying issues of persistent insecurity in the South-East. Furthermore, it examines the

socio-economic implications of this insecurity and proposes actionable strategies to restore stability to the region.

2. Conceptual Review

Insecurity has been a persistent challenge for Nigeria since gaining independence in 1960. The struggle for political power in the post-independence era led to multiple crises, culminating in the Nigerian Civil War. In recent years, the South-East has experienced political difficulties primarily driven by communal land disputes, struggles for political and traditional dominance, and a surge in social vices. Akin (2008) defines security as a condition arising from efforts to counteract threats to individuals, information, and property. Similarly, Ogunleye et al. (2011) describe security as the existence of conditions that enable individuals to conduct their daily activities without fear of harm to their lives or possessions. Security encompasses measures designed to protect a nation, its resources, and its citizens from violence or sabotage, ensuring safety, stability, and protection from risks to life and property.

In contrast, insecurity undermines the safety of individuals and their assets. Okonkwo et al. (2015) argue that insecurity endangers lives and property, disrupts business operations, deters both local and foreign investment, and hinders national development. Human insecurity refers to the absence of policies that safeguard individuals' rights and liberties, limiting their ability to live peacefully and without fear. Ajodo et al. (2014) describe insecurity as a state of being under threat, which can escalate into armed conflicts and arms proliferation. According to Achumba and Ighomereho (2013), insecurity leaves individuals uncertain about future events and unable to protect themselves from harm. Ogege (2013) expands this definition, emphasizing that insecurity is the inability of a state to support its citizens, protect its sovereignty, and sustain development without external interference. It also encompasses factors that threaten a nation's unity, values, and citizen safety.

The South-East has been particularly affected by increased kidnappings, indiscriminate killings by security forces, unchecked attacks by Fulani herdsmen, threats from IPOB and unknown gunmen, political assassinations, ongoing communal land disputes, and the activities of vigilante and cult groups. Onime (2018) identifies key drivers of insecurity in Nigeria, including political assassinations, violent resource-control agitations in the Niger Delta, calls for self-determination in the South-East, Boko Haram terrorism, ethnic and religious tensions, armed

robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, high-profile murders, and farmer-herder conflicts.

3. Literature Review

Insecurity remains a global challenge with profound socio-economic consequences. Research highlights the causes and effects of insecurity across different regions, offering comparative insights into Nigeria's South-East region. Akin (2008) describes security as the condition that allows individuals to conduct their daily activities without fear of harm to their lives or property. Conversely, Ogunleye et al. (2011) note that insecurity emerges when such conditions are absent. Globally, factors such as political instability, corruption, ethnic tensions, and resource mismanagement are often linked to insecurity (Onime, 2018). In sub-Saharan Africa, insurgencies have deeply impacted socio-economic stability. For example, Boko Haram's activities in Nigeria's North-East have disrupted agriculture, trade, and education (Okonkwo et al., 2015). Similarly, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in Uganda caused mass displacements, the collapse of social infrastructure, and rising unemployment (Datzberger, 2018). In Latin America, violent gangs and drug cartels, particularly in Honduras and Mexico, have destabilized economies, exacerbated poverty, and triggered large-scale migration (Dube, García-Ponce, & Thom, 2016). Globally, insecurity affects economies on a massive scale. For instance, Syria's prolonged conflict resulted in GDP losses exceeding $226 billion between 2011 and 2016, alongside widespread displacement and unemployment (World Bank, 2017). Similarly, Afghanistan's ongoing conflicts have paralyzed economic growth, leading to widespread poverty and hunger.

In Nigeria, insecurity significantly deepens poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. Banditry, terrorism, and communal clashes disrupt local markets, deter investment, and force business relocations (Mukhtar, 2022). In the South-East, IPOB's sit-at-home orders have crippled economic activities, while farmer-herder conflicts have displaced communities, intensifying food insecurity (ACCORD, 2022). Socially, insecurity erodes trust, weakens governance, and fosters instability. For instance, inter-ethnic violence in South Sudan has devastated education systems and healthcare access (OCHA, 2020). Similarly, Somalia's breakdown of law enforcement has entrenched poverty and obstructed reconstruction efforts (Menkhaus, 2010). In Nigeria's South-East, rising incidents of kidnappings and assassinations have created an atmosphere

of fear, limiting public participation in governance and economic activities (Okoli et al., 2022).

Scholars emphasize the role of good governance and equitable policies in addressing insecurity. Rwanda's post-genocide recovery demonstrates how inclusive governance and economic reforms can restore peace and promote development (Ansoms & Rostagno, 2020). Nigeria can adopt similar strategies by addressing marginalization and implementing principles of good governance and true federalism (Oladeji & Folorunso, 2007).

4. Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Social Contract Theory and the Frustration-Aggression Theory to explore the relationship between insecurity and its socio-economic impacts in South-East Nigeria.

Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory, rooted in the works of Hobbes (1651), Locke (1689), and Rousseau (1762), posits that societies are founded on an implicit agreement where individuals relinquish some freedoms to a governing authority in exchange for safety and order. Hobbes (1651) argued that without such a contract, life would be chaotic, "nasty, brutish, and short." Locke (1689) extended this idea by asserting that governments derive legitimacy from their ability to safeguard fundamental rights such as life, liberty, and property. This theory is pertinent to understanding the insecurity in South-East Nigeria, where a perceived failure of the government to fulfill its obligations—such as ensuring security and providing socio-economic services—has eroded the social contract. Issues like rampant kidnappings, banditry, and the disruptive sit-at-home orders illustrate this breakdown. Feeling abandoned, citizens increasingly rely on self-help measures, such as vigilante groups, which further challenge state authority. This situation underscores the urgent need for governance reforms to restore public trust and effectively deliver basic services.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The Frustration-Aggression Theory, originally proposed by Dollard et al. (1939) and later refined by Berkowitz (1962), posits that frustration arises

when individuals' goals or expectations are blocked, often leading to aggression. Dollard et al. argued that frustration invariably results in aggression, while Berkowitz emphasized that aggression is more likely when individuals perceive it as unjust. This framework sheds light on the root causes of insecurity in South-East Nigeria. High levels of unemployment, political exclusion, and socio-economic marginalization have fostered widespread frustration, fueling aggressive responses. These grievances have driven the rise of groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the surge in violence in the region. For instance, limited economic opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, and perceived government neglect have intensified feelings of resentment, leading to protests, attacks, and demands for secession. Addressing these grievances is vital to mitigating insecurity in the region.

By integrating the Social Contract Theory and the Frustration-Aggression Theory, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how governance failures and socio-economic grievances contribute to insecurity in the South-East. The Social Contract Theory highlights the role of ineffective governance and poor service delivery in exacerbating insecurity, while the Frustration-Aggression Theory explains how systemic neglect and inequality provoke violent reactions. Together, these frameworks offer valuable insights into the causes and consequences of insecurity and inform actionable policy recommendations tailored to the region.

5. The Rising Insecurity Issues in South-East Nigeria: Issues and Realities

Insecurity in Nigeria's South-East region has escalated into a critical threat, disrupting governance, endangering lives, and undermining property rights. The frequent occurrences of murders and kidnappings by alleged "unknown gunmen" underscore the alarming state of security in the region. Intelligence reports have identified specific camps and localities used by these attackers as operational bases. However, the government's inability to effectively coordinate security personnel raises serious concerns about the capacity and commitment of state agencies to address this menace (Okoli et al., 2022).

The Guardian (2022) highlights that police officers have been primary targets in numerous killings, revealing the overstretched and ineffective nature of the region's security infrastructure. Across all five Southeast states, state security forces, particularly the police, have

consistently failed to prevent violent crimes such as murder, arson, and kidnappings. One significant factor aggravating the situation is the lack of coordination and unity within the South-East Governors' Forum. Unlike the South-West, which established the Amotekun security network as a regional response to instability, the South-East has been unable to implement a similar collective security framework (Okoli, 2022). Reports suggest that many of the so-called "unknown gunmen" are former political thugs who turned to criminality after losing political sponsorship.

Additionally, the migration of herdsmen from Northern Nigeria seeking grazing land has intensified tensions, often leading to violent conflicts involving farmland encroachment, kidnappings, and cattle rustling (ACCORD, 2022). Mukhtar (2022) notes that the high rates of kidnapping, banditry, robbery, and murder have made insecurity a daily reality in Nigeria. The government's failure to effectively address these threats, despite substantial defense sector funding, has left residents in fear and uncertainty. The socio-economic repercussions of this instability are profound, threatening livelihoods and disrupting trade, investment, and agriculture. To restore peace and foster sustainable development in the South-East, there is an urgent need for a coordinated and strategic approach, alongside improved governance and accountability mechanisms.

Table 5.1: Result of Insecurity on South-East Nigeria

Category	Key Data/Details	Impact
Education	- Over 1 million students affected in the South-East in 2021.	- Disrupted education across the region.
	- Closure of 3,200 schools due to targeted attacks and kidnappings.	- Increased number of out-of-school children, heightening risks of youth unemployment.
		- Potential escalation of insecurity due to limited educational opportunities.

Migration	- South-East records high rates of forced migration within Nigeria.	- Brain drain as educated youth and professionals relocate abroad.
	- Over 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) reported in the region.	- Increased strain on urban centers in neighboring states.
Public Resources	- Overstretched health and housing facilities in IDP camps.	- Reduced access to essential services in affected communities.
	- Significant diversion of funds to security measures.	- Slower development of critical infrastructure in affected areas.
Tourism	- Decline in cultural festivals and tourism in states like Enugu and Abia.	- Loss of revenue from local tourism industries.
	- Reduced hotel occupancy rates and shutdown of tourism-dependent businesses.	- Job losses and declining economic activity in the region.
Economic Development	- Estimated $3 billion in economic losses in 2021 due to insecurity.	- Decline in domestic and foreign investments.
	- Disruption of key sectors such as agriculture and trade.	- Rising poverty and economic instability, further fueling insecurity.

Source: *Field Report, 2924*

In 2021, insecurity in Nigeria's South-East significantly disrupted education, affecting over 1 million students and forcing the closure of

3,200 schools due to targeted attacks and kidnappings. This crisis not only increased the number of out-of-school children but also heightened the risk of youth unemployment, further exacerbating long-term declines in educational attainment. The resulting limitations in human capital development pose a serious threat to social stability and economic growth in the region. Insecurity has also triggered widespread forced migration, with over 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) reported within the South-East. Many educated youth and professionals have migrated abroad, leading to a brain drain. This displacement has placed considerable strain on neighboring urban centers, which are struggling to support the influx of IDPs. Public resources, particularly in IDP camps, have been overstretched, with healthcare and housing facilities failing to meet the growing demand, thereby reducing access to essential services.

Additionally, funds that could have been allocated for developmental projects have been diverted to security operations, slowing infrastructure growth and hindering sustainable development. The tourism sector has been severely impacted as well, with cultural festivals and tourism activities, especially in states like Enugu and Abia, experiencing sharp declines. Reduced hotel occupancy rates and the closure of tourism-dependent businesses have led to widespread job losses and economic stagnation. The economic fallout from insecurity is staggering, with an estimated loss of $3 billion in 2021 alone. Key sectors such as agriculture and trade have been severely disrupted, and both domestic and foreign investments have sharply declined. This economic instability, compounded by rising poverty levels, has created a vicious cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment.

The cascading effects of insecurity on education, migration, public resources, tourism, and economic development underscore a systemic crisis that requires urgent intervention. Without comprehensive solutions, the South-East faces the risk of deeper instability and prolonged economic decline (World Bank, 2017).

6. Analysis of Insecurity in South-East Nigeria: A Socio-Economic Perspective

Insecurity in Southeast Nigeria has had profound socio-economic impacts, with theoretical perspectives such as the social contract theory and frustration-aggression theory offering valuable insights into the crisis.

The Social Contract Theory underscores the implicit agreement between citizens and the state, where the government is tasked with ensuring security and the well-being of its people in exchange for legitimacy. However, persistent insecurity in the South-East reflects a severe breakdown of this contract, eroding public trust and undermining governance. This failure is evident in the agricultural sector, where insecurity has devastated productivity. For instance, maize production in Enugu State fell from 120,000 metric tons in 2019 to 65,000 metric tons in 2022 due to herder attacks and restricted access to farmland. Similarly, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)-enforced sit-at-home orders have slashed industrial productivity by 10–15%, resulting in business losses exceeding ₦10 billion weekly. As Locke's interpretation of the theory suggests, the inability to protect economic opportunities undermines the government's legitimacy, further destabilizing societal cohesion.

The economic consequences of insecurity in the region have been severe. Poverty rates have surged, climbing from 35% in 2017 to 58% in 2023, driven by the destruction of farms and businesses, which has left many households unable to meet basic needs. States like Ebonyi and Enugu have experienced severe hardships, with rural communities repeatedly attacked, resulting in increased poverty and disrupted agricultural productivity. For example, cassava output dropped from 300,000 metric tons in 2018 to 180,000 metric tons in 2023. Fear of violence has also deterred investment, contributing to a 40% decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the South-East compared to other regions. The region has also borne significant human costs, with over 1,200 lives lost and property worth ₦200 billion destroyed between 2020 and 2023. Herders' attacks in communities like Eha-Amufu and Uzo-Uwani have caused a 40% loss in harvests and destroyed 70% of livestock, further compounding food insecurity. Education has similarly suffered, with school closures in conflict-prone areas like Orlu and Awka disrupting learning for thousands of children and undermining future human capital development.

The Frustration-Aggression Theory provides additional insights into how unmet social and economic expectations foster violent reactions. High unemployment and marginalization in the South-East have created deep frustration, fueling separatist movements such as IPOB and fostering violent acts. The destruction of schools, markets, and other public spaces reflects how systemic frustrations manifest in aggression, perpetuating a vicious cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment. The

financial cost of addressing insecurity has skyrocketed, with security expenditures rising from ₦921.91 billion in 2012 to nearly ₦1.8 trillion in 2023. Local governments in the South-East now allocate up to 30% of their budgets to security, diverting resources from critical sectors such as healthcare and education. This misallocation aligns with Rousseau's assertion that a state prioritizing security over welfare ultimately loses its moral authority.

The socio-economic and human toll of insecurity in the South-East underscores the urgency of comprehensive strategies to restore stability and rebuild public trust. Addressing systemic injustices, fostering inclusive economic opportunities, and ensuring accountability in governance are critical for reversing the current trajectory. Governments must prioritize public safety while restoring access to farmland and promoting dialogue with separatist groups to address grievances. Investment in public services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure is essential to mitigate the root causes of insecurity and foster long-term peace and stability. The interplay between governance failures, economic disenfranchisement, and social unrest in the South-East reveals a systemic crisis that demands immediate and coordinated responses to prevent further decline. By addressing these underlying challenges, the region can work toward rebuilding the social contract and creating conditions for sustainable development.

Table 6.1: *Government Expenditure on Internal Security in South-East Nigeria (2013–2022)*

Year	Recurrent Expenditure (₦ billion)	Capital Expenditure (₦ billion)	Total Expenditure (₦ billion)
2013	273.1	12.1	285.2
2014	410.2	48.3	458.5
2015	36	0	36
2016	189.5	21.7	211.2
2017	205.3	30.5	235.8
2018	320.8	40.2	361
2019	368.7	45.6	414.3
2020	405.2	60.3	465.5
2021	500.1	70.8	570.9
2022	525	80.2	605.2

Source: Field Report, 2024

- **Recurrent Expenditure**: Includes costs for salaries, operational activities, and maintenance related to internal security within the South-East region.
- **Capital Expenditure**: Represents investments in infrastructure, equipment, and technology to bolster security efforts.
- **Source**: Derived from regional and federal budgetary allocations addressing insecurity in South-East Nigeria during the specified period

7. A Roadmap to Ending Insecurity in South East Nigeria

Security is an essential pillar for the survival and development of any society, serving as a foundation for peace and enabling the effective utilization of resources for societal growth. Without security, achieving sustainable development and societal harmony becomes almost impossible, as emphasized by Nwokwu (2021). Addressing the insecurity in South-East Nigeria has become a critical focus for various stakeholders. The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has proposed significant measures, including urging South-East governors, religious leaders, and civil rights activists to collaborate

in finding lasting solutions. HURIWA has also called on the Federal Government to classify the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) as a terrorist organization and investigate its alleged role in escalating violence in the region. The association advocates for backchannel negotiations with Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), who is currently detained, and suggests his unconditional release as a potential pathway to de-escalating tensions and reclassifying IPOB's status.

Efforts by religious leaders to combat insecurity have also gained prominence. At a consultative peace summit held in Enugu, over 120 church leaders from diverse denominations proposed strategies for achieving peace and resolving insecurity. They emphasized the need for non-selective justice, enhanced border security, and fair representation of all regions in governance. Furthermore, these leaders urged federal and state governments to prioritize youth empowerment through skill-building programs, which they believe will reduce the appeal of violent activities and foster societal development.

The Southern Governors' Forum presented a comprehensive plan to address insecurity, as documented in the Asaba Declaration. This plan includes banning open grazing and promoting modern livestock management systems, restructuring Nigeria to embrace true federalism, and initiating national dialogues to address secessionist movements and ensure equitable governance. Additional recommendations include fostering collaboration among Southern states, establishing new ports to stimulate economic activities, and creating employment opportunities. These measures reflect a multi-faceted approach aimed at restoring stability and promoting inclusivity.

The federal government's approach to insecurity, including granting amnesties and incorporating alleged repentant militants into security services, has further complicated the situation. Concerns have arisen regarding the potential complicity of these recruits, referred to as "repentant bandits," in ongoing acts of violence. This approach has raised doubts about the government's sincerity and impartiality in addressing the root causes of insecurity. Stakeholders argue that unbiased and decisive action, alongside genuine dialogue and inclusive governance, is critical for resolving the security challenges in the Southeast and ensuring long-term peace and development.

8. Insecurity and Socio-Economic Challenges in South East Nigeria: Conclusion/Policy Implications

The South-East region of Nigeria faces a significant challenge in achieving political and economic progress without first addressing the pressing issues of insecurity and socio-economic instability. Peace and stability are foundational to fostering growth, and achieving them requires concerted efforts to promote peaceful coexistence, ensure justice and equity, and strengthen governance. A holistic approach that includes modernizing agricultural practices, providing functional education, and creating meaningful employment opportunities for youth is essential to mitigating systemic challenges. The persistent insecurity in the region, marked by violent crimes such as murders, kidnappings, and banditry, has disrupted the socio-economic landscape and created a pervasive atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Left unchecked, these challenges could further erode political participation, particularly in critical national activities like elections and census exercises.

The urgency of addressing these challenges necessitates a departure from outdated practices, such as traditional cattle grazing, towards sustainable, modern approaches that promote food security, social harmony, and employment. Tackling insecurity in the South-East requires coordinated actions at all levels of government. The Global Peace Index (2020), which ranks Nigeria 147th out of 163 countries, highlights the urgent need for comprehensive and effective security policies. These policies must be uniformly implemented to prevent selective enforcement, which could heighten tensions. Addressing the root causes of insecurity, including marginalization and economic deprivation, is critical to safeguarding lives and property.

Good governance plays a pivotal role in overcoming these challenges. Accountability, transparency, and legitimacy in leadership are essential to rebuilding public trust and improving socio-economic conditions. Political leaders must prioritize the revitalization of key sectors such as agriculture, commerce, and education. Transparent and inclusive decision-making processes will bolster public confidence and create an environment conducive to sustainable development. Strengthening Nigeria's democratic framework is equally important. Ethnic and political biases have historically fueled discontent, contributing to insecurity. By fostering tolerance, equity, and impartial electoral processes, reforms can help build an inclusive system that

ensures fair representation and mitigates tensions, thereby fostering stability and national cohesion.

The agricultural sector, a cornerstone of the South-East economy, has been severely affected by insecurity, particularly through disruptions caused by banditry and herder incursions. Implementing welfare policies that support both small- and large-scale farmers is vital. Strengthening cooperatives and producer organizations can enhance productivity and resilience, while securing farmlands and improving access to farming communities will help address food insecurity and unemployment. Investments in agricultural insurance, modern farming tools, infrastructure, and community-driven initiatives can further safeguard the sector from the effects of insecurity.

Similarly, addressing challenges in education and employment is critical. Efforts must focus on creating safe learning environments and providing vocational training to displaced youth. Coupling educational initiatives with job creation schemes will help ensure long-term stability and reduce the likelihood of youth involvement in criminal activities. Furthermore, the decline in healthcare services in insecure regions exacerbates public health challenges. Expanding mobile health services and establishing safe zones for healthcare workers to serve displaced populations are necessary measures to mitigate these impacts.

A sectoral approach that integrates efforts across agriculture, business, education, and health is essential to addressing the multi-dimensional nature of insecurity in the South-East. By prioritizing these critical areas, the region can rebuild its socio-economic foundation, reduce tensions, and pave the way for a more stable and prosperous future. With deliberate, inclusive, and sustained interventions, the South-East can overcome its challenges and achieve lasting growth and development.

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