



## The Role of Military Quick Impact Projects in the Enhancement of Human Security: A Case Study of the Armed Forces of Nigeria in North-Eastern Nigeria

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### Abstract

In post-war or conflict-ridden areas, the distinction between a military approach and a humanitarian approach is becoming increasingly ambiguous. This paper examines how Military Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) used in the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) have helped to improve human security in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, which is devastated by the insurgency of the Boko Haram. Although QIPs are advocated as a winning of hearts and minds approach in counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, their effectiveness in providing sustainable human security results is controversial. Based on a mixed-methods approach, with a survey of 422 stakeholders and in-depth interviews, this study evaluates QIPs in a seven-dimensional human security framework. Results show that QIPs have already attained significant short-term returns on rebuilding critical infrastructure, delivering first-line services and building initial trust. Their long-term effectiveness is, however, severely compromised by structural flaws, such as a lack of community ownership, poor interagency coordination, poor monitoring and evaluation and a short-term mismatch with the long-term development planning. Theoretically, the paper uses the Public Goods Theory (PGT) to reveal that although QIPs are expected to deliver public goods such as infrastructure, the lack of inclusivity and interagency rivalry makes it highly vulnerable in the real world due to politicized implementation and sustainability issues. The research concludes that in order to enable the QIPs to go beyond the level of utility within a tactical approach and to make a significant contribution to human security, a paradigm shift to a more collaborative, community-based and strategically patient approach is necessary. Suggestions are provided regarding including QIPs in a more civilian-based framework of stabilization.

**Keywords:** *Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), Human Security, Counterinsurgency, Public Goods Theory.*

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## Introduction

The social contract (as theorized by Hobbes and John Locke) emphasizes that the state and citizens must establish to each other rights and obligations as manifested in security and welfare provision by the state and corresponding citizen acquiescence besides other critical components of the contract. Historically, security has been conceptualized in a state-centric manner with prominence placed on the integrity and sovereignty of the state territory from external aggression (Tarry, 1999). The post-Cold War period has, however, provided a paradigm shift whereby security now redefined to include the individual. The concept of human security was formally introduced into the development of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report in 1994, in which it was defined as freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live with dignity. This re-imagining of the referent object of security shifts the object of security that is the state to the individual to a complex interplay of threats that encompass economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political (UNDP, 1994). This contract in weak and conflict-ridden states is not only tense but is frequently broken, with non-state armed forces directly contesting the state monopoly of violence and its ability to deliver important public goods.

This crisis of state authority is felt less strongly in the north-east, where Nigeria struggles with the disastrous Boko Haram insurgency and its breakaway groups. (Yalmi, 2020). The war has caused more than 35,000 people to die, displacing more than two million people and destroying social and economic infrastructure since 2009 (Nyadera et al, 2020). The insurgency has taken advantage of the historical grievances based on historical marginalization, extreme poverty, poor governance and rampant corruption, which have provided a good breeding ground for radicalization (Onapajo, 2017). Here, the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) have, at the start, implemented a heavy-handed kinetic counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, which was largely unsuccessful. The extremely militarised reaction had the effect of worsening the situation in the region while failing to address the root causes of the conflict, demonstrating the shortcomings of a strictly combat-focused approach (Campbell, 2018).

As a result, AFN, like several contemporary militaries relying on an asymmetric approach to warfare, has incorporated non-kinetic actions into its strategy. This change is indicative of a greater doctrinal change in the thinking of counterinsurgency, which was greatly informed by classical theorists such as Galula and Betts (2008) and Robert Thompson (1966), who argued that the most significant tool to defeat an insurgency was to win over the hearts and minds of the population. In this context, Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) have come into the limelight as a strategic tactical instrument. They are minor, short-term activities aimed at providing beneficial effects in the community, such as the rehabilitation of schools and health clinics, the supply of clean water sources, and the distribution of agricultural inputs (Kilcullen, 2010). The QIPs rationale is unmistakable: reduce human suffering by feeling the real value of state presence, gain trust and legitimize the power of the Government and, finally, undermine the popularity of insurgent forces.

Nonetheless, there are theoretical and practical complications surrounding the employment of military forces on development-oriented missions. As much as the tactical advantages of QIPs are touted (Sepp, 2007), the strategic effectiveness and the long-term effects of QIPs on human security are contested. First of all, the military-humanitarian blurring of the boundaries between military and humanitarian sides may cause civilians to question the perceived impartiality and autonomy of the aid organizations and turn them into a target of attack, which is referred to as the humanitarian space (Cockayne, 2016). Secondly, the imperative of the so-called quick impact frequently focuses on speed, visibility over sustainability, resulting in ill-fitted to the local needs, non-community-owned and forgotten projects when military units redeploy (so-called white elephant) projects (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010). Thirdly, the security-oriented nature of military QIPs, which may be implemented on top of existing conditions, may unintentionally make the state-society relations paternalistic, not solve the issues of vulnerability and in certain instances, the existing tensions may be aggravated by the fact that some groups of people benefit more than others (Bennett et al., 2010).

This paper thus stands at the crossroads of these debatable issues. Although current research on the QIPs of the AFN has provided meaningful descriptive information on project typologies and immediate outputs (Akinwale, 2022; Nunoo, 2024), a significant gap remains. Systematic, empirical studies that subjectively assess these projects to the normative, holistic prism of human security are still elementary. The vast majority of research focuses the particular areas, such as education or infrastructure, without narrowing down on the overall effect on the entire array of human security dimensions. Also, the theoretical basis of such interventions has not been well-examined. This lacuna is filled by the current paper by applying the Public Goods Theory (PGT). This theory was chosen because it enabled the researcher to incorporate Mancur Olson's 2009 "the free-rider" analogy and Elinor Ostrom's (1990) study of polycentric governance to diagnose the sustainability and governance issue afflicting QIPs.

The overall research question was: How and to what extent do military Quick Impact Projects contribute to sustainable human security in North-Eastern Nigeria, and what are the key limiting factors to their effectiveness? To respond to this, the paper explored QIPs' perception that it cuts across the seven human security dimensions, how the root causes of insurgency have been perceived among stakeholders and the systemic issue of poor teamwork in community engagement causes long-term absence of impact. The value of this study is threefold. First, it contributes to academic literature by providing a theory-inspired, critical examination of civil-military cooperation in a high-stakes conflict setting. Second, it offers evidence-based policy suggestions to the AFN, the Government of Nigeria and other partners who aim at streamlining the stabilization process. Third, it has practical consequences regarding the redesign and execution of the QIPs to make them shift the focus not on short-term stability but on strategic investments in the long-term, resilient human security.

## **Literature Review**

Military deployment to do development-oriented work is at an uneasy intersection between security studies, development theory and humanitarian practice. The review is a synthesis of the available literature in three key areas, which are the development and criticism of QIPs in counterinsurgency doctrine, the human security paradigm as an evaluation framework and the empirical context of AFN activity in North-Eastern Nigeria. Through analysing the overlaps and contradictions between these two bodies of knowledge, this review identifies the gap in scholarly knowledge that this paper will address.

### *The Development and Discussions concerning the QIPs in the Counterinsurgency Doctrine*

The theoretical DNA of the Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) is permanently imprinted within the conventional theories of counterinsurgency (COIN) of the mid-20th century. Theorists such as David Galula (1964) in Algeria and Robert Thompson of Malaya (1966) made reasonable arguments that insurgencies cannot be won by military power, but by a political contest over legitimacy and loyalty of the people. Out of this key principle came the so-called hearts and minds concept to provide security, good governance and economic access as the means of draining the sea in which the insurgent fish lives. QIPs were the embodiment of this strategy on a smaller, more tangible scale- small-scale projects that would be visible and fast, providing proof of the value of siding with the Government (Nagl, 2007). The contemporary operationalization of QIPs was highly influenced by the experience of NATO forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, specifically in the form of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These civil-military formations formalized the application of mini-infrastructure and aid initiatives as a direct assistant of developing host-nation legitimacy and intelligence accumulation (Fishstein & Wilder, 2012). Advocates believe that properly executed QIPs can have important tactical-level benefits: they can generate instant goodwill, they ease the protection of the forces by making them less foreign to the local people and they even deconstruct insurgent propaganda by demonstrating the effectiveness of the Government (Sepp, 2007).

Nevertheless, a well-developed and convincing critical literature has grown, questioning the effectiveness of this strategy and its moral principles. One of the main criticisms is focused on the principle of humanitarian space. According to Clements (2018), this blurring of the military and humanitarian functions is dangerous, given that it casts the aid workers in the same light as either side of the conflict. This aid militarization has the potential to erode the perceived neutrality and impartiality that traditionally shielded the humanitarian actors, turning them into intentional targets of the insurgent organizations that perceive the humanitarian actors not merely as a continuation of the counterinsurgency campaign.

The second, bigger stream of critique is the question of the feasibility of QIPs and their relevance. Even the name of quick impact presupposes the fundamental tension between the process of sustainable development, which is slow and complex. Goodhand and Sedra (2010) argue that the demands of visible and fast results tend to promote a top-down and supply-based approach, bypassing the local participatory processes. This leads to poor alignment between the community priorities, a lack of local ownership of the projects and the projects are not incorporated into the long-term development plans. As such, most QIPs turn into white elephants, which are the representation of unspent resources that go to waste as soon as the military unit leaves and may end up decreasing the trust instead of cultivating it.

Moreover, some critics refer to the political economy of QIPs, according to which the necessity to spend the money urgently can be used to promote corruption, overcharge locals and assure patronage (Suhrke, 2011). The emphasis on the physical infrastructure, which is visible and can be easily measured, does not pay much attention to the less tangible but more important pillars of peace, including the legal means of conflict resolution, justice and reconciliation. The evidence base of the long-term strategic effectiveness of QIPs is still largely ambivalent (Berman et al., 2011), with the majority of studies indicating localized and short-term gains but a notable absence of converting them into long-term stability and a decisive shift in popular commitment

#### *Human Security Paradigm: A Multifocal Prism to be evaluated*

The human security construct, which was propelled to the forefront by UNDP's Human Development Report in 1994, was a drastic shift from the conventional state-centred approaches to security. It is a holistic and normative framework that offers a perfect perspective through which the multifaceted effects of interventions during complex emergencies can be assessed by refocusing security on the individual and by including both the freedom from fear and the freedom from want (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). Its seven dimensions, such as the economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security, provide a complete checklist of what the actual impact of QIPs may be measured.

The application of such a lens shifts the analysis outside of simplistic measures of output (e.g., such as the number of schools built) to a more valuable evaluation of outcomes associated with the well-being of the individuals, the agency and the dignity. As an example, a QIP that restores a clinic is aimed directly at health security, whereas a QIP that fixes a market road helps in economic security. Nonetheless, the human security model prompts more investigation: Is the clinic sustainable in terms of the supply of medicines and trained employees? Will the road be equally beneficial to all the ethnic groups, or will it further divide the society? This is in line with the attainment of human security being considered a prerequisite to positive peace pioneered by Kaldor (2007). It follows that peace is not merely the absence of violence but a positive peace where justice and institutions are present to guarantee harmonious living by addressing the root cause of the conflict.

The most significant aspect of the human security lens is that it allows the discovery of possible inconsistencies in the military-dominant development. A project providing personal security because of military presence could also jeopardize community and political security when it is seen to be forceful or disempowering to local governance systems (Bennett et al., 2010). The framework requires that the dynamics of power in QIPs must be analysed: who makes decisions about which projects they will be applied to, who will gain and who

will not gain? Such emphasis on process and empowerment can tend to be lacking in the output-oriented, target-driven culture of the military. Consequently, when human security is used as an assessment tool, it is essential to explore what goods are provided, as well as how their provision impacts the social contract and the sustainability of the community over time.

### *The Nigerian Situation: The AFN Incursion into Non-Kinetic Operations*

The Boko Haram insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria does not manifest itself as a sudden burst of violence but is the result of a layered historical interplay of factors. The long history of economic disregard, political marginalisation and identity crisis in the Nigerian federation has been carefully recorded by scholars in the region (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). A Salafi-jihadist ideology capitalised on this fertile ground and provided a compelling, yet devastating, account of redemption and revolt against a corrupt, illegitimate state (Onapajo, 2017). The kinetic nature of the early reactions of the AFN was heavily criticized as a form of human rights violation and regularly backfired since it tended to isolate the same population it was supposed to serve (Parker, 2020).

Understanding the shortcomings of this approach, the Nigerian Government and its international collaborators, especially within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), started to propagate an approach that was much more comprehensive and included non-kinetic measures. This was indicative of a change in the COIN doctrine worldwide and QIPs in the centre of the AFN strategy to regain popular support (Byrd, 2012). The current research on the QIPs of the AFN remains in its nascent stage, yet it can be roughly divided into two camps. The former includes analytical and supportive descriptions. Onapajo (2017) and Shihundu et al (2021) present useful lists of QIP activities, where schools, boreholes and medical outreaches were reported to have been built. The studies tend to emphasize the short-term gains, especially the enhancement of civil-military relations and delivery of much-needed services in regions where the state has totally pulled out. Their usual response is that these projects have been essential in enabling the restoration of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and also in the establishment of havens of stability.

The more critical camp, which includes such researchers as Nyadera and Osedo (2023) and Tinti (2024), starts to investigate the systemic challenges. They cite insufficient technical skills in the military to carry out development activity, the informal nature of project choice and tension between the AFN and the civilian humanitarian corps. Such critical studies, however, are usually confined to individual problems and do not provide a comprehensive theoretical explanation of why the problems continue to exist and how they are connected to each other to limit overall effectiveness.

### *The Gap*

Such a review indicates a significant gap in scholarship. Although research criticizing the concept of QIPs overall is abundant and studies detailing the activities of the AFN in North-Eastern Nigeria are on the rise, there is a need for a body of research to apply a comprehensive, critical framework, such as human security, in empirically assessing the QIPs promoted by the AFN. Moreover, little is ever dug into the theoretical basis of these interventions. This gap is filled in this paper by adopting a perfected Public Goods Theory, which is integrated with the criticisms of Olson and Ostrom, to give a more analytical tool. It shifts the debate on whether QIPs are being introduced to a diagnostic one on how their particular manner of delivery and governance can contribute to their transformation into actual, viable public goods that increase human security. This paper thus seeks to fill the theoretical criticism of the COIN literature with the normative desires of the human security paradigm and the reality of North-Eastern Nigeria is the case.

## **Theoretical Framework: A Critical Application of Public Goods Theory**

This paper is based on the critical use of PGT, which offers a solid but debatable framework through which the provision of security and basic services within a conflict environment can be analysed. The conceptual framework of the paper does not simply use PGT as a fixed model but actively works on its most powerful criticisms. Such a process is a dynamic analytical instrument that can be used to diagnose the complex issues behind QIPs. Combining the original contribution of Paul Samuelson with the iconoclastic contributions of Mancur Olson and Elinor Ostrom, this framework goes beyond a simplistic account of state failure to a much more complex explanation of the governance and incentive mechanisms that lead to the eventual success or failure of the supply of public goods in the post-conflict environment.

The original conceptualization of PGT by Paul Samuelson in 1954, was that some goods and services have two properties, namely non-rivalrous and non-excludable. Non-rivalry implies that the consumption of the good by one person does not reduce its availability to other people. In contrast, non-excludability implies that it is not possible or prohibitively expensive to deter or exclude non-payers. Traditional examples are national defence, clean air and public infrastructure. Samuelson maintained that since people can or cannot consume these goods without causing a reduction in their price, a dilemma called the free-rider problem, then a market privately provided by these goods will systematically fail to provide them efficiently and state intervention would have to be used to provide them efficiently to the collective good. Within the setting of North-Eastern Nigeria, the insurgency left a deep, empty hole in the role of the state to deliver the primary public goods, which are security, law and order, basic infrastructure and basic services. According to this classical school of thought, the AFN, as a state agent, intervenes via QIPs to rectify this disastrous state and market failure. The stability, safety, rebuilt schools and new boreholes brought about by these projects are supposed to be used as a form of a common good in which the members of a community are served as a whole, and the economic activity and social cohesion are established on the foundation of these projects. The conceptual rationale of why QIPs should be provided by the military is thus well-grounded in this rationale of necessitating governmental provision to make available what the private entities cannot provide and to restore the circumstances of an operating society.

Nevertheless, a naive application of classical PGT is inadequate for understanding the complexities of implementation. The initial enhancement, which is crucial to this framework, has been influenced by Mancur Olson and his seminal account of collective action. Olson's (1971) main criticism clarifies the free-rider problem by showing that when a large, latent group is made up of rational individuals, they will typically act in their own interest unless compelled or incentivised to do otherwise. This indicates an inherent flaw in the assumption that community-wide benefits will naturally lead to community support and ownership of QIPs. In practice, Olson's reasoning manifests when the community uses a newly built clinic or water point without organising collectively to maintain or ensure its safety. The shared use of such resources is real but often lacks the collective effort needed for maintenance. This results in a fragile sustainability, where the original communal resource quickly deteriorates due to a breakdown in collective responsibility, turning what could have been a valuable resource into a symbol of neglect. Therefore, while QIP can solve issues related to the provision process, it does not address governance problems, leaving communities vulnerable to the same cycle of state failure once military forces withdraw.

The theoretical framework is also enhanced and advanced by incorporating the Nobel Prize-winning text of Elinor Ostrom. Ostrom (1990) broke down the depressing dichotomy of classical PGT, which traditionally offered a dichotomous decision between provision by the state and market failure. She used intensive empirical studies to show that communities often could organize themselves to govern common-pool resources by polycentric systems of governance, complex, overlapping layers of authority and decision-making, which run downward and upward, out of the local level. Ostrom identified several design principles of sustainable governance, such as well-specified boundaries, the rule-local fit, the collective-choice features, the involvement of the most affected in the decisions and the high quality of self-monitoring on the part of the community. This is a deadly accusation when applied to the examination of top-down, military-based QIPs.

The tactical imperatives of speed and of operational security used as the standard operating procedure of the AFN frequently presuppose that the design and implementation of projects take minimal involvement from the existing local governments. This is a good way of circumventing the very institutions that represent the principles of polycentric governance, as discussed by Ostrom, namely traditional councils, community development associations and local artisan guilds. The AFN also inadvertently compromises the social capital and the local institutional capacity, which the long-term sustainability heavily relies upon, by not involving these structures in the planning, implementation and long-term management of projects. The project itself is an external connotation instead of an internal resource, which breaches the principle of collective-choice arrangements by Ostrom and ensures that the community perceives it as the military property instead of its own.

Table 1

*Analysis of the Relationship between QIP and the Public Goods Theory*

<b>Theoretical Concept</b>	<b>Key Theoretical Tenet</b>	<b>Manifestation in QIP Implementation</b>	<b>Observed Empirical Challenge</b>	<b>Impact on Human Security</b>
Classical Public Goods Theory (Samuelson, 1954)	Non-excludable, non-rivalrous goods require state intervention due to market failure and free-rider problems.	The AFN, as a state agent, intervenes to provide stability, infrastructure (schools, boreholes) and services as public goods in a context of state failure.	Visible Short-term Gains: High output of tangible infrastructure creates immediate humanitarian relief and demonstrates state presence.	Positive, but Fleeting: Directly enhances <i>economics, food, health and environmental security</i> in the short term by providing essential goods.
Olson's Free-Rider Problem (Olson, 1971)	In large groups, rational individuals will not act to achieve their common group interests without coercion or selective incentives.	Communities consume QIP benefits (e.g., water from a borehole) but do not collectively invest in maintenance, assuming the state/military remains responsible.	Lack of Community Ownership (68.3%): Projects deteriorate post-deployment. The "Sustainability Gap" emerges as the functional facility decays.	Undermines Sustainability: Erodes long-term <i>economic and environmental security</i> . Creates dependency, weakening <i>community security</i> and resilience.
Ostrom's Polycentric Governance (Ostrom, 1990)	Communities can self-organize to manage common-pool resources through local, nested institutions, challenging the	Top-down, military-driven project planning and execution bypasses existing traditional councils, CBOs and local governance structures.	Insufficient Collaboration (71.6%): Projects are misaligned with local needs. Lack of participation leads to poor utilization or rejection.	Undermines Legitimacy & Empowerment: Weakens <i>community and political security</i> by disempowering local institutions. Fails to build the

	state-market binary.			social capital for sustained peace.
Synthesized Critical PGT Framework (This Study)	The adequate provision of public goods is contingent upon both the <i>good itself</i> and the <i>governance of its provision</i> .	The AFN's operational model prioritizes the <i>output</i> (the built asset) over the <i>process</i> (inclusive governance and capacity-building).	Systemic Failure of Long-term Impact: The combined effect of free-riding and suppressed polycentric governance prevents QIPs from transitioning from tactical relief to strategic assets.	Holistic Deficit: While targeting specific human security dimensions, the flawed delivery model actively undermines the foundational <i>community and political security</i> required for durable stability.

Source: Author (2025)

Thus, a Critical Public Goods Framework is a synthesized theoretical stance of the current paper. According to this framework, although QIPs are conceptually constructed to deliver the much-needed public goods in a condition of state failure, their actual implementation as accurate, sustainable public goods depends on two conditions usually ignored by classical PGT. To start with, the provision is as important as the governance of the provision. A top-down military-based model of delivery may establish de facto excludability, in which the perceived benefit stream is thought only to run to those villages that are cooperative or are corrupted by corruption and thus contravene the very principle of non-exclusiveness itself and undermine the perceived legitimacy of the good. Second, both the free-rider problem of Olson and the subjugation of Ostrom's polycentric governance make the sustainability of provision an issue.

The non-rivalrous character of the good is not permanent because of the short-term nature of QIPs, as well as because of a lack of embedded community governance mechanisms, which guarantee that unattended resources degrade and become inaccessible to everyone. With this fine-grained structure, there is an opportunity to engage in a diagnostic analysis that goes beyond the simplistic output measures to question the institutional and social processes behind this analysis. It offers a very compelling prism through which to understand why, despite their noble aims and apparent early results, QIPs end up being short-lived relics of a temporary existence as opposed to being the cornerstones of permanent human security (see Table 1).

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study relied on a sequential mixed-method research design to conduct data collection and analysis. Through an overarching pragmatist approach, (which focuses on the research problem more than adherence to one paradigm) the research design employed a mainly quantitative design, via a survey of the main stakeholders in a cross-sectional mode. This was complemented by a qualitative research, consisting of semi-structured interviews useful for elaborating and putting the statistical results into context. This design was the best in generalizing trends in the survey, besides the qualitative data used to explain mechanisms and complexities underlying the trends (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The population under study comprised of institutions and individuals directly involved with or influenced by QIPs in the North-Eastern part of the country (Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states). There was a multi-stage stratified sampling method. There were ten stakeholder strata (AFN, NGOs, State Ministries, Community Leaders). A sample of 450 respondents was



selected to enhance the level of representativeness and 427 questionnaires were sent back; a response rate of 94.9% was attained (See Table 2).

Table 2

*Response Rate of Administered Questionnaire*

<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Questionnaires Distributed</b>	<b>Questionnaires Retrieved</b>	<b>Not Returned</b>
Armed Forces of Nigeria	120	116	4
NPF & Other Security Agencies	50	47	3
Northeast Development Commission	40	38	2
International NGOs (e.g., ICRC, Mercy Corps, NRC)	40	37	3
State Ministries (Health, Education, etc.)	40	38	2
Local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	40	39	1
UN Agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF, WHO)	40	37	3
Traditional and Religious Leaders	30	28	2
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	30	29	1
Academic and Research Institutions	20	18	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Percentage and Response Rate</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94.9%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>

Source: Author (2025)

*Data Collection*

*Quantitative Data Collection:* A questionnaire was used; whereby 5-point Likert scales and multiple-choice questions were used to measure the data on perceptions of effectiveness, challenges and impacts. Validity and reliability were covered through rigorous pre-testing. *Qualitative Data Collection:* 25 semi-structured interviews were carried out with purposely chosen respondents of each stakeholder group, which comprised battalion commanders, NGO project managers, the local government officials and the community elders. This gave deep contextual information on the dynamics of implementation. SPSS (Version 28) was used to analyse the quantitative data. Frequencies, percentages and means were created as descriptive statistics. Relationships among variables, such as, stakeholder group and perception of effectiveness, were investigated by using inferential statistics.

*Data Analysis*

The qualitative data were transcribed and analysed through thematic analysis in NVivo software and the six-step process of thematic analysis, in reference to Braun and Clarke (2006), identified recurring themes and patterns. All the participants gave informed consent. There were anonymity and confidentiality. A relevant

university ethics board passed the research protocol and all requisite military and civil authorities were given permission for the research.

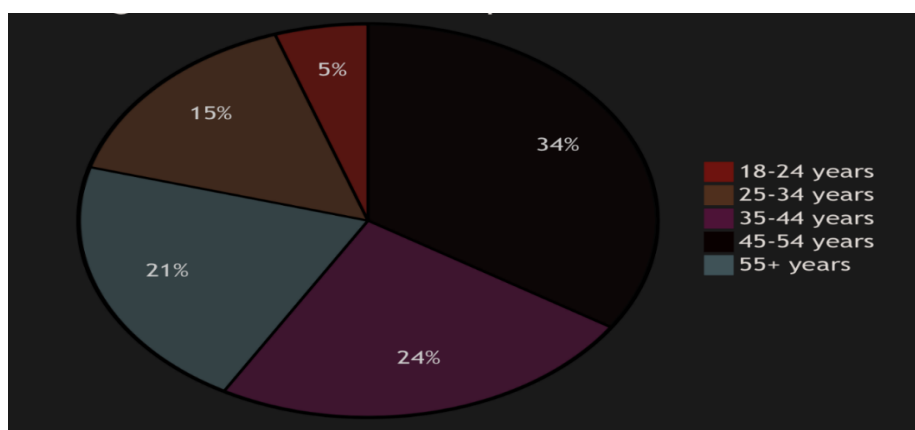
## Findings and Analysis

### *Demographics and Professional Profile of the Respondents*

The survey confirmed a very varied and well-educated group of respondents. Figure 1 indicates that the age distribution varied, as the highest rate was 45-54 years (34.12%), implying that QIPs are active older adults who may be in high-ranking positions in the community.

Figure 1

#### *Age Distribution of Respondents (N=422)*

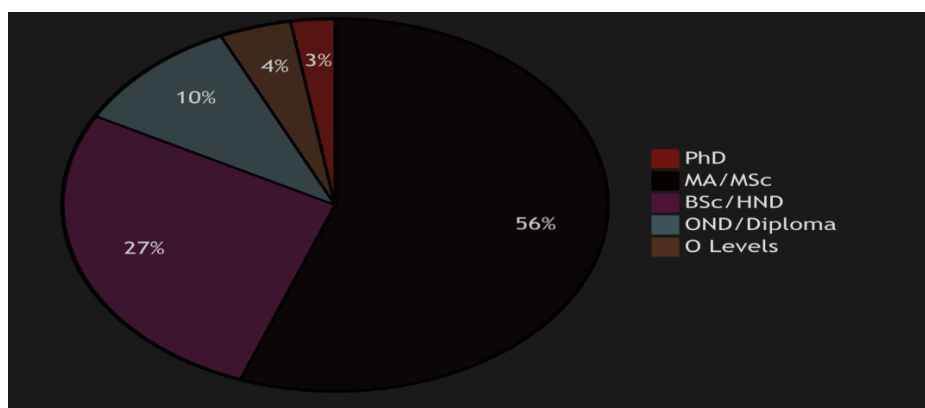


Source: Author (2025)

More impressively, Figure 2 shows the higher education rate of the respondents, with 55.6% being master's degree holders and 2.61% being PhD holders. This implies that the QIP ecosystem is comprised of a very knowledgeable group of professionals and this enhances the validity of the perception information that is gathered.

Figure 2:

#### *Highest Educational Qualification of Respondents (N=422)*



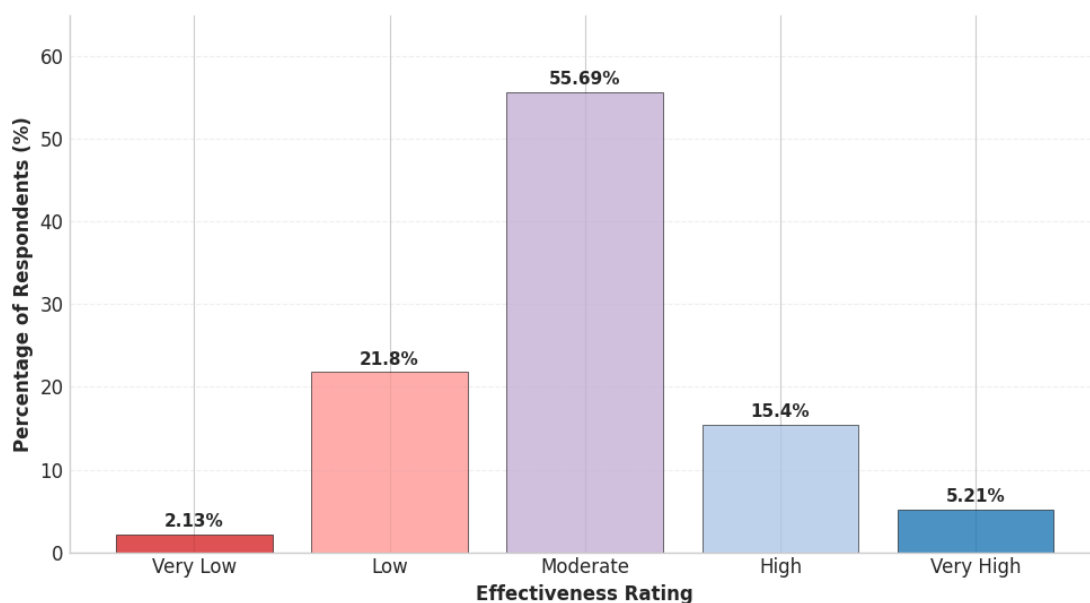
Source: Author (2025)

### *The Nature and Perceived Effectiveness of QIPs*

From Figure 3 it is evident from the respondents when asked to rate the overall effectiveness of QIPs, most of them (55.69%) rated it as moderately effective. This is an indication that there is a generalized feeling that QIPs are working, though not exceeding expectations. The 23.93 percent that scored effectiveness as Low or Very Low reflects much dissatisfaction.

Figure 3

*Participants' Response to the Effectiveness of QIPs Implemented by the AFN*

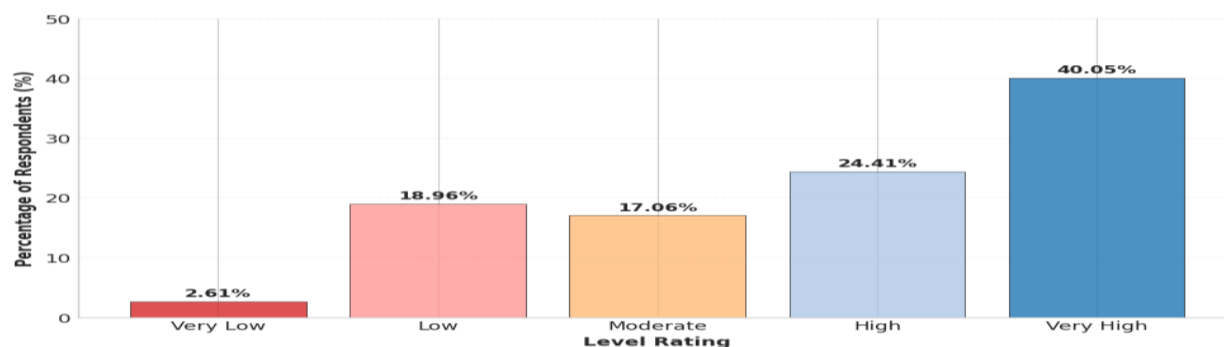


Source: Author (2025)

Nevertheless, the more positive perceptions were observed when the question was formulated as per the level of efforts put in by the AFN (Figure 4). The level of 40.05% of the rating members was very high, meaning that the criticism was not towards the purpose or effort of the AFN but towards the design and the results of the projects themselves.

Figure 4

*Respondents' Response on the Level of QIPs by the AFN*



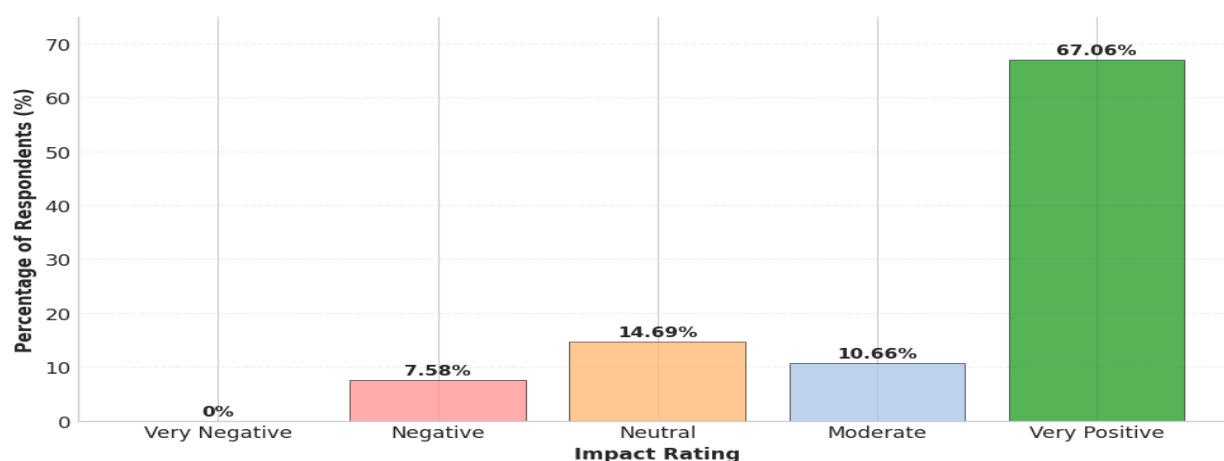
Source: Author (2025)

### *The Impact of QIPs on Human Security Dimensions*

The value of QIPs to particular areas of human security was perceived in a positive way. Figure 5 demonstrates that 67.06% of the respondents considered that the influence on education, healthcare and infrastructure had been positive to a great extent. This is a high level of positive perception that is in line with the reported AFN outputs as seen in Tables 3 and 4.

*Figure 5*

#### *Respondents' Opinion on Contributions of QIPs to Education, Healthcare and Infrastructure*



Source: Author (2025)

Table 3 illustrated the support to the perceived positive effects of Quick Impact Projects identified in the survey data. The table shows a physical and long-term dedication to the restoration of the broken infrastructure of the North-East with significant spikes in performance, such as the restoration of 60 kilometres of road and eight boreholes in 2020. This information demonstrates that it is a direct reaction to the essential human security issues: fixed roads (economic security) allow the passage of goods and people, reconstructed healthcare facilities (health security) offer necessary healthcare services and reconstructed boreholes (environmental security) guarantee the availability of clean water. Nevertheless, these changing figures, especially the noticeable decrease in activity since 2022, also visually tell the story of the difficulties in maintaining such activities, which is probably a sign of limited funds, the speed of operations and the problem of logistics, which can hinder the sustainability of such essential interventions.

Table 3

*AFN's Infrastructure Restoration Efforts in the North-East (2017-2024)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Roads Rehabilitated (km)</b>	<b>Bridges Reconstructed</b>	<b>Healthcare Centres Restored</b>	<b>Boreholes Rehabilitated</b>
2017	40	2	3	5
2018	30	1	2	6
2019	50	3	4	7
2020	60	2	5	8
2021	45	1	4	6
2022	55	1	6	7
2023	35	1	3	5
2024	30	1	2	6

Source: Author (2025)

Table 4 data can be characterized as the evident increasing tendency of humanitarian outputs up to 2022-2023 and then a slight decrease. This peak-and-downward trend, which was supported by the interview data, is an indication of a scaling-up stage, which is followed by the possible donor burnout, financial limitations, or strategic priorities change.

Table 4

*Trend Analysis of Humanitarian Assistance and Social Services by AFN (2017-2024)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Food Distributed (Metric Tons)</b>	<b>Medical Outreach (Beneficiaries)</b>	<b>Vocational Training (Beneficiaries)</b>
2017	2,000	20,000	800
2018	2,500	25,000	900
2019	3,000	30,000	1,000
2020	3,500	35,000	1,200
2021	4,000	40,000	1,500
2022	5,000	45,000	1,700
2023	4,500	50,000	1,800
2024	3,800	45,000	1,600

Source: Author (2025)

*The Root Causes of Insurgency and Implications for QIPs*

The most significant result, which is included in Table 5, is the overwhelming dominance of the factor of Poverty and Economic Hardship (95.3%) in the list of the key drivers of insurgency, which is much higher in relation to such factors as radicalization and religious extremism (25.1%). This has far-reaching consequences for the QIP strategy. It indicates that most of the urgent issues that require the attention of QIPs are addressed, but unless strategies are in place to connect them to programs that deal with the underlying economic causes of the conflict, they are not enough.

Table 5

*Primary Sources of Insurgency in the North-East (N=422)*

Source	Response	Percentage (%)	Rank
Poverty and Economic Hardship	402	95.3	1
Weak Governance and Corruption	219	51.9	2
High Rate of Illiteracy and Poor Education	201	47.6	3
Porous Borders and Arms Proliferation	135	32.0	4
Religious Extremism and Radicalization	106	25.1	5

Source: Field Data, (2025)

*Systemic Challenges Undermining QIP Effectiveness*

The survey also established the structural issues of QIPs that are central to the ranking of the respondents in Table 6. The most severe was the lack of Special equipment (77%), which pointed to the shortage of operation. However, the following three highest-ranked issues, including Insufficient Collaboration Mechanism (71.6%), Lack of Community Participation and Ownership (68.3%) and Inadequate Specialized Training (63.3%), are all process-oriented, but not resource-oriented issues. This identifies one of the underlying weaknesses of the present QIP model: it is centred on the provision of tangible outputs against the development of collaborative processes and local capacity as the building blocks of sustainability.

Table 6

*Major Challenges Undermining QIPs (N=422)*

Major Challenges	Response	Percentage (%)	Rank
Lack of Specialized Equipment	325	77.0	1
Insufficient Collaboration Mechanism	302	71.6	2
Lack of Community Participation and Ownership	288	68.3	3
Inadequate Specialized Training	267	63.3	4
Poor Monitoring and Evaluation Framework	196	46.4	5

Source: Field Data, (2025)

These were expounded in qualitative interviews. According to an NGO director,

*The army comes, constructs a clinic within two weeks and goes. There is no negotiation with the State Ministry of Health on the staffing of the same or provision of drugs. It turns into a shell, a representation of broken vows. One of the older people in the community remarked, they do not bother to enquire what we need. They decide for us. What are we going to do with a project we did not think of in the first place?*

These quotes are a graphic depiction of the lack of consideration of the linkage between the delivery of a social good and the institution of governance structures that are required to maintain the good.

## Discussion

The results are contradictory: QIPs are known to be highly hard-working and producing beneficial effects on the sector, but their overall performance is seen as moderate only and lacks effectiveness due to the entrenched operational and strategic barriers. The current discussion explains these findings in the framework of the critical Public Goods Theory, which was created above.

### *Public Goods Dilemma: Provision vs. Governance*

The AFN is, as an agent of the state, trying beyond any doubt to offer public goods, which are security, infrastructure and basic services, in an area where they are sorely needed. Tables 3 and 4 are evidence of this effort in the data on rebuilt schools, clinics and distributed aid. This intervention is logical and must be done in the classical PGT terms.

The critical PGT viewpoints, however, show the weaknesses. The lack of community ownership is a manifestation of the so-called free-rider problem (Olson, 1971). When an outsider makes a project and gives it to the community, the latter has little reason to invest in it based on its own resources. Moreover, the top-down form of provision is also actively hostile to the possibility of the polycentric systems of governance that Ostrom (1990) found important in the context of common-pool resources. The AFN does not develop the local institutional capacity to govern these public goods on a long-term basis by bypassing the local authorities and community decision-making structures. The project is not a part of the social life of the community, but a closed event. This is the reason why only a moderate perceived effectiveness can be perceived at the same time by high-output projects.

### *Symptom or Cause-based Treatment? The Disagreement with Human Security*

Since most of the countries have overwhelmingly associated poverty as the primary force behind insurgency (Table 2), there is a possibility that the existing QIP model is only addressing the symptoms of the war and not the causes. Although offering a borehole can deal with short-term environmental security and a vocational training program can enhance economic security in the short term, they are piecemeal interventions. A broad human security would demand a coherent plan that would provide systematic connections of such projects to the larger economic renewal, reform in the justice sector and political integration. The existing, project-oriented, but lacking in terms of Collaboration, approach (Poor Collaboration Mechanism scored second) is not good enough to meet this integrated vision. It boosts in the respective areas of human security in a compartmentalized fashion, but does not produce the synergistic effect that can allow transformative change.

### *Sustainability Gap: The Tyranny of the Quick Impact*

These fundamental constraints (identified in the need to limit community involvement, ineffective M&E and insufficient training) all reflect an underlying conflict between the tactical reasoning of the quick impact and the strategic need of sustainable development. The slow and participatory nature of sustainable development is incompatible with the pace at which the military operates, which is motivated by the necessity to have visible victories. This is one of the main conclusions of this study. The QIP, as envisaged, is a tool of tactical counterinsurgency but not strategic human security improvement. To make it the latter, its design and

execution should be disconnected from the short-term military goals and become part of a long-term developmental structure led by civilians.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has given a methodological examination of how the Quick Impact Projects of the AFN have improved the aspect of human security in North-Eastern Nigeria. It finds that QIPs had a functional but insignificant role. They are operational to provide short-term humanitarian assistance, state presence and to establish the initial trust following the conclusion of combat actions, which makes them effective as a tactical aid. Nevertheless, their role in sustainable human security is grossly limited by a model that considers quick delivery of output as the paramount value over process, collaboration and empowerment of the locals. The theoretical value of the current paper lies in proving that the successful delivery of public goods in a post-conflict environment is not just the technical issue of resource allocation but the more profound problem of governance and the political-social fit. In a bid to fill the gap between tactical achievement and strategic influence, the following recommendations are put forward:

*Delivery to Facilitation Paradigm shift:* The AFN has to transform its role of direct implementation of projects to a facilitator of civilian agencies. The comparative advantage of the military is to offer security and access; they must apply it to create a safe environment within which the specialized government ministries, NGOs and private contractors can take the initiative to develop projects.

*Make Compulsory Collaboration Structures Institutional:* AFN, with the affiliation of the Northeast Development Commission (NEDC) and the state governments, must set up formalized Civil-Military Coordination (CIMCoord) frameworks at state and local government levels. All stakeholders in the stabilization should be required to participate in sharing plans, avoiding duplication and integrating activities.

*Embed Community-led Needs Assessment and Participatory M&E:* No QIP may be launched without the previous, validated needs assessment that is to be done in Collaboration with the community leaders, the representatives of women and youth. In addition, basic M&E systems are to be developed with communities, which will enable them to monitor the project performance and report on the functionality after implementation.

*Invest in Specialized CIMIC Training and equipment:* The AFN must have a specialized CIMIC training school that trains personnel in conflict-sensitive programming, stakeholder analysis, negotiations and community engagements. At the same time, there should be a dedicated fund to acquire the rapid deployment engineering and medical packages that are needed for effective delivery of QIP.

However, through these recommendations, the AFN can change its approach to QIP strategy to no longer be a series of disconnected tactical moves but a part of a larger benefit-sustainable and people-centred human security plan of North-Eastern Nigeria. To further refine the best practices, future studies can track the lifecycle of QIPs longitudinally and compare QIP models in other countries with conflict to identify the best practices.



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