Introduction
The ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy Tracker is an Open Data Platform that provides practical analysis of operational policy framework for ECOWAS counter-terrorism actions and promotion of common regional approach towards prevention and combating of terrorism within the Community through the documentation and analyses of the location, nature, trends and patterns of violent extremist incidences, extremist groups and government response across West Africa and beyond on daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis.

This project is aimed at helping ECOWAS member and observer states to understand terrorist activities in the region and to track ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy (CTS) implementation efforts, through the presentation of actionable data. Ultimately, the tracker endeavours to counter violent extremism in the ECOWAS region.

Highlights for the Month
According to the North-East Nigeria Recovery and Peace Building Assessment Report completed in April 2016, nearly 15 million people have been affected by the violence of Boko Haram and the resulting military operations in North East Nigeria, with over 20,000 lives lost and 1.8 million people displaced due to violence.¹

This trend of extremist based violence continued in May 2016 as observed in different states across ECOWAS and Sahel countries by different groups with major attacks, including the reports of not less than 30 ethnic Fulani herdsmen killed by Boko Haram militants in northern Nigeria last week of April 2016 when they raided the village of Alau in Borno State. Boko Haram was also responsible for the killing of seven internally displaced persons in Goniri town of Gujba Local Government of Yobe State, Nigeria and an attack by a female suicide bomber who blew herself at the Musa Usman Secretariat in the Northeast Nigeria killing a police officer and injuring 19 others. Other events of note included the killing of five United Nations Peacekeepers in north eastern Mali on the 18th of May, three injured and the sixth person died of his injury on May 24th in Mali when their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device and unknown gunmen opened fire on them. The Islamist group Ansar Dine claimed

responsibility among other attacks within the month’.2

The month of May 2016 also was not void of violence attack in the Niger Delta of Nigeria by the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and the Fulani Herds men attacks in Ekiti and Enugu state, in the country’s middle belt.

However, the fight against terrorism recorded notable progress within the month which includes the affirmation of the judgement of a federal high court in Lagos convicting and sentencing each of the three members of the dreaded terror group Boko Haram to 25 years imprisonment by the court of appeal and the willful surrendering of no fewer than 16 suspected Boko Haram fighters to the military troops3

‘No fewer than 16 Boko Haram fighters surrendered to military troops in Balazala and Ahamdaga Makaranta Villages’. Source: ECOWAS CTS Tracker

**Key Event within the Month**

The sequel to the Paris Summit held 2 years ago, the 2nd Regional Security Summit held in Abuja on the 14th of May 2016 with major focus on reviewing the progress made by the Lake Chad Basin member states including Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin and plan for the post conflict phase of the fight against extremist groups with members of the International community, Heads of States of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Central African Republic, Senegal, Togo and the President of France in attendance.

*As at May 2016, about 795 Boko Haram members were held in Maroua Prison, with only 125 of them formally charged, tried and sentenced to Prison*

*Source: ECOWAS CTS Tracker*

**Trends and Pattern of Extremist Violence**

The trend of violent terror and its approach has continued to grow in different dimensions and this includes

**Multiplicity of Attacks by different groups in one State** - Burkina Faso faced multiplicity of attacks by different violent extremist groups in less than a year including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Macina Liberation Front (MLF) or Ansar al-Din south, and al-Murabitun of Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui.

**Recruitment of Foreign Nationals** – There were strong speculations that foreigners were behind the attacks in Burkina Faso.

**Use of Children and Girls as Suicide Bombers** - Reports of extremist attacks within the month tracked by the ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Tracker and reported from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs shows

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2 http://ecowascounterterrorism.org/violence-incident-update/

3 http://ecowascounterterrorism.org/violence-incident-update/
that one in five suicide bombers used is a child, while more than 75 per cent of them are girls. There are worries that this trend may grow because of violence in the Northeast region of Nigeria has led to the displacement of more than 1.2 million children in the zone.\footnote{www.nigeriabulletin.co/threads/over-1.2m-children-displaced-by-boko-haram-in-northeast-unicef.213014}

‘Boko Haram has increased its use of child suicide bombers tenfold over the past year despite more military operations targeting the militants in the Lake Chad Basin Region’, Source: UN OCHA

**Use of Improvised Explosive Device (IED)**
The Use of Improvised explosive device was prevalent as observed in the attacks targeting

- a. Eight UN Peace Keepers in Mali, killing 6 of the peace keepers and injuring others

- b. Four soldiers in Nigeria killing one of the soldiers and injuring 3

- c. On the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of May, two Boko Haram suicide bombers detonated their explosives about 200kms from Kolofata but only succeeded in killing themselves.

**Use of Gun Shots and Burning of Victims**
- Six people were killed on Friday May 20\textsuperscript{th} in a village in southern Niger in an attack thought to have been carried out by Boko Haram militants, per the Defence Ministry. The victims died from gunshot sounds or being burned alive, seven other people were wounded in the attack and have been evacuated

**Use of Poisoned Arrow by Self-Défense Group**— the Cameroonian authorities reported a new trend of a local self-defence group using a poisoned arrow to kill a woman with explosives strapped to her body within the month

**Rise of Female Headed Households**—While the rate of migration through Niger to or from Algeria or Libya has increased, the demographics of the migrants as tracked by the Niger Border tracker shows that majority of the families migrating are female headed households, children and the elderly.

**Nearly one in five suicide bombers is a child with more than half of them being girls**

Source: ECOWAS CTS Tracker

**Challenge of availability and access to Food and other basic needs** — the prevalence of extremist violence has not only caused displacement of its victims from their homes, including displacing children from their parents but also has affected the availability and access to basic needs of life including food, shelter, clothing, health care and primary education. This is evidenced in the recent Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Overview
Report showing that 481,000 children in the region are suffering from severe acute malnutrition.\(^5\)

**Use of Niger as Transit Route**- Among the migratory issues is the growing trend of migration to & fro Algeria and Libya using Niger as transit route. From February to April 2016 alone, over 60,970 migrants have crossed through Niger moving towards Algeria or Libya or coming from Algeria or Libya to other Lake Chad destinations.

**Nationalities of Migrants**- The nationalities of these migrants show they are mostly citizens of Lake Chad Basins and SAHEL countries were extremist groups violence has been prevalent over the years, with Nigeria accounting for over 35% of the migrants.

![Graph showing nationalities of migrants using Niger as transit route to & fro Algeria & Libya](image)

Data Source: Niger Border Tracker. Graph piloted by ECOWAS CTS Tracker

This observed rise in migration are not without its own financial cost on the side of the migrants as reports shows that on the average, the migrants spend within 85 to 345USD to migrate through Niger. Making it a growing economic trend and exploitation from the already vulnerable groups as the means of migration and cost are without appropriate

**Reduction in number of incidences and death rate** - From May 2015 to May 2016, incidents trends also show that the number of deaths from violent attacks has reduced from over 140 deaths to less than a 100 while the number of violent attacks has also

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\(^5\) [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Snapshot_03%20June%202016%20%281%29.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Snapshot_03%20June%202016%20%281%29.pdf)
reduced its all-time low since recording began in April 2016⁶.

**Strategy**

Following the ECOWAS CTSSIP strategy, with focus on prevention, rescue and reconstruct, the 2⁰ regional security summit therefore plays a great role in improving coordination among member states, however, the ECOWAS CTSSIP calls on states to implement the outcome of the summit as outlined in its communiqué especially as it relates to prevention and de-radicalization activities that addresses basic needs of affected victims, ideologies, health and social issues for youths, children, women and repentant extremist group members.

Looking at some of the events and activities of the MNJTF tracked by the ECOWAS tracker within the month, the joint taskforce despite its challenges made remarkable progress, some of which includes

- MNJTF member nations now freely share intelligence leading to current successes in the fight against Boko Haram per MNJTF Commander, Maj. Gen Lamidi Adeosun.

- The MNJTF fighting Boko Haram in the Northeast Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon said it has liberated at least 4,690 hostages between January to May 2016

  - The multinational forces fighting the Islamic extremists of Boko Haram arrested five of the group’s leaders and freed dozens of captive women and children, per Cameroon’s government on the 14th of May 2016

  - Arrest of Boko Haram leader, Boukar Kaou, during a raid in which 58 militants died

  - Arrest of Yacouba Toure, the number two in the Ansar Dine of the south terrorist group Harakat Ansar al-Din), linked to Al Qaeda outside Bamako by Malian Forces

  - Rescue of a second girl from the group of 276 schoolgirls kidnapped more than two years ago, by the Nigerian army

Sequel to the progress made by the Joint Taskforce, emphasis on good governance and human rights should also not be alienated while engaging at both national and regional level in pursing counter-terrorism across the region

⁶[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Snapshot_03%20June%202016%20%281%29.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Snapshot_03%20June%202016%20%281%29.pdf)
Conclusion
Terrorism has become a major trend across Africa with ECOWAS and Sahelian countries are struggling to manage the burgeoning terrorist threat, which has implications for the people, economy and development in these states. These terrorist groups have explored and exploited the weaknesses existing in the porous borders, poor coordination, political conflicts, bad governance among other developmental challenges to build and strengthen their base and activities.

This threat therefore presses the need for states to be consistent with their alliance in fighting this common threat in a way that helps them prevent, rescue and de-radicalize both victims and extremist group members.

The ECOWAS counter terrorism tracker, based on its observations and trends of the incidences of violent attacks and state responses/approach in countering terrorism from the ECOWAS and Sahelian states, therefore recommends the following:

- State parties should prioritize the implementation of the ECOWAS counter terrorism strategy
- Affected states should improve intelligence sharing and coordination
- States should improve tracking and managing of displaced persons – especially of vulnerable demographics like children
- Include of traditional and religious leaders in engaging and de-radicalization of the affected extremist group members and communities from extremist ideologies and propaganda.
ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy Implementation Factsheet - May 2016

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