The Impact of Community Engagement on Border Surveillance in Nigeria: A study of Communities in Yunusari Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of community engagement on border surveillance in Yunusari Local Government Area, Nigeria. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research explores how active community participation can enhance the effectiveness of border surveillance efforts. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with community members, border guards, and local government officials. Key findings indicate that increased community engagement improves information flow, enhances early warning systems, and strengthens trust between local communities and border security agencies. The study also highlights challenges such as resistance to change, lack of resources, and inadequate training. Recommendations are provided to foster greater collaboration and mutual benefit between communities and border surveillance authorities, emphasizing the importance of empowering residents as key stakeholders in national security. This research contributes to the broader understanding of how community-driven initiatives can support more effective border management strategies in Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

Border security over the years has been an important aspect of national and international security, especially in the regions that are affected by transnational crime, irregular migration, and terrorism. Community engagement is becoming a critical approach to the improvement of border surveillance in the world. In the United States, one such program that is being used by the Department of Homeland Security to promote community-based efforts includes the Border Community Liaison Initiative, which enables the residents and law enforcement agencies to enhance situational awareness (Andreas, 2012). Moreover, the cooperation with the local community can be mentioned among the efforts to enhance the intelligence-sharing process and border surveillance, which are prevalent in Europe, e.g., the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) (Carrera et al., 2017). Countries in Asia, such as India have instituted the India border security strategy on its border with Bangladesh which includes community watch that empowers villagers to report suspicious incidents that help in enhancing surveillance and curbing the movement of illegal cross-border (Chatterjee, 2020).

The community-based security models have become increasingly popular in Africa. The Nyumba Kumi project which encourages security monitoring in neighborhoods in Kenya, has played a crucial role in countering cross-border crime and terrorism in the border areas (Ruteere & Mutahi, 2019). Some of the community policing activities on the Ugandan border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo have enhanced the levels of early warning and cooperation between locals and security employees (Nantulya, 2021). These illustrations highlight the importance of involving communities around borders in security systems. These types of integrations will not only help in sharing information more effectively and increase the possibility of detecting threats earlier, but also build trust between the security staff and the residents.

Nigeria faces a significant border security problem, especially in areas prone to insurgencies, smuggling as well as uncontrolled migration. A typical example of the location where these border security concerns are particularly strong is the Yunusari Local Government Area (LGA) of Yobe State, Nigeria. A community in the northeastern part of the country bordering the Niger Republic. Since the traditional security approaches are becoming inefficient, the idea of community engagement in border surveillance is an

opportunity to boost security outcomes (Okoli & Orinya, 2022). This paper examines the importance of community involvement in border surveillance in the Yunusari LGA and evaluates how the active involvement of residents can enhance the ability of the border security agencies to collect intelligence, increase the level of early warning, and improve the level of trust between the communities and the border security agencies.

The study will have a mixed-method design, as surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with the members of the community, border guards, and local government officials will be used to gather information. The results found that high-level community involvement is of critical importance in enhancing security at the borders since it enables effective sharing of information in time and collaborative security programs. Nevertheless, the lack of resources, the insufficiency of training, and resistance to change undermine the successful execution of community-based surveillance programs (Adebayo, 2021).

This paper will examine how community policing has impacted border patrol in the Yunusari Local Government Area (LGA) as a part of the general argument about participative approaches to security in Nigeria. It has touched on the importance of empowering residents as major stakeholders in national security. What is more, the study provides recommendations aimed at intensifying the cooperation between the communities and border management bodies.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW
Community Engagement
Community engagement is a wide and dynamic process that entails interaction of persons, groups and institutions to tackle shared problems and enhance shared outcomes. It is common in governance, security development and the health of the people to enhance participatory decision making and collective problem solving (Arnstein, 1969; Head, 2007). The community can be described as the process of including local people and groups of people in eventuality that impact their lives to a sense of ownership, participation, and empowerment (OECD, 2016). Its idea is based on inclusiveness, building trust, shared accountability, and respect (Putnam, 2000).

Community Engagement Models
Several community engagement models such as the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (2000) have been created to inform the participatory process. This framework emerged out of the efforts of the International Association of Public Participation and it categorizes a continuum of engagement activities, which include informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering communities in decision-making.

Border Surveillance
Border surveillance is a scientific process of patrol and control of the territorial limits to avoid illegal acts like unauthorized migration, smuggling, people trafficking and cross-border terrorism (Andreas, 2012; Zaiotti, 2016). It is an essential element to national security and sovereignty and it provides the security of the citizens of a country in addition to providing legal cross-border traffic and trade (Weber and Bowling, 2008). According to recent research, the border policing at the community level (the concept of community-based border policing, or CBBP) becomes a viable option at the Nigeria/Niger border, where collaboration of the local communities can be viewed as a way of improving the surveillance (Adamu, 2024).

METHODOLOGY
The paper is based on a mixed-method study design, which includes an in-depth examination of the influence of community engagement on border surveillance in the Yunusari Local Government Area of Yobe State, Nigeria, incorporating statistical data and comprehensive insights of the community, border security officers, and local government forces. Yunusari LGA is located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, which borders the east and south with the Niger. The area belongs to the larger Lake Chad Basin which has a rich cultural heritage and natural resources (Sani and Mohammed, 2020). There are a number of wards that make up the LGA and each of them has its peculiarities and difficulties. Yunusari covers an area of about 3,500 square kilometers in land and has a population of about 300,000 residents (National Population Commission, 2019).

The sampling method employed was stratified random sampling to be able to have a full representation of different groups of stakeholders. The sample comprised 150 members of the community who were randomly chosen on the villages bordering the borders, 50 border security officials who had been chosen randomly from diverse agencies, and 20 local government officials who were chosen purposely based on whether they were engaged in security governance.

It is essential to ensure a clear sample size so that the study can be generalized to the whole population and the sampling error is reduced (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Considering the nature of the Yunusari Local Government Area, whose population is scattered with a high concentration of various security stakeholders, the sample of 220 respondents can be considered a powerful representation of the community members, security staff, and government representatives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research was a mixed-method study that sought to determine how community engagement affects border surveillance in the Yunusari Local Government Area of Yobe State in Nigeria. This chapter will contain the data analysis and delivery of the data obtained by 220 individuals (community members, border security officers and local government officials).

The analysis based on quantitative data was performed with the help of descriptive statistics and frequencies, percentages, and means:

Table 1: Community Members' Perception of Border Surveillance.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Community engagement improves border Surveillance.	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%	13.3%
Community members are aware of border security threats.	33.3%	38.7%	17.3%	10.7%
Community members report suspicious activities to security agencies.	23.3%	30%	26.7%	20%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The data suggests a generally positive perception among community members, with 73.3% (strongly agree + agree) recognizing the importance of their involvement in border surveillance. This reflects a strong potential for deepening community engagement as a strategic asset in border management. However, the presence of dissenting views, though in the minority, underscores the need for institutional reforms, trust-building, and support systems to encourage wider and more consistent participation.

Table 2: Border Security Personnel's Perception of Community Engagement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Community engagement is essential for effective border surveillance.	60%	30%	6%	2%
Community members provide valuable information on border security threats.	50%	40%	6%	4%
Community engagement improves relationships between security agencies and the community members.	40%	50%	6%	4%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The overall result demonstrates overwhelming support among border security personnel for deeper collaboration with local communities. With 90% (strongly agree + agree) affirming the necessity of community engagement, it is clear that frontline officers view local participation as not just beneficial but essential to successful border management. The complete absence of disagreement also suggests that resistance to community involvement does not stem from the security agencies themselves, but more likely from structural or logistical constraints. As such, policies and programs aimed at strengthening these partnerships are likely to receive strong backing from border operatives.

Table 3: Local Government Officials' Perception of Community Engagement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Community engagement is a key component of border surveillance strategy.	75%	20%	5%	0%
Community members are willing to collaborate with security agencies.	50%	40%	10%	0%
Community engagement improves the overall security of the community.	60%	30%	10%	0%

Source: Field Survey 2025

The findings demonstrate near-unanimous support for community engagement among local government officials, with **95% (strongly agree + agree)** affirming its central role in border surveillance strategy. This consensus reflects a shared recognition of the strategic advantage that grassroots participation offers in addressing cross-border threats. Importantly, the lack of dissent indicates that the local government is likely to support efforts aimed at institutionalizing community-based security frameworks, especially if such efforts are accompanied by adequate resources and training.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed the issue of community involvement in intensifying border patrol in the Yunusari Local Government Area (LGA) in Yobe state, Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-methodology to collect information about the community members, border security officers and the local government. The results prove that community-based activities are key to enhancing border security by ensuring better intelligence collection, timely information exchange, and a system of early warnings.

Community participation is a major aspect of border surveillance that was largely supported by a great number of stakeholders in all groups. Members of the community have realized that they are good at detecting threats, whereas border officials have realized that local intelligence is operationally valuable. Similarly, the local government officials endorsed the strategic value of integrating grassroots players into security systems.

Even though the future is promising, the research has revealed some of the major challenges that have continued to impede the successful adoption of community-based surveillance programs. They are insufficient training of the members of the community, fear of retaliation, poor logistics, and poor coordination of the security agencies and the residents. Further, the absence of official frameworks and motivations remains a constraint to the sustainability of such initiatives.

Thus, community-based border surveillance requires a well-resourced and collaborative and trust-based strategy to be effective. Local people's inclusion in security governance cannot be a casual affair but it has to be institutionalized into an element of policy and practice.

RECOMMENDATION

According to the results, the research provides the following recommendations:

1. **Establish Community-Based Surveillance Structures:** The government agencies must institutionalize community-based watch groups in the border security strategies. This would encompass laws, which define the roles, duties and safeguards of community volunteers.
2. **Capacity Building and Training:** The community members who participate in surveillance need training regularly on how to identify threats, report, and ensure personal safety. The security agencies also need to be trained on the methods of engaging and working with the local populations.
3. **Incentives and Support Mechanisms:** Basic incentives to the community participants to achieve sustainability should be offered as stipends, communication tools or livelihood support. This will strengthen their dedication and less susceptibility to extraneous influence or pressure.
4. **Improve on Information Sharing:** Border security threats and incidents need to be communicated promptly and efficiently by security agencies and other individuals within the community. This would be done by setting up a reporting system within the community and frequent interactions between security personnel and the community members.
5. **Encourage Community Trust and Awareness Campaigns:** Outreach and sensitization campaigns are to be introduced to establish mutual trust between security actors and residents. This will contribute to the lessening of fear, suspicion and misinformation.
6. **Strengthen Interagency and Multi-Stakeholder Response:** Local governments, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, and security agencies are expected to establish joint committees to manage and synchronize the community engagement activities along the border.
7. **Secure Sufficient Financing and Government Support:** The federal and state governments need to provide special resources and policy commitment to neighborhood security programs, particularly along the borders that are vulnerable to insecurity.

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