TECHNICAL EDUCATION AS A PANACEA FOR CURBING BANDITRY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NORTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Banditry is among the major security trepidations stifling development in the Northwest and Nigeria at large. This has heighted insecurity and internal displacements in the region with humanitarian issues as farmers have limited access to their farms. Despite government's attempts to end insecurity in the region it has been proven abortive. This paper therefore examined leadership challenge in inculcating technical education in the context of unending banditry in Northwest Nigeria. Relying on secondary sources, the paper drew extensively from the state fragility theory and posited that the lackadaisical attitudes of Nigerian government to introduce technical and vocational education has caused a lot of challenges to the ever-growing population that relies on farming and pastoralism for survival. The paper submitted that governments of the Northwest Nigeria have not invested in technical education which has made the youth vulnerable to banditry. The paper concluded that until the government invest in formal education that is technically inclined to get the youth engaged, banditry will continue to be the order of the day. To do this government has to direct the budgetary allocation to education with sincerity of releasing the budgeted funds for the implementation of technical oriented educational programmes for the youths. Also, the stake holders have to engage the youth in meaningful projects to make them self-sustaining. This can start with abolishing the Almajiri system in the region so that parents will be held responsible for the upbringing of their children.

Abstract

Introduction

Banditry is among the major security trepidations stifling development in the Northwest and Nigeria at large. The extant explosion of small arms and light weapons in the region has occasioned an inadmissibly high level of armed crime and banditry (Idris &Umaru,2024). Consequently, an unquantified number of people are killed kidnapped or attacked and cattle rustled s on a daily basis across the region. Armed bandit according to Lamidi (2024), have a major impact on the development programmes of a nation. This can be experienced in the deterioration of physical infrastructure during armed conflict, as well as the decline in agricultural productivity (UNCTAD, 2002). The growing number of literature on the origin of banditry especially in the Northwest is centred on the chronological analysis of farmer herder crisis and climate change (Ojewale, Osasona, &Shamsudeen, 2024 Bello & Abdullahi, 2021). This group of scholars hinge their argument on the natural resource perspective of the crisis. The perspective emphasises over reliance on the limited natural resources for survival by an increasing population which naturally resort to scarcity perpetuated by climate change. Thus there is a constant violent interaction between the sedentary and pastoral farmers. The fact that there are cases of cattle rustling and farmer-herder crisis in the Northwest region, this can be considered narrowly as the cause of banditry because resource depletion can be predicted and managed with good policies.

Another line of scholars dwells their arguments on the ungoverned spaces (Okoli &Ngwu, 2024; Lamidi,2024; Okoli &Ugwu, 2019). This perspective emphasises the inability of government to govern all its territories especially in the rural areas who organise their government around traditional non state actors without formal rules. Usually you have the traditional and religious leaders mobilizing the local youths into vigilante groups for the protection of the communities who most times operate beyond their limits. The fact that some states in the Northwest shared international borders, managing the borders by the untrained and ill equipped vigilante becomes difficult paving the way for trans-border banditry, the case of Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram insurgency. The un-governability of the remote communities, hinterlands, mountains and forest zones in the Northwest states like Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna among others has become heavens for the bandits. Okoli and Ngwu (2024) reinforce this position that abandoned environment is prone to warlordism implying that in an unprotected environment banditry is highly anticipated.

Another related perspective emphasises illegal mining, poverty and unemployment (Aina, Ojo, & Oyewole, 2023; Ogbonaya, 2020; Azeez, & Yahaya, 2016). Related to the perspective on ungoverned spaces, this is scholars are of the view that when the government is not able to harness the natural resources in a formal way, the politicians use the youths to incite violence while they feed on such violence. To this end many interests come to play sometimes from the government or from the stakeholders who push the youth into illegal means either to mine the resources illegally for them or to attack the miners threatening the inhabitants to forcefully relocate. All these perspectives are valid and enduring in the Northwest region and the Nigerian governments have taken the kinetic and non- kinetic steps to manage the situation by deploying the army to quell the bandits (Okoli & Ngwu, 2024) and negotiating for amnesty (Lamidi, 2024). However, these appear secondary to the cause of enduring banditry in the region.

This paper takes a departure from the above by looking at the governance inability ab initio to invest in education for transformation. According to Siele (2011, p.1) “education is seen as a way of supporting the production system, as a way out of poverty, as a way to reduce conflict, as a source of economic diversification, as an insurance against drought and in the longer run as an adaptation to climate change”. This implies that without due consideration for education especially technical education, all the efforts made to curb banditry are reactionary in nature because the children who find themselves in IDP camps are most times left on their own with no livelihood to sustain them (Apinean & Gever, 2020). This however ought to be the starting point to give the displaced children formal and technical education to distract them from being vulnerable to be recruited into banditry as a means of survival (News Agency, 2021). Climate change is a natural event that is predictable and this predictability shows that it can be managed (IPCC 2023; Agbakoba & Akande, 2019). If technical education was embraced by the leadership pastoral farming would have been improved upon if the government had introduced technology by introducing ranching

system (Umoru & Okele, 2012). As it stands farming and animal husbandry, which are the main economic activities of the north western states, have been significantly affected by bandit campaigns.

The paper therefore, examines leadership challenge in inculcating technical education in the context of unending banditry in Northwest Nigeria. Relying on secondary sources, the paper drew extensively from the state fragility theory and posited that the lackadaisical attitudes of Nigerian governments to introduce technical education has caused a lot of challenges to the ever-growing population that relies on farming and pastoralism for survival. Following from the foregoing, the remainder of the paper is structured under the following subheadings: the concept of banditry, theoretical framework, education, banditry, curbing banditry in Northwest Nigeria, conclusion and recommendations.

ii. Concept of Banditry

Banditry can be explained in many perspectives depending on the outlook of the scholars. Egwu (2016) described banditry as act of rustling animals from herders or prowling of cattle from their studs. This implies that banditry is a violent attack on the pastoralist with the aim of stealing their animals. This has not given a wider view of banditry especially in the Northwest Nigeria experience where it cut across all facets of life. To this end Uche and Iwuamadi, (2018) argue that it is reflected in criminal adventures like cattle swooshing, abduction, armed theft, drug abuse, arson, rape and the unabashed and horrific extermination of rural societies with urbane arms by alleged herdsmen and retaliation attacks from remaining victims, a development that has been brought to the front burner of national security. This view explains a multi- faceted nature of banditry that is characteristic of their activities in most parts of Nigeria. In the context of this paper, it is defined as the entirety of occurrences of mugging such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, community invasions as well as highway incursions which involves the use of unwarranted force, threat, to bully a person or a group of persons with the aim of robbing, rape, kidnap or kill the victims.

iii. Theoretical framework

The study adopts state fragility theory to understand the remote and immediate cause of insecurity in Nigeria generally and Northwest in particular. A state is measured as fragile when it cannot sufficiently and faithfully carry out its task (Ojo, 2020). State fragility theory emphasizes the ultimate botch of a state to execute the essential roles to meet citizens' basic needs as well as their anticipations (Imasuen, 2015). This reflects the administration's inability to guarantee rudimentary safety of life and property, uphold the tenet of law, order and justice, or avail their citizens with indispensable services and economic prospects. The major tenet of this theory has to do with the feeble, inadequate and insufficient ability of the central government in concrete control over considerable space of its territory, provision of socio-economic services, control over sleaze, criminality and degeneration of violence and averting internal displacements (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013) such states are typically linked with tensions permeating in various places with high consequences. This is a replica of the Nigerian state as replicated by the unrest in the Northwest, Northeast, southeast, south-south and the North central regions. that is characterized by all the elements of a failed state as the basic ingredient for emancipation and transformation is not guaranteed.

iv. Education in Northwest Nigeria

Education is a process of learning that opens up to the learner, a comprehension of situations around him/her. According to Ajiboye et al (2024, p.170), "an individual develops a pattern of taught and conduct that is consistent with the level of education as a result of the knowledge they have acquired". This helps in attending to the demand of a community when it arises implying that an individual develops acquaintance with the situation base on the extent his knowledge can take him. Modern education is oftentimes the emancipation of individuals from the traditional way of life implying that it is a tool in the hands of individuals to overcome difficulties by exploring better ways of attending to the society's threatening demands (Siddiqui,2005). By implication the standard of living of any society is linked to the level and nature of education that is embraced by such a society. The justification of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

recommendation for 15% and 20% of the annual budget to education sector has come to pay here. The thinking is if this is achieved and the funds well utilized the sector will push aside the shackles of ignorance and prepare the society for socio- political economic attainment and aggravate the level of technology to transform agriculture and industry engaging the society's population in the work force for further transformation and a secured environment.

Nigeria is an African giant that refuses to lead the way in implementing the recommendations and hardly have the Nigerian budget nears half of the UNESCO recommended percent explaining how education for development and secured environment is not on the agenda of the Nigerians.

In the midst of the above there have been strikes in the Nigerian education sector from primary, secondary to tertiary levels. Worst of it all technical education is not on the mind of Nigerian governments over time despite the availability of natural resources that technical education can harness to change the situations of the nation. A summary of budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria from 1960 to 2023 explains why insecurity is very high in Nigeria.

Table i: The budgetary allocations to the education sector in percentage by the FGN (1960-2023)

Year % Allocation	**Year % Allocation**	**Year % Allocation**	**Year % Allocation**
1960	1976	1992	2008
6.02	8.71	3.86	13.00
1961	1977	1993	2009
6.15	3.12	5.62	6.54
1962	1978	1994	2010
5.19	11.44	7.13	6.40
1963	1979	1995	2011
3.45	3.70	7.20	1.69
1964	1980	1996	2012
3.65	4.95	12.32	10.00
1965	1981	1997	2013
3.57	6.45	7.59	8.70
1966	1082	1998	2014
4.23	8.09	10.27	10.60
1967	1083	1999	2015
4.88	3.04	11.12	9.50
1968	1984	2000	2016
2.84	4.49	8.36	6.10
1969	1985	2001	2017
2.20	3.79	7.00	7.38
1970	1986	2002	2018
0.69	2.69	5.90	7.03
1971	1987	2003	2019
0.53	1.93	1.83	7.20
1972	1988	2004	2020
0.62	2.40	10.50	6.70
1973	1989	2005	2021
0.88	3.55	9.30	5.60
1974	1990	2006	2022
2.96	2.83	11.00	5.40
1975	1991	2007	2023
4.57	1.09	8.09	5.30

Source: culled from Ohagbuelum compilation of the World Bank

Narrowing down to the Northwest the governors of the states in the region have perpetually shown less interest in technical education and education in general looking at their allocation to education sector. For instance, from 2016 to 2019 available records show a consistent decline in the allocation to the sector, according to Agu (2022) Katsina state witnessed a consistent decline in the allocation to education from 30.60% in 2016; 21.55% in 2017; 17.88% in 2018 to 15.75% in 2019 respectively and the actual amount released has not been commensurate to the allocation. Year 2019 that witnessed least allocation to education also recorded Katsina state with the number of out of school children in Nigeria with 781,500 children out of 10.5 million second to Bauchi with 1.1 million (Agu,2022). Even with this the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) in 2024 cautioned the Katsina state Governor to ensure budgetary allocations for education tallies with release and expenditure (Yusuf,2024). This has been the situation in the region over time and all the Northwest states have been on the list of out of school children with Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara among the first four on the Nigeria scale.

There is no denying that education is essential for the growth and transformation of society. The importance of education to the process of socioeconomic development, citizen orientation, conflict resolution, peace-building, and the general prosperity of the society is

supported by evidence from human history as well as findings from a vast array of empirical studies on related topics (Okebukola, 2021; Dye, 2005) investment in education is just as crucial as a nation-building strategy since it may increase people's human capital assets and promote economic growth for improved welfare and livelihood (Odigew & Owan, 2019). The Nigerian government at different levels has spent over 462 trillion dollars on national security in the previous years. The government's attempts to halt the threat (of theft and cattle rustling) of the banditry against the inhabitants and prevent a total collapse of law and order appear to have failed to generate the desired outcome.

The inability of the Nigerian government to pay attention to formal education and particularly technical education over the years has giving rise to avoidable insecurity situation in the country. An analysis of banditry influx in Nigeria shows that those stats that are ranked low in education as well as the highest number of out of school children like Zamfara, Taraba, Katsina have high level of banditry activities (International Crisis Group, 2018). Scholars have advanced the causes of insecurity in Nigeria to include unemployment, climate change, unemployment (Rufai, 2017). These are no doubt extrapolations of the true confirmation of the Nigerian situation.

v. Banditry in Northwest Nigeria

Northwest Nigeria has a history of education right from pre-colonial times; the only difference is it was a conventional system of education to train the children in religious and faith based ideology and not an educational system meant to train the children to relate with the environment to transform it for their sustenance. According to Ajiboye et al (2024), this system of education known as Amajiri was funded by the Emirate system. The advent of colonialism that ought to change the African way of life which was considered barbaric to a modern way of life throw the *Almajiri* system off balance as the white men took control of the finances of the region. Rather than embrace formal education with the already existing structure of *Almajiri* the children were dispersed to fend for themselves through begging for alms sowing the seed for what transcend the Northwest Nigeria today. It should be remembered that northern region had a well centralized administrative system that would have been used to bring the children together and impart modern values in them to be good citizens. Instead, they were thrown out without care and over time they have received no value beyond fending for themselves without protection, care, direction from neither the community nor the government.

Northwest Nigeria is known for pastoral and crop farming as major occupations that have sustained the region over time through the crude or traditional system due largely to lack of knowledge of modern technology and the lackadaisical attitudes of the government to encourage modern technical education in the region. According to Kratli and Dyer (2009, p.5) "To be a successful economic operator in a pastoral economy requires among others (i) a detailed knowledge of the technical aspects of livestock husbandry – for example a sophisticated knowledge of grasses, shrubs and animals, and (ii) membership of social networks which enable the capture of economies of scale in production and provide the basis of risk management. These things are a critical part of education but are not taught in school". Sharing the same view Siele et al (2011, p.1) argue that "Education is seen … a way out of poverty and by the household actively involved in pastoral production as a way to support their production system in an increased globalized world" this can only be achieved through technical education that is practical in nature. However, majority of the Northwest Nigerian children were denied formal education and were hired out by cattle owners for grazing and other purposes.

With the increase in population the grazing spaces became thinner over time and an ensued competition over land. Again the continuous grazing destroyed the ecosystem of the area. To protect the grazing activity, cattle owners had to provide the guns for the hired realer in an event of misunderstanding over grazing space. Because the hired grazers lack values they sometimes sold out a number of cows as they travail long distances for months and on their return they find it difficult to reconcile or account for the missing cows and as a result run away from their masters with the arms to the forest fending for themselves through rustling of cattle. To deter their rustling activities, the community recruit from the same *Almajiri* who received no formal values and had lived a wretched life and equipped them with arms to fight the rustlers since most of these spaces are ungoverned (Okoli & Altehe,2019). As the boys work as volunteers with sophisticated weapons

in their custody they soon realize the need to enrich themselves by forming another bandit group.

On realizing the need to train the children who fend for themselves to prevent further insecurity, the government embarked on *Amajiri* schools which was conventional in nature. Reacting to this, Siele et al (2011, p.1) aver that "Educational systems are failing to respond to this shift in demand, and remain oriented towards educating pastoral children out of pastoralism. The model used everywhere is that of a teacher in front of a class, a model that effectively exclude the children directly involved in pastoral production". What this implies is that based on the nature of pastoral occupation they need a technical type of education that is practically oriented to improving their occupation and not that of separating them from what they earn a living from. This would have been the opening up of ranches with the same amount of money for construction of structures for conventional type of education, training the children on the use and the value chain for ranching. Such training is essential as it is more of workshop training to a classroom training and is essential if children acquire the skills about the complex network of ranching that will propel them to an adult producer. Regrettably however, government has taken to lip service on ranching rather emphasis is on free universal basic education hat emphasize the ability to read and write making the youth vulnerable to unemployment at the completion of the study period while our natural resources remain untapped as conventional education only exposes students to knowledge about the availability of natural resources without giving them the skills to tap same for the benefit of the society.

vi. Consequences of banditry in Northwest Nigeria

Banditry has brought a lot of consequences to the Northwest ranging from humanitarian, economic, and social aspects of life. Banditry has given rise to the surge and near permanence of internally displaced persons in the region. According to IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, (2023) Katsina state has the highest number of IDPs to the tune of 252,262 who are camped majorly in Funtua local government area who are mostly displaced from Dandum, Faskari, Ssabuwa, Batsari and Faskri local governments; Zamfara had 156, 216 IDPs who camp mostly in Anka, Gusau and Talata Marafa local government areas while Kaduna has 108,370 IDPs living in ChikunLere and Kaduna North local government areas. In Sokoto state the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, (2023) recorded 65,393 IDPs who are mostly from Goronyo, Tambua and Wurno local government areas while Kano recorded 27, 058 in Albasu and Taraumi local government areas. These large numbers of people have no hope of return to their homes in the near future in the face of threatening hardship.

Pastoral and crop farming that are the main stay of the region is grossly affected by the scourge of banditry. The hitherto cash crop farmers could not access the land to farm on just like there are no labourers to farm for them in the areas where there is fragile security thereby creating a situation of prolong food shortage, hunger and malnutrition in the face of thousands of people. The region leads the fatality in crime related incidence (Abdullahi, 2019)

The educational system has been affected in the region as bandits have directed their attacks on schools in the region causing the closure of many schools. According to Idris and Umaru (2024) in September 2021, a total of 168 schools were closed in Zamfara state as a result of bandits' incursion while 13 schools were closed in Kaduna state. Economically the repeated attacks have slowed down businesses as thousands of shops have been shut down as a result of kidnapping of business men and women for ransom. In Zamfara state for instance "more than 10,000 houses, shops and silos" aredestroyed (PM News, April 25, 2019). Markets like Maidabino, Dandume, Ilella and Kankara in Katsina state while Bardoki and Shnkafi in Zamfara have been closed (Rufai, 2018).

vii. Curbing Banditry in Northwest Nigeria

Literature abounds on the effort's governments both at the federal and state level are making to fight insurgency. These include the deployment of security to quell the bandits (Ajiboye, et al, 2024; Okoli & Ngwu, 2024; Abdullahi, 2019; Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; Rufai, 2018). Okoli and Ngwu (2024, p. 106) outlined these operations to include "Operation Sharan Daji which was launched in early 2016, Operation Harbin Kunama in July 2016, Operation Dirar Mikiya in 2018, Operation Diran

Mikiya also in 2018, Operation Pull Adder in 2019 and Operation Accord in 2020". The state governments have been providing logistics to the security in their various states to assist in effective operations for instance, former Governor Yari of Zamfara was reported to have spent thirty-five billion naira to assist the army (Momodu, 2019). To complement the efforts of the security the state governments formed local vigilante groups and armed them like the Civilian Joint Task Force in Zamfara (Lamidi, et al, 2024). There have been non-kinetic efforts like the agreements on disarmament with the bandits by the Governors of Zamfara, Sokoto and Katsina states (Dutse & Olowoselu, 2020).

However, these have been reactive and reinforcing in approach because the government has been finding it difficult to come up boldly with initiative to end the insecurity either because it will mean shooting on her own leg or it is merely the way of life. What this means is that everything in Nigeria has been politicized including insecurity. This is why Lamudi (2024) noted that the war on insecurity is taking long because security operatives are part of the kidnap group. Recall the story of Mr. Kabiru Sokoto a member of the Boko Haram who was arrested in Abuja in Borno State Governor's lodge when the indigenes of Borno State were under the scourge of Boko Haram attacks as he was been assisted by an officer of the Nigerian Air Force to sneak out of the country. This same man was assisted by the Police Commissioner to escape by ambushing the four officers who were escorting him from Abaji to Abuja (Vanguard, 2012). Recently it has been alleged that politicians are using the banditry against their opponents the same way public officers are using it as a conduit pipe to siphon the nation's resources (This Day, 2024). This implies that all the secrets about government's efforts to track the bandits are open to the insurgents by the elements in the innermost circle of government. the security will continue to lose the battle on the insurgents so long as the higher echelon of the forces are complicit in the operations of the bandits, using the insecurity as a means to enrich themselves. Annan (2003) declare that "Corruption undermines economic performance, weakens democratic institutions and the rule of law, disrupts social order and destroys public trust, thus allowing organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish…And it is always the public good that suffers."

Integrity that is a moral force for persuasion has been called for questioning in the governance of Nigeria in all spectrums and the leadership has been ineffective in chatting a course for development for lack of integrity. The Nigerian government have the opportunity to leverage on the abundant human resources to develop the vast natural resources for the wellbeing of the citizens. It has, however, chosen to trod the path fraudulent share of the nation's wealth pushing the population that is largely made up of the youth to survive through the available means. These long years of neglect by the government has endeared poverty and unemployment leaving the youth a narrow alternative of survival and revenue generation through criminality since they do not have access to benefit from the fraudulent share of the national cake. Banditry is lucrative as it has been paying huge in a shortest possible time and both the government and individuals pay ransom to secure the release of their victims. The non-kinetic attempts made in Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina to end banditry could not last because the government has not provided a conducive environment for the citizens to thrive and survive so whether it was the exchange of guns for cows the climate change and growing population cannot permit the repentant bandits to endure the occupation since there are no provision for modern ranching with a value chain and it will not be enticing. The exchange of guns for cash was not effective because the cash multiplies when it is transacted and a larger population do not have the cash to transact the business so the rate of turnover of such cash will definitely be slow as compared to when you sit in one place and make a call and people are ready to negotiate for the ransom you have not laboured for. The bandits were frustrated and had to return to their way of life.

This account for the reason why local vigilante are not able to succeed in preventing the attack because they too wear the shoes of poverty and destitute and when they are given the arms, extortion of the intended beneficiaries of their activities become the sole concern and the exceptionally bad ones among them escape with the arms to the bush becoming a threat to the society as there is quick money the other way or have become informants to the bandits thus making them ineffective (Yusuf, 2015). Part of the reason for this is that the government look at them as volunteers and are not giving enough attention even as they trade with their lives even though they are retired monthly on the security vote of the government. Nwabu (2000, p.4)

explained that "Corruption and corrupt leaders both deepen poverty and make it difficult for ordinary people to get ahead as a result of their own efforts. There is increasing evidence that costs of corruption disproportionately affect the poor, who do not only suffer from lack of services and efficient government, but who are also powerless to resist the demand of the corrupt officials".

In 2021 Governor Masari of Katsina state admitted that it is only investment education that will engage the youths outside crime and violence, only sincere investment in youth development and education will help the teaming youth to follow the right track. This implies that by educating our youth, we will reduce banditry. Agbakosa and Akande (2019) aver that vocational and technical education can play a vital role in engaging youth with relevant skills to be self-employed and thereby reducing security challenges. Umaru and Okale (2012) argue that we must embrace technical education because it prepares citizens to prevent, adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change. Supporting this view Ismail and Abdullahi (2023) argue that there is absence of concentration on tackling the roots of the problem. Rather there has been attention on the indicators of the problem, for example the actions of the bandits instead of the fundamental questions that have resulted to the tension. The fundamental factors comprise lack of access to education and weak governance.

viii. Conclusion and Recommendations

Northwest Nigeria is characterised by insecurity as a result of farmer herder conflict, climate change, unemployment that has given rise to banditry in the region. This has affected all facets of life from socio-political and economic sectors. There have been humanitarian concerns that the government is not able to contend with, though a lot of efforts has been made by governments at the federal and state to douse the security situation, not much has been achieved. What account for the government inability to curb banditry in the region is that the root cause of the problem has not been treated over time and what we have now is a manifestation of government insincerity to encourage formal education in the region that is technical and vocationally inclined. As the population keeps growing with the youth having no skills the unrest will persist. Until the government invest in formal education that is technically inclined and get the youth engaged, banditry will continue to be the order of the day. To do this government has to direct the budgetary allocation to education with sincerity of releasing the budgeted funds for the implementation of technical oriented educational programmes for the youths. Also, the stake holders have to engage the youth in meaningful projects to make them self-sustaining. Above all there should be collaboration between the government and the stakeholders in the region devoid of religious affinities to chart a course for modern way of pastoralism which is through ranching. This in a long way will create a linkage between the livestock and crop farmers that will provide job opportunities for the youth. This can start with abolishing the *Almajiri* system in the region so that parents will be held responsible for the upbringing of their children.

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