ABSTRACT

This study assessed the role of the security sector in combating the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone. In achieving the overall goal of the study, the assessment broadly covered the following: examined the national response structure before the outbreak; the emergence of Ebola and conspiracy theories in Sierra Leone, ascertained the early national Ebola response structure; the transition and composition to a new response architecture; assessed the effectiveness of policies and strategies by the security sector in combating Ebola; ascertained whether the effects of policies and strategies implored by the security sector in response to the outbreak; evaluated the impact of civil-military relations in combating the outbreak; and in the end examined the overall challenges in terms of the security sector's roles, and policies and strategies implored in responding to the outbreak. These areas broadly correspond to some of the objectives in response to the security sector's roles.

Based on findings from assessing the areas stated above, the study has argued that the role played by the security sector in combating the 2014 Ebola outbreak have been largely effective. But while the role of the security sector has been largely positive, but this is not without many other factors - notably without the engagement of communities which underscored the effectiveness of the policies and strategies implored in response to the outbreak. Over the period under consideration the intervention of the security sector helped to curb the scourge with the support of international civilian and military actors. As such, "the deployment of international military forces and the imposition of coercive control measures by the government of Sierra Leone, clearly showcase a securitized response" (Dubois, M. et al, 2015). It also brings to the fore the lack of political will by the government, and a challenge to the security architecture

in response to the outbreak. This was visibly seen in the capacity response of the SLP and that of the RSLAF. Such security interventions also highlighted the linkages between formal and informal structures as a hybrid response; which inadvertently blurred the lines between health and humanitarian response.

Though the evidence is mixed, such achievements by the security sector clearly shows that they can also undertake non-traditional roles in response to public health emergencies such as Ebola. However, the findings from the study relate to Sierra Leone alone and therefore cannot be generalized for all other developing countries. Finally, the findings from the study do and will imply that there is a causal relationship between inadequate healthcare systems and the role played by the security sector in combating the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone. However, this researcher recommends that further empirical research is needed to complement as to what constitutes the call and intervention of the security sector prior to the next public health emergency such as Ebola.