



The Effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on Borno Women, 2009–2016

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Abstract

Boko Haram insurgency is largely becoming a household word globally as no neighbouring country of Nigeria is entirely unaffected by the effects. The activities of the sect since 2009 have created a state of palpable fear in Borno State. Boko Haram, which figuratively implies that western or non-Islamic education is a sin, is a very controversial Nigerian militant group that seeks to impose sharia law in the entire northern states of Nigeria. The official name of the group is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awa Waljihad*. Against this background, this study examines the effects of Boko Haram insurgency on Borno women from 2009 - 2016. Thus, both primary and secondary source materials were used in the study. The primary sources include oral interviews conducted with internally displaced intellectuals, security agents, and other victims of the insurgency. The secondary data involves the use of published and unpublished books, journals, theses, dissertations, and newspapers.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Insurgency, Terrorism, Borno State, Insecurity

Introduction

Conflict is a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings, whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political or others, is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals. This definition means conflict arises due to clash of interests between two or more groups in pursuit of certain goals. Conflict can be taken to mean an open clash between two opposition groups or individuals; usually, the disagreement may be as a result of incompatibility of views, opinions, values or access to shared resources. Violent conflict therefore refer to an open contention between two or more groups or parties over certain goals which results in injury and destruction of lives and properties in a given space or area.

Borno state has a long displacement, loss of lives and properties caused mainly by religious conflicts, communal crisis and political disturbance, the most virulent being that of Mai Tatsine uprising in 19805. According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2009. Nigeria was the 7th most terrorized country in the world. On 26 July 2009, there was a clash between Boko Haram Islamic group and the Nigerian army which started in Borno and quickly spread to neighbouring states of Yobe, Bauchi and Kano. This led to losses of lives and properties. The incessant attacks led to the death of thousands of men, women and children who were rendered homeless and had to flee to other neighbouring states for refuge.

From the foregoing, there is no doubt that Boko Haram activities have become a source of worry and concern to the international community. Unimaginably all continents have been battling with one form of terrorism or the other. A critical analysis of the displacement of many Nigerians



since 2009 reveals that internal population displacement is caused by various Boko Haram insurgencies.

The Clarification of Insurgency

The term insurgency is conceived as an armed rebellion against a constituted authority, i.e., authority so recognized by the United Nations. Insurgency is an attack on a recognized government, its people and its resources. Ajayi defined insurgency as a protracted political, military activity directed towards completely or partially controlling the country's resources through irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. According to him, this includes: guerrilla warfare, terrorism and political mobilization. It is a violent anti-government activity that seeks to take over the power of a sovereign state through terrorist war, guerrilla attacks, and propaganda in order to achieve the goal of the perpetrators. The Boko Haram insurgency, which degenerated into open violence in the year 2009 in the Northeast Nigeria, was characterized by a high spate of killings, abductions, bombings, destruction of homes and properties, as well as displacement of people.

Boko Haram Insurgency

Boko Haram means western education is sacrilege or western education is sin. Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri in Borno state, the organization is a Muslim sect that seeks to abolish the secular system and establish an Islamic state and sharia system of government in Nigeria. The group members do not interact with the local Muslim population and have assassinated anyone who criticizes it, including Muslim clerics. The sect is against scientific explanation of natural phenomena, such as evaporation being the cause of rain, the leader Muhammed Yusuf says that it is blasphemous for a believer to accept the logic that the world is a sphere or that rain comes from water evaporation as a result of interaction with the sun, the fundamental ideology of Boko Haram is western education is forbidden and therefore should not be accepted. The phrase Boko Haram is derived from a combination of both the Hausa word Boko (western education) and an Arabic word Haram (forbidden), meaning "western education is forbidden."

The Causes of the Boko Haram Insurgency

Several reasons have been advanced as the causes of the insurgency. On 7th July 2009, the Boko Haram fighters unveiled their disastrous campaign in Borno. Since then, the people of Borno and, indeed, the entire northeast region of Nigeria have continued to experience tragic experiences. Many scholars and critical observers of events have put forward a number of reasons which profiled the emergence of the insurgency. It could be that religious doctrine, pervasive poverty affecting the people's general disenchantment over western education and or civilization, the relegation of Islamic scholars to the background and undue preference of western scholarship for employment and recognition for appointments. On the other hand, it might be hues and cries over undue disequilibrium between graduates of western education and those of Islamic education who quest for leadership among the top actors of the Boko Haram sect lack of western education and exposure among the insurgents.

Religion Extremism

The principle of Islam is based upon the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). Throughout the history of Islam, there has been a conflict between religion and politics. This was particularly between Islamic leaders who were often secular-minded and flexible in applying Islamic



principles to political life and fundamentalists who strictly adhered to only the strict aspects of the principles and lifestyle of the prophet's ideal society where there was no distinction between religions and political authority. Boko Haram resorted to violence because it was convinced that these concepts could be eradicated by destroying those who subscribed to them.

The sect wanted sharia established across the length and breadth of the northern states as the only condition for ceasing its deadly destructions. The ideologies of the group could also be better understood by its quest for the declaration of sharia law and strict adherence to the doctrine of Islam, especially as a return to former principles during the times of the prophet (SAW). By implication, the ideology of this group was based on the complete Islamic religious orientation in the northern part of the country. Kukah argued that religion was used to mobilize against modernity, which has been seen as the root cause of social anomalies.

Insecurity

There is no country that can achieve its development without security. Security is the backbone of every development. Nigeria as the giant of Africa terribly faces problems of economic, political and social insecurity, which restricted its national development since the end of the civil war in 1970. Boko Haram has contributed greatly to the underdevelopment of Borno state and the northern part of the country due to a lack of security. This disaster of Boko Haram caused the distorting and collapse of Nigerian national security. The menace brought widespread insecurity all over northern Nigeria. It caused an increase of tensions among the various ethnic groups, a collapse in the development of activities, frightening of foreign and national investors, border insecurity of neighbouring countries, daily attacks in Borno, Yobe, Kano and Adamawa states, major attacks in Kano which killed over 200 people and other three attacks in Abuja that included the bombing of the UN headquarter in August 2012.

Poverty

Nigeria has almost 200 million people and approximately 500 ethnic groups speaking different languages and cultures, with about fifty percent Muslims, forty percent Christians, and ten percent adhering to local religions. The country has abundant human and natural resources and is number six in terms of oil as an OPEC member. Despite all these endowments of human and natural resources, Nigeria has been ranked 158 out of 177 poor economies by Human Development Index. This poverty problem caused many Nigerian citizens to engage in social violence. According to Mallam Ali, the Almajiri (child pupil) scattered all over the streets with calabash in their hands for alms begging very dirty, hungry and thirsty, were seriously neglected as part of children that should be given the opportunity just like others to attend schools. This usually causes them to willingly join Boko Haram and engage in violent aggression and other social and criminal activities. As reported in Saturday Tribune of 14th July 2012, a fifteen year old suicide-bomber (an almajiri) attacked the Maiduguri Central Mosque and killed ten innocent Nigerians with the narrow escape of the Shehu of Borno State and the Borno State Deputy Speaker.

Proliferation of Arms and Unguarded Borders

The Nigerian borders are porous, especially in the northern part of the country. This facilitates the epidemic of global terrorism to infiltrate into the country. The crisis across African countries such as Mali, Libya, etc, also spreads ammunition within the region. The unguarded border in Nigeria allows smugglers to perpetrate their act unhindered.



Social and Economic Problems

Marginalization of the majority of the people by political elites, especially in the North Eastern part of the country, is the impetus for most of the violence. There was little impact of the Nigeria's wealth, especially in the Northeast region. The indices of poverty and social exclusion were apparent, individuals families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty. They lack the resources to obtain basic diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities, which are customary or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belonged. The number of insurgents' groups keeps on increasing because of the lack of opportunities to participate in the social and economic activities in their societies.

Massive Unemployment

Massive unemployment has been affecting the state for a long time. Many years before the eruption of Boko Haram insurgency, there was high level of unemployment in the state. The number of unemployed youths in Maiduguri became alarming. Most youth groups who have joined politics as political vanguard groups and have become a serious security risk. This was the condition before the violence escalated. Many scholars and commentators attempted to link Boko Haram insurgency to unemployment and injustice. Madunagu revealed that the incessant violent attacks in the north are functions of the economic injustice where more than 80 percent of the populace are not sure of three meals a day. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening and unemployed youths have resorted to violence to express their grievances. Accusing the political class of not being sensitive to the plight of the people, it was estimated that less than 20 percent of the country's population control the nation's wealth, while the other 80 percent are wallowing in abject poverty. It was adduced that poverty and youth unemployment have engendered Boko Haram insurgency.

Youth unemployment is not just about lack of basic needs. It is also about exclusion from the goods, services, rights and activities which constitute the basis of citizenship. When the majority is poor, it inevitably leads to uprising and tension in a society. It is, therefore, not surprising that the northeast zone of which Borno state is an integral part is one of the poorest sub-region in the world. Adetiloye (2014) opined that where there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor, it will always bring about class conflicts. A country like Nigeria which is blessed with abundant wealth, but only the privileged few benefits from the wealth, brings all sorts of anti-social activities.

Atim (2014) says that those engaged in the Boko Haram violence are mostly jobless, no skills no trade, and have no sources of livelihood. They hate western education that will empower them to be employable. So, it became easier for Muhammad Yusuf, the leader of Boko Haram, to brainwash them that even the certificates they acquired through western education is a sin. As a result, most of his followers destroyed or burnt their school certificates as a sign of condemnation of western education. Commenting further, he said the youths constitute over 70% of the population of Nigeria, and yet over 60% of this category lacks jobs and better opportunities.

Effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on Women in Borno State

Borno state women constitute about half of the state's population and are known to play vital roles as mothers, producers, community organizers, and social and political activities. Nigerian women over the years became the target of violence of diverse foml based on their positions in promoting transformation politics. Women in Borno state will not forget the insurgency effect that has been making the widows and their children orphans. It has made many homeless, fleeing their homes which they inhabited for generations, besides inflicting severe economic devastation.



Everything they toiled to acquire during their lives had vanished as a result of the activities of the insurgents. This ugly situation in the region have caused untold hardship with a wide gap.

In June 2014, Nigeria experienced its first attack by a female suicide bomber. Since then, Boko Haram has increasingly used girls and women as operatives in suicide attacks on soft targets. According to the Nigeria security tracker, female suicide bombers have been responsible for over 200 deaths since May 2015; nearly half of all casualties from Boko Haram attributed to suicide bombings during this period. Women suffered the most, though as a result of the nature of their domestic and local investments which are huge and varied in nature. They fled, leaving behind their farms, cattle, farm produce, pieces of jewelry and all possessions.

Women under the age of 18, especially girls, have been negatively affected by the crisis in the form of a lack of access to basic needs, sexual and gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation, abuse and abduction. Their level of vulnerability is on the increase as most of them are widowed or single due to the high rate of men-killing in the course of the conflict and the detention of some men by the military for investigation purposes. Women now bear the responsibility of feeding their families. Many mature girls and women were raped by the Boko Haram sect and, by extension, some security agents and some agents of international donors.

The prevalence of sexual violence within the Boko Haram crisis has been widely reported in humanitarian assessments, human rights reports and media coverage from the early days of the insurgency. Boko Haram's abuses against women and girls including abduction, forced conversion to Islam, physical and psychological abuse, forced labour, forced participation in insurgency operations and forced marriage, rape and other sexual abuse have inspired tear among local communities in north-east Nigeria and contributed to the groups notoriety both within the region and globally. However, while Boko Haram's violence against women has been at the centre of public attention to the crisis delivering protection and support for women has been an ongoing challenge in the humanitarian response.

In January 2016, three UN Special Rapporteurs visited Maiduguri Borno State on behalf of the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). There they found evidence of widespread sexual abuse and other major protection concerns affecting internally displaced women and girls. They concluded that a protection gap is evident, especially in service delivery and access to justice for women and girls victims of Boko Haram.

This was not the first report of a protection deficit in the humanitarian response, nor the first report of sexual exploitation and abuse displaced women and girls. Still, it was the first time that UN officials had pinpointed the coalescence of Boko Haram violence and sexual exploitation and abuse in displacement to create extreme vulnerability among displaced women. In April 2016, an assessment report identified gender-based violence as a feature of displacement in the north-east Nigeria crisis and identified a lack of prioritisation of gender-based violence programming by the humanitarian community in Nigeria. The prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and girls by civilian militias, members of the military, and the national and state government's emergency management cadres has also been highlighted, including a report by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs following a visit to Maiduguri in August 2016.



Population of Women in Various Camps in Borno State

1	Bakasi female Population	13,098
2	Elmiskin Female Population	1,982
3	Teachers Village	9,532
4	Madinatu Female Population	4,642
5	Dalori I Female Population	10,399
6	Muna Elbadawi	2,885
7	Dalori II Female Population	6,078
8	Farm Centre Female Population`	11,964
9	Custom House Female Population	658
10	Stadium Female Population	1,004
11	Gubio Road Female Population	1,136
12	NYSC Female population	3,622
13	EYN female population	692

Conclusions

The vulnerability of the northeast region is linked to the high prevalence of youth poverty and unemployment. This has made many youths become skeptical about a democratic system that has brought them little benefit and has served well the interests of the established political elite. Hopelessness and frustrations due to joblessness and poverty have lured many youths into embracing the Boko Haram sect, which led to women being widows and suffering as a result. It has been established that there is socio-cultural nexus with the emergence of Boko Haram Insurgency in the North East. The philosophy of Boko Haram is rooted in promoting the practice of orthodox Islam, which condemns western civilization because it contaminates Islamic doctrine. This explains why the sect is popularly known as Boko Haram, literally meaning “western education is a sin.” More so. The activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria have led to palpable fear among the citizenry and a high sense of insecurity due to regular loss of life and damage to properties and infrastructures on account of bombings and reported cases of assassination. The Irony is that while the state is striving towards capacity building, the Boko Haram menace is crumbling all the efforts as a result, women and children suffered the most.

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