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BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN NIGERIA: CASE OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (2009-2018)

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Abstract

The article examines the activities of Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria and the proliferation of Internally Displaced Persons (1DPs) between 2009 and 2018. The outbreak of Boko Haram insurgency heralded a new phase in Nigeria's insecurity challenges. Boko Haram which started as a religious sect metamorphosed into a high-intensity violent organisation in terms of operations, attacks, and sophistication and proved to be a potent force affecting the social, economic, and political developments of the state. The study adopts exploratory research techniques that rely on secondary sources of information to understand the linkage and intricacies between human security and conflict. This article speaks to broader debates of IDPs and the utility of Nigeria's current approach and frameworks for addressing protracted displacement and humanitarian crises. The article argues that the dimension and deep suffering of IDPs, government attitudes to its responsibilities on IDPs, and gross violation of IDPs human rights are particularly products of government's failure to give legislative backing to some of its regulatory frameworks and policies on IDPs. The article concludes that government's failure to accord necessary statutory and legal support to some of these policy frameworks is one of the essential factors responsible for the fragile protection of IDPs. Given this, governments at all levels must embark on the urgent task of securing a comprehensive framework for IDPs.

Keywords: Boko-Haram, Internally Displaced Person, Insurgency, Insecurity, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria, by its human and material resources, has always been expected to play a leading role in Africa and the West Africa sub-region. However, these expectations have changed over the years with the recurrence of violence and insecurity (especially in the Northern-eastern part) that plunged the region into a quagmire. The Boko Haram Islamic sect in Nigeria has heralded a new dimension

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into Nigeria's insecurity challenges. The insurgent sect now attracts international comments due to the nature of warfare, sophisticated weapons used, thousands of militias at its disposal, and the socio-economic destruction accompanying its operations. Boko Haram insurgency has an adverse impact in north-eastern geopolitical zone. The activities have led to the loss of lives and property, kidnapping and raping of women and girls, the bombing of major cities, police stations, market places, and religious centers, disruption of economic activities, displacement of millions of people, within and beyond the borders of the affected states. (Mantzikos, 2013 pp.9-13; Hill, 2012 pp.26-29; Abdulazeez *et. al.*, 2018 p. 88)

The proliferation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) arising from the insurgency is however a major national and international concern today. It has exposed the link between human security and conflict. Although IDPs are considered as an internal problem of the state in terms of spatial motilities, yet, they have the prospect to become an international issue the issue spills over to the neighbouring state, thereby may change them into refugees and asylum seekers.

It is on this premise that the study examines IDPs as one of the humanitarian challenges caused by Boko Haram insurgency. IDPs are faced with significant humanitarian crises such as the absence of a conducive environment, health care facilities, food, and water supply among several others. We argue that for a comprehensive government at all tiers response to the issues surrounding internally displaced in Nigeria to be comprehensive, legal and policy backings such as the Kampala Convention of the African Union and National Policy on IDPs should be ratified and implemented. This study relies on secondary sources of information. The secondary data are collected from peer-reviewed journals, reports, books which are subjected to rigorous content analysis.

Conceptual Clarifications: Boko Haram Insurgency and Internally Displaced Persons Boko-Haram Insurgency

Boko Haram crisis has resulted in the loss of lives, destruction of properties with an upsurge in the number of IDPs especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. (Adesote et.al. 2015). The sect ideology





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has been tagged to the rejection (forbidden) of everything 'western' or 'foreign' (Haram). (Mantzikos, 2013 pp.9-13) The origin of Boko Haram can be traced to two major accounts. The first account traces the origin of the sect to 1995 when it began as Sahaba Muslim Youth. (Madike, 2011 pp.1-4) The Sahaba Muslim Youth was initially led by one Lawan Abubakar and Mallam Usman. At this formative stage, the sect followers exercised their spiritual duties at the Indimi Mosque, Maiduguri, Borno state. (Hill, 2012 p. 28) The emergence of Mohammed Yusuf was traced to 1999 when Mallam Lawal left the shores of Nigeria to academically and intellectually equip himself with Islamic knowledge in Medina.

The second account traces the origin of Boko Haram sects to Mohammed Yusuf (1970 - 2009) in 2002. The sect conducted its activities peacefully under the leadership of Yusuf until the 2009 clampdown which led to the death of Yusuf. However, whatever the origin of the sect, the consensus is that Boko Haram is an Islamic militant group that seeks to replace constituted government in a secular state with what they consider as a pure Islamic state governed by Sharia. (Omenma, 2020, p. 5) (Hill, 2012 pp.26-29), identified five stages of Boko Haram transformation. The development of its goals not as a terrorist organization but rather as a group of Muslims that live piously according to the basic tenet of Islam was the first stage of the sect. The second transformation started in 2003 when the organization used violence in pursuit of its goals. The third was the increase of its targets.

Between 2004 and 2009, the attack was primarily targeted at the security forces and structures like police stations and border raids. The fourth transformation was the expansion of its scope of operation. Between 2004 and 2009, the group operated around Maiduguri while between 2009 and 2018, Boko Haram had carried out its attack in states like Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, and Yobe States and the Federal Capital Territory, and Abuja. The last transformation was the development of its operational capabilities. Between 2009 and 2014, Boko Haram increased the range of attacks and developed abilities not only in guerilla warfare but made



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ambushes and frontal assaults Nigerian (Tribune, 2012), lightning raids and prison breakouts (British Broadcasting Cooperation's News, 2012), suicide bombings (Reuters, 2011) and targeted assassinations (Vanguard, 2012). Boko Haram insurgents have enjoyed the support of transnational terrorist organisations. (Adepoju, 2011) noted that "the method of warfare, sophistication of weapon, deadly modification of combat strategy and the effective permutation of propaganda and terror attest to the potency of Boko Haram insurgency and affiliation with other transnational terrorist organisations with a similar ideological orientation such as Al-Queada. Without doubt, Boko Haram's relationship with these groups has contributed to the funding and intelligence for the operation of the sect in Nigeria and neighboring states.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Internally Displaced Persons IDP consist of individuals who are forced to abandon their habitual residence either as a result of armed conflict or in other to avoid the consequence of conflict. Handbook for the Protection of the IDPs 2006, averred that IDPs consists of 'Persons or groups who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disaster, and who are within the territory of their own country' (UNCHR, 1992). This definition was further expanded in the 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on internal displacement. Internal displacement, covers 'persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border'. (UNGP, 1998 p. 53) identified political instability, communal armed conflict, violence, and religion as well as sudden and slow-onset disaster, as the causes of displacement which forced many people to flee their homes to other locations in search of safety. (United Nations Migration & IDMC, 2015 pp. 287-288)



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Boko Haram Insurgency and Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

Boko Haram insurgency has contributed significantly to the number of displacement of people in the country, specifically in the north-eastern region of the country. (Eweka et. al., 2016 p. 195). However, Borno Adawama, and Yobe States (BAY) remain highly volatile and major theatre of the conflict among the states in the region. (Omadjohwoefe, 2012 p. 8) (Adesote, 2015 pp. 5-9) The year 2009 marked a shift in the activities and strategies of Boko Haram ,leading to, an estimated 15 million people affected (Felbab-Brown, 2018) According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2019), Nigeria recorded a large-scale number of IDPs in 2014 as a result of the violent operations that led to mass displacement and as at 2015, there were over 1.3 million displaced persons (UNHCR, 2015, p.4) while by 2017, the Rights Council Report put the number of IDPs in the country at 2.2. million. (RCR, 2017).

The statistics have shown that the Boko Haram crisis has produced over 2 million IDPs in the northeast region. (Amnesty International, 2018 pp.22-35; Read, 2017 pp. 24-25; Okechukwu, 2018 p. 81) The International Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) also reports that at least 2.5 million people across northeast Nigeria have been forced from their homes and displaced in camps across six states in the region between 2009 and 2016, – Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. (IDMC, 2018 pp. 46-52) IDPs population tracked by the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in the states affected by Boko Haram puts Nigeria IDPs at 2, 026, 602 with a substantial figure of 1,642,696 returnees' refugees. (DTM, 2019).



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Table 1: Displacement Statistics between 2009 and 2018 according to IOM

Year	Number of Displaced
Before 2014	108,307
2014	1,381,161
2015	437,677
2016	104,712
2017	98,722
2018	134, 293
Total displaced	2,031,857

Source: International Migration Report, 2019

According to IOM (2019), Boko Haram displacement since 2016 has reduced when compared to 2014, which saw an exponential increase in IDPs figures. The reduction has been attributed to improved security situations through the efforts of the Nigerian security apparatus towards curbing the Boko Haram insurgency. Similarly, new displacement has been reduced because earlier displaced communities are abandoned. In other words, displacement recorded between 2016 and 2018 are secondary displacement while new displacements are rarely encountered. The above figure was quoted (Table 1) from 2014 because one, significant displacement began in 2014 and two, owing to challenges with efficient and reliable statistics. Fig 1 shows the impact analysis of Boko Haram attacks between 2013 and 2018 according to the Global Terrorism Index Report.



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45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5 0 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Fig 1: Impact Analysis of Boko Haram Attacks, 2013-2018

Source: Global Terrorism Index (GTI). (2015). *Measuring and understanding the impact of terrorism*. Institute for Economics & Peace.

Incident ■Fatalities ■Injuries

Fig 1indicates that Boko Haram attacks up to 2013 were minimal with the total percentage of attacks put at10.13%, fatalities is 9.28% and injuries is 5.69%. The character and impact of attacks changed significantly in 2014. It was the year Nigeria was ranked second among the countries most impacted by terrorism. There was an astronomical rise in the number of attacks (22.13%), fatalities (38.17%), and injuries (27.96%). In 2015, there was a slight fall in Boko Haram attack incidents reduced to19.65%. According to the report, the percentage of incidents, deaths, and injuries keep decreasing between 2016 and 2017 until an increase of 5.04% in terrorism incidents in 2018.

Internally Displaced Challenges and Government Responses in Nigeria

The Nigerian government's response to the crisis emanating from Boko Haram has also targeted the IDPs. The establishment of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally



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Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), saddled with the responsibilities to respond to the emergence and the rehabilitation of victims of natural disasters, communal, ethnic, and religious conflicts, as well as the humanitarian needs of IDPs in different parts of the country, is a fundamental example.

Despite the presence of government institutions and agencies, their efforts have been characterised by haphazards to topics concerning IDPs in the northeast. (Abdulazeez *et.al.*, 2018, p. 88) IDPs Camps in Nigeria are primarily faced with social and economic challenges. Women and Children with a considerable percentage of the displaced are vulnerable to gender violence such as rape, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, and forced marriages. (Ajayi, 2020 pp.1-24) Women and Girls faced several challenges in the process of being displaced, especially as regards cases of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in volatile states and IDP camps. In IDPs Camps, women survived through sex with high risks of sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD) as well as depression. A report published on September 20, 2020, captured "Sex for Survival: How officials use underage IDP girls as Object of Pleasure" narrates the experience of a girl named Aisha with sexual assaults from Boko Haram fighters and IDPs camp officials (Kunle, 2020).

Also, children are exposed to the danger of abuse, forceful recruitment as child soldiers, suicide bombers, sex slaves, and abrupt discontinuation of their education among others. Children of school age in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe are faced with difficulty due to perpetual attacks of Boko Haram insurgents on school and infrastructural facilities. Also, the failure to secure captured Chibok girls on August 15 has generated national anxieties and international condemnation Food insecurity and malnutrition is also a major challenge facing IDPs in Nigeria (UN, 2016). There are reported cases where food brought by humanitarian agencies, is sold or hoarded, thereby making it unavailable to the displaced population. In recognition of this problem, the Nigerian government



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officially declared a state of emergency on nutrition. Adamawa IDPs Camp at Fufore witnessed a protest over the shortage of food (Premium Times, 2020).

Inadequate social amenities and infrastructure have also become a substantial challenge to women and children. There are reported cases of outbreak of diseases among IDPs such as Malaria, Cholera, and Kwashiorkor. In the North-eastern region, where most health facilities have been destroyed and deserted, IDP camps lack health personnel and vaccinations to diagnose these health challenges. World Health Organisation reports showed that critical health and endemics such as malaria, acute respiratory infections, and diarrhea are problems bedeviling IDP camps in Nigeria (WHO, 2017). Furthermore, IDP camps are also faced with the problem of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Available water and sanitation facilities and structures are inadequate to cater for the basic needs of the displaced population, thereby putting them at the risk of disease contamination and other related ailments (UNICEF, 2016). The situation of IDPs and IDPs Camps has become a source of concern because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a Vanguard interview with IDP Camp, Abuja, on March 22, 2020, respondent lamented the lack of resources and their vulnerability to the COVID-19 Pandemic (Victoria, 2020).

The government has responded to the insurgency through civil and military approaches. Nigeria's government response began with police action against the sects' members. The police action was substituted by 'Public Blame Politics' between 2010 and 2013, where "sad narrative of denial, recrimination and the trading of blames by public officials, politicians and their supporters" dominated the public sphere (Kelvin *et.al.*, 2017 p.188). After the May 29th, 2011 bombing incidents, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, set up the Joint Task Force – Operation Restore Order (JTF-ORO) on June 15th, 2011. The task force was saddled with the responsibility of providing a multi-service response to the insurgency with a mission to restore law and order. It comprised of Nigerian Air Force (NAF), the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Police



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Force (NPF), and the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS). (Ekhomu, 2020) As a result of the increasing destruction that accompanied Boko Haram operations, the federal government declared the first state of emergency on 31 December, 2011. The emergency covered 15 local government areas (LGAs) in four states – Borno, Adamawa, Niger, and Plateau. The intensity of the insurgency prompted the Federal Government to declare another state of emergency covering Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States on 14 May, 2013. The Federal Government also established the "Civilian JTF" as a local force in defending communities in Maiduguri, Borno, and Yobe States.

Internally displaced persons have also enjoyed the supports of international organisations and humanitarian agencies that have committed human and material resources towards addressing challenges faced by IDPs. These organisations focused on the situations of IDPs state of camps, vulnerabilities of the women and children, violation of displaced human rights. The Human Rights Commission victims of VAWG while the United Nation Human Rights Commission (UNHCR) also stretched its activities to IDPs in a conflict-affected state through emergency and transitional shelter interventions in the states like Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States. UNHCR met the needs of 885,200 helpless IDPs affected by the conflict in six states in northeast Nigeria between January and December 2017. (UNHCR, 2017) UNHCR also coordinated and established a multistakeholder working group and solid relationship with national humanitarian agencies such as Shelter/Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), International Organization on Migration, National and State Emergency Management Agencies (NEMA/SEMA), Humanitarian Country Team protection, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) and local stakeholders towards the internally displaced crisis in Nigeria. The United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) also provided finances to tackle challenges such as poor nutritional conditions, child protection, education among others.



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Beyond Protection: State of National and International Legislations on IDPs in Nigeria

Interestingly, despite government institutions or agencies' commitments to the plights of IDPs in the country, the government's lackadaisical attitude towards a national policy on IDPs and complete disregard for international instruments on the IDPs is a major concern. In other words, the absence of substantive national legislation in Nigeria, refusal to ratify and conform with other international instruments and principles on the status of IDPs such as the African Union Convention for the Assistance and Protection of IDPs in Africa (Kampala Convention) have contributed to the to IDPs crisis in the country. The UNHCR (2017) reports stated that a fundamental impediment to the effective and efficient national response to IDPs such humanitarian crisis is the absence of legislative and policy framework to support such process. The sub-section reviews Nigeria's status at establishing these legislative and policy frameworks by examining two of such. These include the National Policy on IDPs and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

National Policy on IDPs

Nigerian government institutional framework towards IDPs remains shadowed with no elaborate, functional, or legal policy framework or institutional architecture that deals explicitly or directly targeted towards the IDPs, despite the enormous displacement. In 2003, a draft National Policy on IDPs was designed as a step towards ameliorating the plights of IDPs in the state. The Nigeria National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons was prepared based on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement of 1982, African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and the Communiqué of the First ECOWAS Ministerial Conference on Humanitarian Assistance and Protection of IDPs in West Africa. The National Policy on IDPs guides national, regional, international humanitarian organizations, international donors, civil societies, on schemes of response to challenges emanating from transnational terrorism such as the IDPs through humanitarian assistance. The National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) encompasses the responsibilities of





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government, humanitarian agencies, IDPs host communities among others. However, proper action on the adoption has been unnecessarily delayed because of bureaucratic challenges and the failure of good governance.

The policy also empowers institutions such as National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), and State emergency services such as Borno State Emergency Management Agency to provide relief materials, support state-level deradicalization programmes and protection for IDPs. The outcome of the committee effort was presented in 2012. However, since 2012, the policy is yet to be officially adopted. Conversely, nine years after, successive governments keep giving false hope on the domestication of the policy which and the nation still grapples with cases of displacement without an adequate legal framework. In 2016, National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMFI) and an Inter-Ministerial Task Force was set up to assist in the provision of humanitarian services as well as protection for the IDPs. However, since the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons has not been adopted, NCRMFI also has not been supported by any legal statute (Ademola *et. Al.*, 2016).

The Kampala Convention and the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs

The domestication of the African Union Convention for the Assistance and Protection of IDPs in Africa (Kampala Convention) is another major stumbling block in the quest of protecting IDPs in Nigeria. The Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa was adopted at the October 2009 African Union Special Summit. The Kampala convention served as a legally binding framework for the protection of IDPs in Africa. By 2012, Nigeria became the 12th state to ratify the Kampala Convention and deposit its instrument of ratification with the African Union Commission in May 2012.



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Since 2012, despite the opportunities presented in these conventions for Nigeria to realise sustainable solutions to IDPs plights, it is yet to be domesticated. Suffice to note that the non-domestication of the Kampala Convention in line with Section 12 of the 1999 Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution renders the Convention inapplicable. With Nigeria's government's neglect of the Kampala Convention and national policy, the handling of issues relating to the welfare and protection of IDPs becomes national insecurity as well. The paper argued that there is an emergency need for the ratification of pending bills on the status of IDPs and the establishment of a coordinating body saddled with the responsibility for the protection, coordination, provision of humanitarian assistance, and sustainable solutions for IDPs. This article posits that managing such number of IDPs without adequate funding could be very challenging for the agencies saddled with such responsibilities. There is then the need for the government to provide adequate funding and support for both national and international bodies focusing on matters related to IDPs.

Conclusion

The article assessed Boko Haram insurgency and the profusion of internally displaced persons in Nigeria between 2009 and 2018. Between 2009 and 2018, Boko Haram operations led to the widespread killing and large-scale internally displaced persons. The problem of IDPs reiterates the interconnection between human security and conflict. The acute suffering of IDPs was examined vis-à-vis government response and humanitarian agencies contribution to IDPs crises. The article also examined the status of National Policy on IDPs and the African Union Convention for the Assistance and Protection of IDPs in Africa (Kampala Convention). The study therefore concludes that Nigeria's failure to domesticate this national and international legislation and policies has been a major setback on issues related to IDPs. Given this, comprehensive efforts towards ameliorating the plights of internally displaced in Nigeria must factor in the place of national and international legislation and policy frameworks that accommodate issues of IDPs' rights, welfare, and protection.



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