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Boko Haram Violence and its Effects on Children in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

A lot of scholarly works have been done on Boko Haram and its violent activities in the northern part of Nigeria. Most of these studies are centred on the ideology of the group, its historical emergence, its link with other terrorist organizations, the impact and effects of its terror, the humanitarian crisis resulting from their insurgent activities, as well as both national and international/regional responses to counter its violent activities. However, less attention has been paid to the impact of Boko Haram terrorism on children, especially the children living in internally displaced peoples' (IDP) camps. Using qualitative method, this study investigated the effect of Boko Haram insurgency on children in Adamawa State of Nigeria. Primary data for the study was generated from in-depth interviews with care givers, camp managers, representatives of government and non-governmental institutions and some displaced children. Secondary data was derived from books, journal articles on Boko Haram. Data was content analysed. It is obvious that the Boko Haram crisis has affected children in many ways such as not being able to go to school, not having access to healthcare facilities, inadequate as well as nutritional food to eat in camps. Children were also forcefully recruited into Boko Haram as fighters and spies while the Nigerian security forces have arrested and detained several children thereby violating their rights. The crisis has also affected the mental health of children and has made many girls vulnerable. It is therefore important for both the government and other relevant stakeholders to pay adequate attention and make serious commitment to the physical, mental, and social needs of children living in IDP camps.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Insurgency, Children, Nigeria

Introduction

Boko Haram, a Hausa phrase meaning 'Western education is sacrilege' is the name commonly used to refer to the movement *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad'*, translated to mean 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings through Evangelism and Jihad' (Danjibo, 2013). Boko Haram has its roots in Maiduguri city, the capital of Borno State in North East Nigeria. Its violence in the North-East of Nigeria is one of the security challenges confronting the country. According to Anifowoshe (2012) and Ilechukwu (2014), the jihadist group has caused both physical and psychological damage on the people and infrastructural development of the Northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The damaging activities of the terror group have both national and international consequential outcomes, making it a somewhat thorny condition for the Nigerian government to handle (Gilbert, 2014).

The emergence of Boko Haram and its violent activities have forced most residents in that region to flee to other parts of the country where their safety and security can be guaranteed (Nwakaudu, 2012). The violence has resulted in over 20,000 deaths, the forced displacement of over 2 million people, and the widespread loss of livelihoods and access to essential social services (UNDP, 2017). As a result, thousands of people are living in overcrowded displacement sites far below international minimum standards and without

proper access to latrines, clean water and other conveniences. Some have put up shelters made of wooden sticks and pieces of ripped fabric. Many of the shelters do not even have doors, making women, men, and children highly vulnerable to intrusions and attacks (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2019).

The consequential effect of Boko Haram violence has led to the violation of the rights of many children in northeastern Nigeria. For example, children have become deliberate targets, often subjected to extreme violence from sexual abuse and forced marriages to kidnappings and brutal killings (UNICEF, 2015). It was reported that children as young as four years were being used within the ranks of Boko Haram as cooks, porters, and spies (Reliefweb, 2017). According to accounts by escapees, young women and girls who have been abducted have been subjected to forced marriage, forcible religious conversion, physical and psychological abuse, forced labour and rape (Christian Science Monitor, 2015). To this end, the conflict is exacting a heavy toll on children by affecting their human security such as their access to basic health, education, and social services. Thus, this paper discusses the effect of the Boko Haram crisis on children in the internally displaced camps in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Data and methodology

The research is qualitatively driven, and the exploratory and case study research designs

were adopted. The study population consisted of 1,235 IDPs (412 boys, 468 girls, 166 men and 189 women) in Malkohi Internally Displaced Person Camp, Head of Operations NEMA, three Care Givers in Malkohi Camp, staff of United Nations Children Fund and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. A total number of 16 persons formed the sample population and respondents were purposively selected. The respondents were Madam Tiki (Director, Child Development, Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development), President of the Youth Association, Shuwa, Ms. Aisha (not real name), Ms. Hassanatou (not real name), Mrs. Hannatou Yaki (Consultant for UNICEF on Child Protection and Gender Based Violence), Abbani Imam Garki (Head of Operations, Yola, National Emergency Management Agency), Mrs. Lydia (Women Leader, Malkohi Camp), Mariam Musa, (Youth leader at the Malkohi IDP), Alhaji Mustapha (District Head, Madagali), Peti and Abdullahi (unaccompanied children), Ms. Purity Kalunga (UNICEF Health Worker), Chairman, Muslim Council, Madagali Local Government, Dr. Marchulum (State Emergency Management Agency), Mr. Abdullahi Mahmodu (Camp Manager, Malkohi Camp, Adamawa state), Ada, (Humanitarian actor), Teacher (Shuwa). Secondary data was derived from books, journal articles and other relevant documents. The data was content-analyzed using descriptive and narrative styles.

For ethical consideration, permission was obtained from the National Emergency Management Agency and the State Emergency Management Agency before collecting the data. As part of ethical consideration, the identities of the respondents were kept anonymous as requested.

Adamawa State

Adamawa State is one of the states that make up the North-East geographic zones. The state was carved out from the old Gongola State in 1991 alongside Taraba State. The state is bound to Borno State in the north, Cross River State to the east, Gombe State to the west and Taraba State to the south. It also shares international boundary with the Republic du Cameroun. Adamawa is a heterogeneous society with high social diffusion made up of over 70 different ethnic compositions, and languages with the Fulani as the dominant ethnic group administering an emirate with the Lamido as the administrative head. In terms of belief system, the state is inhabited by mostly Muslims Fulani of the old Fombina Empire that stretches into Cameroun; Christians that belong to several non-Fulani speaking groups and people who practice the traditional belief system. However, despite their differences, Adamawa was known to be one of the most peaceful states in the north east until the emergence of Boko Haram with its violent activities. Severn Local Government Areas- Gulak, Madagali, Michka, Mubi North, Mubi South, Hong and Gombi became the epicentre of Boko Haram attacks. In fact, Boko

Haram overran these territories and administered them as part of its caliphate until they were recaptured by the military in 2015 (Ovaga, 2012).

Conceptual Clarification

This section is devoted to clarifying certain key concepts germane to the subject of investigation.

Child

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, a child is every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. In Nigeria, the Child Right Act (2003) is the most comprehensive legislation on child protection. The Act recommended punishment for child trafficking, exploitation, and abuse. The Act started by stating that “the best interest of the child shall be of paramount consideration” in all actions relating to a child. The Act also provided for the right of the child to life, name, dignity, education, health, etc. It equally prohibits child marriage, using children for any criminal activity, abduction, unlawful removal and transfer of a child from lawful custody; forced exploitative or hazardous child labour, recruitment of children into armed forces, hawking, begging for arms, prostitution and unlawful sexual relation. Section 277 of the Child Rights Act of 2003 defines “a child as a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years.”

Conflict

Conflict is the struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Diez et al, 2006). In the broadest terms, conflict represents the incompatibility of subject positions. Since 2009, violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and the government’s military response have killed tens of thousands of civilians and displaced millions across the Lake Chad region, which straddles Cameroon, Chad, Niger Republic, and Nigeria. Although major military campaigns from 2015 to 2016 succeeded in degrading the group’s territorial control, Boko Haram has proven remarkably adaptable in its tactics (Danjibo and Aubyn, 2018). From the end of 2018 to the present there was an increase in attacks in Nigeria’s Borno State (Maclean, 2018). Since Muhammadu Buhari began his second term as President in 2019, the conflict in the northeast appears far from being resolved (Brechenmacher, 2019).

Rights of Children

Several instruments were designed to protect the rights of children. These include the Geneva Convention (1949), the United Nations Refugee Convention (1951), and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) with its accompanying Operational Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. In international law, the involvement of children in armed conflict and targeting facilities such as educational and health facilities is a human right

violation. Of relevance is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in which the rights of children are grouped into three categories: protection, promotion, and participation.

Armed conflict affects the entire populace, however, it has more consequential effects on children since they are the most vulnerable group (Bellamy, 1998). The UN Security Council (2009), the 1989 Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) and the 1977 Geneva Convention identified five grave violations against the rights

of children during armed conflict. These grave violations are (1) killing or seriously injuring a child, (2) recruiting children under the age of 15 as soldiers, (3) abducting a child, (4) attacking a school or hospitals (5) using schools and hospitals as military bases and (6) denying humanitarian access to children. Apart from this, the UN has Convention of 1989 has other key articles on the rights of the child as presented in Table 1 in the same vein as the African Union (AU) also has as presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Key Articles of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article six	Right to life
Article seven and eight	Right to an identity
Article nine	Right not be separated from parents
Articles twelve and thirteen	Right to express views and be listened to
Article seventeen	Right to information
Article nineteen	Right to be protected from all forms of abuse
Article twenty	Right to ensure the best interest of the child
Article twenty-three	Right for disabled children to enjoy life and participate in the society
Article twenty-four	Right to healthcare
Article twenty-seven	Right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
Article thirty-two	Right to be protected from exploitation
Article thirty-three	Right to be protected from illicit drugs
Article thirty-four	Right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation

Source: Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

On 23 October 2009, the African Union (AU) adopted the Convention for the protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa known as the Kampala

Convention. The Convention was the first regional legally binding instrument imposing clear duties on states regarding the protection and assistance of IDPs.

Table 2: Key articles of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009)

Article 7 (5)	Right of IDPs including children to live in satisfactory conditions of dignity, security, sanitation, food, water, health, and shelter.
	Prohibition from being associated with Armed Groups and Armed Forces
	Prohibition from forceful recruitment, kidnapping or hostage taking, being recruited into sexual slavery and trafficking of persons
Article 9 (2)	Members of armed groups are prohibited from sexual and gender-based violence notably rape, enforced prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour and recruitment of children.
	Right to special protection for and assistance to IDPs with special needs including separated and unaccompanied children, young children and persons living with disabilities.
	Right to reunification with family
Article 13 (4)	Right to obtain necessary identity documents and documentation in their own name.

Source: African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009)

Boko Haram Insurgency: An Overview

Boko Haram emerged as a fundamentalist sectarian group in Maiduguri in the Northeastern Nigeria 2002. Its teachings detested Western-oriented civilization and secularism because of their support for extreme liberalism and ‘ungodliness’. More significantly, the sect postured as an organisation with an independent government within the Nigerian state (Ibiang & Chukwudi, 2018) and succeeded in establishing a caliphate. Boko Haram drew inspiration from the late Muhammadu Marwa, popularly known as Maitastine, whose revolt against the Nigerian state in Kano led to the death of over 4,000 people, including Marwa himself. Marwa’s death sparked more riots against the government in Bulumkutu in 1982,

where 3,300 people were killed, in Gongola State, where nearly 1,000 people perished in 1984, and in Bauchi State where hundreds more were killed in 1985 (Foyou, Ngwafu, Pantoyo, & Ortiz, 2018).

Boko Haram was founded by Mohammed Yusuf who was “a radical, young Islamist cleric...with the aim of establishing a fully Islamic State in Nigeria”(Foster-Bowser & Sanders, 2012, p 5).Yusuf gained support from speaking out against poverty and corruption in Nigerian government. Moreover, Yusuf saw the Nigerian state as a creation of westernization and modernization- two principles that run contrary to an Islamic state. In 2009, Mohammed Yusuf and his followers engaged the Nigerian security agencies in a violent confrontation. The sect was

'crushed' by the Nigerian Army; Yusuf was arrested and handed over to the police and was extra-judicially executed by the latter in July 2009 (Danjibo, 2009/ 2017; Mohammed, 2015; Thurston, 2016; 2018). From 2011 till date, Boko Haram has continued to terrorize the Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States with spill over attacks in Cameroun, Chad and the Republic of Niger (Lugga, 2016; Danjibo and Aubyn, 2018).

The death of Mohammed Yusuf resulted in a change of leadership in which Abubakar Shekau assumed the headship of the violent extremist group. Under Shekau's leadership, Boko Haram became extremely violent, carrying out terror attacks against the state, communities and citizens (Ibiang & Chukwudi, 2018). According to the Global Terrorism Index of 2015, Boko Haram has caused the death of 6,644 in 2015 and this number rose by 300 percent in 2015, with an estimated 7,512 deaths (Lugga, 2016). One of the major characteristics of the conflict is the various abuses against women and girls by Boko Haram insurgents, which includes abduction, forced conversion to Islam, physical and psychological abuse, forced labour, forced participation in insurgency operations, forced marriage, rape and other forms of abuses (UNICEF, 2016; Read, 2017).

Displaced children in Adamawa State are faced with emotional and mental anguish and physical problems which are known to hinder growth, leading to lasting physical and psychological challenges that can extensively influence their potentials to develop healthy/positive

relationships in the society. So far, it is estimated that more than 20,000 children have been detached from their respective families in North-eastern Nigeria (Humanitarian Response Plan Nigeria, 2016). These children are at risk of maltreatment, being denied access to good education and forced to participate in menial jobs that will endanger their lives.

Responses to Displaced Persons in Nigeria

The magnitude and complexity of the challenges faced by displaced persons especially children calls for a concerted effort. This is why the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2004) recommended the need for inter-agency collaboration in tackling the issues surrounding displaced persons. In Nigeria, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has been saddled with the responsibility of providing care to children and coordinating other humanitarian actors in addressing these needs. NEMA is therefore, in charge of managing all the IDP camps especially the formal camps in Fufore, Malkohi and the NYSC Camps in Adamawa State (UNHCR, 2017).

Established via Act 12 and as amended by Act 50 of 1999, to manage disasters in Nigeria, NEMA's mandate is to address disaster-related issues, coordinate responses to all emergencies, and provide relief through the establishment of concrete structures and measures. A chairman, who is supported by several directors at the top management level, heads the agency. NEMA's

activities are guided by a number of plans and frameworks including: The National Contingency Plan, Search, & Rescue and Epidemic Evacuation Plan, National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF), Emergency Response Standard Operating Procedures (Mohammed, 2017). The North East Development Commission (NEDC), and The Presidential Committee on North East Initiative (PCNI) were also established to give succour to the IDPs and the results have been rewarding (Onaedo and Sejoro, 2017).

Asides the National and State Emergency Management Agencies, many international organisations are aiding, protection, reintegration, and resettlement for Internally Displaced Persons in northeast, Nigeria especially in Adamawa state. These organisations include International Organisation for Migration which assisted in carrying out psychosocial needs assessment in Adamawa State, Nigeria (IOM, 2017). In the same vein, the UNCHR Office has enhanced its partnerships with development actors and international financial institutions, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the World Bank, to advocate that IDPs in Adamawa State and other states in northeast Nigeria are identified and integrated in development plans (UNHCR, 2017). As at 31 October 2018, UNICEF was able to provide treatment to children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and more than one million

people gained access to safe water and better sanitation services in Adamawa State. UNICEF's child protection intervention has reached out to more than 294,000 children and caregivers with support services.

Experiences of Children during Armed Conflict

For as long as there have been conflicts, children have been shaped by its consequences. These armed conflicts define both the childhood and the future of its child victim (IBCR, 2016). Since the 1996 release of Graça Machel report titled "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" (UNICEF, 1996), policymakers, academics civil society organizations and the media have paid greater attention to children in situations of armed conflict. This concerted attention has led to great progress on normative protective standards. Unfortunately, those standards are difficult to enforce during times of conflict and have not always translated into reasonable improvements for the protection of children (UNICEF, 2009).

According to the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General, parties in situations of armed conflict (both state and non-state actors) commit grave violations against children, including killing and maiming, abduction, rape and other sexual violence, attacks on schools, religious houses and hospitals and barring humanitarian access in 2008 (UN, 2009). There is evidence that children are explicitly targeted for atrocities in order to demoralise or terrorise

opponents and there is certainly little regard for their well-being, given the use of landmines, bombs and other indiscriminate weapons, as well as the use of boys and girls themselves as human shields (UNICEF, 2002). Also, the 2008 Global Report from the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers documented the presence of children associated with fighting forces of one kind or another in at least 17 conflict zones and argues that “where armed conflict does exist, child soldiers will almost certainly be involved” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

Displaced children are at increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect as they have lost the care and protection of their families and caregivers. To compound matters, there may be no trusted adults who have the time to explain issues and reinforce the child’s resilience. These children face many challenges as emergencies disrupt daily routines thereby weakening social ties; as people are torn from their social supports and displaced from their homes. In addition to losing loved ones, homes and items of basic necessity, children lose geographical references and symbolic personal items which serve as important reminders of their life, identity, and culture (Terre Des Hommes, 2006).

Whether sudden or chronic, conflicts lead to violations of children’s rights. For these children, physical survival becomes a daily challenge, making it difficult to access clean water, an adequate food supply or appropriate

shelter, just to mention a few of the violations (IRC, 2003). Articles 6, 8 and 16 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child assert the right of children to human security. During conflict, children are killed as a result of torture, firearms, bombs and landmines. Children in conflict situations sustain serious injuries and or life-long disabilities such as loss of limbs, eyesight and hearing capacity (Zwi et al. 1992).

Asides the physical impacts, children also suffer psychological traumas. This is a violation of article 19 which states that measures should be taken to protect the child from all forms of mental violence and injury, including sexual abuse. Both government security personnel and non-state armed groups gang rape even under-aged girls or force them to provide sexual gratification in exchange for food in camps (Machel, 1996). For instance, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict reported that “in Darfur, rape is a means of warfare used by armed groups to deliberately humiliate and to force displacement of girls and their families” (UN, 2006) and in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, staggering numbers of cases of sexual violence against children by all parties to the conflict continue to be reported (without prosecution) (UN, 2009). The post-traumatic effect of armed conflict on children includes withdrawal syndrome, exhibition signs of depression or demonstrate hyper-alertness, nightmares and mental disorder, confusion, fear and aggression.

All of these and many more effects affect childhood development (Geltman, 1998; Save the Children, 1996; Boyden, 1997; Zwi, 1992).

Food security is a striking example of how children's insecurity is compounded by interlinking elements in situations of conflict. Furthermore, food is one of the basic needs of humans, yet in conflict situations the whole food chain is disrupted. This starts with production problem because crops and stock are destroyed; food and future income revenues are drastically reduced and food production ceases out rightly (Machel 1996). With regards to health security, during conflict situations, health centres are targeted and destroyed (Onyango 1998) making it impossible for people to have access to healthcare and children become the most vulnerable as they suffer inadequate health supplies, unable to have access to health workers or attend healthcare programmes such as immunization (Summerfield, 1996a; Edson, 1997; Goldson, 1996).

Over 50% of all primary school-aged children who are not in school live in a 'fragile state' (O'Malley, 2007). Fighting disrupts a child's education, sometimes forever, as children struggle to find a way to attend the limited schooling options available during a crisis or to return to school at an appropriate level when it reopens. The inability to attend school, resulting from curfews, sieges or destruction of facilities, and the absence of a regular schedule can contribute to instability and make children

more vulnerable to military recruitment and other forms of exploitation (International Bureau for Children's Rights, 2016).

The Boko Haram Conflict and the Experiences of Children

The Boko Haram conflict has been a destabilising experience for children, as it exposed them to risks at a time in their lives when they are most vulnerable. It becomes even more traumatising because the difficult conditions they endure might persist for years. In the process of fleeing their homes and communities to avoid being killed or abducted, many children in Nigeria's North-East were exposed to dangers such as attacks, trafficking, landmines, and illness. These children were also victims of abuse and exploitation in IDP camps or host communities (Olaitan, 2019). This section focuses on the impact of the Boko Haram conflict on children.

Child casualties

The Boko Haram insurgency has led to child casualties in Adamawa State, Nigeria. During an in-depth United Nations mapping exercise, the UN documented accounts of 3,909 children (1,428 boys, 1,021 girls and 1,460 unknown sex) killed and 7,333 children (2,101 boys, 1,459 girls and 3,773 unknown sex) maimed during 474 conflict-related incidents in the reporting period. Of these, the United Nations verified 139 incidents (29 per cent) in which 1,044 children (399 girls, 551 boys and 94 unknown sex) were

killed and 1,350 (520 girls, 434 boys and 396 unknown sex) were injured. The verified incidents took place mainly between August 2015 and June 2016, when access had improved. The unverified incidents largely occurred between January 2013 and July 2015. Nine percent of the child casualties were reported in Adamawa State (UN Doc. S/2017/304). According to one of the respondents who was an unaccompanied child, many of his friends were killed and that there was an attack on the Malkohi Internally Displaced Persons Camp in 2015 which claimed some lives. This has caused panic among children in the camp as they feared that they would be killed just like their parents. He noted that

Even the camps are not safe, the Boko Haram insurgency is still on-going so nowhere is safe, we can only pray for it to end, that is why I want to become a soldier so I can fight them. So many people have been killed and so many people have been taken away. The camp was bombed in 2015 and people died. Even my own friends and some of the parents have been killed (Interview at Malkohi Camp, 2017).

Suicide attacks have become the second leading cause of child casualties, accounting for over one thousand deaths and 2,100 injuries (UNICEF, 2017). The Chairman, Muslim Council, Madagali Local Government noted that girls are mostly used for suicide missions. He posited that:

the reason is that people do not suspect girls. They do not regard

them. They look at them with innocent faces and the reason why they are attacking people is because they want to attract relevance to themselves. They want to make sure that the government in power is being threatened in one way or the other by bombing here and there, they are happy but when the people are happy, people are peaceful, they are unhappy, that is why they find an alternative to make members of the public unhappy.

In 2018, 48 children were used as suicide bombers in Nigeria out of which 38 were girls (BBC, 2019). During a meeting with some youths in Shua town in Madagali LGA, participants believed that hypnotism and enforced drug-use also coerced females, especially small girls to embark on suicide mission. In 2016, a woman abducted in Maiduguri described how she and two other women were injected with a tranquilizer before being strapped with bombs. Eyewitnesses have also reported seeing men accompanying female suicide bombers to ensure they accomplished their task. Surviving female suicide bombers reported being paid as little as 200 Naira (60 cents) to carry out suicide attacks. More than 2,000 women and children, according to estimates by UNICEF, were abducted by Boko Haram between 2012 and early 2016 obviously with the intention of turning them into suicide bombers (Zenn, 2018).

Child Trafficking and Exploitation

Boko Haram conflict in the northeast has exacerbated children's vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation. As a result of the

conflict, child trafficking has become prevalent (US Department of State, 2019). One of the respondents who was a UNICEF consultant buttressed this as she stated that:

Trafficking is very common in conflict situations, for example, a child that his mother was killed or a woman running with five children because the man is not likely to support, dies while running, these children become vulnerable, so anybody that needs them will take them. We have reported cases, and some have been retrieved (Interview at UN Women, Office, May 31, 2017).

Lack of Access to Education

Since the Boko Haram conflict commenced, attacks on education and educational institutions have been prevalent. Teachers and schools became the group's first targets. Between 2009 and 2014, the group has burnt down hundreds of school buildings, threatened and killed teachers, and abducted and killed students. A study carried out by Mohammed, Alimba and Momodu (n.d.) revealed that over 2000 schools were destroyed by Boko Haram in the North-East. The impact of armed conflicts on education is damaging as Elbert et al. 2009 highlighted that children of school age in would usually be forced to drop out of school.

Also, according to Odinkalu (2014), the closing down of schools has far reaching consequences, including ending the education of many students and the opportunity to get higher education. According to an official of the education ministry, 85 schools were closed in

Borno State, affecting about 120,000 students after frequent attacks by Islamic militants in areas that house the country's most illiteracy rate. Also, more than 270 schoolgirls were kidnapped in April, 2014 in Chibok community (*The Guardian*, 2014). From the beginning of 2012, about 70 teachers and more than 1,000 school children have been killed while some were wounded; 50 schools were burnt, and many schools have been forced to close. Many children were also forced out of school across communities in Yobe, Kaduna, Adamawa and Borno states and many teachers were forced to migrate to other locations for safety (*The Guardian*, 2014).

According to Mariam Musa, a youth leader at the Malkohi IDP Camp in Adamawa State who is also a care giver to three unaccompanied children, displaced children have a lot of educational needs and the teachers in the IDP schools are not often available to teach the children. This is because the teachers were mostly soldiers who had their primary responsibilities. She highlighted that:

These children need schoolbooks, uniforms and nobody is giving the children much attention. Many of these organisations have left and have gone to Borno because the state has been attacked severally in recent times. Most times, the school has no teacher, no one to care for them. Some classes have no teacher, the teachers are not even enough for the school, the students are too much (sic) in a class" (*Interview at Malkohi Camp, May 30, 2017*).

Internally displaced children in the IDP camps face significant challenges in exercising their right to education, from infrastructure, capacity and resource constraints to persistent insecurity, social tensions, and discrimination. This is due to the notion that education is a secondary need to be addressed once violence has subsided.

Sexual Abuse

The sexual abuse of children is “the involvement of a child in sexual activities that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to . . . or that violates the laws or social taboos of society” (WHO, 1999). Displaced children often suffer from gender-based sexual violence. Threats of such violence come from both within the camp and from outside and are often due to poor security conditions. According to a UNICEF consultant in Adamawa State, “we have had different cases of rape. We have a 13-year-old boy who has raped young girls. The fourth victim is a five-year-old girl” (Interview at UNWomen, May 31, 2017). Another respondent noted that many underage children have been violated. According to her, “violations are things you see (sic) from time to time and since we work with agencies such as the Police, the Judiciary and all other organisations, we always refer these cases to them. Some of the criminals get killed and even some of the people are persecuted” (Interview at UNWomen, May 31, 2017).

In May 2016, the United Nations verified the rape by Boko Haram of 52 girls aged between 9 and 18 years, who were part of a group rescued by the 8th Infantry Division of the Nigerian security forces. Among them, three girls were pregnant and six had babies. In the fourth quarter of 2016, the United Nations verified 22 new cases of sexual violence by Boko Haram affecting 21 girls aged between 9 and 17 years (UN Doc/S/2017/304).

In addition, the researchers met with two young mothers aged sixteen (16) and seventeen (17) who were forcefully married to Boko Haram members at the ages of eleven (11) and twelve (12) at Shuwa community in Madagali LGA in Adamawa State. According to Ada, an NGO activist, during a group discussion she had with Boko Haram wives, it was revealed how Boko Haram fighters threw small infants and young babies into rivers because their mothers denied them sex. A respondent also highlighted that many of the women who had been raped by Boko Haram insurgents have given birth to children and claimed that seeing the child reminds them of the pain they went through. She highlighted that: “some will just abandon these babies, because no mother can go and say I had this pregnancy through sexual violence, I don’t want that child, can you collect it?” (Interview at UNWomen, May 31, 2017). During an interaction with Alhaji Mudstapha, the District Head of Shuwa, he recounted that Boko Haram had fathered more than 25,000 children

who were not cared for or accepted by the communities in the North-East (Interview at Yola, May 28, 2017). However, while Boko Haram's violence against women and girls has been at the centre of public attention to the crisis, delivering protection and support for women and girls has been an on-going challenge in humanitarian response (Read, 2017).

Killing of Humanitarian Workers

In 2015, four staff of the National Emergency Management Agency were injured during a bomb explosion on 11 September 2015 in Malkohi camp for internally displaced persons, Adamawa State. The killing of humanitarian workers has caused some organisations to suspend their operations. The security situation also resulted in the temporary suspension of activities by the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations in parts of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States from December 2013 to March 2015 (UN S/2017/304). One of the respondents highlighted that many of the humanitarian workers were already leaving the state because of insecurity. The increasing security risks in the region have become a major challenge for organisations to meet the needs of displaced children. This point was buttressed by the Assistant Field Officer, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as she highlighted that it was becoming increasingly dangerous to provide humanitarian assistance in Adamawa State given the rise in the death of aid workers. She stated that:

Our lives are at risk most times. We sacrifice our lives. We face negative publicity; people tend to portray us in bad light. It is a risk for us. Last week, just after we passed the First Bank in Madagali, Adamawa State, it was bombed. So many humanitarian workers have been killed. We do not have working hours. This has discouraged many humanitarian workers. (Interview at UNHCR Office, May 22, 2017).

Inadequate food and nutrition

With an increase in Boko Haram attacks and the displacement of nearly two million Nigerians, agricultural production has plummeted and staple food prices have skyrocketed. At Shuwa, the President of the Youth Association told how they were unable to access their farmlands and how hunger was ravaging the people. He claimed to have been producing over 300 bags of grains annually but now he could barely produce any as a result of insecurity (IDI, 29 May 2017). According to UNICEF, nearly 100,000 displaced children with severe acute malnutrition have been admitted to therapeutic feeding programmes in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States (23.4% of the targeted children in need) (OECD, 2019).

One of the respondents at the Child Development Department, Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development noted that hunger and lack of good food was responsible for many of the illnesses among the children in the IDP camps in the state. Hunger is one of the consequences of the Boko Haram conflict in the

Northeast of Nigeria as the Women Leader of Malkohi Camp, Adamawa State, Mrs. Lydia noted that in the IDP camp, a half-filled bucket of food was for thirteen people and that the rice served in camp was just mixed with palm oil (IDI, 30 May, 2017). This is to suggest that apart from the fact that the food provided to the children in the IDP camps was inadequate, they also lacked nutritional value.

Health risks

Health is a fundamental human right indispensable for the exercise of other human rights. Every human being is entitled to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health conducive to living a life in dignity (UNHCR, 2000). Article 9(2) of the Kampala Convention states that internally displaced persons should be fully provided with adequate humanitarian assistance which shall include food, water, medical care, and other health services. Internally displaced children are one of the special groups which are most vulnerable to health hazards. Since the emergence of Boko Haram insurgents in 2009, key health services and architecture for displaced children have been adversely affected as virtually all the clinics and dispensaries were destroyed by Boko Haram. Several nurses were also kidnapped by Boko Haram and in 2013 BBC reported that three North Korean doctors were killed in Yobe State. It was reported that they were killed during the night in the town of Potiskum. Two

of them had their throats slit while the third was beheaded (BBC, 2013).

As the Boko Haram insurgency continues, displacement and the interruption of health services in affected areas increase the risk of children under five to be exposed to and perhaps die from a range of diseases such as polio, diarrhoea, measles, malaria, pneumonia and cholera (PM News, 2016). In Nigeria, insecurity has hindered access to vaccinations for at least 100, 000 children under the age of five. One study found that vaccination coverage had been reduced by 24.8% and that each additional attack limited vaccination coverage by a further 6.5% (Ekhaton-Mobayode & Abebe Asfaw, 2019).

Children's mental and psychosocial health

Exposure to armed conflict has both social and psychological repercussions that endure long after the termination of the conflicts. Children who are affected by war have an increased prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and behavioural and psychosomatic complaints (Krug, et al, 2002). The effects of mental health stressors on children arising from violence such as that perpetrated by Boko Haram include the exhibition of strange behaviours, numbing, malnutrition, fear, avoidance, and recurring flashbacks (Rosshandler et al., 2016). A teacher who volunteered to assemble children in Shuwa buttressed this as he told us how some children will run out of the class blocking their ears with

their hands at the sound of any object, obviously reacting to the sound of gun shots that they have heard in the past. He observed that the children needed post-traumatic stress counselling (IDI, 30 May 2017).

Luthar and Eisenberg (2017) highlighted that in some cases, children relied on community and familial support to develop adaptive coping mechanisms after exposure to traumatic events. The impact of violence on children's educational attainment is weighty because it may impair students' learning and exam performance, in addition to having a lasting effect on human capital accumulation (Shany, 2017). This was buttressed by one of our respondents who spoke about cases of traumatic disorder among displaced children. She stated that

Sure, you know in any conflict situation, you find out the issue of trauma is always there because as a child there will be that fear, especially those children whose parents were killed in their presence. They always feel either frightened, scared or traumatised to the extent that they will start displaying some characters and they find it difficult to concentrate in school. There you find out that such a child needs to be assisted psychosocially. We try to provide psychosocial support to such children to build their resilience to see that they become stable, because if you don't do that it will affect their mental wellbeing." (IDI at the Ministry for Women and Social Development, May 30, 2017).

Also, one of the respondents said:

We have unaccompanied children in Malkohi Internally Displaced Persons camp with mental health issues. We have a boy that was found in the bush by soldiers tied to a tree and people that identified him said he was not crazy before. He does so many things, so we do not know where to put him because no caregiver will come forward to take him. (Interview at UN Women, May 31, 2017).

Unaccompanied and separated children

Armed conflict separates children from their families and relatives as evident by the huge number of unaccompanied and separated children. According to Chad International (2017), there are about 32,000 unaccompanied and separated children in Northeast Nigeria whose parents were either killed or displaced. According to one of the respondents,

Unaccompanied children are those who we have concluded they have lost parents, but separated children are those that may meet their parents after the crisis, but you still register them.... Children are trying to locate parents and parents are trying to locate their children. So, through the neighbours, they may call parents to come and take their children. So, with some identification, we hand over these children and then we document it, so nobody says you sold my child (IDI at Malkohi Camp, Jimeta, May 31, 2017).

According to one of the unaccompanied children in Adamawa state, the armed conflict has made many of them suffer some health

challenges and trauma and this has affected their development. One of the boys stated thus:

...because we are no longer with our parents, we suffer malaria often and cold. In this cold weather, some of us do not have blankets and even clothes to wear to prevent cold. Almost every time we suffer from catarrh and cough. We are often sick as we remember everything that has happened. We visit the clinic often unlike other children.

According to Kadir et al. (2018), health issues are common among unaccompanied and separated children relating to their traumatic experiences. These include infections, nutritional deficiencies, and mental health problems.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The consequences of armed conflicts on children can be deep-seated and long-term, including physical and psychological effects. The physical injuries, gender-based violence, psychosocial distress, and other violations of rights as highlighted in Fig 1. faced by displaced children are affronts to every impulse that inspired the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Kampala Convention (2009). Food insecurity, disintegration of families and communities, displacement of populations and the destruction of educational and health services and of water and sanitation systems, all took heavy tolls on children in the Northeast. This paper examined the Boko Haram insurgency and its effects on displaced

children in Adamawa State as it highlighted that the conflict is first and foremost a crisis that has violated the rights of many children as they are most vulnerable in any crisis. Many children have been killed, abducted, forcefully recruited, and internally displaced, while others have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Children have become deliberate targets, often subjected to extreme violence from sexual abuse and forced marriage to kidnappings and brutal killings. The paper also examined the various child rights that have been violated by both Boko Haram insurgents and the Nigerian military. The paper concludes by recommending that the rights of children should always be protected. To actively protect the rights of children in the on-going conflict, some recommendations are provided:

In spite of the obvious benefits of the Child Rights Act (2003), implementation is seriously challenged in Nigeria as it has been adopted in only 25 states of the Federation while the remaining 11 States, Adamawa state inclusive, have chosen not to adopt the Act. The domestication of the CRA by Adamawa state and the amendment to contain provisions for displaced and unaccompanied children will ensure that they have a right to safe spaces, better life, an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potentials. These provisions must ensure that displaced children are protected, duly registered, prohibit trafficking, sexual abuse and physical attacks, and provide access to education, healthcare, skills

acquisition, non-food items and food items. Provisions should also be made for the best interest of the child to be considered before interventions by national and international organisations, and secondary displacement should be avoided.

Special education programmes should be instituted for displaced children to fulfil their right to education. This is crucial to rebuild the country and avoid the recurrence of the Boko Haram conflict. This can be achieved through increased investments in child friendly schools and vocational training programmes. To fulfil children's right to healthcare, the health care systems should be rebuilt and equipped to cater for the needs of children affected by conflict, including provision of psychosocial support. Health care must be accessible, which requires skilled medical personnel, immunisation, and free services. The Nigerian Government must also leverage on partnerships with international organisations to deliver essential services such as health care services and food to all children.

Community and religious leaders must be engaged to monitor and provide information about members who may be offenders. These leaders are better placed to monitor their communities and identify issues that might open the door to radicalization. They should be encouraged to provide insights on how children are recruited by extremists or associated with armed groups.

In the same vein, both the Boko Haram sect and Nigerian government should abide and comply

with their duties and obligations under human rights law and humanitarian law respectively and stop unlawful targeting of children.

Poor funding of State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and the National Emergency Management Agency has been identified as major limitations to meeting the needs of displaced children, as the absence of a strong SEMA in Adamawa state is making it difficult for the National Emergency Management Agency to operate effectively. It is important that the government increase funding to the Emergency Management Agencies to address the needs of displaced children.

Conclusively, in considering placing unaccompanied children in orphanages or giving them up for adoption, unaccompanied children must not be given up for adoption or placed in children's homes in haste and any adoption must be determined as being in the child's best interests and carried out in line with applicable laws. In addition, priority must be given to adoption by relatives or members of the communities where they live.

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