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Women and Children and the Boko-Haram Insurgency in the Northeast

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency on women and children in the Northeast. Anchored on data largely generated from fieldwork surveys and credible secondary sources carefully sampled and synthesize, the authors posit that the insurgency has had more baneful consequences on women and children in the Northeast for at least two basic reasons. First, is the fact that they represent the most vulnerable in the Northeast largely sexist socio-cultural milieu; and secondly, they are usually easy soft targets for claims and counter-claims between disputants in the dynamics of the conflict. On the basis of this, the authors made far reaching policy recommendations on how to ameliorate the dire conditions of women and children in the Northeast as part of conflict mediation strategy and postconflict resolution mechanism.

Keywords: Women, Children, Boko Haram, Conflict, Northeast.

Introduction

African states have experienced all forms of social conflicts including insurgency in recent times. In the Maghreb, the Horn of Africa and West Africa, the activities of insurgent groups like Al-Qaeda, Barakat Al-shabbab especially in Somalia and her neighbouring Kenya, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar Dine, Ansar Sharia, and Jama'atul Ansarul Musilimina Fi Biladis Sudan (JAMS - Ansaru) have created serious security problems for their various states.¹ In Mali, the turbulent instability between 1963 and 1996 led to the stockpile of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) by insurgents whose activities spread to other parts of the Sahel Region.² The causes of insurgency are numerous and are strongly interwoven with

socio-economic, religious, and political factors.³ In Kenya for instance, ethnically based competition over access to natural resources in an environment of mounting resource scarcity has been chronic stress and a critical causative factor in the emergence of insurgency.⁴

Nigeria, the 'giant of Africa' is not left out of this problem. The country has experienced Boko-Haram insurgence in her fourth democratic dispensation with serious negative implications for human security and economic development. While we acknowledge the fact that the insurgency has attracted many studies seeking to interrogate its causes, nature, impact, and dynamics,⁵ the ongoing study focuses on the impact of the Boko-Haram insurgency on women and children in the Northeastern part of Nigeria.

¹N. .Salihu (2015). 'The Centre Can Hold: Towards a Regional Approach to Combating West Africa's Terrorist'. *Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre*. Policy Brief. , D Garba (2018). 'Transnational Insurgency: Boko Haram and Regional Insecurity in Africa', *FUDMA Journal of Politics and International Affairs* (FUJOPIA). A.E Adeyemi & M.N. Musa (2014). 'Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Terrorist Network Infiltrate Northern Mali'. *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences, Sociology and Culture*, Vol. 14. No. 5. pp. 8-19.

², N. Florquin & S. Pezard (2005). 'Insurgency, Disarmament, and Insecurity in Northern Mali, 1990-2004', SAS ECOWAS PART 1DEF. Accessed on c:/user/iregi/downloads/part102mali.pdf/.

³N. K. Akani (2022) 'Comparative Analysis of Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency Approaches In Nigeria and Other Jurisdictions'. Unpublished Paper.

⁴Menkhaus, K. (2016). *Conflict Assessment: Northern Kenya and Swaziland*, Danish Demining Group, p. 20.

⁵A. Adesoji (2010). *The Boko-Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria*, African Spectrum, pp. 95-108. , M. Abdoulaye (2013). *Nigeria Seeks Niger's Military Support against Boko-Haram*, Kano: Springfield Books Ltd. Merkel, P. (1988). *Political Violence and Terrorism Motifs and Motivations*, Berkeley: University of California Press. M. A. Maigari & A. U. Abdul-Qadir (2017). 'Insurgency, militancy and achieving sustainable development in Africa: Experience from Nigeria'. *Global Journal of Sociology: Current Issues*. Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 76-89.

In Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa, insurgent groups have changed the bearing of the development agenda compass, by destroying social infrastructures and uprooting people from their locations, creating dire humanitarian crisis: refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), malnutrition, food crises, *et cetera*.⁶ Although peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights, and sound economic management are conditions for development, African leaders are yet to appreciate the direct link between all these and the stability of their countries.⁷ This is the crux of the matter across the continent, and it is one which requires careful study, close examination and a deep reflection and understanding, particularly as the search for enduring peace and stability continuous.

The chapter specifically examines the impact of Boko-Haram terrorism on women and children in the Northeastern part of Nigeria. This area is made up of Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba, states. The area occupies about 272,395 km² of Nigeria's 923,763 km² of landmasses, with vast agricultural land and resources.⁸ In

recent years, this zone has been faced with desert encroachment and draught, and insurgency. The chapter is structured into various parts beginning with an introduction. Following in this sequence is a conceptual clarifications in which we attempt explain some concepts around which our discourse will resolve. Next, we review Boko Haram's pattern and dimensions of attacks and violations of women and children's fundamental Human Rights. This is followed by the efforts made by the government and non-governmental agencies to cushion and mitigate the human and economic cost of displacement. We thereafter consider some policy options on how to end insurgency and some of its consequences, including forced population movements and the attendant humanitarian crisis. The last segment of the chapter is the conclusion, which synthesizes our major arguments.

Conceptual Clarifications

Insurgency is a term that attracted different meanings in certain historical epochs. For instance, it has been traditionally construed to be a 'rebellious act that did not reach the

⁶ M. A. Maigari & , A. U. Abdul-Qadir (2017). 'Insurgency, militancy and achieving ...'p.76.

⁷ New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), 2001, p. 71.

⁸ North East Region of Nigeria: List of States, Map & Key Facts ★ NaijaHomeBased. Accessed 20-07-2022.

proportions of an organised revolution'.⁹ On this note, Charles Cheney Hyde asserts that, 'the nature and extent of the insurrectionary achievement' qualify it to be tagged as a 'rebellion', 'belligerent', or even 'war'.¹⁰ In the aftermath of World War II, communist and decolonising African countries attached such meanings as 'just wars of national liberation', and 'national self-determination' to insurgents, while Western societies and America rejected such interpretations as indirect aggression.¹¹ In the Cold War era, 'insurgency was treated as synonymous with a system of politico-military technique that is aimed at fomenting revolution, overthrowing a government, or resisting foreign invasion'.¹² In contemporary usage, the meaning of insurgency has become even more elastic with several other meanings. For example, the Department of Defence Joint Publication looks at insurgency as; 'an organised movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict'.¹³ It begins

and evolves from the pre-insurgency stage, organisational stage, guerrilla fighter's stage; and develops into conventional warfare fighter's stage through support from the masses as a result of an effective internal and external communication network. Today, globalisation through information and communication technology has strengthened the operations and complexities of insurgency. This is why the Field Manual (FM) of Foreign Internal Defence Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces, succinctly summarises that insurgency leverages 'a vulnerable population, strong leadership, and lack of government control'.¹⁴

Insurgencies can be typologised according to the political goals they seek to ultimately achieve. These could be transformational goals such as the revolutionary overthrow of the state or such prosaic goals as 'persuading' foreigners to 'go home' or compelling governments to comply to the wishes and

⁹ insurgency | Definition, Examples, Types, & Facts | Britannica. Accessed 20-07-2022.

¹⁰ insurgency | Definition, Examples, Types, & Facts | Britannica. Accessed 20-07-2022.

¹¹ insurgency | Definition, Examples, Types, & Facts | Britannica. Accessed 20-07-2022.

¹² insurgency | Definition, Examples, Types, & Facts | Britannica. Accessed 20-07-2022.

¹³ . Department of Defense Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (2001). (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], p. 264.

¹⁴ Foreign Internal Defense Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces (1994). Washington, DC: GPO, pp. 3-4. See also FM (Interim) 3-07.22, Counterinsurgency Operations (2004). Washington, DC: GPO.

aspirations of the insurgents.¹⁵ Based on this, insurgencies assume various characterisations such as political military, and it could be traditional/rural based and/or urban based,¹⁶ Some insurgencies have overlapping characteristics. Generally, their motive is to limit the ability of the government and decimate its capabilities to provide public services to the populace. They also aim at obtaining support from the critical segments of the public, while isolating the government from international diplomatic and material support, while increasing internal support for their actions.¹⁷ Another serious motive insurgents have is to destroy the self-confidence of the government leaders and cadres and cause their withdrawal or abdication. Lastly, insurgents reduce and possibly neutralise government, conceive and assert power while strengthening their capabilities.¹⁸

The question of why insurgency in any society has been addressed with a good number of theoretical constructs should also be examined in order to put their bases into

proper perspective. To the Marxists,¹⁹ social conflicts including insurgencies are necessary and inevitable inherent contradictions over scarce material resources in class societies. In the light of the above, Karl Marx argued that the first premise of all and every human existence and consequently of all history is that man must live to make history. Living does not just happen: it involves the ability to eat and drink, habitation and many other things. Thus to Marx, the first historical premise is the production of material life itself.²⁰ Reinforcing this position, S.U. Fwatshak asserts:

History has however shown that in the course of men's development, the weaker classes were always alienated from the means of production and became subjects of oppression, domination, and exploitation by the stronger classes. This exploitation of man by man and the knowledge of it by the weaker classes has made the historical process one characterized by

¹⁵P. Brooker (2010). 'The Types and Modes of Insurgency'. In *Modern Stateless Warfare*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

¹⁶ CIA Report (2011). Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.

¹⁷ CIA Report (2011). Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.

¹⁸ CIA Report (2011). Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.

¹⁹ V. Krapivin (1985). *What is Dialectical Materialism?* Moscow: Progress Publishers.

²⁰ M. Karl (1970). *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, pp. 20-21.

epochal conflicts based on which new forms of society arose.²¹

Adherents of the Marxist theory believe that the basis for the maintenance of social order is domination and power, instead of agreement and unity.²²

There is also the structuralist perspective which advances a position that is slightly different. The central argument of structuralism is that conflict is built into particular ways societies are structured and organised. Thus, according to Faleti, the theory looks at:

Social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, inequality *et cetera* as sources of conflict. Structuralists maintain that conflicts occur because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, and the domination of one class by the another.²³

Thus, class differences marks the crux of structural social conflict theories. The solution to this problem according to the

Marxists is by revolution where the bourgeoisie will be overthrown in a social revolution led by workers. This is where insurgency also had its historical roots in the failed states of the African societies.

The failed state thesis was coined by R. Robert²⁴ in his study; *when States Failed: Causes and Consequences*. Robert postulates that such a state is consumed by internal violence and ceased delivering positive political goods to its inhabitants. Similarly, Anyanwu cited in Gbamwuan collaborated when he observed that; state is perceived as having failed when some of the essential responsibilities of a sovereign government is lacking or ineffective.²⁵ This means that such a state is unable to hold its social and political structures which are characterised by multiple failures.²⁶ Common characteristics of a failing state are when a central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its

²¹ S.U. Fwatshak (1998). 'Pre-colonial Labour System in Nigeria', in Mangwat, M.Y. (ed.) *A History of Labour in Nigeria*, Jos: Jos University Press. P.2.

²² S.A. Falet (1998). 'Theories of Social Conflict', in Best, S.G (ed). *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. p. 41.

²³ S.A. Faleti (1998). 'Theories of Social...', p. 41.

²⁴ R. Robert (ed.) (2000). *When States Failed: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 302-318.

²⁵ Anyanwu cited in A. Gbamwuan (2013). 'A History of Post-Election Violence in Nigeria Since 1976', Unpublished M.A Dissertation, Department of History, Benue State University, Makurdi, p.19.

²⁶ P.A. Agidi & A. Gbamwuan (2022). 'The Use of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria's Election: An Assessment of the 2019 General Elections in Benue State, *Human Discourse*, Vol. 2. No. 3. p. 57.

territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline.²⁷ Nigeria has exhibited these attributes; Boko-Haram terrorism, banditry, secessionist movements, farmers-herders conflicts, and communal violence are lucid features of a failed state. Other attributes are unemployment, hunger, poverty, and diseases, which all stimulated the youths to take up arms and commit criminal activities against the Nigerian state. Insurgency, therefore, strives in ungoverned spaces since the government is weak to have effective control of its territory. In this chapter, we have adopted a fair mixed grill of the Marxist, structuralist and failed/failing state perspectives to discourse the subject matter in the discourse that the subsequent sections.

Historicizing Boko-Haram in the Northeast

²⁷ P.A Agidi. & Gbamwuan, A. (2022). 'The Use of Small Arms and Light Weapons...', p. 57.

²⁸ S.S. Shuaibu & Salleh, M.A. (2015). 'Historical Evolution of Boko-Haram in Nigeria: Causes and Solution', a Proceedings of ICIC2015 – International Conference on Empowering Islamic Civilization in the 21st Century. p. 217.

²⁹N. D Danjibo. (2009). 'Islamic fundamentalism and sectarian violence: the 'Maitatsine'and 'Boko Haram'crises in northern Nigeria'. *Peace and Conflict*

The Boko-Haram which is interpreted as 'Western Education is forbidden or an abomination' belong to the group of believers who followed the teachings of Ustaz Muhammed Yusuf (1970-2009), a radical Islamist cleric, in Maiduguri, Borno state, North Eastern Nigeria. Members of this group call themselves Jama'ah al-Ahlu al-Sunnah Li al-Da'wah wa al-Jihad.²⁸ This movement started in 2002, and some scholars have linked its similarities to Muhammed Marwa's Maitatsine movement of the 1980s in Kano.²⁹ This is because Boko-Haram and Maitatsine movements are all anchored on the philosophy that Islamic religion has been corrupted as a result of westernization and modernization. Armed with this ideology, the Boko-Haram movement started peacefully as a local Salafist Islamic group whose original aim was preaching and assisting the needy.³⁰ The trajectory of the group changed from service and preaching to extremism when in 2002 Mohammed Yusuf met a radical, fanatical cleric named Mohammed Alli.³¹

Studies Paper Series, Vol. 1-21. Also see A.Osewe (2011). National Security in Nigeria: A Review of Selected Cases across the country since C.1980. 56th Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Osogbo, p.139.

³⁰ S.S. Shuaibu & Salleh, M.A. (2015). 'Historical Evolution of Boko...' p. 2018.

³¹Ahmad Salkida (2014). "Boko Haram from the Beginning" *Sunday Sun*, May 18th, pp. 13–14. Mr. Salkida, a journalist with *the Daily Trust newspaper*,

Mohammed Alli indoctrinated Yusuf into the Taliban extremist ideology of strict Wahabism. Coming under the doctrinal influence of Mohammed Alli became a turning point for Yusuf as a person and the organisation he led.³² The teaching of Ustaz Mahammed Yusuf became a threat to the sovereignty of the Nigerian state in 2009 and this led to five days of violent clashes with the Nigerian security forces resulting in the death of Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf and many of his followers.³³ Justifying the radical teachings of Ustaz Muhammed Yusuf, Chothia cited in Shuaibu and Sallen made the following observation:

He (Muhammed Yusuf) set up a religious complex, called Markaz, following his expulsion from two mosques in Maiduguri by Muslim clerics for propagating his radical views. The complex included a mosque and an Islamic school. Many poor Muslim families in Nigeria, and neighbouring countries, sent their children to school to get a proper education. The center had ulterior

political goals to create an Islamic state and impose Sharia Laws, and it soon became a recruiting ground for future jihadists to fight the state.³⁴

Corroborating this observation, Duyile, Adu, Jegede, and Buhari point out that:

they recorded sermon tape made public by the group's erstwhile leader Mohammed Yusuf, that he issued a threat to kill the Bornu State Governor, former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff, and remove the then Nigerian President from power was the declaration of war that escalated the crisis.³⁵

Yusuf was hostile to democracy, Christianity, and the secular education system, vowing that: 'this war that is yet to start would continue for long' if the political and education system was not changed.³⁶ The assassination of Ustaz Muhammed Yusuf in police custody, his father-in-law and sect financier, Ustaz Buji Foi (Borno State former Commissioner of Religious Affairs), and other members drew a battle line between the

was a confidant of Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of Boko Haram. Also, see

History of Boko-Haram p. 5.

³² K. Mohammad, 'Emerging Trends in Boko Haram Insurgency', *Narc Monograph Series No. 6* (September 2019); And Ahmad Salkida (2014). "Boko Haram from..." p. 14.

³³ Umar, S. (2011). *The discourses of Salafi radicalism and Salafi counter-radicalism in Nigeria: A case study of Boko Haram*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 156. Also see Walker, A. (2012). What is Boko Haram?, United State Institute of Peace.

Accessed on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamist_insurgency_in_Nigeri.

³⁴ S.S. Shuaibu & M.A. Salleh (2015). 'Historical Evolution of Boko...' p. 2019.

³⁵ A.W. Duyile, M.F. Adu, G.G., Jegede & L.O. Buhari (2020). 'A Historical Study of Boko-Haram Activities in Nigeria, 2009-2015'. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 59, No 2. p. 238-239.

³⁶ A.W. Duyile, M.F. Adu, G.G., Jegede & L.O. Buhari (2020). 'A Historical Study of ...' p. 241.

Boko-Haram group and the Nigerian state with the emergence of the group's new leader Mallam Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's second-in-command.³⁷ The frequency, lethality, and sophistication of Boko Haram's attacks increased dramatically under Shekau, allegedly as a result of increased cooperation with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).³⁸ The group has carried out an uncountable number of coordinated attacks on government properties (schools, hospitals, clinics, police states, military bases), places of worship, motor parks, markets, farms, foreign institutions, *et cetera*, killing and displacing thousands of people including women and children. According to some reports, Boko-Haram has killed over 150, 000 people between 2009 and 2022,³⁹ while displacing over 2114, 000 people to stay in Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs).

Boko-Haram Modes of Attacks and the Violation of Women and Children's Rights

Boko-Haram insurgency has different modes of operations and acts of terrorism including indiscriminate killings, kidnapping/abduction, girl-child, forced marriage, child soldering, sending women and children on suicide missions, *et cetera*. These modes of attacks have violated the fundamental Human Rights of women and children in Nigeria. For instance, as argued by Moorthy, Akwen, Daud, and Gill, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 has been undermined by the Boko-Haram insurgent group in that:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 has isolated some undisputable rights that all people should enjoy. They include rights to "life, liberty, and security of persons"(Article 3), the right to fair trial and hearing contained in (Articles 10 and 11), the right to discretion, freedom from torture, the right to political asylum and right to work are contained in Articles 12, 5, 14 and 23 respectively." Any action or inaction by any actor that prevents anybody from enjoying the above-mentioned rights is tantamount to a human rights violation.⁴⁰

³⁷F. Chothia, (2014). "Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists?" BBC News. May 20. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>. Accessed 22-07-2022.

³⁸ Mapping Militant Organizations. "Boko Haram". (Last modified March 2018). Stanford University. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/boko-haram>. Accessed, 22-07-2022.

³⁹ [PressReader.com - Digital Newspaper & Magazine Subscriptions](http://PressReader.com). Accessed, 22-07-2022.

⁴⁰R. Moorthy et al (2020). 'Counterterrorism and Human Rights Violations in Northeast Nigeria', in *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, Vol. 13, Issue 12. p. 934.

Similarly, the Nigerian state also specified clearly in Section 33 of the 1999 Federal constitution which affirms that all humans have the right to life and should not be dispossessed of their lives deliberately, except if found culpable by a court that has jurisdiction after due trial.⁴¹ The implication of this is that the Nigerian constitution only permits the taking of another person's life at the instance of a court ruling in respect of a crime committed. Therefore, Boko-Haram insurgents have no right to kill any Nigerian citizen in whatsoever circumstances.

In addition to the above constitutional covers for the Nigerian citizens, the country is signatory to and has continued to champion 'the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW), the protocol of 'African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Rights of Women in Africa', 'Child Right Act', 'Violence Against Persons Prohibition Acts', *et cetera*.⁴² It is therefore strange that despite these wonderful counsels and protocols for the protection of women and

children in Nigeria, the government still handles affairs regarding this religious extremists with recklessness.⁴³ By action or commission, the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian state in dealing with this problem speaks to its failure. In the remaining paragraphs of this section, we shall attempt to show how the rights of women and children are imperiled by the activities of the Boko Haram in the Northeast.

(i) *Displacements*

Women and children have faced displacements in the Northeast since the emergence of the Boko-haram insurgency. To secure IDPs camps, women and children trekked between 500 – 1000km without adequate food and water.⁴⁴ Between 2014 and 2018, the International Organization for Migration's Report (IOM), established the records of displaced persons in the Northeast including women and children as demonstrated on Table 1..

⁴¹R. Moorthy et al (2020). 'Counterterrorism and Human ...' p. 936.

⁴²R. Moorthy et al (2020). 'Counterterrorism and Human ...' p. 934.

⁴³Gilbert, L. D. (2014). "Prolongation of Boko-Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: The International Dimensions",

in *Journal of Research on Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 4, No. 11, pp. 150-156.

⁴⁴E.M. Dumbil & E.F. Mwanwube (2019). 'Boko-Haram Violence and Social Inequalities: A Sociological Exploration of Internally Displaced Persons in Northeastern Nigeria', *Covenant International Journal of Psychology (CIJP)*, Vol. 4. No. 1.

Table 1: Statistics of Persons Displaced in the Northeast Arising from Boko Haram Violent Activities, 2014 and 2018

S/N	YEAR	NUMBER OF DISPLACED PERSONS
1	Before 2014	108,307
1	2014	1,381,161
2	2015	437,677
3	2016	104,712
4	2017	98,722
5	2018	134, 293
Total Displaced		2,031,857

Source: International Migration Report, 2019.

Table 1 above captures the displacement figures in the Northeast with 2014 having the highest recorded cases. This is because of the intensify of attacks on civilian population by Boko-Haram in 2014. For instance, there was an astronomical rise in the number of attacks (22.13%), fatalities (38.17%), and injuries (27.96%) during the period under review. In

2015, there was a slight fall in Boko-Haram attack incidents which were reduced to 19.65%. It should also be noted that the percentage of incidents, deaths, and injuries keep decreasing between 2016 and 2017 until an increase of 5.04% in terrorism incidents in 2018.⁴⁵

According to reports by various agencies, local and international organizations and institutions like the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), The International Movement Against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) *et cetera*; women and children constituted the highest number of displaced persons in the Northeast.⁴⁶ Against this backdrop, the Center for Reproductive Rights (the Center), Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP) noted in November 2020 that about 1.17 million of the internally displaced persons in Northeast Nigeria are women, while 510,555 are girls of reproductive age.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Y. Olawale and R.Tosho (2021). 'Boko-Haram Insurgency and Humanitarian Crisis in Nigeria: Case of Internally Displaced Persons (2009-2018), *Wilberforce Journal of Social Sciences* (WJSS), Vol. 6, No. 1.

⁴⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). Supplementary appeal: Nigeria situation.

Nigeria (UNHCR). International Committee of the Red Cross. (2016). internal displacement in northeast Nigeria: Operationalizing the Kampala convention in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states. Abuja, Nigeria (ICRC).

⁴⁷D. Iwambe (2020). '1.1 Million Women Displaced by Boko-Haram in the Northern Nigeria-Report', in the

This fact has been corroborated by the IOM round 39 and 40 Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), in March 2022 that the Boko-Haram insurgency constituted 93% of displacements in the Northeast and the most affected groups are women and children (women 22%, men 19%, girls less than 18 years 32%, and boys less than 18 years 27%).⁴⁸ The displaced people were majorly found in the numerous IDPs camps scattered in the Northeast. Between 2017 and the last quarter of 2018, there were over 2,026,602 IDPs camps in the six Northeastern states of Nigeria.⁴⁹ Those IDPs were characterised by different social, psychological, and physical problems which Dumbili and Mwanwube succinctly but strongly assert that:

The IDPs in general are predisposed to suicide attacks and insecurity, inadequate drinking water and toilet facilities, lack of access to basic health services, prostitution, human trafficking, child labour, as well as sexual exploitation.⁵⁰

Internally displaced Women and children were exposed to all sorts of harm.⁵¹ For instance, family separation, negative coping strategies such as child labour and child marriage; violence, exploitation, sexual abuse, and trafficking pose direct threats to their lives and futures.

The above challenges have been observed by variously by researchers, international observers, media reporters, and so forth, in the Northeast Boko-Haram torn zone. It is in this regard also that Iwambe said there were:

Increased cases of sexual exploitation, HIV transmission, inadequate access to reproductive health services, maternal deaths, and injuries are among myriad challenges women and girls grapple with in armed conflict zones. While revealing the effects of the Boko-Haram conflict on the sexual reproductive health and rights of women and girls affected by the conflict, the report revealed further that sexual exploitation and sexual violence, including demands for transactional sex to access food and nonfood items

Daily Times Newspaper, Available on; [1.1million women displaced by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria- Report - \(dailytimesng.com\)](https://dailytimesng.com). Accessed, 25-07-2022.

⁴⁸ IOM Nigeria Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Northeast Nigeria Displacement Report 40, March 2022.

⁴⁹ E.M. Dumbili & E.F. Mwanwube. (2019). 'Boko-Haram Violence and Social Inequalities ...' p. 42.

⁵⁰ E.M. Dumbili & , E.F. Mwanwube (2019). 'Boko-Haram Violence and Social Inequalities ...' p. 43.

⁵¹ O. O. Okpeh, Jr., 'Displaced, Dispossessed and Neglected: Internally Displaced Persons and Security Problematic in Contemporary Nigeria', *NARC Monograph Series No. 9* (November, 2019)

are commonplace, inadequate assistance to the IDPs.⁵²

Regrettably, from national to the international levels there is no practical demonstration of gender-responsive camps. To stress this point, it is pertinent to mention that a Tripartite Agreement for the Voluntary Repatriation of Nigerian refugees signed in March 2017 between the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees makes no provisions for the special needs of women and girl refugees.⁵³ This is besides the travails of women and children in IDPs camps, including rape and sexually transmitted diseases, child abuse, and all other forms of human rights violation.

Indiscriminate Killings of Women and Children

Boko-Haram war has recorded the highest fatalities in the history of terrorism in Africa. Globally, Boko-Haram has been ranked as the fourth deadliest terrorist group apart from the

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL/ISIS), Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban.⁵⁴

The group has indiscriminately killed thousands of Nigerian citizens since the beginning of the needless war in 2009. Here again, a good number of examples present themselves for scrutiny and elaborate analysis. On 26th August 2011, Boko-Haram detonated a car bomb at the United Nations building in Abuja killing at least 21 and wounding 60 people.⁵⁵ This is a clear indication that Boko-Haram was not only local but an international terrorist sect. At any rate, the group had claimed it has international links with Qaeda and other deadly global terrorist groups. Again, on the 25th of December 2011, the group attacked some communities in Damaturu and Gadaka in Yobe State. At least 41 people were killed in this coordinated attacks on various churches, and women and girls were not spared. One of the attackers was identified as Kabiru Sokoto.⁵⁶ Similarly, on the 6th of

⁵²Iwambe, D. (2020). '1.1 Million Women Displaced by Boko-Haram in the Northern Nigeria-Report', in the *Daily Times Newspaper*, Available on; [1.1million women displaced by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria- Report - \(dailytimesng.com\)](https://www.dailytimesng.com/1.1million-women-displaced-by-boko-haram-in-northern-nigeria-report/). Accessed, 25-07-2022.

⁵³ [Nigeria must rethink responses to women displaced by Boko Haram \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/nigeria-must-rethink-responses-to-women-displaced-by-boko-haram/). Accessed, 25-07-2022.

⁵⁴ History Collection (2022). '10 of the Most Dangerous Terrorist Group in the World'. Available at: [10 of the Most Dangerous Terrorist Groups in the World \(historycollection.com\)](https://www.historycollection.com/10-of-the-most-dangerous-terrorist-groups-in-the-world/). Accessed, 30-07-2022.

⁵⁵ A. Nossiter (2011). 'Islamic Group Says It Was Behind Fatal Nigeria Attack'. *The New York Times*.

⁵⁶ See the U.S. warns of possible terror attack in Nigeria". *Los Angeles Times*. Accessed, 30-07-2022.

January 2012, 8 worshippers were shot dead in Yola on Church premises and on that same day, another set of 17 Christian mourners in Mubi were shot dead. These people were just returning from a burial of another victim of the Boko-Haram attack the previous day and also meet their waterloo.⁵⁷ A teenage girl was shot dead when Boko-Haram insurgents attacked a police station in Birniwa town in Jigawa on 3rd January 2012. While the Baga massacre of 16th April 2013 led to the death of over 200 people including women and girls.⁵⁸ Although, there are contradictory reports on the Baga killings. it is not clear whether it was Boko-Haram or the military that was responsible. The inability of the Human Rights Commission to investigate and give a comprehensive report on this matter compounded this problem. The Global Terrorism Index, against this backdrop, remarked that: ‘the death toll from terrorism-related attacks climbed dramatically in Nigeria, increasing by 300%.⁵⁹ This, according to the Global Terrorism Index is ‘the largest increase in terrorist deaths ever recorded in any country’.⁶⁰ Table 2 below a

glimpse of the indiscriminate death caused by Boko-Haram insurgents between 1999 and 2022.

⁵⁷ [Timeline of Boko Haram attacks and related violence - Nigeria | ReliefWeb](#). Accessed, 31-07-2022.

⁵⁸ Channels Television (2013). ‘37 Not 185 Died In Baga Clash, We Were Never Unprofessional – Army’. Accessed, 30-07-2022.

⁵⁹ [Boko Haram Kills More People In Terror Attacks Than ISIS | HuffPost The WorldPost](#). Accessed, 30-07-2022.

⁶⁰ [Boko Haram Kills More People In Terror Attacks Than ISIS | HuffPost The WorldPost](#). Accessed, 30-07-2022.

Table 2: Death Tolls Arising from the Activities of Boko-Haram in Nigeria, 2009-2022.

S/N	YEAR	DEATH FIGURES
1	2009	197
2	2010	357
3	2011	317
4	2012	725
5	2013	754
6	2014	1019
7	2015	1008
8	2016	844
9	2017	1062
10	2018	1407
11	2019	1463
12	2020	2305
13	2021	2861
14	2022	1715

Source: ACLED, Security Related Attacks in Nigeria, 2009-2022 Available at FACT-CHECK: Is Nigeria better today than before 2015 as claimed by Buhari? | The ICIR (icirnigeria.org). Accessed 29-07-2022.

The above table shows that indiscriminate killings by Boko-Haram insurgents sharply increased in 2020 because of other deadly factions of the terrorist group that emerged. For example, Abu Musab al-Barnawi (son of Yusuf Mohammed) is the leader of the Islamic State (IS) in 2015,⁶¹ there is also the Islamic State for West African Province (ISWAP) faction that emerged in Nigeria after the death of Abubakar Shekau who committed suicide by detonating an explosive vest during a confrontation with ISWAP in May 2021. Given the demise of their leader, Shekau's followers were faced with the decision to either continue Shekau's ideology or join ISWAP.⁶² In what is reported to be the fiercest power game between the terrorist groups (IS, ISWAP, and Boko-Haram) and their subsets, attacks on soft targets including women and girls

⁶¹J. Zenn (2022). 'Making Sense of Boko-Haram's Different Factions: Who, How, and Why?'. Available at, [Making sense of Boko Haram's different](#)

[factions: Who, how, and why? | African Arguments](#). Accessed, 31-07-2022.

⁶² International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women...* p. 6.

continued unabated, deepening the terrorist challenge confronting the Nigerian state.

Kidnapping/Abduction of Women and Children

There are a lot of reported cases of Boko-Haram abducting of women and children in the Northeast and beyond. This tactic of kidnapping women and children by the insurgents and terrorists started in 2013 when they abducted some Christian women in the Gwoza area of Southeast of Borno State.⁶³ International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that ‘Shekau publicised the captures, demanding the government to release the wives and children of several Boko Haram leaders, including his spouses, arrested in 2012, an issue he had repeatedly raised’.⁶⁴ A deal was negotiated between the authorities and Boko Haram and an exchange was organised, but abductions of women became a core tactic. This is because, series of abductions of school girls and women were on the rise with the most condemned

globally, being the seizure of 276 girls in a government college in Chibok, southern Borno on the 14th of April 2014.⁶⁵ Other incidences of the mass abduction of school girls were in Dapchi and Buni Yadi all in Yobe State.⁶⁶ The passive approach taken by President Goodluck Jonathan to rescue the abducted Chibok was widely condemned by civil society organisations and other critics of the administration. It is on record that it took Goodluck Jonathan three weeks to speak on the issue amidst global protest code-named ‘#BringBackOurGirls’.⁶⁷ As a result of the passive approach of government, between 2012 and 2015, Boko-Haram took over 2,000 girls and young women, mostly unmarried.⁶⁸ Reports show that the insurgents mostly killed men (civilian and military), but generally abducted women. In a video, Shekau told followers to kill men but “spare the old, women, the lunatic, and the repentant’.⁶⁹ Table 3 summarises a few cases of Boko-Haram abduction of women and

⁶³ International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women and the Boko-Haram Insurgency*, African Report No. 242. p.6.

⁶⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women... p. 6.*

⁶⁵ International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women... p. 7.*

⁶⁶ [Boko Haram Attacks Girls School In Nigeria \(ndtv.com\)](http://www.ndtv.com/Boko-Haram-Attacks-Girls-School-In-Nigeria). Accessed, 27-07-2022.

⁶⁷ International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2014). ‘First Lady Labels Women Activists Terrorists, Orders Arrest’, 5th May.

⁶⁸ Amnesty International (2015). ‘Our Job is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill’: Boko Haram’s Reign of Terror in North-East Nigeria”. Also, see UNICEF (2016). ‘Beyond Chibok’: over 1.3 million children uprooted by Boko Haram’.

⁶⁹ International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women... p. 7.*

girls in the Northeast between 2013 and 2020.

Table 3: Incidences of Boko-Haram Abduction of Women and Girls in the Northeast, 2013-2020.

S/N	Place of Abduction	No. of Women and Children Abducted	Date and Year
1	Kawuri, Borno State	Three women were abducted	27-04-2013
2	Maiduguri, Borno State	Six women were abducted	01-05-2013
4	Bama, Borno State	Four women and eight children were abducted	07-05-2013
5	Konduga, Borno State	Six women were abducted	09-05-2013
6	Firgi, Borno State	One woman was abducted	15-05-2013
7	Barawa village, Borno State	One girl was abducted	20-07-2013

8	Benisheikh Town, Borno State	Twenty women were abducted	17-09-2013
9	Uvaha Village, Borno State	Nine girls were abducted	28-09-2013
10	Benishekh Town, Borno State	Two women were abducted	01-09-2013
11	Bulabulin Ngara, Borno State	Nine women traders were abducted	11-12-2013
12	Nuhu Muhammed Army Barracks in Bama, Borno State	Eighteen people, wives, and children of soldiers were abducted	20-12-2013
13	Konduga, Borno State	Twenty-five women and girls (twenty students, and five street traders) were abducted	12-02-2014
14	Chibok, Borno State	Two-hundred and seventy-six	14-04-2014

		girls were abducted				children were abducted	
15	Wara Town, Borno State	Six women and 2 children abducted	16-04-2014	22	Madagali Village	14 women and two girls were also abducted	2015
16	Gujba, Yobe State	Five women were abducted	25-04-2014	23	Dapchi, Yobe State	One and Eleven Girls were abducted by ISWAP, an off-shoot of Boko-Haram. Five students died in captivity	19-02-2018
17	Warabe and Wala, Borno State	Eight girls, aged twelve to fifteen, were abducted	06-05-2014	24	Takulashi village, Borno State	Nine women were abducted	02-11-2020
18	Garkin Fulani Settlement, Borno State	Twenty women were kidnapped	05-06-2014	<p>Source: Adopted and Modify from Human Right Watch (2014). ‘<i>Those Terrible Weeks in the Camp</i>’, <i>Boko-Haram Violence against Women and Girls in Northeast</i>, United States of America, pp. 61-63.</p> <p>Table 3 above samples a few examples of women and girls abducted by Boko-Haram terrorists between 2009 and 2022. The abduction of these categories of people was premised on a number of factors. First, those women and girls abducted were used to negotiate for the release of Boko-Haram</p>			
19	Kummabza, Yaga, and Dagu Villages, Damboa, Borno State	Sixty women, girls, and infants, as well as thirty-one boys, were abducted	20-06-2014				
20	Gumsuri Village, Borno State	Over 200 women and children were abducted	14-12-2014				
21	Damasak Village	About 300 schoolgirls and	10-03-2015				

fighters. For example, in May 2017 about 82 Chibok school girls were released by Boko-Haram in exchange for their commanders held by the Nigerian government.⁷⁰ Second, they served as suicide bombers, recruiters, spies, source of domestic labour, sex slaves and fighters. As correctly observed by Counterterrorism Centre in 2020, ‘between June 2014, when Boko Haram reportedly deployed its first female suicide bomber, and February 2018, about 468 women and girls have been deployed or arrested in 240 suicide attacks (by far the largest any terrorist movement), killing roughly 1,200 and injuring some 3,000 people’.⁷¹ The rate at which Boko-Haram used females as suicide bombers is justified by Olaniyan citing F. Onuoha and G. Temilola in the notion of the ‘feminization of terror’⁷² in Nigeria. However, for a better understanding, the trend should be situated within the context of intentions and motives. The narratives of arrested female bombers indicate clearly that most of them were minors who could not

make rational decisions, and that their participation in such extreme acts of violence was the product of force and intimidation indicating that the girls were mere pawns in the hands of the terrorists.⁷³ Thirdly, they also provide sex and satisfy the sexual urge of Boko-Haram fighters. Added to this is the fact that some of the abducted young girls were forced to marry Boko-Haram fighters. This particular issue created serious problems between Shekau and other Boko-Haram splinter factions on the basis that he (Shekau) did not give the hands of the abducted Chibok girls in marriage as promised them. Corroborating this fact, the International Crisis Group averred that:

Management of marriageable women and girls, including widows, appears to have been a prerogative of leaders and a contentious issue within the sect. In a 2016 recording, Mamman Nur, a Boko Haram splinter faction leader, criticised Shekau for betraying

⁷⁰International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women...* p. 7. Also, see TRTWorld (2022). ‘Nigerian Mass Kidnapping: A Timeline’, Available at [Nigeria's mass kidnappings: A timeline \(trtworld.com\)](https://www.trtworld.com/news/africa/nigerian-mass-kidnappings-a-timeline/57111). Accessed, 30-07-2022.

⁷¹J. Campbell. (2020) ‘Women, Boko-Haram, and Suicide Bombing’, Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: [Women, Girls, Boko Haram, and](https://www.cfr.org/terrorism/women-boko-haram-and-suicide-bombing/p16187)

[Suicide Bombings \(cfr.org\)](https://www.cfr.org/terrorism/women-boko-haram-and-suicide-bombing/p16187). Accessed, 30-07-2022.

⁷²A. Olaniyan (2017). ‘The Feminisation of Terror: Boko-Haram and Female Suicide Bombing in Nigeria’. The IAFOR International Conference on the Social Sciences, Dubai.

⁷³A. Olaniyan (2017). ‘The Feminisation of Terror...’ p. 3.

his promise to marry the Chibok girls to sect members.⁷⁴

The above testimony underscores the fact that Boko-Haram has been using women and girls as rewards to fighters thereby gaining more attraction. It should be noted that whenever the insurgents run short of food they preferred to release older women at the expense of younger girls as a result of their vitality and usefulness in their camps. Fourthly, kidnapped women and girls also served as smugglers of drugs, weapons, and food items to Boko-Haram, and also recruit other women into the group. As a result of these reasons, Boko-Haram saw the abduction of women and girls as a good enterprise and a potent weapon for winning the war.

Child-Soldiers and Suicide Bombing

The use of child-soldiers and suicide bombing has become a pattern of terrorism adopted by the Boko-Haram in Nigeria.

Suicide bombing was introduced in Nigeria on June 16th, 2011 when the convoy of the Police Inspector-General of Police was targeted at the Police Headquarters, Abuja killing over 30 people while over 40 vehicles were destroyed.⁷⁵ A similar incident occurred at the UN Headquarters on September 14th, 2011 where 23 people died and 116 others were injured.⁷⁶ The attack on the UN Office according to the then UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon was 'an assault on those who devote their lives to helping others'.⁷⁷ The words of the UN chief were full of disappointments and regrets, projecting a bad image of Nigeria in the global system. On June 8th, 2014, Boko-Haram incorporated the idea of using female children as tools for suicide bombing. Olaniyan chronicled some of the incidences of female suicide bomb attacks in Nigeria, thus:

In early December 2016, two young female suicide bombers struck a marketplace in Madagali, killing 45 people and injuring 33 people. In

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG) (2016). *Nigeria: Women...* p. 8.

⁷⁵ P. Ghosh (2009). 'Nigerian Police Headquarters Attacked by Suicide Bomber'. International Business Times. Available at: [Nigerian Police Headquarters Attacked By Suicide Bomber \(ibtimes.com\)](http://www.ibtimes.com/Nigerian-Police-Headquarters-Attacked-By-Suicide-Bomber). Accessed, 31-07-2022.s

⁷⁶ BBC News (2011). 'Abuja Attack: Car Bomb Hits Nigeria UN Building'. Available at: [Abuja attack: Car bomb hits Nigeria UN building - BBC News](http://www.bbc.com/news/abuja-attack-car-bomb-hits-nigeria-un-building).

Accessed, 31-07-2022. Also, see United Nations (2011). 'UN Unveils Full List of Staff Killed in Recent Deadly Attack in Abuja, Nigeria'. Available at: [UN unveils full list of staff killed in recent deadly attack in Abuja, Nigeria | UN News](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/11-07-un-unveils-full-list-of-staff-killed-in-recent-deadly-attack-in-abuja-nigeria.html). Accessed, 31-07-2022.

⁷⁷ BBC News (2011). 'Abuja Attack: Car Bomb Hits Nigeria UN Building'. Available at: [Abuja attack: Car bomb hits Nigeria UN building - BBC News](http://www.bbc.com/news/abuja-attack-car-bomb-hits-nigeria-un-building). Accessed, 31-07-2022.

February 2015, an eight-year-old girl was used by Boko Haram to carry out a deadly suicide attack in Potiskum, in Yobe state, while a failed July 2014 attack in Funtua, in north-western Katsina state, was attributed to a 10- and 18-year-old pair of young girls. In October 2016, another set of female suicide bombers killed 17 people at a station near a camp for internally displaced persons. On November 11, 2016, three young girls with bombs strapped to their bodies were killed on their way to unleash mayhem in Umarari village along the Maiduguri-Damboa road. On December 25, 2016, two female suicide bombers invaded a cattle market in Maiduguri, killing two people in the process. On November 17, 2016, the police were able to avert attacks on Federal High Court in the Jidari Polo area of Maiduguri by two females and one male suicide bomber. On November 7, 2016, two female suicide bombers also killed 30 people in an attack on a local market in Madagali local government area of Adamawa state. In March 2017, a young girl carrying a baby on her back detonated explosives strapped to her body, killing herself, her baby, and several people in Adamawa state. On March 15, 2017, four young female suicide bombers killed two people in the Usmanti area on the outskirts of Maiduguri, Borno state. These cases

show the rate at which Boko Haram is deploying young girls as suicide bombers, with devastating effects on society.⁷⁸

The above instances are the tip of the iceberg regarding female suicide bombers who carried this activities for the Boko-Haram insurgent group in Nigeria. Researchers at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and Yale University analyzed the 434 suicide bombings carried out by Nigeria-based militants Boko Haram since 2011 and found that at least 244 of the 338 attacks in which the bomber's gender could be identified were carried out by women.⁷⁹ It has been observed that the abduction of 273 Chibok school girls in 2014, who were between the ages of 14 and 18 years increases the suicide missions. Jason Warner, assistant professor at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, the United States elite military academy lamented that Boko-Haram 'is the first terrorist group in history to use more women suicide bombers than men, and is at the vanguard of using children as suicide bombers'.⁸⁰

⁷⁸A. Olaniyan (2017). 'The Feminisation of Terror... p. 3.

⁷⁹K.Robyn (2022). 'The majority of suicide bombers used by terror group Boko Haram to kill innocent victims are women and children, a US study reveals'. CNN, Available at [Boko Haram favors women, children as suicide bombers: Study - CNN](#). Accessed, 31-07-2022.

⁸⁰K.Robyn (2022). 'The majority of suicide bombers used by terror group Boko Haram to kill innocent victims are women and children, a US study reveals'. CNN, Available at [Boko Haram favors women, children as suicide bombers: Study - CNN](#). Accessed, 31-07-2022.

Surprisingly, little girls and women go on suicide missions to terminate their lives at early stages. However, studies have provided clues as what is responsible for this. For example, it has been argued that 'the majority of the girls are married off after abduction, and those of them who refuse to accept the marriage option are forced to go on suicide missions'.⁸¹ Ahmed reported the testimony of a girl suicide bomber who was forced on one of these ugly and unfortunate missions in the following passage:

I was in the bush when the people some of whom looked like Arabs and some huge black men told me that did I know what suicide mission was; that is one killing himself? I said no I don't know. They explained it to me and said that if I did plus reciting Sura Albakara I will go straight to Paradise, I declined and told them I will not do it, they now told me that they would dig a hole and bury me alive because that is what they do to all women who refuse to adhere to their demands, and they said they meant what they said. I now complied (sic.).⁸²

The above narrative indicates that the girl-suicide bombers are forced to commit the act. However, because many of them are dead it

is difficult to get their testimonies. Another reason is that women and girls are easily brainwashed to with promises to conduct suicide missions, while ignorance also contributes significantly to their involvement in this act. It should also be noted that few others willingly choose to play this role fighting 'a just course'. In their investigation on 'Why Youth Join Boko-Haram?'⁸³, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) provided various reasons including unemployment and poverty that stimulates northern youths vulnerability to radicalisation. Secondly, USIP discovered ignorance; for, according Mustapha asserts, 'Boko Haram... is the misguided cry of a disgruntled youth crushed by the socioeconomic system on the one hand and then repressed by the state on the other'.⁸⁴ However, a general disadvantage arising from the engagement of women and girls in suicide bombing is the stigmatization this new misnomer brought to society that already undermined the potency of women and girls. The movement of women and girls became

⁸¹A. Olaniyan (2017). 'The Feminisation of Terror... p. 3.

⁸²A. Olaniyan (2017). 'The Feminisation of Terror... p. 3.

⁸³ Onuoha, F.C., (2012). 'Boko Haram: Nigeria's Extremist Islamic Sect'. *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 29 February, pp. 1-6.

⁸⁴A.R. Mustapha (2012). 'Boko Haram: Killing in God's Name.' *Mail and Guardian*, April 5.

suspicious in public gatherings and also subject to close watch by security agents.

Increase in Cases of Girl-Child School Dropouts

One of the major outcome of Boko-Haram terrorism is the increase in school dropout, especially following the sustained attacks of the set on western education. Therefore, since the onslaught of the Boko-Haram terrorism in Nigeria's Northeast, educational institutions have been destroyed while other schools were forced to close down. Northern Nigeria is well known for the low level of girl-child education in Nigeria as a result of poverty, negative attitudes of parents towards education, street hawking, and early marriage. This problem has been compounded by the activities of Boko-Haram insurgents.⁸⁵ It is generally acknowledged that girl-child education is a viable instrument for achieving women empowerment and emancipation from social discrimination in society globally.

Accordingly, Williams and Istifanus have posited that:

Education has a profound effect on girls and women's ability to claim other rights and achieve status in society, such as economic independence and political representation. Educating girls is the world's simple best development investment. Ensuring access to quality and consistent education for girls across the globe is crucial to preventing early or forced marriage, lowering maternal and neonatal mortality, spurring a woman's financial independence; creating smaller more sustainable families, shrinking rates of HIV/AIDS and malaria, opening opportunity for women's political leadership increasing children's educational attainment levels and boosting national economic growth.⁸⁶

When girls go to school, they add value to themselves and society at large. They tend to serve as viable assets for societal development in all ramifications. Alam, Warren, and Applebaum argued that, 'When it comes to promoting sustainable development and fostering viable security, educated girls are force multipliers'.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ [The Challenges of Girl-Child Education, A Case Study of Yobe State, North-East Nigeria | KALU Institute](#). Accessed, 27-07-2022.

⁸⁶A. Williams & J. Istifanus (2017). 'Boko-Haram Insurgency: A Threat to Girl-Child's Access to

Education in the Northeast of Nigeria', European Journal of Education Studies, Vol. 3, Issue 12. p. 122.
⁸⁷M. Alam Warren and A .Applebaum (2016). *Closing the Gap: Adolescent Girls' Access to Education in Conflict-Affected settings*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security.

It has been observed by various reports that the activities of Boko-Haram accentuated girl-child drop-outs in the Northeast. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA), Boko-Haram has killed an estimated 2,295 teachers, and over 19,000 teachers have been displaced by the conflict.⁸⁸ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that more than 1,400 schools have been destroyed, damaged, or looted primarily in the Northeast, and more than 600,000 children have lost access to education.⁸⁹ The attack and abduction of Chibok girls in Borno State⁹⁰ and Dapchi girls⁹¹ as well as a federal government boarding school in Buni Yadi, all in Yobe state have also contributed significantly to driving girls out of school in the Northeast. This is because these attacks were horrific, and created psychological trauma for children and particularly girls and women in the Northeast. In an interview conducted by the Global Coalition to Protect Education in Nigeria, one of the witnesses to

the attacks, Hauwa, a 16-year-old student of the Federal Government College in Buni Yadi, admitted never going back to school again. In her words translated by GCPEA:

(After the attack), I went home. I was too afraid and decided not to go back. I told my parents I would never go back to school. They were also too afraid... Before [the attack], I was so passionate to study and achieve my dream [of being a lawyer]. But now, this experience completely demoralized me... I told my father that I will never go back because of Boko Haram threats and what I saw that night. I cannot go back to face the same thing again.⁹²

Furthermore, GCPEA reported another interview with Rafiya, a 17-year-old student of the same institution that:

They gathered us in a garbage disposal area and started preaching to us. One of them said, "Your parents sent you to this school. You see that what they ask you to do is wrong. You know that studying Biology, Physics, and Geography is cursing God." ... Another insurgent said, "We will rape you and then shoot you in the legs."

⁸⁸ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA) (2018). *I Will Never Go Back to School, The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls*, Available on: ["I Will Never Go Back to School": The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls - Summary - Nigeria | ReliefWeb](#). Accessed, 27-07-2022.

⁸⁹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA) ... p. 2.

⁹⁰ [As many as 200 girls were abducted by Boko Haram, Nigerian officials say - CNN](#). Accessed, 27-07-2022.

⁹¹ [Boko Haram Attacks Girls School In Nigeria \(ndtv.com\)](#). Accessed, 27-07-2022.

⁹² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA) ... p. 1.

But another fighter, who was older, said “This is the first time we are coming, so let’s warn them. If we see that they go to a secular school again, then we will rape and shoot them.” There was a bit of an argument among the fighters, but ultimately, they asked if we promised to go home and get married. We all promised.⁹³

All these are revealing testimonies of girls expressing their fear to attend secular schools for knowledge advancement because of the atrocities of Boko Haram insurgents. Women and girls abducted by Boko-Haram insurgents admitted various forms of human rights abuses including forced conversion to Islam, forced “marriage,” and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Besides, as correctly asserted by Piaget’s cognitive development theory, when children are exposed to violence between the ages of 11 to 15 years, their assimilation and adjustment process may be impaired, and they may find

it difficult to process new information.⁹⁴ This in the final analysis depleted a good number of girl-child in schools in the Northeast.

Increase in Cases of Women's Poverty and Economic Dependence

Arguably, Nigeria is one of the countries that have more people living in poverty than other parts of the world, especially when looking at the economic realities in contemporary times.⁹⁵ Studies do clearly show that about 12.9% of the global population living in extreme poverty is found in Nigeria in 2022.⁹⁶ As a result of this, the 'feminisation of poverty' which has been well documented in extant literature in Nigeria is deepening because women and girls are the worst hit.⁹⁷ Besides, in the Northeast, religious misinterpretations and socio-economic beliefs of the people categorise women as 'inferior' to men which consequently

⁹³ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA) ... p. 1.

⁹⁴ S. A. McLeod (2015). Jean Piaget. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html. Accessed, 28-07-2022.

⁹⁵ *Blueprint* (2019). 'Of Women and Poverty in Nigeria'. Available at: [Of women and poverty in Nigeria \(blueprint. ng\)](https://blueprint.ng/). Accessed, 01-08-2022.

⁹⁶ Statista (2022). 'Number of People Living in Extreme Poverty in Nigeria from 2016 to 2022, by Gender'. Available at: [Nigeria: people in extreme poverty by gender 2016-2022 | Statista](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104444/extreme-poverty-by-gender-2016-2022/). Accessed, 01-08-2022.

⁹⁷ M. Rani, S. Bonu and N. Diop-Sidibe (2004). 'An Empirical Investigation of Attitudes towards Wife-beating among Men and Women in Seven Sub-Saharan African Countries'. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*. Vol. 8; pp. 116-136. C.O. Odimegwu and C.N. Okemgbo (2003). 'Gender Role, Ideologies and Prevalence of Violence Against Women in Imo State, Nigeria'. *Anthropologist*. Vol. 5: pp. 225-236; And M.J. Hindin, (2003). 'Understanding Women's Attitudes towards Wife Abuse in a Non-western Society'. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. Vol. 81; pp. 501-508.

influences and renders them subordinate not only domestically but also professionally; thereby making them very poor even before the insurgency war of Boko-Haram.⁹⁸ Table 4 below gives a graphic picture of women's poverty in the Northeast before the emergence of the insurgency in 2009.

Table 4: The Rate of Female Poverty in the Northeast Nigeria, 1980-1996

S/ N	Year	Male	Female
1	1980	34.9	40.6
2	1985	56.3	45.2
3	1992	54.5	39.1
4	1996	68.4	53.1

⁹⁸ Hassan, Y. & Vershney, D. (2019). 'Overview of Contemporary Women's Issue in Northeastern Nigeria'. *European Academic Research*, p.2664.

Source: Adopted from

National Consumer Surveys, 1980, and 1996

Table 4 above shows that before the outbreak of Boko-Haram terrorism in the Northeast, the rate of poverty was already high. To further corroborate this argument, the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index of 2009 fingered how the Northeast region was poor as captured in Table 5.

Table 5: Human Development Index by Zones

	South South South	South East West	South West West	Northern Central	Northern East East	Northern West West
HDI (Nigeria National HDI : 0.513)	0.573	0.471	0.523	0.490	0.332	0.420

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2009: 10)

As indicated above, HDI in the Northeast which was low as 0.332 in 2009 before the Boko-Haram insurgency began on a serious scale in this part of the country with negative implications on women's economic status. Therefore, with over one decade of Boko-Haram insurgency in the Northeast, there has been a steady increase in the poverty level among women. In line with this analysis, the World Bank Report in 2019 titled 'The Lake Chad Regional Economic Memorandum: Development for Peace' stated that:

In Nigeria, the poverty rate in the Lake Chad region (72%) is nearly twice as high as the rate in the rest of the country (38%); part of this spatial gap is likely explained by the devastating impact of the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria's North East ... Poverty is most prevalent in the parts of the Lake Chad region that lie within Nigeria. The poverty rates in Adamawa and Yobe states reach as high as 74% and 70%, significantly higher than the national average of 38% ...⁹⁹

The report also addressed the issue of food insecurity as an increasing concern in the

region, adding that between 2014 and 2019, the number of undernourished people found in northern Nigeria was five million.¹⁰⁰

Out of the 72%, poverty rates associated with the period of Boko-Haram insurgency in the Northeast, women, and girls suffered the most because of their various disadvantaged statuses in society. Besides, a significant number of women are widowed, displaced, and cut off from their farming, fishing, and trading activities and this worsened their poverty level. Some of these women assumed the status of breadwinner after the death of their husbands without any trade or profession. This also increases their level of poverty leading to social ills like prostitution and stealing among women; while girls of 12 years abandoned school and found themselves in hands of old men as housewives. This, in the final analysis, recycles poverty and economic dependence on men in a society where women's status is so low and where insurgency and a generate state of insecurity is rife.

⁹⁹ Punch Newspaper, 'Poverty Rates in the Most North-East States is 70%- World Bank'. Available at: [Poverty rate in most North-East states is 70% –](https://punchng.com/poverty-rate-in-most-north-east-states-is-70/)

[World Bank - Punch Newspapers \(punchng.com\)](https://punchng.com/poverty-rate-in-most-north-east-states-is-70/). Accessed, 01-08-2022.

¹⁰⁰ Punch Newspaper, 'Poverty Rates in the Most North-East States is 70%- World Bank'.

Efforts by the State and Non-State Actors to Cushion the Effects of Boko-Haram Insurgency on Women and Children

The Nigerian government and international partners adopted various approaches to cushion the effects of the Boko-Haram insurgency on women in Northeastern Nigeria. One way through which the Nigerian government supported women and girls was the establishment of IDPs camps across the affected areas for the purposes of providing of humanitarian assistance. However, those camps were also characterised by numerous challenges including poor living conditions, lack of good health facilities, hunger, and human rights abuses such as rape by camp officials and security agents.¹⁰¹ The issue of human rights abuses by camp officials and security agents has often been downplayed by the Nigerian government on several occasions. However, there is an avalanche of evidence in support of the prevalence of this menace. For instance, a military officer who

raped a 14-year-old girl in one of the Northeastern camps in September 2018 was dismissed and this is documented.¹⁰² Aside this, a situational assessment of IDPs camps in the Northeast in July 2016 by NOI Polls, a Nigerian research organization, reported that 66% of 400 displaced people in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states admitted that camp officials sexually abuse the displaced women and girls.¹⁰³ There were also cases of ‘transactional sex’ for food between camp officials and security officers because such government camps did not meet the ideal camp system as proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to WHO, an ideal camp must have; security, water, food, shelter and sanitation, clothes, blankets, essential domestic items, and preventive and curative health care.¹⁰⁴ These necessities were lacking in IDPs in Northeastern Nigeria. Furthermore, *Search for Common Ground* (SCG) found out that the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) perpetuated corrupt practices. They were

¹⁰¹ O. O. Okpeh, Jr., 'Displaced, Dispossessed and Neglected'; And The Conversation, 'Nigeria Must Rethink Responses to Women Displaced By Boko-Haram'. Available at; [Nigeria must rethink responses to women displaced by Boko Haram \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/nigeria-must-rethink-responses-to-women-displaced-by-boko-haram-12111). Accessed, 02-08-2022.

¹⁰² The Conversation, 'Nigeria Must Rethink Responses to Women Displaced By Boko-Haram'. Available at; [Nigeria must rethink responses to](https://theconversation.com/nigeria-must-rethink-responses-to-women-displaced-by-boko-haram-12111)

[women displaced by Boko Haram \(theconversation.com\)](https://theconversation.com/nigeria-must-rethink-responses-to-women-displaced-by-boko-haram-12111). Accessed, 02-08-2022.

¹⁰³ See Nigeria: Officials Abusing Displaced Women and Girls Displaced By Boko-Haram Twice Over'. Available at:

¹⁰⁴ V. Onifade & R. Osinowo 'Living Conditions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Northern Nigeria'. A Chapter contribution, P. 378.

specifically found to be meddling in family issues, conniving with criminals, extorting the IDPs and host communities, diverting relief materials, looting some valuables in deserted villages, swindling motorists, engaging in burglary and robbery *et cetera*.¹⁰⁵ These are just a few examples of the challenges that faced women and children in IDPs Camps in Boko-Haram ravaged Northeastern Nigeria.

Also, the Nigerian government through the support of the World Bank and the European Union conducted a comprehensive Recovery and Peace-Building Assessment (RPBA) in the Northeast and brought out a blueprint for post-conflict stabilization and recovery or the so-called Buhari Plan.¹⁰⁶ Through this plan, the office of the National Security Adviser is the federal-level partner for international donors on civilian protection and demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) issues. However, coordination of this plan for the amelioration of the condition women and girls in the

Northeast is rather weak. It is on this note that Saskia Brechenmacher laments thus:

... the Presidential Committee on the Northeast Initiative (PCNI), the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), an Inter-Ministerial Task Force charged with coordinating humanitarian relief operations, the Victim's Support Fund, the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement in Borno, as well as state-level emergency management agencies. Many of these institutions have been marred by corruption, while institutional rivalries and overlapping mandates impede collaboration, obscure lines of accountability, and result in ad-hoc interventions¹⁰⁷

It should be noted that on paper, PCNI is to serve as a primary strategy and coordination body. However, the institution is so slow in coordinating, while state and local level actors felt sidelined. Finally, across all levels of governance, corruption and mismanagement directly undermine the conflict response. Under Goodluck Jonathan, humanitarian aid delivery was highly

¹⁰⁵ E.W. Dumbili & E.F. Nnanwube (2019). 'Boko-Haram Violence and Social Inequalities: A Sociological Exploration of Internally Displaced Persons in North-Eastern Nigeria'. *Covenant International Journal of Psychology (CIJP)*, Vol. 4, No. 1. P.45.

¹⁰⁶S. Brechenmacher (2019). 'Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria after Boko-Haram'. *Carnegie Endowment for*

International Peace. Available at: [Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria After Boko Haram - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#). Accessed, 03-08-2022.

¹⁰⁷S. Brechenmacher (2019). 'Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria ... p. 8.

politicized, and projects for the Northeast's economic recovery launched by the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE) existed largely on paper.

Furthermore, some NGOs have remained active in intervening in the humanitarian crisis in the Northeast. For example, the Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development, which focused on education, gender, human right, and peacebuilding established in 2009, located at Ring Road close to Giwa Barrack, Old GRA, Maiduguri trains women and girls on how to make caps, pasta, petroleum jelly, and hygiene kit.¹⁰⁸ After a successful period of training, the recipients of such skills were empowered financially to start such craft on a small scale for self-sustenance. The foundation has empowered a lot of women and girls in the Northeast. Other smaller foundations like the North-East Regional Initiative (NERI), a humanitarian organisation funded by the USAID, in partnership with Cohort for

Existential Emergency Relief (CEER), empowered women and girls in their little ways. For instance, NERI empowered a few women in Dikwa LGA with 60 thousand Naira each after engaging them in a 20-day cleaning exercise of Dikwa town that was ravaged by insurgents prior 2015.¹⁰⁹

International organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provide trauma counselling to women and girls who survived insurgency, including those directly affected by the Chibok abduction, through a \$4.5 million, five-year (2010-15) program.¹¹⁰ The Agency (USAID) trained psycho-social support teams based in Borno state the epicenter of Boko Haram's violent activities. The role of these social workers, health care providers, and other community members is to sensitise communities to prevent stigma against abductees when they return and to provide psycho-social first aid to girls and their families. Finally, USAID started two new

¹⁰⁸Z.Y. Adam (2021). 'Special Report: How NGO is Transforming Lives of Women Victims of Boko-Haram Insurgency'. *Premium Times*, Available at [SPECIAL REPORT: How NGO is transforming lives of women victims of Boko Haram insurgency \(premiumtimesng.com\)](https://premiumtimesng.com/news/special-report-how-ngo-is-transforming-lives-of-women-victims-of-boko-haram-insurgency/). Accessed, 02-08-2022.

¹⁰⁹A. Haruna (2018). 'Boko-Haram: NGO Pays Returnees to Clean Own Community'. *Premium Times*, Available at [Boko Haram: NGOs pay](https://premiumtimesng.com/news/boko-haram-ngo-pays-returnees-to-clean-own-community/)

[returnee IDPs to clean their community \(premiumtimesng.com\)](https://premiumtimesng.com/news/returnee-idps-to-clean-their-community-premiumtimesng-com/). Accessed, 02-08-2022.

¹¹⁰ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary (2014). 'Facts Sheets: US Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against Boko-Haram'. Available at: [FACT SHEET: U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against Boko Haram | whitehouse.gov \(archives.gov\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/07/22/facts-sheets-us-efforts-to-assist-the-nigerian-government-in-its-fight-against-boko-haram/). Accessed, 02-08-2022.

programs that will address critical educational needs for both girls and boys in Northern Nigeria through the provision of a \$20-30 million crisis response program to finance basic education to internally displaced persons and others affected by the violence in the northeast.

Conclusion: Towards Some Policy Options

From the forgoing narrative and analysis, it is clear that the Boko-Haram insurgency has lasted for over one decade, at last for now. The war affected women and girls in all aspects of human life, while government humanitarian efforts to cushion the harsh effects of this war, particularly on women and girls, the most vulnerable group in society, seem to be weak. In the refugee camps, women and girls face human rights violations by men, camp officials, and security agents. This has produced negative implications for the womenfolk in a society that holds them in low esteem. Besides, the war emasculated their weak economic status to a level next to zero and increased societal stigmatization due to the various roles they were forced to play in the hands of the

insurgents. Women and girls also face new roles arising from the death of the breadwinner in their various families. Some have taken to prostitution as an only surviving strategy, while girls of 12-16 years have considered early marriage as an option for survival, thereby recycling generational poverty. This unfortunately speaks volumes to the failing state of Nigeria, where life is meaningless to more than half of the nation's total population.

Arising from all these, we have argued that for the Nigerian state to be responsive, all the three tiers of government must hold the security of life and property of the citizens with all sense of purpose and seriousness. This could be done by the government investigating to know and deal with the root causes of the Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Relatedly, there is the need for a total overhaul of our border security and management policy to address the porous nature of our international borders. It is clear from available evidence that the Boko Haram insurgents have appropriated this advantage and the opportunities provided our very vast ungoverned spaces to carry out their nefarious activities.¹¹¹ Until and unless this

¹¹¹ There are convincing evidences that the involvement of foreigners on the side of the

insurgents has continued to complicate the Boko Haram challenge. This is in addition to the fact that

addressed, the problem of insurgency in the Northeast would remain for a long time to come, an intractable challenge to tackle by our security operatives.

Government's responses to the humanitarian crisis provoked by the insurgency must be swift, coordinated and decisive. The plight of displaced people who need humanitarian support in Nigeria must be prioritised by government at all levels. This means responses to the issues surrounding internally displaced in Nigeria must 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.

The chapter also noted that the HDI in the Northeast is very low even before the Boko-Haram insurgency war. To reverse this trend, rigorous poverty alleviation programs should be put in place with a special spotlight on womenfolk and children in the Northeast. This could be done through conscious efforts to use women at the top echelon to supervise and coordinate policies of government to

reduce poverty among women in the Northern states. Equally, a deliberate effort by the government in improving the health of women, especially in Northern Nigeria by providing free health and medical services is imperative, particularly reproductive health services. In addition, an Empowerment Education Fund for the girl-child is urgently needed so that the poor can have access to these funds to go to school. Let us remember the common saying: 'if you educate a boy, you educate an individual, but if you educate a girl, you educate a nation!'¹¹²

It is also observed that the various roles women were cajoled or forced to play in the insurgency war have put most of them in a bad light. Some of the women were kidnapped from their husbands' homes and forced to marry Boko-Haram leaders with whom they now have children. Coming back to reintegrate with their families is a big problem because of the reality of social stigmatisation. There is therefore the need for the government to engage community leaders and religious groups to facilitate the reintegration and rehabilitation of all women

when they come under heavy attack by the Nigerian military, they quickly retreat to the ungoverned spaces along the nation's international borders with her African neighbours; a pattern that has made it

extremely difficult for the latter to contend with the former.

¹¹² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks (GCPEA) ... p. 1.

released from Boko-Haram camps and provided psychosocial support.

Finally, all donors, UN agencies, and international NGOs who are partnering with the federal government in delivering humanitarian services in the Northeast need to expand and improve gender-sensitive aspects of aid programs. This could be done when such donors strengthen their programs, in partnership with women-led NGOs, to tackle gender stereotypes and raise awareness about women's roles, including in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. This would go a long way in strengthening the capacity of women to positively contribute in rebuilding their communities in the envisaged post-insurgency Northeastern Nigeria.

Brief Profile of Chapter Contributors

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