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## **The Implication of Boko Haram Insurgency on Women and Girls in North East Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This study is set out to make a historical analysis and examination of the implications of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East of Nigeria. The study will cover the period from the outbreak of the insurgency which was 2009, and up to 2017. The purpose of the study is to bring to limelight how the most vulnerable group in the society, women and girls, bears the brunt of the insurgency. The implications of Boko Haram insurgency on women and girls are diverse and dynamic in nature. While most of the impacts are negative, some are positive in nature. With regard to the former, many women and girls were abducted, enslaved and some were forced to join the group as fighters, e.g. female suicide bombers. Forced marriage was also imposed on some of them. Some women became widows while others are IDPs. Women and girls in the IDPs camps and some host communities were also faced with the challenge of insecurity, gender based violence and inadequate feeding which exposed them to malnutrition. With respect to the positive impacts, some young women join the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in fighting Boko Haram and also in frisking females at check points.*

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### **Introduction**

The North East of Nigeria is still in the quagmire of Boko Haram insurgency. This is in spite of the fact that the Nigerian Military have declared that they have technically defeated the insurgents. However, “technically defeated” the Boko Haram means that the Nigerian military was able to rescue or regain the seventeen (17) local governments that were hitherto under the insurgents. Thus, there are still outbreaks of attacks by Boko Haram on some communities and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), more especially women and girls are still living with the impacts of this insurgency. Many women and girls are bearing the brunt of the insurgency such as social displacement, psychosocial problems, gender based violence, hunger and deplorable health conditions. Some of them become members of the Boko Haram sect. Another group of women and girls step up effort and fought against it. A lot of women and girls join the Boko Haram sect either by coercion or persuasion. Some women even engaged in influencing other women and girls to join the sect. These girls and women were brain washed by the sect to carry out suicide bombing attacks with the purported teaching that they are fighting for God and paradise would be their reward.

Women were not only victims of the insurgency; they also contributed their efforts in fighting the insurgents. This came with the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF)

in 2013 where some women and girls join the C-JTF and have help in unquantifiable measures in fighting the insurgency. They came useful in situations that men cannot handle due to culture and religion such as frisking women at search points and entering houses that are prohibited to men that are not relatives. Women in the IDPs camps also faced a degrading living condition. They faced security challenge in the camps because there were incidences of attacks by the Boko Haram group on some IDPs camps. There were also cases of gender based violence in the camps perpetrated on the unfortunate women and girls by some camp officials and security men who are supposed to protect these women. Hunger as a result of inadequate feeding became severe in some camps and this has exposed the women and girls to malnutrition. These are some of the challenges faced by women and girls as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigeria. Therefore, it is against this backdrop that this study aim to investigate the impacts of the insurgency on this vulnerable group in the society; women and girls. The study will begin with conceptual analysis of the term insurgency. We will then trace the origin and causes of the insurgency. The impacts of the insurgency on women and girls will be discussed and then the conclusion of the study.

### **Conceptual Definition**

Insurgency can be defined as a rebellion against authority (for example, an authority recognised as such by the United Nations) when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognised as belligerents.<sup>1</sup> But in situations where a revolt takes the form of armed rebellion, it may not be viewed as an insurgency if a state of belligerency exists between one or more sovereign states and rebel forces.<sup>2</sup> This meant that not all rebellions are insurgencies, as a state of belligerency may exist between one or more sovereign states and rebel forces. Insurgency is also described as revolution, revolt, rebellion, riot and mutiny.<sup>3</sup> Insurgency is asymmetric in nature because the insurgents fight against authority bigger in size to them, which is why they use guerrilla tactics and terrorism. Terrorism is the weapon of insurgency. It is the modus operandi of the insurgents. Terrorism is not an end in itself. It is the subset of an insurgency, or it can be an act of violence by criminals who want to strike at anyone especially a government.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the US Department of Defence (DOD) define terrorism as the calculated use of violence to inculcate fear which is intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological.<sup>5</sup> The US Department of Defence (DOD) also defined insurgency as an organised resistance movement that uses subversion, sabotage, and armed conflict to achieve its aims. Insurgencies normally seek to overthrow the existing social order and reallocate power within the country.<sup>6</sup> All the above definitions of insurgency attempts to explain that it is a violent uprising aimed to oppose and overthrow a country's government by the citizens of that country. Boko Haram tried to carve out some part of North-East Nigeria in order to form or create an Islamic state that will be governed by Sharia law. Therefore, in a war against insurgency of this nature (Boko Haram), it is not enough to win the physical combat; it is much more vital to persuade those who support the insurgency that peace would offer them a better life than the war alternative. Thus, victory

<sup>1</sup> Insurgency, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/insurgency>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ade Abolurin, *Terrorism: Nigerian and Global Dimensions* (Ibadan: Golden Gems Unique Multiventures, 2011), p. 66

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/insurgency>

<sup>5</sup> <https://usiraq.procon.org>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

in a war against rebellion comes not by effective containment of the rebels, but by efficient eradication of the conditions that expose the country to the uprising.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Origin and Causes of the Boko Haram Insurgency**

The name “Boko Haram” has its origin in media and public/community coinage. “Boko” in Hausa stands for Western education. And “Haram” is a Hausa word taken from Arabic. It means something that is not acceptable in Islam; something forbidden or prohibited. “Boko Haram” therefore, may be interpreted as meaning that the Western education is prohibited in Islam.<sup>8</sup> Although the Islamic sect does not refer themselves as Boko Haram, the name was ascribed to them by the community and the media because of their constant usage of the words to express their dislike for Western education and culture. The Boko Haram sect are officially addressed as “*Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati Wal-Jihad*” Which in Arabic means “people of the way of Prophet Mohammed (SAW) and community of Muslims in line with the earlier generation of Muslims”<sup>9</sup>

The Islamic sect came to public notice in 2003 following its attack on Yunusari Local Government Secretariat in Kannama, Yobe State and local police station. Afterwards the group moved to Gwoza hills, near Nigerian border with Cameroon, for military training in 2004, after which they went underground.<sup>10</sup> The Boko Haram sect was founded by Mohammed Yusuf who embarked upon aggressive preaching mission between 2004 and 2009. During his preaching hundreds of youths were cajoled to his mission because it was presented to them as a spiritual revival. As Mohammed Yusuf continued preaching, his popularity and charisma increased especially to the youths in Maiduguri. Yusuf built a mosque and named it Markas Ibn Taimiyyah, after the 15<sup>th</sup> Century radical Islamic scholar, Ibn Taimiyyah. The mosque became the nucleus of a new Islamic movement in Borno.<sup>11</sup>

Having examined the origin of the insurgency, we shall now consider the causes of Boko Haram. The major root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency are poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. These factors have made it possible for the insurgents to recruit youths in the North East of the country as foot soldiers into combatant missions against the federal government of Nigeria.<sup>12</sup> Illiteracy was a great contributing factor to the rise of insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. Due to wide spread illiteracy in the Northeast, youths were tricked into fighting for reasons which majority of them were ignorant about.<sup>13</sup>

The insurgents use the low level of literacy among the youths in the North East as a fertile ground for propagating their agenda. The fighters were made to believe that they were doing God’s work. In reality, there is no such thing as Western education. This is due to the fact that education is the organised value of the real experience of every country. Once it loses the unique trend that enables it to service the domestic environment, not only would it cease to be,

<sup>7</sup> Olatunji Rotimi, et al, *The New Nigerian Manifesto: Alternative Strategy to Rescue the Country by Collective Efforts* (Nigeria: ACRO Ideations Enterprise, 2014) p. 229

<sup>8</sup> *The “Boko Haram” Tragedy* (Nigeria: Da’awah Coordination Council of Nigeria, DCCN, 2009) p. 1

<sup>9</sup> Aro O.I., “Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Its Implications and Way Forward Towards Peace” in *International Journal of Scientific Research*, [www.ijsr.org](http://www.ijsr.org)

<sup>10</sup> Jibrin Ibrahim et al, *Understanding Community Resilience in the Context of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria* (Nigeria: Centre for Information Technology and Development, CITAD, 2017) p. 2

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ian Atack, “Peace Studies and Social Change: The Role of Ethics and Human Agency” on [www.developmenteducationreview.com](http://www.developmenteducationreview.com)

<sup>13</sup> Ibrahim Baba, “Analysis of Cause and Effect of Boko Haram Insurgency in North East Nigeria” in *Journal of Graduate Studies*, vol.5, 2016, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, p.61

but it will also become a glorious monster more lethal than the ignorance it seeks to eradicate. Thus, education is the subliminal tool for structuring the mindset of citizens from childhood to live only by what is true and just. It is the first block in the structure of domestic harmony and it aligns the allegiance of citizens with that of the state in the service of what is true and just. Therefore, for Nigeria to fix the causative factors of Boko Haram crisis, it has to access and adopt the alternative development knowledge and education. This is crucial not only to eliminating the conditions that predispose the country to the Boko Haram insurgency but also for fixing the real factors that drive real economic growth which alone will guarantee the country real peace, domestic harmony and stability in the long run.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from illiteracy and poverty, unemployment also facilitates the emergence of Boko Haram. Despite the fact that Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources, the country is still grappling with poverty. Consequently, poverty is one of the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency. One time president of America, Bill Clinton, maintained that the truth about Boko Haram insurgency is the high rate of poverty in the North, which according to him, is three times what it is in Lagos. Another precipitating factor to Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is the alarming rate of unemployed youths especially in the Northeast. Lack of functional education breeds unemployment. Thus, the Boko Haram terrorist group find the unemployed youths as fertile ground to propagate their misguided ideology and twisted teachings and preaching.<sup>15</sup>

The absence of good, responsive and representative governance also contributed to the emergence of the Boko Haram sect. When people think they are marginalised and hardly experience government presence, they tend to align themselves with any movement they think could alleviate their impoverished condition. Good governance, according to the World Bank entails efforts to create an enabling environment and to build capacities of the people. To a very large extent, this was lacking in Northeast Nigeria. More so, growing wave of radical jihadists and fundamentalist groups around the world also aided and abetted Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Their doctrines, activities and modus operandi have influenced the growth and spread of Boko Haram. Terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Taliban, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) among others have promoted the course of the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Impacts of the Insurgency on Women and Girls Women Joining Boko Haram**

There were some women and girls that joined the Boko Haram group either voluntarily or by force. These women and girls have helped the group in its recruitment of other members and also in attacking the group's targets. The Boko Haram insurgents used a mixture of persuasions, coercion and deception in recruiting women and girls into their ranks. Persuasive and coercive approaches may contain deceptive elements. Insurgents may be deliberately discreet with regard to their goals, support levels and strength. They mask their heinous activities and make up some abuses claiming that they are from the government. They mostly target women and girls who do not understand the larger implication of joining. Thus, in illiterate population, insurgents easily deceive people into joining them.<sup>17</sup> Their adherence, willing or forced to the insurgents' version of Islam also contributed to the dissemination of its ideology among other

<sup>14</sup> Olatunji Rotimi, et al, Op. Cit., pp. 235-237

<sup>15</sup> Agnes Osita-Njoku and Princewill Chikere, "Consequences of Boko Haram Terrorism on Women in Northan Nigeria" in *Applied Research Journal*, vol.1, May, 2015, pp. 103-104.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ade Abolurin, *Insurgency* (Ibadan: Golden Gems Unique Multiventures, 2015) p.30

women and young men. Women can carry out roles that vary with traditional stereotype. In the Boko Haram insurgency therefore, women have become recruiters, spies, domestic labour, fighters and forced or willing suicide bombers.<sup>18</sup>

Some girls were forced to join Boko Haram by their boyfriends using traditional patriarchy to forcefully conscript their wives into the group. This happens sometimes with or without parental/ guardian consent. Targeting of women and girls in some communities helped to lure supporters, establish a political ideology in opposition to the state and sometimes attacked constituted authorities in areas that would hurt the most. The Boko Haram sect also use financial incentives especially where education and gainful employment is lacking. The group use false religious indoctrination, peer group pressure, personal threats, to their family or familial ties. These include instances where parents give out their children to the insurgents in order to insure their security from the group.<sup>19</sup>

Poverty played a significant role in influencing young men and women to join Boko Haram. A former member of the group confessed that she joined to earn a living. “We had nothing to eat; therefore when this group came we were forced. All my parents were killed so I was left with only brothers who encouraged me to join this group to earn a living”<sup>20</sup> It is apparent therefore, that the boys or males joined the group for worldly benefits while the females joined by force to obey their husbands’ or relatives’ orders. Girls were also brain-washed to join through schools established by the group for mental manipulation of new recruits.<sup>21</sup>

*Ab initio*, despite the number of female followers gathered by Boko Haram, they did not play a direct part in 2009 violence. None of the female followers were arrested or found among the dead. This is because when the invasion of the group’s stronghold became imminent, the sect leader then, Mohammed Yusuf, moved them to safety.<sup>22</sup> Following the 2009 crackdown, some women already loyal to Boko Haram left Maiduguri with their husbands to other towns or the Sambisa forest. The forest is a large savannah area south of Maiduguri where the sect had bases. However, some of them stayed behind to care for family or clandestinely support husbands and relatives.<sup>23</sup> But the major pathway to joining Boko Haram was through abduction.

### **Female Suicide Bombers**

One of the negative impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency is the use of women and girls in making attacks. Boko Haram’s cycle of abduction, detention and increased violence against women and girls are for tactical reasons. In 2013 two veiled women were found hiding an AK-47, a pistol and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in their gown in the city of Maiduguri. This is not only inhumane but disgusting for women to be found trying to perpetuate violent conflict. Al Qaeda in Iraq used a similar tactics because the gown and veil used by women gave them a superior ability to elude security checks.<sup>24</sup>

It is pertinent to bring to limelight that 13% of the incidents of suicide bombings recorded in Northeast Nigeria between January 2014 and December 2016 were perpetrated by children.

<sup>18</sup> *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency* (Africa Report No. 242/5 Dec 2016) p. 6

<sup>19</sup> *Perception and Experiences of Children Associated with Armed Groups in Northeast Nigeria* (Nigeria: NSRP/UNICEF, 2017) p. 6

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>22</sup> Usman Gaji Galtimari, “Report of the Administrative Committee of Inquiry into the Boko Haram Insurgency in Borno State” (Maiduguri, 2009), vol. 2, p. 8

<sup>23</sup> *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*, Op. Cit., p. 10

<sup>24</sup> Agnes and Princewill, Op. Cit., p. 104

Among 44 children, 40 girls and 4 boys were used in the suicide attacks during this period. Some women and girls were trained and forced to become combatants, spies and suicide bombers.<sup>25</sup> In spite of the success recorded by the military, there have been over 100 suicides bombing so far executed by girls and women in Northeast Nigeria since Boko Haram commenced the use of female suicide bombers from June 2014.<sup>26</sup> The sect use children as suicide bombers not minding whether they are boys or girls. At the height of the insurgency, cases of female suicide bombers abounds. There was an instance where two female suicide bombers wreaked havoc at Malari and near Alau village in Konduga LGA of Borno State. In those two separate missions at least 13 people including the suicide bombers died while 12 people sustained various degrees of injuries.<sup>27</sup> More so, according to Kallamu Ango, a trader in Malari, a woman who hid explosives beneath flowing clothes attacked some worshippers who were observing noon prayer at a mosque near the village market. In the attack nine people were killed and many others sustained injuries.<sup>28</sup> Using women and girls as means of attacking the government and public by the Boko Haram sect is an extreme abuse of the female folk. As we have seen above, the reasons why these women and girls were involve in such wanton activities was because of poverty, illiteracy and coercion.

### **Abduction of Women and Girls**

One of the worrisome implications of the activities of Boko Haram is the abduction of women and girls. The Boko Haram sect began kidnapping of women and children in 2013, most especially Christians around the Gwoza hills in southeast Borno State. It was Abubakar Shekau that publicised such nasty activity. After such kidnaps he usually demanded that government should release the wives and children of several Boko Haram members, including his own spouses arrested in 2012, an issue he had repeatedly raised. Despite the deals negotiated between the government and Boko Haram for an exchange (of prisoners), the abduction of women and girls became a cardinal tactics of the insurgents.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Boko Haram started using abducted women and girls as pawns in their activities. In May 2013, the Boko Haram terrorist carried out a mass assault on police barrack in Bama, Borno State where they captured twelve (12) women and children. Mostly, the women and girls abducted by the Boko Haram insurgents experienced various forms of violence such as torture, rape and murder.<sup>30</sup>

One of the abductions by Boko Haram that made national and international news headlines was the abduction of the Chibok school girls. From the end of 2012, the number of teenage girls abducted by Boko Haram and forcefully married off to their combatants began to increase. Although, at the initial stage, the abduction and forced marriages by Boko Haram received little coverage in national and international media, this marked the earliest period that Boko Haram adopted the use of sexual violence against women and girls as a tactics in the conflict. This phenomenon made headlines only in April 2014 when about 276 female school girls were kidnapped from their school in Chibok.<sup>31</sup> This nefarious activity by Boko Haram became a great source of concern to many individuals and organisations both within and outside the country. Following this abduction, the government's response was described as apathetic. This was because it took the government of erstwhile President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan three weeks to make a statement with regard to the abduction. And his wife, Patience Jonathan,

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.ipri.com/women-boko-haram-insurgency>

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Trust*, July 4, 2015, p.5

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*, Op. Cit., p. 6

<sup>30</sup> Agnes and Princewill, Op. Cit., p. 104

<sup>31</sup> *Perceptions and Experiences of Children...*, Op. Cit., p.14

speculated that the kidnap never took place. Boko Haram once declared that they would force the mostly Christian school girls to convert to Islam, while they continue using them as bargaining chips, per se. Thus, when Abubakar Shekau released 21 kidnapped Chibok school girls in October 2016, following negotiation with government, it came as good news to President Muhammadu Buhari.<sup>32</sup>

There have been many more kidnappings by the insurgents following the Chibok school girls' abduction. For instance, in April 2015, a well-documented report estimated that Boko Haram had kidnapped more than 2, 000 girls and women who were mostly unmarried, within the period of twelve (12) months alone. But that figure was just an estimate because the sect probably controlled a few hundred thousand women at the height of its insurgency, and kidnappings were many.<sup>33</sup> In their activities, Boko Haram mostly killed men (both military and civilian), but generally abducts women and girls. Shekau ordered his followers to kill men but spare the old, women, lunatic and the "repentant". Beyond trying to rescue their own female detainees, their reasons for abduction of women and girls are perhaps mixed. In some local context, Boko Haram's actions have ethnic colouration since it recruits more in certain communities than others. That the insurgents first abducted women from mainly Christian communities lend credence to the fact that the history of hostility between different communities in the area featured in the Boko Haram struggle. However, with the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF) in 2013 to fight Boko Haram, they turned to killing men and the Kidnapping of both Muslim and Christian women and girls. For example, when Kareto, Borno State, fell into their hands they treated the Muslim women harshly due to the fact that they had taken part albeit under military command in desecrating the bodies of their killed members.<sup>34</sup>

Another recent kidnap that draws the attention of many individuals, organisations and state actors was the Dapchi school girls kidnap. This abduction of school girls followed the same sequence and pattern like that of the Chibok school girls. On the 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2018, about 110 school girls were kidnapped by an armed group believed to be Boko Haram. The unfortunate incidence took place at Government Girls and Science Technical School, Dapchi, Yobe State. Following the abduction, the Federal Government released names and other particulars of the kidnapped girls. Alhaji Lai Mohammed, who is the Minister of Information and Culture, disclosed the list of the kidnapped girls in Abuja as handed over to the Federal Government of Nigeria by the Yobe State Government. Going by the list of 110 missing girls, eight (8) were in Junior Secondary School (JSS) 1, seventeen (17) in JSS 2, twelve (12) in JSS 3, forty (40) in Senior Secondary (SS) 1, nineteen (19) in SS 2, and fourteen (14) in SS 3. The ages of the girls range from 11 to 19 years.<sup>35</sup> However, all the Dapchi school girls were released by the insurgents with the exception of one Leah Sharibu who is still under the custody of the insurgents.

### **Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

Gender based violence usually consist the use of violence or threat of violence on women and girls. Boko Haram conflict, just like any other conflict around the world is caused by men and yet it is women and girls that suffer the major consequences. The insurgents played on the psychology of women through the use of violence and intimidation, kidnappings, forced

<sup>32</sup> Nigeria: *Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*, Op. Cit., p. 7

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ikechukwu Nnochii and Levinus Nwabughio, "Dapchi: FG Set up Prope intoBoko Haram School Kidnapping" in *Vanguard Newspaper* [www.vanguardngr.com-kidnapped-dapchi-scool-girls](http://www.vanguardngr.com-kidnapped-dapchi-scool-girls)

marriage and compulsory conversion to Islam as a tactics of terrorising the women and girls. The violence against women can be direct and indirect. The example of direct violence is sexual violence by armed forces or groups. Whereas the indirect violence can be when women and girls are prevented from going outside their home for fear of violence, or when they face Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). In situations where violence becomes persistent or “normalised”, the levels of GBV are likely to increase. This militates against women taking up leadership roles, speaking out on issues affecting them or being seen to stand against violence. In a nutshell, it is an obstacle to gender mainstreaming.<sup>36</sup>

Women and girls are also use by Boko Haram as alternative labour force during conflict. They were targeted both for their assets and as an asset; they have value for reproduction and production. When these women and girls are in Boko Haram captivity, they were used for cooking, cleansing and other chores as assigned to them by the insurgents. Many of the women in Boko Haram captivity were forced to bear children that would grow to further the course of the insurgency. However, the management of these women and girls sometimes become contentious issues within the sect. For instance, Mamman Nur, a leader of the Boko Haram splinter faction was at loggerheads with Shekau for betraying his promise to marry off the Chibok girls to the sect members. Another contentious issue is when Boko Haram attempted to distinguished between slave and wife by protecting the latter from abuse. Again, Mamman Nur criticized Shekau for enslaving women deemed to be Muslim. This was contrary to his version of Islam.<sup>37</sup>

A different form of GBV perpetrated by the Boko Haram is forced religion and conversion. Abducted women have generally been kept under surveillance, forced to wear the *niqab* and often compelled to listen to sermon and Quranic education. After brainwashing them, they were then put to work either as carriers, attackers, recruiters or cooks. There were also report of discreet extra-marital activities and rapes in the Boko Haram camps. Rapes occurred mostly when young captives were forced to marry Boko Haram fighters. It is also vital to note here that Boko Haram is not the only culprit with regard to violence on women and girls. Government security agents also unleash violence on women and girls. Women have been arbitrarily arrested by government security agents for the simple reason that their relatives are suspected Boko Haram members. A cursory look at this situation revealed that women are caught in the web of the conflict. The process adopted by security agents to extract information from women sometimes infringe on their fundamental human right.<sup>38</sup>

### **Female Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF)**

The role of the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF) in countering Boko Haram insurgency cannot be overemphasised. The protracted insurgency, coupled with youth frustration and annoyance at the destruction of their society, gave rise to the vigilante group known as the CJTF. The Civilian-JTF, as they are popularly called, emerged in Borno in 2013 to protect communities against the attacks and atrocities being committed by Boko Haram sect. The CJTF fights in Maiduguri, Benisheik, Damboa, Konduga, Bama, Dikwa, Gamboru Ngala and Monguno, among other places. And within that year (2013) they were able to force the insurgents out of Maiduguri, which was the birth place and the epicentre of the insurgency. This was a very remarkable achievement on the part of the CJTF which should not be overlooked. The Civilian JTF as a coping and adaptive mechanism is a best description and

<sup>36</sup> *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*, Op. Cit., p. 9

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *Agnes and Princewill*, Op. Cit., p. 104



practice of community resilience to the insurgency. Thus, the Civilian JTF was the first to incorporate women into their operations against the insurgency. The roles of the female members include conducting pad-down or frisking women and girls in churches, mosques, check points and other public places. They are also engage in intelligence gathering and arresting suspected female insurgents. The Boko Haram sect has been attacking the North-East of Nigeria through the use of female suicide bombers. But the efforts of the female CJTF members have tremendously help in averting several attacks by the insurgents. The female CJTF involve in searching women before they enter public places such as mosques, wedding or other festivals because of the Islamic religious and cultural system which forbids non-related men from entering women's houses, the female CJTF members easily help in making arrest in such places.<sup>39</sup>

Women join the CJTF in fighting Boko Haram for various reasons. It was observed that girls and women were needed to become members because they were needed to frisk female suspects. Some girls were motivated to join as a show of solidarity to their female colleagues that were often kidnapped. Others followed CJTF groups because they have boy friends among them. There are still others that join to get protection from the risk of sexual violence that was perceived to have increased in communities during the insurgency.<sup>40</sup> However, some women offered the CJTF information discreetly concerning the insurgents and their activities within Maiduguri, but they did not join the group. The female membership of the CJTF was registered at 122 female members (in 2016) in Borno State. But there are many others who work informally with the CJTF. Among the female that have joined the CJTF, some have received military training and are armed with shotguns and other weapons. They fought alongside men and the military. The female CJTF are also use to guard Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps within Maiduguri.

To further buttress the role of female CJTF in fighting Boko Haram, the story of Zara JTF is very apt. Her full name is Hajiya Zara but popularly referred to as Zara JTF. She is a 67 year-old widow who has lost her entire family to Boko Haram attacks. Zara JTF migrated from Beneshiekh to Damaturu. She contributes in providing security to the public, every Sunday, which is the weekly market day, and during other public functions. Zara JTF can be found patrolling the market, clad in a hunters' uniform, with her gun and charms. She was among the first women in CJTF that fought against the insurgency, which she started in Borno, before relocating to her hometown, Damaturu, Yobe State.<sup>41</sup>

### **Impacts of the Boko Haram Insurgency on Female IDPs**

The Boko Haram insurgency also has a degrading impact on women and girls in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. These are women who ran away from one danger and fall into another. IDPs are people who have ran away from their home towns and villages in order to escape conflict and persecution based on religion, race and nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion but remain within their country's borders.<sup>42</sup> In December 2015, the Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC) gave out an estimate of almost 2, 152, 000 internally displaced people in Nigeria. This population of IDPs is composed of 53% women and 47% men. Out of the above figure, 92% of them were displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency.<sup>43</sup> Thus, 79% of the IDPs were displaced by the Boko Haram

<sup>39</sup> [www.vanguardngr.com-female-CJTF/northeast-nigeria](http://www.vanguardngr.com-female-CJTF/northeast-nigeria)

<sup>40</sup> *Perception and Experiences of Children...*, Op. Cit., p. 17

<sup>41</sup> Jibrin Ibrahim, et al, Op. Cit., p. 75

<sup>42</sup> [www.venturesafrica.com/the-number-of-idps-in-nigeria](http://www.venturesafrica.com/the-number-of-idps-in-nigeria)

<sup>43</sup> <http://ynaija.com/idp-women-children>

insurgency in 2014. This was the period when the insurgents capture many towns and villages in North East Nigeria, thereby rendering the survivors of the attack to look for safer places and unfortunately tagged as IDPs. Most of the IDPs were from the North East, 62% from Borno State, 18% from Adamawa State and Yobe State with 13%. In the states mentioned above, 87% of the IDPs live with families and friends in the host communities while 13% live in camps.<sup>44</sup> By 2016, the Boko Haram insurgency was responsible for the steady increase of the IDPs to about 1, 920, 471. Most of the IDPs are located in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. It is also reported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that only 8% of the displaced population lives in official camps and received institutional support. Over 1.5 million of the displaced people are in acute need of shelter, food, security, clean portable water, health care delivery and education.<sup>45</sup>

In North East Nigeria, the people displaced by the insurgency, especially women and girls are living in deplorable and deteriorating conditions. This is why they are finding it difficult to adjust to pre-conflict way of living. The IDPs faced the fatigue and rigors of long journeys, psychological trauma, safety challenge, harassment, frequent sexual abuse, child molestation, forced labour, poor sanitation which exposes them to contagious diseases, poor medical facilities that attracts growth of bacteria, fungi and virus in their bodies, inadequate feeding which exposes them to malnutrition, awful state of infrastructure such as power, water, roads, insufficient healthcare, security, education and other basic amenities. In all these, women and girls are more vulnerable.<sup>46</sup>

To further understand the awful condition of women and girls in the IDP camps we shall examine the security and feeding condition in the camps as well as assess the sexual abuse being meted on women and girls in the camp. Due to lack of enough feeding in the IDP camps many women and girls who have no husbands get it difficult to access food, and hence exposed to malnutrition. This is because in the IDPs camps food is administered based on households. For instance, a 32 year old woman from Damasak lamented that life is terrible in the camp. For the past three days they did not eat because there was no firewood to cook food. She added that the camp officials do not allow them to go out and fend for themselves.<sup>47</sup> Another camp resident, a 47 year old mother of eight from Abadam, a northern Borno town said:

We used to get at least twice a day when I first arrived at the camp in 2014. But now, sometimes we get nothing at all. We cannot even buy food ourselves because they will not let us go out. My relatives in the town have to plead with the camp officials for hours before the officials will agree to let them give us some foodstuff from the little they have.<sup>48</sup>

In the IDPs camps, a woman or girl that is not married finds it difficult to get food. If you are not married, you hardly get anything that comes in. Women who have no husbands get insults from those that have it. They used to jeer at them that if they want to eat in this camp they should get married so that husbands can get food for them. A 16 year old mother of one in the camp narrated that:

Life is difficult in the camp, hardly enough to eat. There is food but whoever gets it, get it. We are not allowed to go out to find work or get extra food. Sometimes I go to the kitchen to scrap pot to get something to eat. They distribute tickets, some get tickets

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Jibrin Ibrahim, et al, Op. Cit., p. 75

<sup>46</sup> <http://ynaija.com/idp-women-children>

<sup>47</sup> Nigeria: Officials Abusing Displaced Women and Girls. Accessed on <https://www.hrw.org/nigeria-officials-abusing-displaced-women-and-girls>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

and some don't get. If you don't get a ticket you get no food. The IDP elders distributes the ticket, so they distribute among themselves, they make sure their families get first. Usually distribution of tickets takes place at odd times such as at night.<sup>49</sup>

It is due to this kind of food shortage faced by the IDPs that led to food crisis in the Arabic Teachers College (ATC) camp in Borno State. This was when the IDPs accused government officials of corrupt practices in the camp. Hundreds of women IDPs who were the ones that suffer the most, embarked on a peaceful protest by barricading the Maiduguri/Kano road over the alleged shortage of food in the camp. The protesters demanded for the removal of the Central Feeding Committee. The Deputy Governor of Borno State, Alhaji Usman Durkwa, intervened in the scene and doused the tension created by the women protesters by yielding to their demands of dissolving the Central Feeding Committee and introduced Household Feeding where each family will now receive raw foodstuff from the state government and cook for themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Women also faced the challenge of insecurity in the camps. Some women and girls who lost their husbands and family members faced social and physical problems in the IDP camps. This is because the level of insecurity in the camp is alarming; it is tantamount to a situation of running from insecurity to insecurity. Thus, women and girls that are yet to recover from psychological trauma of the loss of families, friends and properties faced security challenge and the responsibility to protect themselves in their various camps. The inadequacy of security at the IDPs camps exposed them to attacks from terrorists and armed robbers. There were some IDPs camps that have been attacked by the Boko Haram insurgents. For instance, in September 2015, the terrorist group, in a suicide mission attacked people in IDPs camps in Madagali and Yola towns of Adamawa State, killing 12 persons. On 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2016, an estimated 86 people were killed in Dalori camp which is about 12 kilometers to Maiduguri. Another attack also occurred on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016, where 80 displaced persons were attacked and killed in an IDP camp in Dikwa, Borno State.<sup>51</sup>

Women and girls IDPs who are both in the camps or host communities face the challenge of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the form of sexual abuse, rape and other forms of physical and emotional violence. Most of these women and girls were deceived by some dubious men in the society that they will marry them. But when they succeeded in impregnating such women and girls they then disappeared. Thus, these women and girls became victims of rape and sexual exploitation when they accepted offers of "friendship" or "marriage" from dubious men in position of authority. These are men that are supposed to provide adequate security in the camps, ensure freedom of movement for all displaced persons, safe and confidential health care for survivors, and reprimand the abusers instead of being culpable. Camp officials together with security personnel and even Civilian JTF involve themselves in the sexual abuse of women and child molestation in the IDPs camps. A 17-year old girl said that just over a year after she ran away from the frequent attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents in Dikwa, a town 56 miles west of Maiduguri, one police officer approached her for "friendship" in the camp and then raped her.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> "Food Crisis in IDPs Camp in Borno State". Accessed on [www.vanguardngr.com/2018/08/orno-food-crisis-malnutrition-prostitution](http://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/08/orno-food-crisis-malnutrition-prostitution)

<sup>51</sup> <http://ynaija.com/idp-women-children>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/nigeria-official-abusing-displaced-women-and-girls>

## Conclusion

In this study we were able to examine the various implications of the Boko Haram insurgency on women and girls in North East Nigeria. We also understand that it is not all rebellions that could amount to insurgency. The Boko Haram insurgency began in 2002 and it was formed by Mohammed Yusuf. The insurgents used various methods in recruitment such as kidnapping, forceful conscription, persuasions and deceit. More so, illiteracy, poverty and unemployment served as fertile ground for preaching their twisted Islamic ideologies. Thus the impacts of the insurgency on women and girls were in the form of abductions, sexual and gender based violence, deplorable living conditions in the IDPs camps, psycho-social problems, and female suicide bombers. There were also some women that fought against the insurgents especially with the emergence of the Civilian JTF in Maiduguri. The Boko Haram engaged in the kidnap of women and girls in order to use them as human shield against attacks from the security agents and also bargaining pawns in negotiating the release of their members from the Nigerian government. This study is therefore a general assessment of the impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency on women and girls. This is informed by the fact that women bear the brunt of the insurgency to a large extent compared to men.

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