

# **BOKO HARAM AND FORCED MIGRATION: A FOCUS ON THE NORTHEAST AND LAKE CHAD BASIN**

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## **Abstract**

This paper first and foremost, examines the emergence of Boko Haram as a religious organization which later transformed to mysterious militant group, the causative factors of Boko Haram and its impact on forced migration vis-à-vis Nigerian National Development. Secondly, the paper seeks to examine the nature, structure, growth, and consequences of the crisis. Although, forced migration both in and into Nigeria has several causes such as environmental degradation, natural disasters, inter/intra communal and inter-ethnic boundary conflicts, disagreements over land between natives and settlers, electoral violence, as well as violent conflicts. However, the most devastating armed conflict that has led to forced migration of people of the northeastern part of Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin in recent times is the Boko Haram uprising. Reports have shown that, over two million people were forced to move out from their original homes as a result of the crisis. Thirdly, the paper highlights the impacts of the Boko Haram crisis on the plight of the displaced people in terms of their living conditions, food and nutrition, health, security and education. Such highlights are captured in its findings in the area of economic, political and social impacts of Boko Haram and forced migration. The paper concludes by offering some recommendations with a view of improving the situation and even asking the government to formulate a policy towards providing a solution to this crisis. The methodology applied in this research paper is qualitative in nature and has adopted descriptive analysis, whereby, it heavily relied on secondary sources in which data was collected from journals, seminar papers, articles and so on.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Migration, Northeast, Lake Chad Basin, Religious Organization, Security

## **Introduction**

Nigeria, Africa's largest country with a population of about 200 million people and the largest economy in Africa with GDP of US\$ 415 billion is also very rich in both human and natural resources. It is the largest producer of oil in Africa and six in the organization of petroleum exporting countries (OPEC). Nigeria is rich in terms of petroleum, gas and large number of mineral resources. It has fertile land for agricultural potentials, but still an importer of food to feed its citizens (ADB, 2012). Despite all these human and natural resources, Nigeria is confronted with many problems of poverty, inefficient health care delivery system, lack of portable drinking water,

massive unemployment, poor standard of education and other issues of anti-social behaviours that include, armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, ethnic crisis, assassination, ritual killings, militancy, terrorism and the never ending saga of Boko Haram insurgency. Boko Haram's incessant attacks have caused economic backwardness in Nigeria and necessitated the increase in poverty, unemployment, insecurity and failure in sustainable human development that is felt in the entire country as well as neighbouring countries of Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin. This particular insurgency has caused tremendous migration problems through the displacement of people especially, in the northeastern part of Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin.

The Boko Haram insurgents make the cost of mass migration higher than is acceptable thereby, turning communities against displaced people. Boko Haram's demonstrated ability to disrupt and threaten communities via displaced people put the communities at high risk thereby forcing them to reject and sometimes even ostracize the refugees. As a consequent, the displacement has in turn, prompted the creation of numerous internally displaced people's (IDPs) camps and, on a larger scale, the absorption of thousands of displaced persons into extended families and other communities. Many of these displaced people appear eager to remain in their region, but returning home can be exceedingly difficult and dangerous. The region's governments, especially those in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, have repeatedly exacerbated this problem by compelling the displaced victims to return home before it is safe to do so. Meanwhile, it has become a public knowledge that people in camps repeatedly become prey for sexual assault and exploitation, corruption, and profiling, thus leading to a humanitarian fallout.

The humanitarian fallout of Boko Haram is distinctly seen from the migration of northeastern Nigerians and other nationals of the Lake Chad region to other parts of the country and even to far away destinations such as Libya and Europe. In fact, in 2016 and 2017, Nigerians were said to be the most-represented group crossing the Mediterranean to Italy, with over 37,000 arriving in that country alone (<https://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/nigeria-boko-haram-jihadist-group-causes-migration>). As the International Organization for migration comments: "The majority of Nigerians attempting the journey are young people who say they want to work in Europe because sending Euros home (a stronger currency) will make a big difference to their families." Anecdotally, at least in news coverage, many of these migrants do not seem to be from the northeast, many surnames suggest southern, rather than northern, origins. The main roots of migration, then, appear to be economic. The migration to Europe also reflects the continued reverberations of Libya's collapse after the fall of Muammar Qadhafi in 2011, whereas Libya was formerly an economic magnet for sub-Saharan African migrants and a source

of precious remittances for their families, it has now become a crossing point where opportunities are few and dangers are many. Hundreds of Nigerians have already been repatriated from Libya even as late as November last year.

### **Emergence of Boko Haram in the North East**

The group Boko Haram has adopted its official name to be “*People committed to the Prophet’s Teaching and Jihad*” which is the English translation from Arabic “*Jama’at ahl as-sunnah li-d-da’awatiwa-a-Jihad*”, (Bazza, 2014). Literally, the name of the sect ‘Boko Haram’ means: "western education is forbidden". This is due to the strong opposition to anything Western, as it is believed by the sect to have corrupting influence on Muslims: (Oladimeji, Olusegun & Oluwafisayo, 2009)”, in other words, and according to the propagation of its members, anything that comes from West is adulterated and therefore, is sinful.

### **The North East Zone**

Historically, the people of the North East Zone have been known to be peaceful and enterprising as defined by the successes of the various empires that ruled the Zone in pre-colonial times. It is undoubtedly a fact, that the ongoing security challenges faced by the Zone have had a detrimental impact on the psychological state of individuals living in the Zone as well as the economy of the Zone. In contemporary Nigeria, the magnitude and scale of the destruction of lives and property that has befallen the Zone can only be compared to the devastation incurred during the Nigerian Civil War.

Boko Haram, an Islamist religious sect has since 2009, stepped up its violent activities against the government and people of the North East of Nigeria and her neighbours. They believe that the government of Nigeria is entrenched in massive corruption, abusive security and widening regional economic disparity between the disgruntled south and the impoverished north of the country: (Bazza, 2014). They argue that, the government of Nigeria should do more to address the issues facing the disaffected and impoverished Muslim north. Commentators on Boko Haram generally agree that in 1995, the group was said to be operating under the name Shabaab, Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as their leader. While Lawal left to continue his education, Mohammad Yusuf took over leadership of the group. Yusuf’s leadership allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity: (Bazza, 2014). Muhammad Yusuf was influenced by ‘Ibn Taymiyyah’ who was a fourteen century legal scholar that preached on Islamic fundamentalism. Muhammad Yusuf built religious schools and mosques in Maiduguri in 2002 which attracted many students not only from northern Nigeria, but from Chad, Cameroon and Niger (Farouk, 2012). He influenced the students through his preaching, teaching and propagation of Jihad on Nigerian government. This

preaching and lectures by Muhammad Yusuf spread not only among students, but even among top government.

### **Tackling the Root Cause of the Insurgency**

Boko Haram's hate ideology coupled with lack of opportunities and the appalling state of poverty in the North East has helped fuel the insurgency by providing conditions for easy recruitment of vulnerable citizens. Furthermore, as affirmed by former President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR at the 2<sup>nd</sup> North-East Economic Summit, "there can be no doubt that the unique experience that this Zone has had with Boko Haram necessitates aggressive and urgent action to revitalize its economy": ("FG committed to socio-economic development of the North-East", created on December 18, 2013, [www.statehouse.gov.ng](http://www.statehouse.gov.ng)). With this in mind, he posited that, it is paramount that the root causes of the crisis be addressed by fostering functional partnerships with all stakeholders. As a result of stakeholder engagement in the former administration, the conceptualization of the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE), which is currently coordinated by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), was inaugurated. In addition, the Federal Government mobilized Private Sector support through the Victims Support Fund (VSF), which is utilized for the purpose of lessening the burden of Nigerians affected by conflicts, especially those in the North East: ("FG committed to socio-economic development of the North-East", created on December 18, 2013, [www.statehouse.gov.ng](http://www.statehouse.gov.ng)).

The current solutions although good-intentioned are largely inadequate and uncoordinated. Hence, the reason why Sen. Abdul-Azeez Murtala Nyako (The Senator representing Adamawa Central in the National Assembly) argued strongly for the need to establish the North-East Development Commission (NEDC). He went a step further to formulate a bill for the establishment of NEDC which was passed by the National Assembly and subsequently on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2017, President Muhammadu Buhari assented to the *North East Development Commission Bill*. The Commission according to Senator Nyako, will be charged with the coordination of all activities related to the socio-economic stability of the North East Zone. He opined that rather than running at cross-purposes, it will complement and coordinate the efforts of all concerned stakeholders ranging from State, to Federal and to International efforts. ("FG committed to socio-economic development of the North-East", created on December 18, 2013, [www.statehouse.gov.ng](http://www.statehouse.gov.ng)).

### **Boko Haram: Causes**

#### **1. Insecurity**

There is no any country that can achieve its development without security; security is the back bone of every development, be it political, economic or

social. Nigeria, nominally a giant of Africa, no doubt faces problems of economic, political and social insecurity which restricted its national development since the end of civil war in 1970. Boko Haram is a great threat to the country and the disaster it has caused has led to the collapse of Nigerian national security because there is now apparent increase of tensions among the various ethnic group which inevitably frightens foreign and national investors. The persistent attacks in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, major attack in Kano which killed over 200 people and other three attacks in Abuja that included the bombing of UN headquarter in August 2012. Attacks on mosques, churches, governmental institutions and parastatals, all these attacks are intended to put pressure and inflame religious tensions on the nation (Eme, et. al. 2012).

## **2. Youths' Unemployment**

The vicious cycle of poverty and insecurity are said to be the main cause of youths' unemployment which is approximately put at over 64 million youths' are unemployed and 1.6 million are under-employed in Nigeria. Unemployment causes social frustration, dejection, dependency on family and desperation that forced youths to embark on bad social attitudes of violent crimes, assault, burglary, extortion, kidnapping, terrorism, militancy, destruction of lives and recently, the Boko Haram insurgency. According to Awogbenle, unemployment became a great problem on Nigerian youths and juxtaposed a terrible risk and fear to the society. The economical and psychological pressure of youth unemployment is disaster to both individual and society (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010).

## **3. Poverty**

Nigeria is a country with almost 200 million people and approximately 500 ethnic groups speaking different languages and culture with about fifty percent Muslims, forty percent Christians and ten percent others. The country has abundant of human and natural resources and number six in terms of oil wealth global ranking, and an OPEC member. Despite all these endowment of human and natural resources, Nigeria has currently been ranked as 158 out of 177 poor economies by Human Development Index (HDI, 2008). According to International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2007), that despite the Nigerian resources of human and natural endowment as well as oil wealth, the country ranked as one of the poorest countries in the global ranking with over 70 percent of its population as poor and 35 percent in absolute poverty (Kester, 2012). This problem of poverty caused many of Nigerian citizens to engage in social violence. According to Shettima (2009), the Almajiri (Islamic pupils) scattered all over the streets with calabash in their hands begging for alms and often very dirty, hungry, thirsty and were seriously neglected making them vulnerable and willing tools to be recruited by Boko Haram who

will then engage them in violent aggression and other social and criminal activities such as suicide bombing. As reported in Saturday Tribune of 14th July, 2012, a fifteen year suicide-bomber (an Almajiri) attacked the Maiduguri Central Mosque and killed ten innocent Nigerians with the narrow escape of the Emir of Borno State and the Borno State Deputy Speaker (Bwala, 2012).

#### **4. Political Instability and Corruption**

The high rate of poverty is caused by high level of corruption within the Nigeria system as it was ranked among the most corrupt country in the world in 2001 (the Transparency International Corruption Index, 2001). According to Adetoro 2012, most Nigerian agencies and ministries were found guilty of corruption with the police being ranked as the most corrupt agency. Due to high rate of corruption in the Nigerian polity, the former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo called the National Assembly political office holders as 'rogues and armed robbers' (Utebor, 2012). This confirms the allegation of former Central Bank of Nigerian Governor against the Nigerian political office holders (that are less than one percent of the population) for sharing more than twenty five percent of the national budgets to themselves (Sanusi, 2010). Because of this high rate of corruption among security personnel and political office holders that Boko Haram agitated for sharia law in the country.

#### **5. Foreign Connection**

The signal of foreign intervention or influence from other foreign countries and organizations to supply them with money and weapons to carry out their violent activities of attacks, kidnapping, raping, and other social violence was no longer in doubt. According to a United Nations report, Boko Haram has a connection with Al-Qaeda Islamic Movement (AQIM) in the Maghreb region and the link between the Boko Haram, AQIM and Somalia's Al- Shabaab is seen in the similarities of their violent activities of suicide bombing, assault, burglary, terrorism, militancy attacks, etc.

### **Boko Haram: Impacts and Nigerian National Development**

#### **1. Economic Impact**

Boko Haram violence has brought a serious paralysis to business, banking sector, markets, tourism, transport system, hospitality industries, internal and external investment, companies and other economic activities. According to Okereocha (2012), due to such attacks, human capital and investments collapsed and this has led to the migration of people to other parts of the country. Boko Haram attacks has caused economic backwardness in Nigeria and necessitated the increase in poverty, unemployment, insecurity and failure in sustainable human development, not only in the northern part, but the entire country as well as neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin. According to former minister of information, Mr. Labaran Maku, Kano served as the commercial centre of not only the North, but the entire

neighbouring countries since before the evolution of Nigeria, Kano has been the commercial centre of Western Sudan for the past of 500 years. The more you destabilize peace in Kano, the more you destabilize the foundation of economic and social well-being of northern region (Suleiman, 2012).

## **2. Political Impact**

The Boko Haram insurgency has created a serious confusion in Nigerian political system and reduced its performance in the affected areas. The activities of Boko Haram have generally tinted the image of Muslims especially from non-Muslims who considered all Muslims as extremists and fundamentalists. The insurgence juxtaposed a terrible relationship between Nigeria and other nations of the world due to foreign nationals been kidnapped and taken hostages for ransom. Such activities caused the United States of America and other western nations to warn their citizens not to visit northern states affected by Boko Haram attacks. The Boko Haram attacks forced foreign nationals to leave the country, and school, universities, ministries, companies and other government protocols and politicians to migrate from the affected north eastern states to other areas for their safety. According to Anyandike and Nkechi (2013) noted that, the attacks of Boko Haram do not consider age, sex or nationality, but it affected entire nations and survivors of the attacks are afraid to send their children to schools because of insecurity while the attack by Boko Haram is not limited to urban or rural areas, but it cut across the boundaries which affected the neighbouring countries. According Alozieuwa (2012) as cited by Anyadike (2013) “the challenge juxtaposed by Boko Haram in Nigeria is not only the threat of its terrorist acts of propagation Islamic law in the country, but the confusions of exact causes of the violence in Nigeria such as socioeconomic, political and religious factor.”

## **3. Social Impact**

The north eastern part of Nigeria is a region which suffered from serious underdevelopment and lagging behind in terms of infrastructure, education, security and other development indices, this vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment paved a simple way of embracing Boko Haram mission and activities by youths due to the high tension caused by daily life stress, the youths became the terrible militant that engaged in sporadic bombings of the major northern cities such as Kano, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Jos, Zaria, Damaturu, Adamawa, Bauchi and others. This caused the killings of both Muslims and Christians in mosques and churches; this proves that the Boko Haram insurgency is totally against the entire nation and this calls for collective effort to fight against Boko Haram. It is believed that Boko Haram has a connection with foreign terrorist organizations. The constant bomb attacks by Boko Haram have impacted negatively on the lives and properties of the citizens.

The available statistics by Human Right Watch (2012) has reported a total death toll of 935 persons in 164 attacks, 550 people were killed through suicide bombing, another 550 were killed in 135 attacks in 2011 alone (Amnesty International, 2012). According to Oluwaseun, Boko Haram has wantonly destroyed properties worth several billions of naira through bombing attacks (Oluwaseun, 2012). The Boko Haram attack has reduced the number of tourists into the country because of fear of attacks which led to the cancellations of many national and international tourism engagements in the country. According to Deemua (2013) the Boko Haram insurgency has led to the cancellation of international football games between Nigeria Super Eagles and Samba Boys of Brazil in 2012, Arsenal 2012 tour proposal to Nigeria, the Nigerian Premier League between Jigawa Golden Star and Ocean Boys, English top-flight club in EPL 2012 and other national and international events were cancelled due to fear of attacks, these events cancellation negatively affected tourisms which contributes to the Nigerian national economic and social development.

#### **4. Forced Displacement resulting from the Boko Haram Conflict**

At this juncture, we shall consider the economic impacts of forced displacement and the impacts of Boko Haram-induced forced displacement on host communities. First and foremost, people displaced by Boko Haram are experiencing an acute humanitarian crisis with multiple and immediate unmet basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter. Life-saving assistance is therefore critical, as are sustainable solutions to these challenges. Further, the impacts of forced displacement are both severe and persistent. Forced displacement affects every aspect of life. In one stroke, people lose their homes, families, livelihoods, assets, rights, and social networks, and are rendered destitute. Besides degrading social and economic public goods, the disruption by displacement of formal and informal institutions, economic systems, markets, service provision, and social and kin networks creates and aggravates socially undesired results or public resentments. These include insecurity, increasingly prevalent sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, and radicalization.

#### **Impacts of forced displacement as identified by IDPs and refugees**

This can be viewed as incremental layers of complex challenges, which in turn determines a progressive recovery process. Overall, the impacts of forced displacement identified by IDPs and refugees can be grouped into four main clusters:

- 1) **Social connectedness:** Challenges related to the adverse impact to relationships with family, friends, and the community; overall social cohesion, including stigma; and coping mechanisms. This dimension is considered to be

itself an impact as well as an amplifying or mitigating factor for displacement-related challenges;

2) **Basic human needs:** Impacts on access to essential items for survival, such as food, drinking water, and shelter;

3) **Protection and human security:** Challenges surrounding personal or collective safety, including physical insecurity, crime, and discrimination based on displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, prostitution and transactional sex, early and forced marriage, trafficking, and substance abuse (SGBV). Protection impacts also relate to the challenges experienced by refugees, including adherence to international standards for reception, registration and documentation, access to effective protection and assistance, and voluntary repatriation within international standards.

4) **Socioeconomic development:** Conditions crucial for mid to long-term recovery or reintegration of affected populations, including civil and social rights, such as movement, property, and work; assets and livelihoods; and access to services, such as health, education, water and sanitation, energy, and psychosocial support.

### **Impacts of Forced Displacement on Social Connectedness**

One of the most significant and destructive impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency on the displaced population is the disruption of social bonds.

1. The separation of households and the loss of family members through conflict and displacement cause significant economic social and psychological impacts.

2. The sudden flight and scattering of communities resulting from attacks by Boko Haram often results in families being separated. Household members may also deliberately scatter as a coping mechanism, distributing the burden of displacement across several households. This has resulted in increasing numbers of unaccompanied children and households with “unconventional” structures.

3. Social connections were an important factor influencing the choice of destination among displaced people. When forced to flee, social and financial capital are mobilized by individuals and households to address their challenges, including accessing food and water, housing, livelihoods, and assets. Those with social connections in the areas of refuge have an easier time finding shelter and re-establishing a livelihood. By contrast, those without such social capital are forced to settle in camps and unfinished buildings, living at the margins of society with more severely limited possibilities for re-establishing themselves.

4. A significant portion of the forcibly displaced live in “unconnected” types of settlements, particularly IDPs living in camps or camp-like sites, and refugees. In Nigeria 8 percent of the IDP population lives in camps or camp-like sites. Of the remaining 92 percent of IDPs who live with host communities, 36 percent reported living in “unconnected” settlements including public buildings, unfinished / abandoned buildings, makeshift shelters or emergency shelters.

5. Given the importance of social links, impacts on social connectedness affect the resilience of the displaced and their longer-term development outcomes. For the same reason, social connectedness emerged not only as something impacted by forced displacement, but also as either an amplifier or mitigating factor of impacts in other areas, putting it at the center of recovery needs. Victims of displacement due to the Boko Haram conflict are particularly likely to report serious disruptions in social connectedness, family, community, and kinship networks.

6. Closer social integration of the displaced with host communities is impeded by their poverty. The lack of resources among the displaced population prevents them from participating in the social practices that make up community life, such as going to market or attending religious or social celebrations, limiting their opportunities to interact with members of their host communities.

### **Economic Impacts of Forced Displacement**

Forced displacement has significantly impacted the economy of affected areas, both positively and negatively. Yet most of them remain unquantified. In the Lake Chad Region, fiscal pressures in areas affected by displacement are reportedly significant because numerous regional, state, and local governments must provide food, water, and shelter on a consistent basis.

Adverse economic impacts of forced displacement disproportionately affect the poorest, exacerbating preexisting conditions of chronic poverty.

At the same time, the presence of the displaced populations has created economic opportunities in some of the most impoverished areas of the region. Local markets have emerged in isolated areas to serve the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Boko Haram jeopardized government policy and damaged government properties which impacted negatively on national development be it economic, political and social affairs. The daily attacks by Boko Haram on public have caused loss of lives and properties of billions of naira. In recommendation, the Nigerian government has to formulate a policy that will create an employment among the youths within the country. The government

security personnel both military and police need to be equipped with new modern sophisticated equipment. The border patrol needs to be well secured. The government has to investigate the internal and external sponsors of Boko Haram and block the financial flow internally and externally so that government will have a control over the insurgency. Lastly, the government will make sure that it improves the quality of life of Nigerians physically and psychologically.

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