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ETUDES DE PERCEPTIONS SUR LES FACTEURS DE L'INSECURITE ET DE L'EXTREMISME VIOLENT DANS
LES REGIONS FRONTALIERES DU SAHEL

« Ce que disent 700 sahéliens »

ETUDE DE PERCEPTIONS AU NIGERIA

GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

Coming soon.

FINAL DRAFT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The great significance of this study is that it fills a major gap. In Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States, at the borders with Chad, Cameroon and Niger, communities interviewed stressed that it was the first time that researchers were actually visiting them to find out about their experiences of living in border areas and the current challenges they faced. One major concern shared by all interviewees was their vulnerability and insecurity stemming from insurgencies and armed violence in North-Eastern parts of Nigeria. They all experienced difficulties in gaining access to the border areas for several reasons: bomb explosions nearby, numerous security check points, limitations with the communication systems, dirt roads and movement restrictions by car and/or motorcycle, etc.

Border areas at a glance

Three states were selected to conduct the research, namely Borno (Baga and Banki Towns), Yobe (Geidam Town), and Adamawa States (Mubi Town). They remain a hotspot for insurgency and violent extremism. These areas also share porous borders, cultural affinities and desertification, amongst others. In Borno state, the two towns were, until recently, beehives for trans-border trading, smuggling and fishing activities due their proximity with Lake Chad.

- In Borno State lies Kukawa, the capital of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, founded in 1814 by the Muslim scholar and warlord Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi. The town had great strategic importance, being the Southern terminal of an important trans-Saharan trade route to Tripoli.
- In Yobe State, the people of Geidam are mostly farmers who also engage in fishing. Smuggling is also a major activity along this border area.
- In Adamawa State (Mubi Town), major economic activities in this area include trading, farming, and cattle rearing. In addition, the porous border has made smuggling a lucrative activity along this border area. Arabic culture and arts as well as Islamic laws, customs and dress have influenced, and in some cases replaced, the culture, arts, native laws, customs, beliefs and dress of the inhabitants.

State, citizenship, religion and identity

Citizenship and identity are at the heart of the crisis that has engulfed the postcolonial Nigerian state since independence. Ethnicity and religion, which are often politicised, have constituted a dilemma to the project of nation-building by expanding conflict and undermining development.

The politicisation of Sharia law, following its adoption and implementation by some Northern states, further provided explanations for the increased agitation for Islamisation of the North by some militant Islamic groups. The so-called Boko Haram group, especially since it became violent, is the last complexification piece of the Nigerian portrait. An overview of its origins seems necessary.

Community relations and trans-border challenges

People in these areas hardly recognize the borders, cross at will to attend schools, visit hospitals, access other social services and visit their relatives. Neglected in the development strategies of the postcolonial Nigerian state, border areas were relatively peaceful and good for trade, both legal and illegal, prior to the presence of the insurgent group called Boko Haram.

Border areas have become an arena for cross-border smuggling, crime, violent extremism and insecurity. Fears of spill-over from Nigeria to neighboring countries and vice versa are increasing. People are significantly uninformed about the developments outside their immediate environment.

The main component of insecurity is, according to respondents and despite the presence of Boko Haram, poverty and idleness. The accelerated rise in the intensity of insecurity in the North-East is

predicated on the dwindling or absence of social amenities and capital resources, environmental degradation, social fragmentation and decay as well as economic marginalization of the people. Most respondents perceived international assistance as helpful and effective in addressing insecurity and violent extremism. The synergy between the states in the region, international and traditional structures is of utmost importance in ensuring safety of border communities. The role of the media is imperative in influencing social values and mitigating conflicts and insurgency.

Radicalization: indices and processes

Due to the prevalent volatile context, people were reluctant to share their beliefs. The lack of standard perceptions of Boko Haram is therefore a result of such inhibiting factors.

The study reveals that the insurgents took advantage of the high level of poverty, illiteracy and inadequate presence of security forces to dominate and oppress. Religion is also wrongly used to indoctrinate supporters and material gain has now become the dominant motive and driving force of Boko Haram. Even if respondents gave an external origin to violent extremism, the current Almajiri system of education has exposed young people in the North-East to radicalisation and their subsequent recruitment by Boko Haram as foot soldiers.

To resolve the Boko Haram crisis, respondents expect specific actions that must involve governments at various levels, community leaders, women and youths as well as the international community at large. The traditional methods of conflict resolution can play an imperative role in curbing the crisis. People also favour the role of the Nigerian courts in bringing to justice those who committed crimes.

Women's and youth's roles

Women and youth have become the most vulnerable layers of the population in the selected border areas since Boko Haram came into existence. Women are turned into widows when their husbands and children are killed and, in several cases, they are abducted, raped and enslaved to cook, wash and attend to Boko Haram insurgents. The unemployed youth, particularly the Almajiri, are either forced to join the Boko Haram insurgents or enticed with money, motorcycles and promises of easy access to cash and free women.

At the same time both categories seem to play an ambivalent role. As key stakeholders, they have to be peacemakers and agents of change when given the opportunity. The role played by women in reducing violence is seriously underscored by respondents.

Recommendations

- The Nigerian government must reshape its strategy and take a more prominent role in addressing insecurity.
- Psychosocial intervention must be pushed forward as a strategy in mitigating and resolving the insurgency in Nigeria.
- Consider education as a means of empowerment.
- Harness traditional methods of conflict resolution.
- Better explore possible roles for women and youth in preventing violent extremism phenomena.
- Mobilize international concerted efforts.
- Emphasis should be laid on rehabilitation and reintegration.

INTRODUCTION

From Maiduguri, Damaturu or Mubi, nine investigators travelled more than 1'600 kilometres during 7 days to carry out 120 semi-structured interviews with border area residents. They also conducted 4 focus group discussions with about 30 people each time, which enabled them to identify and invite ten influential people to Abuja to compare and exchange about perceptions on insecurity and violent extremism in their respective border areas. The analysis of the results presented in this report is supported by detailed literature research and by information gathered by and from national experts on the subject.

Significance of the study in Nigeria

Despite the challenges and threats posed by insecurity in the border areas in the Sahel, including Nigeria, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies that seek to broaden the understanding of stakeholders on the critical drivers of radicalism, violent extremism and insecurity in this region. Even more significant is the fact that the activities of Boko Haram insurgents in most Northern states of Nigeria have made it difficult for most local and international scholars and researchers wishing to conduct field work to access the border areas of Nigeria. Most scholars who undertake studies on insecurity, jihadism and related conflicts in the North find it extremely difficult to visit the core areas affected by the Boko Haram insurgency to undertake field work. Most field works are conducted in the capital cities of Abuja, Lagos and/or other state capitals. Researchers usually source their data by mailing questionnaires, and/or conducting interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders such as researchers in safe areas. Most of the time, they limit their visits to research institutes in the country, government officials, journalists, and discussions with citizens in capital cities and other key informants. As such, the voices of the people directly affected by the crises are not heard.

This study is therefore of immense significance. The people in the border communities confirmed that no government officials, national and international organizations, NGOs and even scholars had visited them before to find out about their opinions relating to the current security challenges and how these can best be addressed.

Border areas at a glance

The Nigerian North-East Sahelian border currently stands as a hotspot for insurgency and violent extremism. The mere concept of identifying land border areas is a challenge as the people living along these border areas often do not recognize them. States in Nigeria that have a border with neighboring countries and fall within the Sahel region include Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi states. No doubt, these represent a huge area in the Sahel and were too broad for the study to cover within the given timeframe. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three states, namely Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. Specific border towns were also identified for the study, representing varied languages and ethnic groups, namely Hausa, Kanuri, Fulani, English and French. In order to ensure sufficient inclusiveness and participation of all groups, attention was paid to specific population groups, particularly women and children, and displaced populations located in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.

Borno State (Baga and Banki Towns)

In Borno state, two areas were identified, namely Baga town (Doron Baga - Kukawa Local Government Council) and Banki town (Bama Local Government Council). While Baga is a border town between Borno state (Nigeria) and the Republic of Chad, Banki is a border town between Borno state (Nigeria) and

Cameroon. Baga and Banki were, until recently, beehives for trans-border trading, smuggling and fishing activities due their closeness to Lake Chad.

Kukawa, which was previously known as Kuka is a town and local government area in the North-Eastern Nigerian state of Borno, close to Lake Chad. Notable economic activities in this region include farming, fishing and cross border trading and smuggling and competition due to closeness to Lake Chad Basin. Kukuwa was founded in 1814 as the capital of the Kanem-Bornu Empire by the Muslim scholar and warlord Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi after the fall of the previous capital, Ngazargamu, conquered in 1808 in the Fulani War. The town had great strategic importance, being the Southern terminal of an important trans-Saharan trade route to Tripoli. The town was captured and sacked in 1893 by the Sudanese warlord Rabih az-Zubayr, and then by the British in 1902. Historically the city was much larger than today, with a population estimated by the British at 50,000-60,000 people in the late nineteenth-century.

Other issues of interest for the study in these areas include armed violence by Boko Haram, kidnapping, porous borders, cultural affinity and desertification, amongst others. The people of Banki town who have been displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency were camped at two IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps, the State Hotel and the NYSC (National Youth Service Corps) Camp Maiduguri, while the people of Baga town were camped at the SEMA (State Emergency Management Agency) camp in Maiduguri.

Yobe State (Geidam Town)

The third area of study was Geidam town in Geidam local government area of Yobe state (Nigeria) which shares border with Niger from the North. The people of Geidam are mostly farmers and they also engage in fishing in the Kumadugu Yobe River. Apart from these activities, smuggling is also a major activity along this border area. The interviews and focus group discussion in Geidam took place in Ashikiri Ward and Garin Gada, a border village along Geidam/Mani Soroa in Niger.

Adamawa State (Mubi Town)

The fourth area of study is Mubi in Mubi local government area of Adamawa state (Nigeria) and shares border with Cameroon. Major economic activities in this area include trading, farming, and cattle rearing. In addition, the porous border has made smuggling a lucrative activity along this border area. Arabic culture and arts have influenced, and in some cases replaced, the culture and arts of the inhabitants of the study areas. Islam is the religion of most of the inhabitants of these states. Islamic laws, customs and dress are pervasive and in most cases have supplanted native laws, customs, beliefs and dress. The interviews and focus group discussion in Geidam took place in Kwaja, Sahuda, Gyela and Kaban communities.

Limitations and challenges of the fieldwork

One major problem was the vulnerability and insecurity of the interviewers, stemming from insurgency and armed violence in the areas covered by the study. Some interviewers, specifically in Yobe state, were trapped in Geidam during the period of fieldwork for two days following bomb explosions in the neighbouring towns of Busari and Tarmuda. Interviewers in this area found it difficult to communicate because all GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) networks masts had been destroyed by the insurgents. As advised by community leaders in the area, the interviewers had to remain in the town, until security forces confirmed that they could return to Damaturu, the state capital.

All the interviewers experienced difficulties in gaining access to the border areas due to numerous security check points mounted by security forces (soldiers, police, immigration and custom officials) and the civilian JTFs. In some cases, interviewers (Adamawa state) were asked to alight from their vehicles

and walk very long distances, while only the driver and vehicle were allowed to pass through the security checkpoints. Movements into and out of Mubi were only allowed at 8am and stopped at exactly 6pm. These were part of the measures adopted by security forces in Nigeria due to high incidences of various forms of violent extremism, including suicide bombings. Non motor-able roads and long distance constituted another major challenge. Interviewers had to walk the rest of the distance and, where available, motorcycles had to be used by interviewers to cover the rest of the distance to access border communities.

Some communities, whom initially viewed interviewers with suspicion, were convinced by their village/community leaders whom were contacted by the interviewers (Borno state). It was also not uncommon for the respondents to demand financial assistance for their time and cooperation, noting that the Boko Haram insurgents had destroyed all their means of livelihood. These problems were addressed. Some were envisaged before they arose.

The nine interviewers who undertook the field work were recruited from the states/areas of study because of their vast experience and knowledge of the selected areas and most importantly due to consideration of insecurity in North-Eastern parts of Nigeria. The recruitment and ensuing trainings ensured that the selected interviewers understood the local terrain as well as the languages of the communities under study, and possessed good interpersonal relations skills. In addition, the translators that accompanied the interviewers also assisted them where the need arose. These ensured that the survey gained acceptance of the local population and also took care of local sensitivities and vulnerable groups.

The analysis of this unprecedented collection of voices from people most vulnerable and most concerned by the issue of security in the Sahel border areas is organized around four themes. This report first presents their perceptions regarding the state, citizenship, religion and identity (Section I), before addressing the perceptions of community relations and cross-border challenges (Section II). These first two sections help us to understand the indices and processes of radicalization (Section III), before putting into perspective the roles of women and youth (Section IV). The report concludes with different recommendations.

STATE, CITIZENSHIP, RELIGION AND IDENTITY

Key points:

- Citizenship and identity are at the heart of the crisis that has engulfed the postcolonial Nigerian state since independence. Ethnicity and religion, which are often politicised, have constituted a dilemma to the project of nation-building by expanding conflict and undermining development.
- The politicisation of Sharia law, following its adoption and implementation by some Northern states, provided further explanations for the increased agitation for Islamisation of the North by some militant Islamic groups.
- The so-called Boko Haram group, especially since it became violent, is the last complexification piece of the Nigerian portrait. An overview of its origins seems necessary.

1. The crisis of nationhood

Today, Nigeria faces the challenge of developing inclusive citizenship that could lead to unity and nationhood where all Nigerians, no matter their ethnic, religious and gender-based background, could have access to basic rights and freedoms provided and enshrined in the constitution. The questions of who should control state power, who should enjoy the protection of the state and who should not are central to the discourse on citizenship (Egwu, 2004). Citizenship and different forms of identity in Nigeria have been created to define and redefine the targets of violence. In many cases, contestations in Nigeria have revolved around religion and a contest between Christians and Muslims. More often, it has also revolved around ethnicity.

The problem of citizenship stems from the discriminations and exclusion meted out to the people on the basis of ethnic, regional and religious identities (Adesoji and Aloa, 2009). In fact, this problem places group rights over individual rights, that is, the rights of ethnic groups over citizens. This exposes the Nigerian federal system to divided or dual citizenship between group rights and individual rights.

Today, it is no gain saying that citizenship and identity is at the heart of the crisis that has engulfed the postcolonial Nigerian state since independence. It is common place for a Nigerian to identify him/herself first in ethnic terms and then as a Nigerian. In which case, loyalty to his/her ethnic group comes first before the nation. That is why it has been so easy for Nigerians at every particular instance to support ethnic/religiously based insurgency groups to undermine the state as cases in Nigeria's Niger Delta and North-East have shown.

The dilemma of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's socio-political dynamics

It is impracticable to do an analysis of, and attempt to understand, Nigeria without first understanding the character of the state and delving into the role of ethnicity and religion. Ever since the creation of Nigeria, ethnicity and religion have shaped the people's attitudes about the way the government is organized and operates and the role of its citizens. In Nigeria, many religions exist, but the three main religions are Christianity, Islam and animism. They have often found themselves in contestation, each trying to extol one's own religion over the other. This has led to series of crises and conflicts that have engulfed Nigeria even to date. In Nigeria, the existence of the ruling class revolves around the state from which it derives its power and access to resources. Accordingly, the competition and struggles for state

power over the years heightened identity politics in Nigeria. The country also contains more than 250 ethno-linguistic groups that have been antagonistic and consistently struggling for control of the political space.

Historically, this has existed from independence. For instance, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first Prime Minister, in 1948, had remarked that "since 1914 the British government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any signs of willingness to unite... Nigerian unity is only a British invention". Furthermore, Obafemi Awolowo in 1947 also observed that "Nigeria is not a nation, but a mere geographical expression. There are no "Nigerians" in the same sense as there are "English", "Welsh", or "French". The word "Nigerian" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria, and those who do not" (Meredith, 2011). Thus, from the above, it is no gain saying that the crisis of the Nigerian state is the result of a forceful fusion of different ethnic and religious groups into one centrally administered territory. Isa (2010) has observed that identity mobilization and consciousness take the forms of ethnic, religious, regional, communal and minority political levels. The perception of denial of rights and domination by others creates the basis for identity conflicts. Thus the rise of religious identity is linked to the phenomenon of increased economic hardship, which accounted for the sharp rise in religious activities and the mobilization of religious identities over the issues of control of political and economic power.

Although, ethnicity has always existed in pre-colonial Africa, its entrenchment is a by-product of the arbitrary imposed colonial borders, which confined different ethnic groups in a single state. Many of these African boundaries cut through and enclosed hundreds of diverse and independent groups, with no common history, culture, language or religion. Thus, the aftermath of the fusion of these various ethnic and religious groups is the attendant explosion of the crisis of incompatibility with no sense of national identity that has characterized Nigerian politics since independence (Ubi and Ibonye, 2015).

In slight contrast to Nigeria's South, the inhabitants of the North have always rallied around religion to rediscover their political as well as their cultural identities. Different groups in this region, some fundamentalist and radical in nature, have often times claimed sacred authority for certain actions. These actions affect national unity and coexistence in trying to seek power and influence either through peaceful or violent protest, demonstration, and/or through armed violence – a case in point is the Boko Haram. In the Northeast, which is the study point of reference, two religions exist: Christianity and Islam. However, in general terms, the dominant religion in the North is Islam. In fact, 80.8% of the citizens in the region are Muslims and just only 19.2% are Christians. In essence, this may also be one of the valid explanation as to why Nigeria's North is more amenable to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism than Nigeria's South.

2. The politics of sharia and the resurgence of militant Islamism in Northern Nigeria

In the past decade, Nigeria has witnessed some mainly Muslim states in the North transform their legal systems to conform to Sharia law, with some being applied for punishment of crimes. The judiciaries in these states were re-organized to administer purely Sharia law. States that adopted the Sharia legal system also sought to re-organize the entire system of administration. Sharia law in Northern Nigeria operated through support of the needy (zakkah, collection and distribution), banning begging, rehabilitating the destitute and prostitutes, improving education, and creating state-controlled and

funded security force known as the Hisbah. A total of 12 Northern states adopted Sharia laws (Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi and Niger).

The main explanation for the adoption and implementation of Sharia was its use as a means of bargaining by the North, which felt it was losing political power, influence and relevancy in the Nigerian Federation (Best, 2010). There were times when the Northern political leaders held most of the top powerful political positions in Nigeria. However, with the elections of 1999, the equation changed. The balance of political power shifted to the South. Hence, the politics of Sharia was part of a protest against power shift in Nigeria. In justifying the adoption and implementation of Sharia, some governors in Northern Nigerian states had also argued that the people are better governed by following Islamic law. Muazzam (2001) observed that Western-trained elites had failed to practice good governance and deliver services through Western laws and systems. The rising popularity of jihadist Islamism movements in Northern Nigeria can be attributed to a combination of certain dynamics, including increased inequality, injustices, poverty, failed social services, insecurity and legitimacy crises of the Nigeria state. The re-emergence of militant Islamist movements and organizations in Northern Nigeria has resulted in the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and even violent extremism in the country. These organizations were perceived as representing the embodiment of an Islamic alternative to everything Western or perceived as Western values. To adherents Islamist movements in Northern Nigeria, these groups represent an alternative to corrupt exhausted and ineffectual regimes that have failed to deliver on promises made.

The awakening and increase in militant Islamist tendencies Nigeria in the last three decades have been linked to the success and influence of the Iranian revolution of the 1970s (Paden, 2008). The Iranian revolution provided a symbolic orientation to radical scholars that revolutionary change can lead to a replacement of the secular state order with an Islamic caliphate state. It radicalised Muslim politics in Northern Nigeria, as exemplified in the intensification of the demand for the inclusion of Shariah laws in the Nigerian constitution during the constitutional conference of the 1970s (Islamism was also linked to the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSS) in the 1970s). In this way, the Maitastine movement had a radical and revolutionary anti-establishment stance and totally rejected the existing state order since State should be constituted only of genuine Muslims and righteous servants of God. This radical militant

UTHMAN DAN FODIO'S JIHAD AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOKOTO CALIPHATE

Central to understanding the re-emergence of radical Islamist movements in Nigeria is to revisit the jihad by Uthman dan Fodio around 1804. It led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate as a model theocratic state in northern Nigeria and is a testimony of the role of the Jihad in the propagation of Islam. People of Hausa descent across and even beyond the Northern parts of Nigeria were originally pagans before the advent and eruption of the Usman Dan Fodio's Jihad, which led to their conversion to Islam. Historically, the Jihad has served as a framework, an inspiration and a model for present-day movements, both Sunni and Shia. Uthman dan Fodio's jihad was aimed at building and administering a theocratic state based principally on Sharia law. Militant Islamic movements of the early 19th century in Hausa societies, that later evolved into today's militants in Northern Nigeria, were the *Quadriyya* and *Tijjaniyya*. These movements advocated the purification of Islamic beliefs and practices. Early Islamic militants under the banner of the Quadriyya accused the leadership of the Hausa societies of un-Islamic practices. This provided the basis for Uthman dan Fodio's Sokoto jihad, which challenged unjust and corrupt rulers. According to Uthman dan Fodio's manifesto, "Jihad was aimed at teaching and spreading pristine or true Islam and the establishment of a system of government based on the Shariah" (Isa, 2010: 323). With support from Hausa and Fulani masses, Uthman dan Fodio succeeded in establishing an Islamic political order governed by the Amir ul-Muminin (commander of the faithful), who later transformed himself into the Sarkin Musulmi (ruler of Muslims). Following the jihad, Uthman dan Fodio replaced the Hausa aristocratic rulers with Islamic scholars and administrative structures. These structures have somewhat remained, with some modifications during the colonial era and represented the symbolic importance and place of the Sokoto caliphate today. The jihad represented one of the major landmarks in the political history in Northern Nigeria and West Africa in the 19th century.

Islamist movement became very popular in the early 1980s in the city of Kano following its prolonged armed and violent confrontation with the security and military agencies.

Its violent confrontation later spread to other cities of Northern Nigeria. The movement was founded by Alhaji Marwa Maitastine, who was killed in a confrontation with the political authorities in the 1980 disturbances in which more than 4,177 people died (Skuratowicz, 2005). Skuratowicz (2005) further argues that the Maitastine members rejected other Muslims for having gone astray while maintaining that their beliefs are the most realistic because they revolve around 'Quran only'; a tendency towards an obsession with the Quran and a rejection of the Hadith and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and other related sanctioned sources of Islamic law. Members of the group lived in secluded settlements isolated from other members of society while rejecting everything that is Western, especially Western education and material things. They exhibited intense hatred for agents of the state such as the police and armed forces.

It was believed that the group had been completely suppressed by the state in 1980, but it resurfaced in 2005 in the Jigawa and Kano states of Northern Nigeria. Maitastine movement must have been operating underground in Northern Nigeria for years. Isa (2010) argued that remnants of the Maitastine, which had been operating clandestinely, provided a fertile ground for the sprouting of the militant group known as Muhajirun which later metamorphosed into the Boko Haram.

3. Boko Haram: the last complexification piece of the Nigerian portrait

The Boko Haram Islamist doctrine was inspired by the Afghan Taliban of the late 1990s, as well as the consciousness created following the adoption of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria after the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. Before the emergence of the Boko Haram, there were forerunner fundamentalist groups, of which the "Taliban" was most prominent. This group, which drew inspiration from the Afghan Taliban, was largely made up of Nigerians who desired to live a purist Islamic life. Some members of the Taliban later joined with other extremists from the north to form the Boko Haram. The Taliban, as was the case later with the Boko Haram, was made up of members who were mostly unemployed youth, but led by Islamic scholars from the upper and middle classes of the North-East of Nigeria (Mshelia, 2015). The members of the Taliban group were said to have received training and indoctrination in Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Algeria and other Middle Eastern countries, between 1995 and 2001 (Dlakwa, 2015). Many of its members were drawn largely from Borno and Yobe states. The group aimed at establishing an ideal and perfect Islamic state in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. A kind of society in which, according to the Taliban group, "everyone will live in harmony and everything is for the best" (Mshelia, 2015).

By withdrawing from the society, the group replicated the hijrah of the Prophet Muhammad, by moving from Maiduguri, once the ancient capital of the Kanem Bornu Empire, to an uninhabited area between Yobe State and the Niger Republic called Kanamma. It was from this location that it began to launch series of attacks on the symbols of state authority, such as the police stations, and stripped them of caches of arms and ammunitions, burned them down, and killed several police officers. The result of the inability of the government to totally wipe-out and end the "Taliban" fundamentalist crisis around the two local governments in Yobe state (namely Machina Yusufari and Machina Yunusari, which are at the Nigerian border with the Republic of Niger) and the local government areas (of Nguru, Bade and Geidam of Yobe state and Mobbar and Abadam in Borno State) gave rise to what would become Boko Haram as discussed below.

When the members of the Taliban group were dislodged from their abode in the desert by the Federal troops, most of them sneaked into Maiduguri, Borno state, where again they were confronted by the Federal Troops. Following this development, they decided to regrouped on the mountainous areas of Gwoza along the border of Nigeria and Cameroon, from where they unremitting attack the community and the government. Thus, this engendered the Nigerian government to authorise aerial bombard for the first time using the Nigerian Air force. Unfortunately, after the bombardment, the mop up that followed was not sustained; the “Talibans” were not totally silenced or wiped out. Instead, the few that survived dropped their weapons and gradually sneaked back into Maiduguri. They adopted a new strategy of attending Islamic preaching forums, especially that of the usual, then, annual Tafsirs of Late Sheik Ja’afar at the Indimi Mosque. In fact, they not only attend these Islamic forums but also decided to counter Sheik Ja’afar views with radical fundamental views. Sensing this, the Late Sheik then started preaching against them until most of them, under their killed youthful leader Mohammed Yusuf, relocated to what was referred to as “Makaras” near the Maiduguri Railway Station; from which point they started preaching radical views on a daily basis and further attracted several persons especially youths with radical tendencies who later will be the insurgents.

It is important to note here that in the course of Mohammed Yusuf’s preaching, which were largely anti-government, he told them that Western education was irrelevant and of no use to the society at large. This is substantiated against the background of poverty, the lack of jobs and the high rate of unemployment which is perturbing Nigeria. A critical look at the character of the post-colonial Nigeria state has portrayed poverty in the midst of plenty. Many of its population especially the youthful population, even with all their degrees, diplomas and other certificates, are still wandering without jobs.

Thus, certificates obtained through Western education became to be strongly called into question.

It was at that point that the youth on their own brought out their degrees, diplomas and other certificates and began to destroy them by either tearing and/or burning them; hence the emergence of the name “Boko Haram” around 2003 (Olaposi, 2014:1). The Boko Haram movement later found its stronghold in Maiduguri, from where they subsequently started indoctrinating others through hate preaching and violent attacks on the state symbols. From Maiduguri the Boko Haram began its operations, directed and controlled cell networks with cell commanders in all the major cities of Northern Nigeria including Maiduguri, Bauchi, Potiskum, Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Jos, Jalingo, Adamawa and many others. The Boko Haram was led by a new leader, Muhammad Yusuf, who mobilized his former allies and compatriots from the Muhajirun and engaged in a series of new forms of violent confrontations with the police and other security agencies.

BOKO HARAM’S NAME AND STUDENT ORIGIN

Boko Haram is derived from the Hausa and Arabic languages. It is a compound name comprised of Hausa and Arabic. The word Boko in Hausa means “Western education”. However, when the term Haram is appended to it, it means “Western education is sinful”. As such, the group sees Western influence on Islamic society as an instrument undermining the practice and spread of Islam in Nigeria.

As a local Salafi movement, its initial formation was at the University of Maiduguri, founded by AbubakarLawan in 1995 with membership made up of young people, some members of the Academia and highly placed individuals in society (elites, politicians, etc) mostly from the Northern part of Nigeria. The group was initially named “Jama’atAhl us Sunnah li’d-Da’wahwa’l-Jihad” (The Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Struggle) (Murtada, 2013).

It was further turned into a Salafi-jihadi group which forbade interaction with the Western world and also supported opposition to the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria. The members of the group do not interact with the local Muslim population and have carried out assassinations of anyone who criticizes it, including Muslim clerics.

Violence appearance

The Boko Haram first used armed violence in 2003 when it started having confrontations with the police. At the beginning, the activities of Boko Haram were mostly in fomenting sectarian violence. Its adherents participated in fairly rudimentary attacks involving the use of clubs, machetes and small arms. The climax that got the insurgents volatile and more aggressive was when they lost a member and were on a procession to go and bury him at the Gwange Cemetery in Maiduguri. They had a misunderstanding with the police who later opened fire on them and killed about seven of their members. After this incidence, the group became hostile. Government and its security personnel came under intermittent attacks by the sect, especially in Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe and Borno States. Similarly, churches and Christians were subjected to selective attacks. There was open disobedience of government rules and regulations including open defiance of the rule that required riders of motor cycles to wear protective helmets in the city of Maiduguri. Beginning from July 2009 the sect intensified its clandestine attacks on non-Moslems and Moslems that openly disagreed with their extremism. The group also kidnapped Western tourists and assassinated members of the Islamic establishment who had criticized their activities. Youth were conscripted, taken to a special camp in Maiduguri and were indoctrinated into the sect. Non-Moslems were subjected to forced conversion at the camp or were killed if they resisted conversion. The sect brazenly declared its own enclave in Maiduguri which it referred to as its Caliphate. In addition, the group started carrying out further construction works around their Mosque, including building of underground bunkers un-known to the community.

However, late 2010 was a turning point for the group. It added Molotov cocktails and simple improvised explosive devices to its tactical repertoire, as reflected by the series of small improvised explosive device (IED) bombing attacks against Christian targets in Jos on Christmas Eve in 2010. Since 2011, Boko Haram has grown from an issue of local nuisance to a new frontier of violent extremism. The group is also known to be receiving some foreign financial support. Its heady rise to international jihadist group status has been marked by unabated audacious and brutal terror attacks. Two events in 2011 announced its arrival on the international scene. On June 16, for the first time in Nigeria, it detonated a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) manned by a suicide bomber at the Nigerian police force headquarters in Abuja. On August 26, it carried out another VBIED attack on the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, marking a transcendental shift in the scope of its attacks to include international targets. The fact that these attacks were in the nation's capital and involved high profile targets added to the narrative that the group had become a potent threat to national and international security.

The years 2013 to 2015 has seen changes in insecurity trends in the North East as youth vanguards were constituted under the aegis of civilian joint task force (CJTF) as a complement to the military joint task force (JTF). During this period, the jihad proper which commenced as *Jama'atu Ahalis sunna lidah Awat wal Jihad* (JAS) was massively attacked and routed out of the city of Maiduguri through the effort of the CJTF and the military JTF. The sect members transferred their base of operation to Sambisa Forest and made Gwoza the Caliphate's headquarters in August 2014 while intensifying their activities in Konduga, Damboa, Bama, Biu, Hawul, Uba-Askira, Kaga, Magumeri, Mafa, Gwoza, Marte, Monguno, Abadam, Guzamala, Mobbar, Ngala, Kala Balge, and Kukawa Local Government Areas in Borno State. They also launched attacks on Damaturu, Fika, Potiskum, Gujba and Gulani in Yobe State; and in Madagali, Mubi, Lassa, Michika, Bazza, Maiha, and Gombi in Adamawa State. It was also during this period, on the night of 14–15 April 2014, that the Boko Haram militants attacked a girls' secondary school, broke into the school, shooting the guards and killing one soldier and abducted about 276 female students in the government's girl secondary school of Chibok town. According to the police, the kidnapped children were taken away that night into the Konduga area of the Sambisa Forest where Boko Haram is known to

have fortified camps. Till date, 219 out of the 276 girls kidnapped by the Boko harem are yet to be found by the government. However, attention must be drawn to the fact that, as at today, although the Joint Multinational Force and CJTF have made considerable progress in trying to dislodge and wipe away Boko Haram, the group has consistently continued to undertake many suicide missions various states of Northern Nigeria.

FINAL DRAFT

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND TRANS-BORDER CHALLENGES

Key points:

- People in these areas hardly recognize the borders, cross at will to attend schools, visit hospitals, access other social services and visit their relatives. Neglected in the development strategies of the postcolonial Nigerian state, border areas were relatively peaceful and good for trade, both legal and illegal, prior to the presence of the insurgent group called Boko Haram.
- Border areas have become an arena for cross-border smuggling, crime, violent extremism and insecurity. Fears of spill-over from Nigeria to neighboring countries and vice versa are increasing. People are significantly uninformed about the developments outside their immediate environment.
- The main component of insecurity is, according to respondents and despite the presence of Boko Haram, poverty and idleness. The accelerated rise in the intensity of insecurity in the North-East is predicated on the dwindling or absence of social amenities and capital resources, environmental degradation, social fragmentation and decay as well as economic marginalization of the people.
- Most respondents perceived international assistance as helpful and effective in addressing insecurity and violent extremism. The synergy between the states in the region, international and traditional structures is of utmost importance in ensuring safety of border communities. The role of the media is imperative in influencing social values and mitigating conflicts and insurgency.

1. The dilemma of living conditions in border areas

1.1 Looking for social services and economic opportunities

“The federal government has failed to restore the educational structures and social amenities destroyed by the Boko Haram. Residents of Banki including women, children, and the aged are suffering from lack of hospitals, clean water, roads, bridges and other basic amenities” (statement of a respondent in Banki in Bama Local Government Council, Borno State, June 2015).

Part of the problems that has given birth to insurgency and violent extremism in the North East is attributable to lack and absence of social amenities. In terms of access to basic social services such as education, healthcare, water, electricity and transportation, only 33.3 % of respondents had access, while 65 % had no access. The few existing facilities in Geidam were destroyed by Boko Haram insurgents in December 2014. The entire Kwaja in Mubi Local Government has only three primary schools and one secondary school, which are grossly inadequate to meet the education needs of their children at the elementary and secondary levels. Unfortunately, the border areas and its people have been neglected in the development strategies of the postcolonial Nigerian state. Due to lack of good road networks, drinking water and electricity, teachers and medical personnel posted to the community hardly stay. Except for the few rich people, most people in Kwaja fetch their drinking water from distant rivers, ponds and streams, where animals such as cattle, sheep and pigs also drink from the same source. Furthermore, due to lack of good road networks, some women had in the past delivered their babies on the way to the hospitals in Mubi. For Baga and Banki, notable is the inadequacy of basic social services in this region as the schools are dilapidated, the hospitals are ill-equipped, electricity is absent, and the roads are in a bad shape. In some cases, motor-able roads are almost absent.

Some of these amenities are tapped from neighboring countries. In some of the border areas in Northern Nigeria, people cross over to attend schools, visit hospitals and to access other social services. Other examples are electricity in Banki which is supplied by Cameroun republic and communication networks for which some interviewers had to cross into neighbouring countries during survey to communicate to Nigerians.

Another major disadvantage of living close to the border areas is that during crisis in any country, socio-economic infrastructure and facilities tend to be overstretched. Due to attack of Mubi, Madagali, and Michika local government areas in Borno state, the people of Kwaja, amongst other communities, had to host and accommodate migrants fleeing from these conflicts. A respondent in Kwaja reported hosting more than 100 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in his four bedroom bungalow for about a week after a Boko Haram attack in the face of slow response by the government.

“The repeated attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents in the last seven years have depleted the economic fortunes of our people. Markets have been reduced to risky areas where both buyers and sellers visit with apprehension. Our markets were attacked more than 20 times from 2009 to date. In all the attacks, many lives have been lost, limbs maimed, vehicles destroyed and equipments reduced to ashes by raging flames from bombs. Before Boko Haram was chased out of Maiduguri town in May 2013, one of their major sources of sustenance was attacks on markets. At that time, the insurgents storm the markets, including the Baga market in broad daylight, robbing traders and visitors at gunpoint. The reward for any resistance was instant death” (statement of a respondent in Baga, Kukawa Local Government Council, in June 2015).

Nearly all respondents (97.5 %) in Baga and Banki (Borno state), Geidam (Yobe state) and Mubi (Adamawa state) agreed that economic activity and their subsistence have been affected by insecurity, and particularly by Boko Haram insurgency in the areas. About 97 respondents (80.3 %), whom have experienced displacement from their homes, noted serious differences between their current host communities and their own/communities that have become desolate and insecure as a result of the attacks by the Boko Haram. This is the case particularly with reference to economic and commercial activities, infrastructure and public services. However, 8 (6.7 %) did not observe any difference and 12 did not know if there was any difference between their current host communities and their own communities. Those 20 respondents were largely victims of insurgency and were interviewed in camps for internally displaced persons. Living condition in the camps certainly did not reflect any desirable form of economic and commercial activity or infrastructure and basic amenities. In fact, many of the IDPs camps were in deplorable state.

Amidst the crisis in the North-East, respondents also revealed during the focus group discussions that living close to the border provides employment opportunities for unskilled labour such as loading and off-loading trucks by youth throughout the year. Trade and commerce also serve to strengthen economic ties with neighboring countries.

1.2 The two sides of trafficking

On perception of advantages of trafficking:

“Borders? Which borders? It is true that there is a border post here, but people take advantage of the porous border for trade, to visit friends or even go to the hospital on the

other side. Smugglers use motorcycles as means of transportation to bring in banned goods, especially rice, vegetable oil, spaghetti and drugs into the state from neighboring Niger Republic. Would you believe that at the border post of Banki, for instance, the southern entrance to the local mosque stands in Nigeria, while the northern door of the same house of worship lies in Niger Republic?" (statement of a respondent in Banki, Borno State, June 2015).

On perception of disadvantage of trafficking:

"The Boko Haram has been able to take advantage of the porous border to smuggle arms into Nigeria using various methods such as the use of specially crafted skin or thatched bags attached to camels, donkeys and cows where arms are concealed and moved across the borders with the aid of nomadic pastoralists or herders. Its members are known to connive with merchants involved in cross-border trade to help stuff their arms and weapons in goods that are transported via heavy trucks, trailers, and lorries. Given the huge size of the goods loaded on these vehicles, very little or no scrutiny is conducted on them by security and border officials" (statement of a respondent in Geidam town, Yobe state, June 2015).

According to survey, 45.0 % of respondents identified cross-border trade and cross-border crime as the advantage and disadvantage of living close to borders. In Baga and Banki, there are cases of opposing forces such as militant groups (e.g. Boko Haram), but a spectrum of bounty hunters, and other contending actors like organized militias, criminal gangs and mercenaries who are involved in smuggling of contraband goods, particularly sugar, rice, petrol and alcohol. These are brought into these areas using Lake Chad River, mostly by-passing security officials by several methods and sometimes through bribery.

As a matter of fact, a number of indigenes don't believe that smuggling is an illegal activity because most of the goods are purchased for personal use or local trade. In that vein, 26.7 % were of the view that the advantage of living close to the border is access to a variety of goods. For instance, it was found that a man had a complimentary card he distributed that read "smuggler". This man went around distributing this card on the notion that the business was legitimate. On the contrary, many also believe the government does not allow certain goods from across the border to neighboring countries, not because it is illegal but rather because their governments want indigenous products to sell.

Furthermore, respondents in Baga and Banki (Borno state), Geidam (Yobe state) and Mubi (Adamawa state) perceive smuggling of goods (46.7 %) as more common in the trans-border zones compared to drug and human trafficking (10.8 %). However, 16.7 % did not know of any trafficking activities in the trans-border zone, while 13.3% declined to discuss the issue given its sensitive nature (see table 2 above). In addition to the above, one major finding of the focus group session in Abuja was that trafficking of women for prostitution has become a major activity along border areas due to its illegalisation in most Northern states in Nigeria, following the introduction of Sharia Law. On the other hand, the freedom in neighbouring countries of Niger and Chad enabled women to be trafficked across the border for sex trade.

While 63.3 % of respondents differentiated between illegal and criminal activities and forbidden religious acts (Haram), about 26.6 % did not and 6.7 % were of the view that they do not know the difference.

2. Perceptions of insecurity and how to deal with it

2.1 Insecurity: a poverty issue or a Boko Haram-driven phenomenon?

“As you can see most of us are poor. It is so bad that we can barely feed our children. The inability of government to provide a secure and safe environment for us, and to provide good roads and bridges for us to take our farm produce and fish to sell in the markets leaves us with very few opportunities to make money. The government has also failed to protect our lives and properties and to provide security for the conduct of business and economic activities. This has led to resentment and disaffection among ethnic groups. The situation has seriously worsened by the activities of the Boko Haram” (statement of a respondent in Geidam town, Yobe state, June 2015).

89.2% of the respondents have experienced insecurity and violence along the border areas. For Geidam, the most serious experiences that strikes the town was the Boko Haram attack on the 21st of December, 2014, which caused serious destruction of lives and property. Before the advent of the Boko Haram attacks, armed robberies were experienced by people living in the border areas of Mubi. Only 8.3 % had not experienced any major insecurity or violence (and 3 person declined response to the question).

The main component of insecurity is, according to respondents and despite the Boko Haram presence, poverty and idleness (70.8 %). Absence of security (14.2 %) and marginalised youth (11,7 %) come afterwards. Therefore, from the survey and interactions in the focused areas, it is revealed that the accelerated rise in the intensity or scale of insecurity and crime in the North-East is predicated on the dwindling and/or absence of social amenities, capital resources, demographic explosion, environmental degradation, social fragmentation and decay, and economic marginalization of the people. The major concern as noted by respondents is insecurity and employment (72.5 %), followed by insecurity and road network (4.2 %). The issue of corruption, even though it is a serious problem in the Nigerian state, is not a major concern to respondents in the border communities 5 (4.2 %). This is understandable given recent incidences of insecurity as a result of Boko Haram attacks.

On who alerts them and how they go about finding information, as high as 73 (61.9 %) of valid responses maintain that family and friends inform them. This is followed by 25 (21.2 %) from personal experience, 13 (11 %) for the state, and lastly, 7 (5.9%) by the armed forces. This indicates the increasingly diminishing role of the state in early warning and early response.

2.2 Addressing security challenges

“The presence of security guards is reassuring... but some of the security personnel also flee from Boko Haram whenever there is an attack. We hide some of them in our houses to protect them from being killed by the Boko Haram insurgents” (statement of a respondent in Geidam, Yobe state, June 2015).

“It is revealed that the citizens were not involved in border control and management” (statement of a respondent in Kwaja, Mubi Local Government, Adamawa State, June 2015).

Most respondents (79 %) feel insecure leaving in border areas. They live in constant fear of possible attacks by Boko Haram insurgents, most specifically due to the absence of security personnel, as well as a lack of an institutionalized process for long. National security planning has put Nigeria’s North-East at the peril of spasmodic and uncoordinated response to security challenges. In response, respondents

argued that “It is God that protects us and not government”. For instance in Kwaja and Sahuda, it was observed that there is complete absence of not only a police station but also other security personnel despite the constant threats from the Boko Haram insurgency.

Furthermore, disadvantages of living close to the border identified by respondents during the focus group discussions include constant human rights abuses by Cameroonian border patrol officers who extort money, intimidate and claim ownership over territories. People living close to the borders are likely to be victims of hostilities either from country A or B during any crisis. Misunderstandings between Nigeria and Cameroon, or Nigeria and Chad, have had implications on the border people compared to those living in the hinterlands. In fact, corruption on the part of patrol officers, who demand financial inducements before allowing people to cross the borders into neighbouring countries, was also noted as a bane to progress and development.

However, the study showed that 70 % of respondents feel the presence of security forces is reassuring, while about 30 % said it is worrying. This is understandable given the increase in insecurity in the North-Eastern part of the country from 2009-2014 in comparable terms with the number of security personnel or military presence in the region. Some respondents noted that some of the security personnel also flee along with the people when insurgents attack communities. This is so because Boko Haram insurgents attack with a more sophisticated fire power compared to what the Nigerian security personnel have. The involvement of the Chadian and Nigerien forces and recent re-equipment of the Nigerian forces by government helped to bolster the confidence of the security forces and raised hope of ending the activities of the insurgents.

90 % of respondents in Baga and Banki (Borno state), Geidam (Yobe state) and Mubi (Adamawa state) were in support of the presence of armed forces of African countries, in comparison. Respondents noted that Chadian and Nigerien forces have assisted in repelling the Boko Haram insurgents. Similarly, 71 % of respondents supported the presence of armed forces of Western countries, while 33 % were against the armed forces of Western countries coming to Nigeria. Some cited the failure of the Western governments to assist the Nigerian government in rescuing the Chibok girls that were kidnapped by the Boko Haram from their school hostels. One major revelation from the focus group discussion in Geidam was that foreign assistance should be sought by the Nigerian government. Respondents believe that though the West has better capacity, technology and training in fighting violent extremism, however, that such help should be devoid of ulterior motives. Even so, 52 % are of the perception that states can ensure security in the region; while 24.2 % perceive the international forces to be more capable in ensuring security and safety of people in the border areas. About 16.7 % perceive that traditional structures can ensure their security and safety. The group discussion in Geidam, however, underscored the importance of synergy between the states in the region and international and traditional structures in ensuring safety of border communities.

Lastly, 8.3 % of the respondents were of the view that living close to the border enables them to flee into neighbouring countries in case of violence. In addition, to the advantage of learning more than one language, living close to the border also encourages intra and inter-ethnic marriages between the natives and their neighbours across the border, without restrictions. Therefore, people cross borders to visit their relatives and support cultural melting pots.

3. The strategic role of the media in Nigeria's security

"It is true the media has an important role to play in combating insecurity in the north eastern Nigeria. Before the Boko Haram started destroying everything, including media outlets, we use to get information through the radio, television, and some people read the newspapers and few in the cities had internet access. The media and the people must work together to end the insecurity in the region. Both the people and the media should discourage acts of insecurity in the nation" (statement of a respondent in Doron Baga, Baga Local Government Area, Borno State, June 2015).

The media in any society is a critical channel of communication, which not only informs, but also educates and entertains the people. Location of media outfits in any society helps in promoting the socio-economic and political life of the people. Hence, it significantly contributes towards transforming the lives of the people towards peace and stability. The media could mar or build a nation. However, from the data gathered in the course of this survey, out of 116 valid responses only 41 (35.3 %) of respondents are of the opinion that the media covers their region. This indication points to the fact that people living in the region are significantly uninformed on the happenings outside their immediate environment. This also alludes to the fact that even the information the media sends out to the public on happenings in the North-East are also not valid. This is because the media is not on the ground.

Their absence on the ground will also create a vacuum of misinformation, lack of/absence of information on security risk. Accordingly, only 48 (40.7 %) of the respondents think they are sufficiently informed. Again, this indicates that many of the people lack the understanding of and are unaware of the sources of threat to their security within the larger Nigerian context.

The survey points to the fact that the media has an important role to play in influencing social values in North-East Nigeria. If this is well harnessed, it will go a long way to mitigate against armed violence and insurgency. The people without gain-saying attested to this fact and 93 (79.5 %) of the respondents agreed that the media influence and help transforming social values. However, because the news media in print, television and radio are limited in the region, many respondent resort to using the internet, which they are able to access either using their phones. Although this too is limited, 29 (44.6 %) of the total valid responses of 65 out of 120 questionnaires administered use websites and social networks. This is followed by 18 (27.7 %) for those who use Facebook, 12 (18.5 %) for those who use websites, 3 (4.6 %) for those who use website-Youtube videos, 2 (3.1 %) for social networks-Youtube videos and 1 (1.5 %) for Youtube videos. From all indication, it is agreed by 90 (76.9 %) of the respondents that the social media can be used to prevent violence, however, only a low 27 (23.1 %) did not accept that it can be used for conflict prevention. Thus, 75 % of the respondents suggest the increasing acceptability of social media as a tool for preventing violence among the population.

With regards to the source of information they are most confident with, 61 (52.6 %) opine that they are most confident with Western satellite channels, 32 (27.6 %) with local radio, 15 (12.9 %) with national radio-TV, 4 (3.4 %) with pan-Arab channels, 3 (2.6 %) with pan-African satellite channels and 1 (0.9 %) with religious radio-TV. This generally indicates an increasing tendency towards Westernization in terms of information on matters that affect their day-to-day lives and this also seems to suggest that Western channels are more reachable than local channels.

It also agreed with the fact that Western channels are about the most favoured. Answering the question of which media source informs them about activities of armed groups, 48 (43.2 %) of valid responses favoured local radio-Western satellite channels; 39 (35.1 %) favoured Western satellite channels-

Internet and social networks; 22 (19.8 %) favoured Radio-TV-Western satellite channels-Internet and social network; and 2 (1.8%) for local radio-Internet and social networks.

“The western media has done well to keep us informed about what is happening around us. We listen to BBC and VOA in Hausa. The western media is also informing the world on what is happening in the north eastern part of Nigeria - such as the terrorist killings, destruction of lives and properties, the abduction of boys and men and the kidnapping of women and girls.” (statement of a respondent in Kwaja, Mubi Local Government, Adamawa State, June 2015).

From the discourse above, the study evidently noted that since the beginning of insurgency by Boko Haram, respondents and even the Nigerian population adduced that the media has not actually played a strategic role in the search for solution to the armed violence in the North-East. It was observed that reports in the media have often times not depicted the real scenarios on the ground. These reports are based on speculation and from calls made to an informant based either in state capitals of the affected states. Furthermore, it was also noted that instead of media information giving impetus and morals to the security forces fighting Boko Haram insurgency, they instead extolled Boko Haram and undermined the effort of government and the military in the fight against insurgency. Thus, they psychologically created a demoralizing atmosphere for the Nigerian military and even for the people at the affected communities.

RADICALIZATION: INDICES AND PROCESSES

Key points:

- Due to the prevalent volatile context, people were reluctant to share their beliefs. The lack of standard perceptions of Boko Haram is therefore a result of such inhibiting factors.
- The study reveals that the insurgents took advantage of the high level of poverty, illiteracy and inadequate presence of security forces to dominate and oppress. Religion is also wrongly used to indoctrinate supporters and material gain has now become the dominant motive and driving force of Boko Haram.
- Even if respondents gave an external origin to violent extremism, the current Almajiri system of education has exposed young people in the North-East to radicalisation and their subsequent recruitment by Boko Haram as foot soldiers.
- To resolve the Boko Haram crisis, respondents expect specific actions that must involve governments at various levels, community leaders, women and youths as well as the international community at large. The traditional methods of conflict resolution can play an imperative role in curbing the crisis. People also favour the role of the Nigerian courts in bringing to justice those who committed crimes.

1. Perceptions of violent extremism and radicalisation

The increasing radicalization, violent extremism and insurgency by the Boko Haram in Nigeria shows that while abundance of structural factors (such as weak governance, social exclusion and inadequate infrastructure and social amenities) may create an enabling environment for radicalization and perhaps fundamentalism, they remain insufficient to explaining what drives individuals into violent extremism and insurgency.

1.1 Origin, factors and measurement of extremism

“Some say that poverty and unemployment were the primary motivators of violent extremism, but the factors that lead youths to become radicalized are much more complex” (statement of a respondent in Geidam, Yobe state, June 2015).

The study further delved into the understanding of what the people at the border area of the North-East perceive as violent extremism, radicalisation and the misuse of religion for selfish purposes. To begin with, respondents were asked to note the main factors that could give rise to violent extremism. In their views, 19.2 % opined that the main factor that promotes development of violent extremism was the combination of economic-political-religious factors. 17.5 % alluded to the economic-educational-religious factors as a pointer to violent extremism. Another 10.8 % pointed to economic-political-psychological factors, while 0.8 % considered economic, political and international factors as least among factors promoting the development of extremism.

With regard to the degree of tension and violence, 26.7 % of respondents in Baga and Banki (Borno state), Geidam (Yobe state) and Mubi (Adamawa state) noted that violence becomes extreme when

there is no intervention by the government. For 20 % of respondents, violence becomes extreme when there is a loss of lives and property, while for 17.5 % it is when there is killing and kidnapping. 16.7% attributed it to mass killing. On the whole, violence becomes extreme when there is killing and failure on the part of the government to intervene and provide security. Some respondents insist that violence became extreme when the security force that was supposed to protect them became those who had to be protected from the insurgents. Some narrated how they hid security forces in their houses to protect them from insurgents.

An interesting revelation of this study is the response on whether violent extremism is instigated and sponsored from the outside, or whether it is initiated and developed from within the community. While 68 (56.7 %) of the people purport it to be an outside phenomenon, 44 (36.7 %) assert that it developed from the community. Those who perceived violent extremism as an outside phenomenon argued that the Boko Haram started manifesting violent extremism in 2009, when groups with similar violent motives like Al Qaeda, and Al Shabab had gained grounds in the Middle-East and Somalia respectively, with their tentacles and subsidiaries extended across the globe. These respondents stipulated that external influences were motivating factors for the development of insurgency in Nigeria. Those who perceive violent extremism as originating from within revealed that the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf, an indigene of Yobe state, was a Nigerian and a disciple of Sheik Jafar Mahmud Adam. Mohammed Yusuf was a fiery Islamic scholar who, until 2009, was not committed to violent extremism. He recruited his followers from Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Kano and Adamawa states. It could therefore also be argued that the group is an indigenous one with no outside instigator or interference.

People's perception of the Boko Haram appeared to be an issue difficult to survey. Most respondents did not want to discuss issues related to armed groups, particularly the Boko Haram in Nigeria, and 76.7 % did not tell how they classified them. Even so, 16.7 perceived them as terrorists; 4.2 % perceived them as rebels; and 1.7% argued that they should be eliminated. This lack of a standard perception of Boko Haram has also been part of the problem curbing or eradicating the group. This same disposition also played out at the national level, when the Nigerian government tried persuading the United States and the international community from labelling Boko Haram as a terrorist group.

One thing stood out succinctly during the field study. It was noted that at the preliminary stages of the Boko Haram, some Muslims supported their cause for the whole of Northern Nigeria to abide by the Sharia and Islamic laws. However, it was when the group started killing Muslims and Muslim clerics aside non-Muslims that the support weaned down.

1.2 Misuse of religion and "easy cash" attraction

"When we killed people, we were paid. We were paid more when we killed people, took their money and brought back the loot. As a foot soldier, if the money I brought back was much, I was given 100,000 Naira. Sometimes I sent the money received to the bank or to my younger siblings" (statement of a repentant jihadist).

As for reasons why people engage in violent extremism, half of the respondents (50 %) identified material incentives as the major reason to engage, while others pointed to religious values (22.5 %), wickedness (11.7 %) and social status (9.2 %). 112 (93.3 %) respondents from Baga and Banki (Borno state), Geidam (Yobe state) and Mubi (Adamawa state) said there has been misuse of religion for clandestine activities. The overwhelming opinion is that religion was wrongly used to indoctrinate and mobilise supporters of certain sects who later engaged in violent extremism. The respondents argued

that no religion preaches violence and challenged the radical extremists who claimed to want to establish an Islamic Caliphate through violence to justify their stand from the Qur'an or Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed. Respondents who were Christians expressed similar views that both Islam and Christianity abhors violent extremism and will not support targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, hostage taking, raping, etc.

From the field, especially during interviews with repentant Jihadists and discussions at focus group sessions, it was extensively documented that today Nigeria's North-East is currently caught in the web of convulsive upsurge of insecurity as a result of "easy cash". This material gain has now become the dominant motive and driving force for Boko Haram's expanded repertoire of strategies and engagements for pursuing clandestine criminal activities (Bassey and Ubi, 2015) through the sustenance of horrors involving suicide bombings, raiding of communities, smuggling, kidnapping, robbery, transborder banditry, etc. If the original intention of the founders of Boko Haram was to islamize the North-East, it has been jeopardized for material and criminal gains. It was further noted that to be a commander in Boko Haram a person is first asked to kill either his father or mother, a killing for which they are given 500,000 Naira and made a commander. The subordinate members of the sect are given about 100,000 naira. This further goes a long way to portray that insurgency has moved beyond political Islam in Nigeria. At present, it is taking a complex mix of political, economic, and criminal dimensions. In fact, it was gathered during the focus group sessions in Abuja that Boko Haram is now a cult enmeshed in black magic practice.

"The evidences discovered after the destruction of the Boko Haram mini Headquarters in Bulabilin Nganaram inside Maiduguri in 2013 revealed traces of ritual killings, human sacrifices, preserved human blood that was believed to have been consumed by sect members and other evidences of diabolical manifestations. This lends credence to the speculations going round in Borno State that the insurgency is a product of joint activities of prominent politicians, religious extremist and ritualists" (statement from a National Consultant, 2015).

The study further established that it is marginalised social groups, in particular the youth, that are more vulnerable to radicalisation as 90 (75.0 %) respondents attested. Most respondents during the group session and focus group discussions pointed out that the youth are more attracted to radicalism. 47.5 % of respondents also believe that there are some communities that due to their religious culture seem more resilient to violent extremism. 28.3 % of respondents did not believe so and 22.5 % said they do not know.

In table 21, about three-third of respondents 65.8 % perceived Al Qaeda to be a terrorist group and only about 3.3 % arguing that it is a resistance or guerrilla movement. While 59.2 % said they do not differentiate between Al Qaeda, AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), ISIS (Islamic State in Syria and Iraq), Boko Haram, 32.5 % argue they do. Only 3.3 % said they do not know at all (table 22). It is interesting to also note that while 33.3 % perceive the Jihadist groups to be rebels, 28.3 % and 20.0 % respectively perceive them as bandits and desperados. It was the opinion of 87 (72.5 %) that the jihadist cause uses religion to propagate violence, and the opinion of 26 (21.7 %) that jihadist cause uses violence to propagate religion.

1.3 Reluctance while questioning on respondents' identity and beliefs

"I know very well that the activities of the Boko Haram are against the principles of Islam. I don't know who they are because membership of the group is not written on their foreheads."

Anybody that still wants to live will not condemn that faceless group publicly. No! I won't talk about the Boko Haram; I still have family to care for" (statement of a respondent in Banki, Bama Local Government Council, Borno State, June 2015).

From the study, we can underline the extensive absence of answers to a large set of questions related to respondents' identity or beliefs. It is harder to understand the reasons behind (fear to be identified as jihadists, supporters, etc.).

To begin with, when asking respondents of their potential membership of a group, lack of response represented about 81.7 %. Only 5.0 % of respondents agreed they were members of confraternity movement (Tariqa); 4.2 % agreed they were members of religious or cultural associations; and 2.5 % said they were members of political parties and other unions. The majority of respondents, representing 85.0 %, also did not respond to questions on cultural expressions of religion. However, 6.7 % noted that there are cultural expressions of religion, such as Islam as practiced in Saudi Arabia. Compared to this, only 3.3 % noted that there are cultural expressions of religion, such as Islam as practiced in the Maghreb. In terms of findings on the differences between religious practices in North-East Nigeria, 102 respondents (85.0 %) declined to respond to the questions. Even so, 2.5 % noted that there was a difference between their religious practices and Islamism; 1.7% said their religious practice was different from Wahhabism; and 8 % noted a difference with Salafism and Sufism.

Respondents were asked if they had knowledge of the four doctrines (Madhhab) of Sunni Islam. 97 (80.8 %) respondents did not respond, while 11 (9.2 %) had knowledge of the four doctrines; 5 respondents (4.2 %) did not have any knowledge of these. Nevertheless, the issue of religion and doctrines can no doubt be very sensitive in Nigeria. This is demonstrated in the response to questions on doctrines by respondents in the border communities. 80.8 % did not respond, while 12.5 % followed Maliki; 8 % followed Shafi'ite; and 5.0 % followed none. Given the above, it was not surprising that 103 (85.8 %) of respondents declined to rank the order of flexibility and degree of openness of the doctrines. Notwithstanding, 5.8 % ranked Maliki-Hanbali-Hanafi-Shafiite and 5.8 % ranked Maliki-Shafiite-Hanafi-Hanbali in order of flexibility and degree of openness.

Even though most people (80.8 %) from the survey areas did not respond to questions on knowledge of the four caliphs of Islam, 15.0 % actually said they have knowledge of the four Caliphs of Islam (Abubakar, Umar, Usman and Ali). Similarly, only 11.7 % could name the religious authorities in their community or country. About 82.5 % did not respond to the question. Even though 100 respondents (83.3 %) did not want to name religious authorities outside their country, 12.5 % did not know any and 4.2 % knew names of religious authorities outside the country. Respondents were also reluctant to respond to questions whether they had stayed abroad, as 80.8 % declined to respond. Only 9.2 % said they had lived abroad, while 10.0 % said they did not. When asking if staying abroad had affected their religious education, 101 (84.2 %) of respondents did not respond. While 8.3 % were of the view that their stay abroad did not affect their religious education, 7.5 % said the opposite.

2. Perceptions, the search for solution and the fight against Boko Haram

"We must return to our hitherto old values and beliefs that have been eroded over the years" (statement by a participant at Group Session in Abuja, June 2015).

Resolving the crisis of armed violence and insurgency in the North-East goes beyond the conventional military means. Any solution must be cognizance of specific actions that must involve governments at various levels, as well as individuals such as community leaders, women and youths, regional institutions and the international community at large. However, the study is not against conventional military means. Such conflict management mechanism must involve issues that are developmental in nature and requires a governance-oriented response, along with a determined effort to invest in neglected geographical areas and ensure equal access to economic opportunities for all in society. It is therefore necessary to understand the role stakeholders can play in tackling insecurity and violence in border areas. The study revealed that the federal government (73.3 %) has taken more serious actions to tackle insecurity and violence, whereas 8 % also believed stakeholders and community vigilantes have also taken actions to foster peace in the region. Even so, 24.2 % believe that no action has been taken.

2.1 The potential of traditional methods for peace-building

“As custodians of tradition and customs, traditional institutions enjoy respect and loyalty from members of their communities. This is why they have always been called upon to intervene in resolving conflicts that can lead to serious security problems in the community. Traditional methods of intelligence gathering such as informing the village or district head of any stranger in town will help in identifying members of the Boko Haram” (statement by a participant at Group Session in Abuja, June 2015).

“Conflicts in Africa were resolved amicably through alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Traditional rulers were adequately assisted by clan elders and household heads in maintaining peace in such communities. However, in contemporary Nigeria these virtues have disappeared. During the first sub-phase of violence by JAS (Jama’atu Ahalis sunna lidah Awat wal Jihad), young boys of the ages between 14 and 19 years liberally used AK47 weapons in eliminating anybody as directed by their sponsors. These weapons were kept in their parents’ houses, but the parents dared not rebuke or expose them to security agents. Those who did so were killed by their own children” (statement by a National Consultant, 2015).

A major finding of this study is the role of traditional methods of resolving conflicts as a desideratum in resolving the Boko Haram crisis. 70.5 % of respondents believed that traditional methods of conflict resolution will go a long way to mitigate insurgency and armed conflict in the North-East. Accordingly, the responses of border communities on what the leaders were doing to address extremism showed 52.5 % of respondents are saying that leaders had taken actions and measures to fight against violent extremism. 40.8 % noted that they are passive. And 5 % also believed that the leaders approved and supported violent extremism. In other words, from the above, it is observed that African social formation characterized by either centralized authority of Emirs and paramount traditional chiefs and state system will be epistemic in helping to resolve the crisis in the North-East. In that stead, it was observed also that while heads of household and parents should provide the basic foundation for the restoration of moral values that could bring about peace, our community leaders should also implement traditional systems of neighbourhood community watch. These could play an important role in identifying visitors and criminal entrants into the community.

2.2 Including women and youth in peace-building

“If women are the most vulnerable of this insurgency; it then means that they have earned the right to be included in security matters. Strategies aimed at countering violent extremism will be most effective if they prioritize consultations with women-led civil society groups in their development and implementation and women’s inclusion in the security sector” (statement by a participant at Group Session in Abuja, June 2015).

The role played by women in reducing violence was seriously underscored by respondents. While some perceived the role of women in terms of advice to their husbands and children (60.0 %), others said women prayed for peace (17.5 %) and 12.5 % noted that women played no role at all. Equally important is the role played by young people in helping to reduce violence either by organising social clubs (54.2 %) or through vigilance groups (34.2 %), and by understanding religion (4.2 %). It was further noted that women related to governmental and non-governmental organizations must come together to form a formidable force to advocate for women’s involvement and participation in all spheres of life. As such, it was suggested that women from the North-Eastern states are to be in the forefront to set the ball rolling, and then move on to carry the campaign, not only to their respective states but also to all the communities in the entire North-East.

2.3 The role of the state and justice

“The judicial system can do more to reduce criminality and terrorism in Nigeria by applying the law judiciously and punishing those found guilty. The Nigerian state and our leaders must provide those things that would improve the quality of life of ordinary Nigerians. This include good infrastructure like road, railways, industries, quality and functional schools and health care services, employment opportunities, constant and uninterrupted power supply, abundant and affordable food among others” (statement by a participant at Group Session in Abuja, June 2015).

In their voices, in response to resolving the crisis in the North-East and assessing what it will take for members of the armed groups to lay down their arms, a majority of the respondents (44.2 %) perceived force to be the answer. Others opted for negotiations (23.3 %), prayers and provision of jobs (8.3 %), as well as granting of amnesty (5.0 %). There is no doubt that respondents agreed that the state can do more to help them to a greater extent, either by providing more security (42.5 %) or by employing more people (24.2 %), and assisting victims of conflict (23.3 %). However, more than half of the respondents 73 (60.8 %) did not favour the granting of amnesty to those that committed crimes, especially for commanders and leaders of the Boko Haram. On the contrary, 43 (35.8 %) favoured amnesty as a solution. Invariably, what the people of these communities are asking for is that the state should bring to justice all those who have been involved in all the atrocities being committed in the North-East. The study portrayed that the people (41.2 %) favour the role of the court in bringing to justice all members involved in the armed conflict, as compared to 31.1 %, 21.7 % and 5.9 % who favour international court, religious court and traditional court respectively.

2.4 A wake-up call for the international community

“I am happy that Nigeria is working with its neighbors in fighting the Boko Haram through the MNJTF. But the international community should support their efforts both financially and with weapons to defeat the Boko Haram. The developed countries should use their advanced

technology to monitor the borders to curtail the movement of Boko Haram and also share or exchange intelligence information with Nigeria on a more regular basis” (statement by a participant at Group Session in Abuja, June 2015).

Nearly all of the respondents (117 or 93.3 %) perceived international assistance as helpful and effective in addressing insecurity and violent extremism in North-Eastern Nigeria. Respondents also perceived Western international assistance to be advantageous (65.0 %). Equally noteworthy is the response of 11.7 % of respondents who believe that the West provided weapons and military strength. However, 10.0 % perceived international assistance as not only unhelpful but also disadvantageous. They argued that the Nigerian government should carefully study the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq before accepting Western assistance. Furthermore, they were of the view that those who share different cultural values like the West will never understand African values. The respondents from Baga and Banki (Borno state), Geidam (Yobe state) and Mubi (Adamawa state) also perceived assistance from Arab countries as advantageous (70 or 58.3 %), while 19 (15.8 %) believed otherwise. 10.0 % of respondents believed that assistance from the Arab countries will lead to a strong economy. And only 2.5 % of respondents believed that it resulted in religious and doctrinal disorientation.

3. The Almajiri system and radicalisation of youth in North-Eastern Nigeria

“We wake up for the 5.am Asuba (early morning) prayers, after which we go for early morning begging. We wake people up when we go for this first begging, because our voices are always loud to attract attention. We move from house to house to beg for food. After that, we come back to sit on the floor and start the day’s learning. When it is almost midday, we are sent out again for another round of begging” (statement by Almajiri youth in Maiduguri, Borno state, June 2015).

State and multinational efforts aimed at containing jihadist violence in Northern Nigeria have only yielded modest results, partly due to the poor understanding of certain underlying factors of radicalisation and violent extremism. Most analysts simply blame violence escalation in Nigeria on militant Salafism and radicalization. The ranks of the foot soldiers of the Boko Haram continue to increase even in the face of the concerted efforts by both state security forces, MNJTF (Multi-national Joint Task Force) and Civilian Joint Task Force to destroy them. While some of the Boko Haram members are known to be forcefully conscripted, others have been radicalized through the almajiri system and joined the sect on their own volition. Abandoned by parents and the state, the itinerant Quranic pupils resort to street

THE ALMAJIRI PRACTICE

Since the 11th century, Quranic teaching has been a medium of Islamic education in the Northern part of the country. The *almajiri* practice is an old tradition that remains attractive to certain segments of the population. The word “*almajiri*” is an adulterated spelling of the Arabic word “*almuhajir*” which connotes to a person who migrates from his place of abode to another for the purpose of learning and/or propagating Islamic knowledge. As practiced in Nigeria, people inhabiting a particular neighbourhood gather their children, mostly school-age males of about six years and above. They hand them to an Islamic scholar (*mallam*) to teach them the basics of Islam and how to write and recite the Arabic alphabet. In order to escape the distractions of life, the *mallam* may take the *almajirai* out of the city to a camp where they are taught piety, discipline and self-reliance. Sometimes, when there is shortage of food, the Quranic teacher sends the pupils out to solicit for food from residents around; the collected food is later on brought back to the camp for all to eat. This practice of soliciting for food by the *almajirai* became known as *almajiranchi*, a practice meant to make them strong and to prepare them for survival later in life.

begging for alms and survival. Most unfortunately, street life exposes the *almajiri* to abuse, criminalization and subsequent mobilization for violent causes including jihadism. While the *Almajiri* system was not really discussed by respondents, analysis from the field data and national consultants raised the importance of presenting this aspect of the Boko Haram phenomenon.

Currently, it is estimated that there are about 9.5 million *almajiri* children in Northern Nigeria (Oladosu, 2012). About half of these are domiciled in the core of North-Eastern Nigeria, which is also the epicentre of Boko Haram insurgency. The high rate of enrolment into *almajiri* schools all over Northern Nigeria contrasts sharply with the low enrolment in formal schools and represents a serious problem for Nigeria if not redefined or controlled. For instance, a survey carried out by the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) in 2009 indicated that the enrollment of pupils into Quranic schools tripped that of formal schools in Sokoto and Zamfara states. A similar trend was observed in a survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2008. The survey revealed a total pupil enrollment of 514, 264 in Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara states. When these figures are compared with the total number of 54,434 public primary schools across the country, it becomes clear that Quranic schools have a commanding presence in the North (Olagunju, 2012).

ALMAJIRAI SONG

For example, the *almajirai* are made to chant songs of protest and radicalization that criticize “makarantan boko” (schools providing Western education) and praise “makarantan addini or makarantan allo” (schools for Islamic instruction):

Yan makarantan boko
Ba karatu, ba sallah
Sai yawan zagin *mallam*

The song translates as:

Pupils of Western schools,
do not learn or pray
but only abuse your teacher.

The scope of curriculum in Quranic schools is limited, as it does not include such subjects as mathematics, English, social studies, and basic science. The *almajiri* curriculum focuses primarily on the reading and the writing of the Holy Quran, tafsir, hadith, and tawhid and other areas of Islamic studies or as defined by the Malam. This pattern of education, which does not equip them with modern entrepreneurial skills, negatively affects the students in the labour market after graduation, thus making many of them unemployable. In the end, many take to petty theft,

thuggery, and peddling of hard drugs. The socio-economic destitution of the *almajirai* makes them easy preys to conflict entrepreneurs. Desperate politicians pay the street urchins peanuts to execute criminal acts. In Maiduguri, most of these boys became known as ECOMOG (Cease-fire Monitoring Group - Economic Community of West African States) gangs¹. They were exploited and used by the politicians as thugs and hoodlums to foment trouble, cause riots, and disrupt peace. Over the years, the ECOMOG assumed a life of its own becoming too dangerous and uncontrollable even by the politicians. In fact, it has been alleged that most of the Boko Haram attacks involving suicide bombings, setting places of worship ablaze, killing innocent souls and destroying property were masterminded by jobless pupils of the *almajiri* schools.

¹ ECOMOG is for Cease-fire Monitoring Group - Economic Community of West African States. ECOMOG term was adopted by the group of radicalised youths in Borno state. The group was used by the politicians as thugs and hoodlums to foment trouble, cause riots, and disrupt peace.

The existence of the *almajirai* is not peculiar to Nigeria. Similar trends exist in neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, where the Quranic education was the main functional educational system before its devaluation during the period of colonial rule in these areas. The abuse of the *almajiri* has a number of implications for state and society in Nigeria, as well as for immediate neighbouring countries. *Almajiri* training provides one of the easiest avenues for indoctrination and radicalization.

Furthermore, confessions of children arrested in connection with Boko Haram insurgency provide deep insights into the vulnerability and radicalization that lead them into violent extremism. Some of the 35 children released in May 2013 confessed to be *almajirai*. One of them admitted that they were paid about USD\$30 each by some politicians and Boko Haram leaders to spy on troops, vandalize property, and maim and kill non-Muslims: “We were given a keg of petrol by our bosses to set some schools ablaze, which we did within Maiduguri and we were paid N5000” (Alli, 2013: 4). “We were taken to Damaturu. We watched out for the soldiers at their units and reported back to them [BH]. We were reporting when soldiers were at ease or enjoying themselves and when they were off guard, and we were paid for doing that” (Alli, 2013:4).

Even though the administration of then President Goodluck Jonathan recognized the need to address the problems associated with the *almajiri* system, particularly because of its link with insecurity in Nigeria, the government’s efforts yield little results. Participants at focus group sessions in Abuja had argued that most communities were not consulted or carried along in the implementation of the *almajiri* school project initiated by the Jonathan government. Instead, local contractors simply build schools, some in locations far away from the communities, which became uninhabited because of the fear of being attacked by the Boko Haram. It is against this background that the study underscores the importance of community participation in programmes and projects that affect them. The study also notes that until the practices of rampant child abuse and state neglect of the *almajirai* and other vulnerable groups are addressed through better education, employment opportunities and poverty reduction measures, Northern Nigeria is likely to remain a breeding ground of violent conflicts with the likelihood of spreading not only to other parts of Nigeria, but also to neighbouring countries and/or other parts of West Africa.

WOMEN'S AND YOUTH'S ROLES

Key points:

- Women and youth have become the most vulnerable layers of the population in the selected border areas since Boko Haram came into existence. Women are turned into widows when their husbands and children are killed and, in several cases, they are abducted, raped and enslaved to cook, wash and attend to Boko Haram insurgents. The unemployed youth, particularly the Almajiri, are either forced to join the Boko Haram insurgents or enticed with money, motorcycles and promises of easy access to cash and free women.
- At the same time both categories seem to play an ambivalent role. As key stakeholders, they have to be peacemakers and agents of change when given the opportunity. The role played by women in reducing violence is seriously underscored by respondents.

“Women recognize that religion has been used as a powerful weapon for violent extremism. As mothers and wives, we preach peace. So, the first strategy women groups have adopted is to include both Christian and Muslim women who have refused to allow religion to be used as a tool for hate and divide. We have also encouraged dialogue and promoted advocacy campaigns to facilitate discussions among traditional, religious and women leaders, and also, with the youth” (statement by a female participant at Group Session in Abuja, June 2015).

1. Vulnerability and impact on freedom

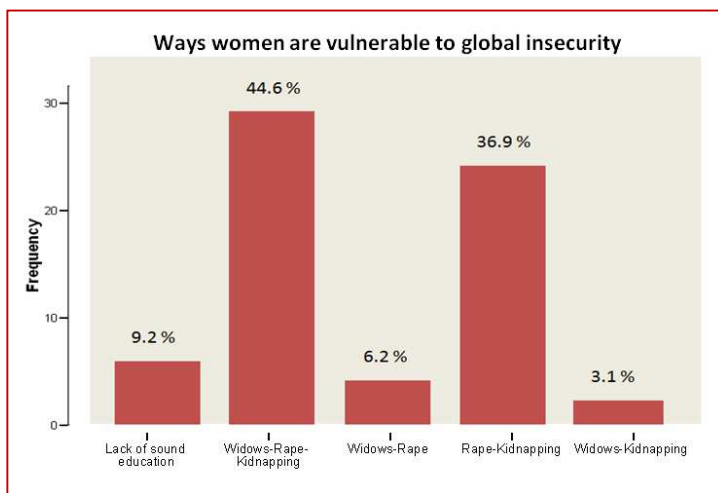
Women and youth are the most vulnerable set of people during conflict situations. For women, not only are their husbands and children killed, and they are turned widows; also, in several cases, they are abducted, raped and made to slaves for combatants. The increasing vulnerability of women in conflict situations and the fact that women experience conflicts differently from men has been some of the motivating factors behind mainstreaming gender in the peace-building processes of any society. Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council provides a broad framework for gender mainstreaming. Youth on their part have been found to be perpetrators of violence during conflicts. Although this is the case with this category of people, the reality is that this is a manifestation of their own vulnerability as they are usually victims of poverty, unemployment, inaccessibility to quality education. They are also often times manipulated by self-seeking politicians in society. Therefore, focusing on the role of these categories of people in society before, during and after conflict situations is of crucial importance.

“Many women have taken over the mantle of providing for the home because their husbands have been killed by the sect or by security agencies, while many others have had their trading truncated, thus affecting their means of livelihood” (statement by a participant at the focus group discussion in Mubi, June 2015).

“Several of the female victims were sexually abused, impregnated and/or infected with HIV/AIDS virus. It is also believed that some of the boys were similarly abused. Out of the about 300 women and girls rescued from the Sambisa forest, it was recently recorded that

over two hundred are pregnant and/or infected” (a quote from one of the National Consultants, 2015).

In response to the incidence of insurgency in the North-East, the figure below shows responses on ways by which women are vulnerable to global insecurity.



This insecurity and violence has to a considerable extent affected women’s and youth’s freedom. The survey noted that 86 (98.9 %) of the respondents accepted that their freedom had been curtailed. This reveals the extent to which women and youth in the region feel they have been affected by insecurity and violence.

As a result of insurgency in the North East, many women, children and youth were forced to flee from their homes and communities to neighbouring African countries, especially Cameroon, Niger and Chad. People were no longer free to live where they want. Cameroon is one of the major hosts of refugees from Nigeria. The traumatised refugees often travelled through the bush to escape from Nigeria and arrived at the Cameroonian border towns tired, weak and seriously malnourished.

“I use to live in Doron Baga, Nigeria. The insurgents attacked our village, as I fled, I heard a child crying beside his dead mother. I picked him up. Many people were fleeing to Cameroon, Chad or Niger where they could find safety. Some were not strong to run, so they stay behind. I kept the boy with me and my children. We hid on a small island for three days, with nothing to eat, until hunger forced us to leave. We pray this should end” (statement by a participant at the focus group discussion in Doro Baga, Borno state, June 2015).

The activities of the insurgents have also affected the freedom of women in terms of choice of religion. Women who are abducted by the insurgents are also forced to change their religion. The insurgents do not believe in any religion other than Islam. Even so, they believed that Muslims who associate with non Muslims are also infidels and needed fresh conversion.

“Many of the victims were forced to change their religion and compelled to adhere to Islamic codes of dressing such as wearing veils or hijab” (statement by a participant at the focus group discussion in Maiduguri, Borno state, June 2015).

The focus group discussion held with respondents in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps also revealed how insurgency and violence affected the freedom of women in the North eastern part of Nigeria. Women were initially reluctant to contribute because they still live in fear. They had to be assured of confidentiality. Some of the women were abducted by the insurgents as such, their parents or guardians, especially of the young girls, are highly protective of their wards. Many of the cases of rape and sexual abuse was not reported because of the culture of silence, stigma and shame associated with rape.

“As a mother, I may not even tell my husband that his daughter had been raped or will want to tell him I have been raped. Women may not be accepted again in the society because of such stigma. Rape is especially traumatic if the victims were married or had not had sexual relations before the abductions” (statement by a participant at the focus group discussion in Maiduguri, June 2015).

Another basic women’s freedom that has been affected as a result of insecurity and violence in the north east is the right to education of the girl child. Boko Haram’s misguided ideology that “western education” is sinful has significant negative consequences on the education of women and the girl child in the northern part of Nigeria. For fear of attack by the group, most schools in the affected regions (northeast) have closed.

“Since public schools facilities are being used as IDP Camps, academic activities in these schools have been suspended indefinitely. There is no hope of reopening them in the immediate future. Instead of learning, young women are married off in their teens thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty in the region” (a quote from one of the National Consultants, 2015).

2. Ambivalent roles

Some respondents during the focus group discussion insist that women have been used by the insurgents to carry out attacks as suicide bombers in the North Eastern states, particularly in Borno state.

“Some female agents of the insurgents have designed different means of transporting weapons and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), either on their backs as Babies or in their tummy as pregnancies or even in their head gears and cover them with “Himmar” (Covering veil)” (a quote from one of the National Consultants, 2015).

“In June 2013, Ak-47, a pistol and improvised explosive devices (IEDS) were found in the garments of two veiled women in Maiduguri. This prompted the government to discourage the use of long veil by women. Also, the female Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) had to be brought in to frisk women passing through checkpoints in Maiduguri” (statement by a participant at the focus group discussion in Maiduguri, June 2015).

The focus group discussions conducted in survey areas suggests that some youths use violence to promote their religious beliefs. According to participants youths engage in religious violence for a multiplicity of reasons, which mostly centre on economic and social motivations. Most participants at the focus group discussions were of the belief that youths engage in religious-based violence primarily

due to ignorance of the full teachings of their religion. Others said that unemployment, poverty and manipulation of religion by extremist religious leaders are what have given impetus to violence extremism.

“Poverty and youth unemployment have been presented as the root cause of insecurity in the North East. There are also ignorance and manipulation of religion by extremist religious leaders” (a quote from one of the National Consultants, 2015).

The porosity of the borders also allows all sorts of cross-border activities and crimes to take place. Most of the people passing through the borders into Cameroon, Niger and Chad are mostly vulnerable youth, accompanied by women and children. This has encouraged the manipulation of the youth as couriers and spies by the insurgents. They are also used for intelligence gathering. The Boko Haram insurgency has been fuelled by cross-border activities and crimes.

“The first group of youth that brought about Jama’atu Ahalis sunna lidah Awat wal Jihad (JAS) had links with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Algeria and Libya. It was through such young scholars that jihadism and religious puritanical movements were promoted in the North East between 1995 and 2009” (Statement from a National Consultant, 2015).

“Some of the youths acting under the influence of drugs have been used in arms smuggling across the borders by members of the terrorist group. Some terrorists, mostly the youth, also frequently cross into either territory through border towns linking Nigeria and Cameroon to launch attacks in either country. It also retreats into the hills along the borders with Cameroon” (statement by a participant at the focus group discussion in Banki, Borno state, June 2015).

From the discussions above, it has been established that the women and youth are both victims as well as actors in some cases in the insurgency in northern Nigeria. Beyond this, both women and youth can play key roles in promoting peace and finding lasting solutions to insecurity and violent extremism, particularly, insurgency by the Boko Haram in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the collected perceptions of surveyed people and on observations from the ground, and supported by analysis and discussions with pertinent actors, the following recommendations emerge:

Recommendation 1: The Nigerian government must reshape its strategy and take a more prominent role in addressing insecurity

- It is imperative for the federal government to urgently reinforce its policy response capacity through strategic planning in security sector transformation in two key areas. First, there is a necessity to address the socio-political causes and sources of insurgency, which include – but are not limited to – mass poverty, unemployment, extreme social inequalities (arising from inequitable distribution of resources and generating and feeding the spiral of violence, and pervasive insecurity). Second, a comprehensive programme of security sector transformation is needed in the country to heighten the operational efficiency of the security agencies: the military, customs, police, etc., should be strengthened.
- The government must also address the place of religion in Nigeria’s socio-political dynamics.
- However, for peace to return to the North-East, the Nigerian government should pursue a people-based and human-centred approach to development. It should also foster a sense of ownership of development policies in the population. Similarly, the Nigerian state should also involve the people living along the borders as stakeholders in border control and management.
- The government must also make sure that it delivers justice to the people. For instance, commanders and top ranking Boko Haram members who have been involved in mass killings and suicide bombings should be brought to justice.

Recommendation 2: Psychosocial intervention must be pushed forward as a strategy in mitigating and resolving the insurgency in Nigeria

Without discouraging conventional military means as part of the main process in mitigating and resolving the Boko Haram insurgency, communities’ perceptions along the border areas make it clear that a psychosocial support component should be included in the containment strategy. It is imperative to state here that such psychosocial intervention strategy should be dual focused:

- First, it should take into consideration captured insurgents. Captured insurgents should be given tailored treatment and should not be summarily executed. Some of the foot soldiers of the insurgent group (some of whom are children and teenagers) were forcefully conscripted and in some instances drugged into committing the atrocities which they were ordered to carry out. When captured, foot soldiers of the insurgent group should be properly debriefed and if need be, rehabilitated, pardoned and reintegrated into the society. If well harnessed, this strategy will be a better way to mitigate insurgency as many of these pardoned insurgents will be ready to cooperate and give sensitive information as to the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Such psychosocial support would therefore also benefit intelligence gathering efforts in Nigeria’s fight against insurgency.
- Secondly, psychosocial intervention should be considered as a support strategy for all those affected by the insurgency. The aim should be to build empathy, understanding and sensitivity, to identify those who need psychiatric services and provide them with the right guidance and support. Activities that come under a psychosocial intervention as strategy in conflict resolution

range from trauma counselling, peace education programmes, life skills, to self-esteem building initiatives.

Recommendation 3: Education as a means of empowerment

It has been discovered that most of the Boko Haram members are *Almajiri* who were brought into the North-East from outside the region. The nature of the *Almajiri* system facilitates the indoctrination of some of the young. Knowing that education is key for the development of any society, it is therefore important that the Nigerian government look for a synergy of both Western education and the *Almajiri* system to enable these children and youth to discover their potentialities and resist to the appeal of violent alternatives to the society they live in.

Repentants should also be accepted, rehabilitated, reintegrated and empowered to enable them to acquire new skills, and to share their experience with broad audiences, especially youth at risk. This will act as a prevention mean, dissuading both the repentants and populations at risk of recruitment from getting involved in inimical activities. Most importantly, the government should consistently monitor these rehabilitated repentant Jihadists.

Recommendation 4: Harnessing traditional methods of conflict resolution

The role of culture and tradition in peace-building is gaining increasing momentum in peace and conflict discourses and it should be carefully thought about in the case of Nigeria. Mitigating violent extremism in the North of the country must take into consideration the empowerment of socio-cultural institutions of tolerance and the support for local media outlets that emphasize an effective counter-narrative against extremism. Inter-communitarian dialogue should be encouraged to mitigate tensions at the local level. Local traditional institutions must also be empowered to play a role in effectively monitoring inimical activities and to report them to the authorities.

Recommendation 5: Role of women and youth

Insurgency in the North-East particularly affects women, children and young people. Most of the IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in Nigeria are women and children. Men should cooperate with women in countering the narrative of the Boko Haram insurgents. Communities should incorporate women in peace-building efforts and measures. The recent collaboration between soldiers and the Civilian Joint Tax Force (CJTF) in checkmating the activities of Boko Haram in Borno State has been very effective and yielded results. There is thus a need to sustain and enhance these activities, until the insurgency is brought to its final end.

The role of women in the CJTF is of utmost importance. For example, some female agents of the insurgents have designed different means of transporting weapons and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), either on their backs as babies, or in their tummy as pregnancies, or even in their head gears covering them with “Himmar” (Covering veil). Women should therefore be used to address the prevention and response efforts to the insurgency.

Recommendation 6: Mobilizing international concerted efforts

The current crisis in North-East Nigeria has shown that resolving the Boko Haram crisis is only possible through closer regional concerted efforts and cooperation in conventional military terms. Support

should come from neighbouring countries as well as from the international community at large. Nigeria needs modern weapons to better fight the insurgency in the North-East. Suggestively, it is imperative for Western countries to aid Nigeria in terms of surveillance, weapons procurement, training of personnel for counter insurgency, etc. This support must not exclude a monitoring mechanism to prevent military abuses from the national armed forces, which further fuels radicalisation among disillusioned communities.

Recommendation 7: Emphasis should be laid on rehabilitation and reintegration

The insurgency in the Northern part of Nigeria is rooted in deep-founded grievances, and will therefore take time to dissolve. Those whose loved ones have been killed and whose property has been destroyed may seek revenge. Adequate resources should be deployed for the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of armed conflict in the region, as well as for the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant jihadists. There should be proper enlightenment of religious leaders who could preach peace and forgiveness. Traditional leaders/authorities should take a more pro-active role in these endeavours, for example by identifying and monitoring people or religious preachers that are new in town. Finally, at the end of the insurgency, Nigeria must find new tasks and responsibilities for the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) so as to keep them active. Absorbing them into the armed forces, the police or para-military agencies is a sine-qua-non to avoid further reversal into new armed violence or insurgency in the region.

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