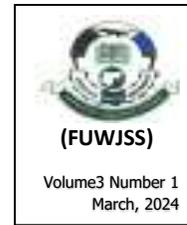# BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Boko Haram insurgency has in recent years severely hindered governance and development in the north-east region of Nigeria. The insurgency has resulted in the displacement of millions of people in the north-east region of Nigeria. This paper examines the impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency on the livelihoods of internally discplaced persons in north-east Nigeria. The paper relied on the review of secondary sources that were content analyzed. The findings of the paper indicate that lack of social cohesion, maladministration and lack of government presence in some communities of north-east Nigeria largely contribute to Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria. The paper concludes that Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria has led to the destruction of critical infrastructure and a humanitarian crisis in the region. That majority of internally displaced persons in north-east Nigeria are victims of Boko Haram insurgency. The paper recommends that a comprehensive strategy and effective collaboration among stakeholders is required to adequately address the issues of internal displacement and Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria.

Keywords: Displacement, Boko Haram, insurgency, humanitarian crisis, north-east Nigeria

Introduction

Northeastern Nigeria is made up of six states: Yobe, Taraba, Gombe, Borno, Bauchi, and Adamawa. It has a range of geographical features, including mountains, savannahs, and the Sahel desert belt. the area has substantial levels of deteriorating infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, inequality, unemployment, and poor living circumstances (Omede & Alebiosu, 2020). The Boko Haram insurgency is headquartered in Nigeria's northeast and has posed a substantial threat to peace and security (Omede

& Alebiosu, 2020). The rebels, known as "Jama'atu Ahli-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad," are dedicated to spreading the Prophet's teachings and engaging in jihad. The organisation, which was founded in 2002, seeks to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. The insurgency has been marked by brutality, ideological fanaticism, and a negative impact on impacted areas (Omede & Alebiosu, 2020). The insurgency has spread to neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has been a major driver of internal displacement, particularly in the northeastern region. The militant group's violent activities, including bombings, attacks, and abductions, have forced millions of individuals to flee their homes, resulting in a significant population of internally displaced persons. The destruction of communities has also resulted in the destruction of homes, infrastructure, and basic services, forcing residents to seek refuge elsewhere. The internal displacement has led to a complex humanitarian crisis, with displaced persons often lacking access to basic necessities like food, clean water, healthcare, and education. The overwhelming number of IDPs has strained resources and humanitarian efforts. Establishing IDP camps presents security challenges, as they face threats from Boko Haram, affecting the well-being of those seeking refuge.

Understanding the nexus between the Boko Haram insurgency and internal displacement is crucial for developing effective humanitarian responses, addressing the needs of IDPs, and working towards sustainable solutions that contribute to lasting peace and stability in affected regions. This study collected data from various sources, including reports, scholarly books, and academic journals, and used a content analysis approach to analyse it. This method allowed for systematic examination of patterns, themes, and nuances in the literature, aiming to extract valuable insights and uncover the depth of information on the Boko Haram insurgency's impact on internally displaced persons in northeast Nigeria.

Origin of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

An insurgency is an armed conflict involving non-state actors challenging government authority, often driven by ideological motives, ethnic or nationalist aspirations, or global jihadism. Five different forms of insurgencies may be distinguished: revolutionary, reformist, separatist, resistance, and commercialist (US Government, 2012). While reformist insurgencies push for improvements in the government, revolutionary insurgencies seek to overthrow the current political system and install a new one. Separatist insurgencies aim to oust occupying powers, while resistance insurgencies pressure them to leave. Insurgencies that practice commerce amass riches or material resources. Insurgencies are recurring phenomena

driven by grievances, criminal elements, and ideological motives. Between 2002 and 2017, sixteen African countries were subjected to insurgent attacks such as kidnappings, assaults, suicide bombings, and occupations (Ibrahim, 2017). Internationally, Boko Haram in Nigeria and al-Shabab in Somalia are now recognised as two of the most dangerous insurgencies (Baobab, 2014). Boko Haram insurgents are a radical and extremist group with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria. The philosophy of the organisation is opposed to Western education, democracy, and secularism and is based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law. A violent rebellion by Boko Haram insurgents against the Nigerian government in 2009 resulted in the leader's murder and the detention of other Boko Haram insurgents. The group's commander, Abubakar Shekau, used increasingly extreme strategies, like bombings, kidnappings, and assaults on innocent people. Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States are most affected by the insurgency, which is mainly focused in northeastern Nigeria. The organisation has a reputation for its brutal and audacious tactics, size of assaults, geographic scope, and choice of targets.

The Boko Haram insurgents have targeted national and international institutions and ruined thousands of lives and possessions. Additionally, 329 and 110 girls from boarding schools in Chibok and Dapchi, respectively, have been abducted by the organisation. A regional crisis has resulted from the insurgency's spill over into adjacent nations. Targeting security forces, religious institutions, schools, marketplaces, and civilian populations, Boko Haram insurgents use a variety of strategies, including suicide bombers, ambushes, kidnappings, and attacks on villages and cities. Thousands of people have died, thousands of people have been displaced widely, and vital services, including access to education and healthcare, have been disrupted as a result of the insurgency.

Nigeria's northeast, which includes Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, has one of the worst rates of poverty in the nation. With a 2019 poverty rate of more than 80 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020), the insurgency has made this problem worse. Millions have been forced to flee their homes as a result of the violence, which has also interrupted agriculture and reduced economic possibilities. Youth unemployment and underemployment rates are particularly high, with Nigeria's overall unemployment rate hovering around 27 percent (NBS, 2021). Social exclusion and poverty, which traditionally have trailed behind in infrastructure, education, and development, are the main causes of the insurgency. Extremist groups like Boko Haram are more likely to attract members when there are high unemployment rates, especially among young people.

The Boko Haram insurgency and socioeconomic problems have both been severely exacerbated by a lack of transparency, accountability, corruption, and government failures in northeastern Nigeria. The resource allocation intended for humanitarian aid and development initiatives, bureaucratic corruption, the use of ghost employees, and wage padding are a few examples of corruption. Due to these problems, people have been evicted, resources have been improperly managed, aid has been diverted, and expensive or inadequate infrastructure projects have been undertaken. Government agencies have been accused of diverting aid meant for IDPs in the six states of Nigeria's northeastern region (Alqali, 2016). Indeed, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the federal government's aid distribution agency and its counterparts at state level, the State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs), have all come under fire for graft and inefficiency (Alqali, 2016).

In addition, the Nigerian court system struggles with inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of independence, which causes protracted delays and a sense of corruption within the judiciary. In December 2020, the Independent Corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC) stated that the judicial sector led the Nigeria Corruption Index between 2018 and 2020, with about N9,457,650,000 offered and paid as bribes by lawyers to judges (BusinessDay, 2023). Corruption deprives societies of essential resources for basic needs, negatively impacts state institutions, justice administration, public trust, and judicial systems' ability to protect human rights (García-Sayán, 2017). These problems may have stoked resentments and given Boko Haram's insurgency local backing. Northeast Nigeria's social and political environment has been severely influenced by historical and ethnic tensions, resulting in instability and conflicts. These conflicts are a result of the northeast's multi-ethnic and multireligious population, which includes Kanuri, Fulani, Shuwa Arabs, and Hausa. Extremist organisations like Boko Haram have taken advantage of these differences, which Boko Haram insurgency has deepened, to further their goals and foment strife among communities. Ethnic tensions are often fuelled by historical grievances like land ownership issues and previous battles. In locations where religious identity is politicised, religious diversity—which includes a mixture of Muslims and Christians—can cross with ethnic identities, occasionally resulting in clashes.

In northeast Nigeria, a lack of governmental presence and bad administration may have led to the region's instability and the formation of the Boko Haram insurgency. The Nigerian state has a limited presence in some communities, resulting in governance voids. The ungoverned spaces and areas, including Sambisa Forest and neighbouring villages and towns, have sometimes come under the attack and leadership of the insurgents.

Boko Haram makes use of these places to gain authority, offering citizens alternative government systems and services. In 2014, the extremist Boko Haram sect mounted its flags in Damboa town, declaring the area its exclusive territory (Audu, 2014). Damboa local government shares a boundary with the dreaded Sambisa Forest, which terrorists have converted into a formidable hideout (Audu, 2014).

Communities have been left underserved and vulnerable as a result of a lack of essential services, particularly in rural and disadvantaged regions. Insecurity and instability have put the Nigerian state's security system under strain, resulting in the country's inability to control the region and safeguard its residents. Local populations have sought protection from self-defence organisations or extremist groups such as Boko Haram. Boko Haram frequently offers alternative government structures and services in areas with low state presence, establishing its brand of Islamic law and delivering basic amenities in exchange for loyalty. Security forces have, however, recaptured these places. Boko Haram insurgents have also extorted money from residents of areas it has controlled as well as from wealthy persons whom they have intimidated into paying protection fees to avoid being attacked by them (Onuoha, 2014). Feeling abandoned by the state, some citizens have accepted or backed Boko Haram as an alternative source of order and stability.

Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency in Northeast Nigeria

Thousands of people have died, been displaced, and had their property destroyed as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency in northeast Nigeria. In order to instil fear and instability, the organisation has targeted civilian populations, including schools, marketplaces, and places of worship. They have kidnapped women and girls and forced them into marriages and sexual assault. Boko Haram's strategy involves the abuse of women, using gendered tactics to promote its anti-western, jihadi agenda (Okoli, 2022). The group victimises women through rape, armed abduction, forced marriage, and captivity and objects to them as weapons and war objects (Okoli, 2022). Boko Haram's suicide bombers are over 60% women, and their targeting has been evident in incidents like the Chibok abduction in 2014 and the Dapchi kidnapping in 2018 (Okoli, 2022). More than 200 kidnapped girls and women have been reportedly sold into marriage with their Boko Haram abductors for $12 (Aljazeera, 2014). These abducted girls are used as strategic bargaining targets, often commodifying women by demanding their release.

Children have also been subjected to violence and psychological trauma as a result of the insurgency's use of them as child soldiers. Boko Haram has targeted children for a decade, committing crimes under

international law (Amnesty International, 2020). These include attacks on schools, widespread abductions, child soldiers, and forced marriage. Some children are recruited through teaching, family, or access to economic or social status, while others are brought into the group by force, procuring and maintaining child soldiers and "wives" through fear (Amnesty International, 2020). Boko Haram's actions violate international humanitarian and human rights law, including special protections for children, and amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity (Amnesty International, 2020). Many people are internally displaced or are refugees in neighbouring countries as a result of the destruction of their homes and communities. Critical infrastructure has been badly destroyed by the insurgency, which has also disrupted vital services and slowed down economic recovery.

The Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has had severe effects on the economy, upsetting agriculture and leading to a lack of food, lower production, and higher food costs. The loss of vital infrastructure, including roads, bridges, educational institutions, and medical facilities, has hampered economic growth and access to necessary services. Investment, both domestic and international, has been discouraged by the violent conflict. It has adversely impacted income and way of life to hinder cross-border commerce with neighbouring nations. Along with the loss of human capital and the fall in tourist and economic activity, the conflict has also caused qualified professionals to leave the area. Long-term economic growth in the area has been hampered by persistent violence and instability.

Education has been seriously disrupted by the Boko Haram conflict in northeastern Nigeria. Abductions, sexual assault, and forced marriages have disproportionately impacted women and children. In order to limit access to formal education, schools have been closed, and parents have kept their kids at home. A lack of skilled instructors has resulted from Boko Haram's targeting of teachers. Enrolment rates fell as a result of the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in 2014, which spread dread among students. Higher education and research have been impacted by the insurgency at tertiary institutions as well. Rebuilding and equipping schools has become challenging because of the loss of important educational infrastructure caused by the destruction of school facilities, materials, and equipment. Social cohesiveness has been severely harmed by the Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria, which has divided communities and created an atmosphere of dread and distrust. Tensions between immigrants and long-time inhabitants have arisen as a result of the displacement issue, which has disrupted old social networks and structures. Interfaith collaboration has been hampered by strained interfaith ties brought on by Boko Haram's radical ideology and targeting of religious

institutions. Self-censorship, stigmatisation, and sensations of marginalisation and isolation have all been brought on by an environment of insecurity. Government institutions have lost public trust as a result of the state's alleged corruption and failure to shield civilians from Boko Haram assaults. This has made it more difficult for communities and authorities to work together. Youth in the area have been permanently impacted by Boko Haram's recruitment of young people, making reintegration and rehabilitation difficult in order to restore societal cohesiveness.

Theoretical Framework
This paper uses social disorganisation theory because it provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay between social dynamics, crime, and deviance in society. In the context of the Boko Haram insurgency and internal displacement in northeast Nigeria, this theoretical perspective aids in comprehending the social factors contributing to the displacement of communities and the challenges encountered by IDPs. Social disorganisation theory, developed primarily by sociologists Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942) in the early 20th century, seeks to explain patterns of crime and deviance in communities. Shaw and McKay applied an ecological perspective, analysing crime rates in relation to the physical and social characteristics of neighbourhoods. They found that certain areas consistently exhibited higher crime rates, suggesting a connection between community dynamics and criminal behaviour. Central to the theory is the concept of social disorganisation, which refers to the breakdown of social bonds, networks, and institutions within a community. Factors such as poverty, rapid population turnover, and ethnic heterogeneity are believed to contribute to social disorganization. In other words, this theory posits that high crime rates and deviant behaviour are not primarily a result of individual characteristics but are instead rooted in the breakdown of social institutions and community structures within specific neighbourhoods.

Applying the social disorganisation theory to the Boko Haram insurgency and internal displacement in northeast Nigeria offers valuable insights in that the violent activities of Boko Haram have disrupted the social fabric of communities, leading to the breakdown of social structures and institutions. The displacement of residents further contributes to social disorganisation, creating an environment conducive to criminal elements. The theory's emphasis on social factors influencing behaviour aligns with the understanding that the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram acts as a significant push factor for internal displacement. Fear, insecurity, and the breakdown of social order drive individuals and families to seek safety

elsewhere. The theory's focus on the importance of social cohesion is relevant to the humanitarian crisis faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displacement disrupts social ties, hindering collective responses to challenges and exacerbating the difficulties faced by IDPs in accessing essential services. Indeed, social disorganisation theory helps understand the relationship between social dynamics, crime, and deviance, particularly in the context of the Boko Haram insurgency in northeast Nigeria. It helps identify the root causes of displacement and develop targeted interventions.

Internally Displaced Persons in Northeast Nigeria

Internally displaced persons are defined by the United Nations (2006) as individuals or groups of individuals who are compelled to flee or leave their usual homes due to or in order to avoid the negative effects of armed conflict or terrorism, instances of widespread violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria account for more than two-thirds of all displacements (91.98%), whereas communal conflict and natural disasters account for 7.95% and 0.06%, respectively (Mohammed, 2017). To put it another way, the Boko Haram rebels have been the main cause of the rise in internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2014; Lenshie & Yenda, 2016; ICRC, 2016), leaving many people destitute and dead in northeast Nigeria. In other words, out of the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), 92% are displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria (UNHCR, 2019).

The Boko Haram insurgency in northeast Nigeria, particularly in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States, has made these states camps for thousands of internally displaced persons fleeing violence from Boko Haram in areas like Mubi, Madagali, Askiral-Uba, Bama, and Gwoza (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2019). IDPs in northeast Nigeria endure many forms of inhumane treatment, exploitation, and humiliation. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (2021), years of instability have left hundreds of thousands of households in the northeast of Nigeria severely hungry and forced to flee their homes. They encounter dangerous circumstances, especially among youngsters between the ages of 10 and 15, who are aggressive in camps as a result of their prior interactions with the local population (Olagunju, 2006; Ogwo, 2013). In addition to being abused, women and girls may also be sold into prostitution or coerced into marriage. The IDPs are wary of conducting any significant business in the camp or even going back to their home towns (Olukolajo, 2014).

IDPs in northeastern Nigeria face difficulties like insufficient access to necessities like food, clean water, healthcare, and education. Particularly for vulnerable groups like women and children, they frequently reside in unfavourable conditions, raising questions about their safety and wellbeing. IDPs frequently reside in overcrowded camps or improvised settlements with insufficient access to healthcare. IDPs' psychosocial well-being has been impacted by the conflict and displacement, which has resulted in loss of livelihood. Their psychosocial wellbeing is negatively impacted by the trauma of displacement and violence. They depend so heavily on humanitarian aid, which raises questions about sustainability. As IDPs struggle with uncertainties about going back to their homes, reintegrating, and being apart from their families, conflict and insecurity make matters even more difficult.

Stakeholder Responses and Challenges to the Boko Haram Insurgency and Internally Displaced Persons in Northeast Nigeria

In addressing the challenges of the internally displaced persons, stakeholders, including the government, local and international nongovernmental agencies, individuals, national and state emergency management agencies, and the ministry of humanitarian affairs, have all provided some forms of intervention in ameliorating the problems of the internally displaced persons and the Boko Haram insurgency in northeast Nigeria. In other words, the challenges of internally displaced persons and the Boko Haram insurgency have both been addressed in northeastern Nigeria using a combination of humanitarian, security, and development initiatives.

The United Nations (UN) is a major organisation involved in interventions related to Boko Haram and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northeast Nigeria. It provides humanitarian assistance to affected regions through agencies like UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and OCHA. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provides emergency assistance, medical services, and support to affected communities, including IDPs and those affected by Boko Haram attacks. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) also provides medical assistance and emergency healthcare services to affected populations, including IDPs. The Nigerian Red Cross Society provides relief and support to affected communities. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also provide aid, support, and advocacy for affected communities. Nigerian government agencies, regional and international military forces, donor countries, and international aid provide financial and material support to address the crisis.

Counter-insurgency operations have been carried out by security agencies, notably the Nigerian military and regional coalitions, to reduce

Boko Haram's presence and power. Secure camps and settlements have provided IDPs with protection and safety. Food, clean water, housing, healthcare, and education have all been supplied by humanitarian groups, including NGOs and United Nations organisations. There are now programmes in place to help former Boko Haram insurgents and radicalised members heal and assimilate. Through educational programmes and the renovation of schools and educational facilities, community-based projects seek to foster reconciliation and acceptance of those who have returned. To assist IDPs in re-establishing their lives and communities, supportive livelihoods and economic recovery efforts have been put in place, including microfinance programmes and vocational training by government. Through discourse, mediation, and reconciliation procedures, community-based peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives seek to re-establish social cohesiveness and trust within impacted communities.

To rebuild the conflict-affected areas, infrastructure development and reconstruction initiatives are launched. Campaigns to raise awareness, the engagement of religious leaders, and community-led initiatives to stop radicalization are all part of attempts to combat extremist ideology. The international community offers cash, knowledge, and logistical help to strengthen response operations. This group includes the United Nations and regional organisations like the African Union. The government's response to the Boko Haram insurgency and internally displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria has mostly been centred on a military strategy, which has resulted in violations of human rights, the deaths of civilians, and only little effectiveness in putting an end to the conflict. With claims of abuses and violations of human rights by both Boko Haram and security personnel, the capacity of security forces to safeguard people in conflict-affected regions has also been called into doubt. In addition to military action, combating the Boko Haram insurgency necessitates a thorough and ongoing commitment to tackling the root causes and reconstructing afflicted communities. The insurgency in Nigeria is being fuelled by socioeconomic issues including poverty, unemployment, and marginalisation, which the Nigerian government has not done enough to address.

The fundamental structural problems fuelling the insurgency may not be addressed by immediate, reactive attempts. The violence has seriously affected the education system in northeast Nigeria, and the government's response to reconstructing schools and infrastructure is insufficient. Many IDPs are living in appalling conditions and lack access to essential amenities as a result of the inadequate and tardy humanitarian response. Security and humanitarian initiatives have been hampered by corruption and poor resource management. Affected people, civil society groups, and

local communities frequently feel excluded from decision-making processes; therefore, inclusion in the formulation and implementation of policies has not been inclusive either. There has been a lack of consistency in regional coordination and collaboration, with bordering nations occasionally adopting their own policies to counter the danger posed by Boko Haram. For stakeholders, the Boko Haram insurgency and the situation of internally displaced persons in northeast Nigeria represent substantial concerns. Boko Haram's assaults, kidnappings, and suicide bombers represent a severe security danger. This makes access to impacted areas for humanitarian organisations and government authorities difficult. Food, clean water, healthcare, and education are frequently unavailable to IDPs. Overcrowded IDP camps are prone to illness outbreaks and can serve as breeding grounds for insurgency radicalization and recruitment. The Nigerian government and humanitarian agencies are limited in their ability to provide aid and support to the displaced people due to budget shortages. Due to allegations of human rights violations against both Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces, protecting people in conflict-affected regions is a big concern.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria is a complicated and protracted issue with enormous humanitarian, security, economic, and societal ramifications. Religious and socioeconomic conflicts that began as violence and terrorism have developed into extreme ideologies. IDPs' poverty and vulnerability have been made worse by the conflict's widespread displacement and disruption of economic, medical, and educational operations. The insurgency's tenacity and resiliency have been facilitated by the poor state presence in northeast Nigeria, which is typified by governance flaws, corruption, and a lack of basic amenities. A comprehensive strategy is required to adequately solve the problem, one that addresses counterterrorism measures, immediate humanitarian needs, long-term development projects, fighting corruption, enhancing governance, settling conflicts over resources, and encouraging intercommunal communication. For Nigeria and its neighbours, collaboration and help from international institutions are essential.

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