

## **Terrorism, the Vulnerable Population and the Social Inclusion Question in Nigeria**

**Thompson O.O. & Aduradola R.R**

---

### **Abstract**

*The multi-dimensional nature of terrorism around the world has created a widespread concern and initiated the need to look deeply at its multiplier effects on the vulnerable groups. Since the beginning of the terror campaign in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, millions of people especially the vulnerable population, mostly women and children affected have suffered displacement. These groups spread across the nation and even to some neighbouring countries where they have been deported in recent times, thereby compounding their problems. Those who are within the country find it hard to get a livelihood and or reintegrated into the larger society due to the stigma, most especially girls, who were impregnated by the terrorists. This article traces the origins of terrorism, its impact, and issues of social inclusion and integration in Nigeria. Also, it advocates the use of effective communication for inclusion and reintegration. It then concludes by stressing that for sustainable development, stability and peace, there is a need for concerted efforts on the part of the Government, the Civil*

---

**Thompson O.O. and Aduradola R.R**

Department of Communication and General Studies.

Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta

PM.B 2240 Alabata. Ogun state

Corresponding author: [olakunleolasupo@yahoo.com](mailto:olakunleolasupo@yahoo.com) Tel No:

+2348036220630

*Society Organizations and the entire populace to embrace and re-integrate these groups.*

**Keywords: Terrorism, Social Inclusion, Vulnerable Population**

### **Introduction**

Terrorism is undoubtedly one of the pressing problems of the international community today apart from issues of food security, and sustainable development and peace. Terrorism is not limited to Nigeria and Africa but is an international phenomenon. Though it has been in existence since the classical period and a known route to warfare, it has however taken another dimension in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a result of the globalization and internationalization of our communication system. In the aftermath of the 9/11 incidence, terrorism has not only become an agenda on every country's checklist but is a challenge that requires a concerted effort. Such is the case of the dreaded Boko Haram group.

A phenomenon which began in Nigeria has since spread to the neighbouring African States like Chad, Cameroun, and Niger with treacherous manifestation which has resulted in wanton destruction of lives and property. It has also led to an increase of the vulnerable population in the West African region. Though scholars have written extensively on the country's spate of terrorism, there is still a paucity of materials on the demographic implication of the act. Apart from depriving these groups of all fundamental rights and access to basic amenities, but they have also been stigmatized especially some of the women who returned with pregnancy purported to be for the terrorists. Since its brutal campaign, it has left thousands of people dead, millions displaced and billions in properties destroyed. Despite its efforts, the Nigerian government has not been able to quell the insurgency and even with the collaboration of foreign allies, not much is yet achieved. The article aims to examine the issues of social inclusion, which encompass integration and reintegration of the returnees or displaced (vulnerable population) in our societies and the response of the government and the society as a whole.

## **Terrorism in Nigeria: Origins, Radicalization, and Internationalization**

Terrorism involves unlawful and typical random acts of violence or the threat of such violence employed by an individual, group, or government to achieve a political goal. While war involves conventional warfare, terrorism uses sporadic and random acts of violence to cause fear (Macionis, 2002, p.470). It is a method, which can be employed by any person or group and for any motive. As a form of violence, it does inform us of little about the individual who engages in it, nor does the approach itself explain its worth for its users. Before employing a more detailed analysis and forecast of trends, it is, therefore, worth remembering that lumping together and recommending uniform solutions for enormously different violent conflicts based merely on tactical similarity – that is, the use of ‘terroristic’ means – does not lead to valid predictions (Neumann, 2008). It could have its roots from the religious, national or anarchists or even of the state purview. From the religious purview, it had been in existence since about 2000 years ago. The term terrorism originates from the Latin word *terrere* that means to frighten. It, however, obtained its modern form ‘terrorism’ during the reign of terror in France in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In Maximilien Robespierre’s words, ‘...terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country’s most urgent needs’ (Burgess, 2003).

Since that period, it has become a complex, subtle and generally accepted international language (Elshtain, 2003, p.18) hence becoming one of the sootiest especially in asymmetrical warfare. There is virtually no state in the world that has not witnessed one form of terrorism or the other be it in a small or large scale, even the most powerful nations of the developed world are not exempted. Though prior to 9/11, most Americans had little knowledge of it (Rourke, 2003), it had however been used even before that historic event either in or outside the continent or the country on its citizenry, allies or interests abroad (Thompson, 2014). In 2000, there were 423 terrorist attacks worldwide, which claimed 405 lives and injured

791 people. States as well as non-states actors have continued to use fear as a weapon to achieve their policies and interests, hence its popularity. An online global terrorist Statistics portal puts the number of fatalities due to terrorist attacks worldwide between 2006 and 2014 thus: 2006(20,487); 2007(22,719); 2008(15,708); 2009(15,310); 2010(13,186); 2011(12,533); 2012(11,098); 2013(18,066); 2014(32,727) (Statista, 2015). It is both highly concentrated as well as a globally distributed phenomenon. Over 80 per cent of the lives lost to terrorist activity in 2013 occurred in only five countries - Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria. However, another 55 countries recorded one or more deaths from terrorist activity (Global Terrorist Index, 2014, p.2)

In Nigeria, terrorism was used in the establishment of the colonial states; likewise the indigenous people that occupied the pre-colonial states also countered this act used by the colonial hegemons to occupy their territories. While the tactics used by the British against the indigenes could be a conventional warfare, the indigenes in some circumstances used terror attack. It should however be noted that modern terrorism in Nigeria was first witnessed during the Maitatsine movement in 1980 led by Alhaji Marwa Maitatsine who was believed to be an immigrant. From his base, he made sure that his ideology which was felt in the Northern states of Sokoto, Kano and Borno elicited the "justifiable" anger of the "puritanic" Maitatsine group which proceeded to spearhead religious uprisings in Kano (twice in 1980) which later spread to Yola and Maiduguri in 1982 and 1983 respectively (Ajayi, 2012). Though the difference between the two is that while terror was used by the indigenes against the colonialist in some communities, it was used by the group to spread an ideology. After then so many fanatical groups had emerged in both the northern and southern parts of the country such as Shabaab Muslim Youth Organization (SMYO) of 1995 which some scholars believe was the origin of the Boko Haram (Danyibo, 2009), Egbesu Boys, Niger Delta Volunteer Force and others.

The group's official name is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad* which in Arabic means *People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad* took the name, Boko haram-

Western Education is forbidden. Though, Boko Haram may have been influenced by the SMYO, it was not an offshoot of the group. Be that as it may, the group emerged in 2002 as a small, radical Sunni Islamic sect that demanded Sharia law for the Nigerian state (Ploch, 2013). It engaged in periodic skirmishes with the Nigerian Police during its formative years and activities resulted to the impoverishment of states in the predominantly Muslim Northeast. They may not have had plans to overthrow the government but subsequent harsh treatment, pervasive police brutality, infringement of fundamental human rights, social exclusion coupled with bad governance and long years of neglect may have radicalized the group especially with the controversial murder of the sect leader, Mallam Muhamed Yusuf. Responding by destroying government structures, aiming at the armed forces and the Nigerian Police personnel and structures, it transcended into killing innocent Nigerians as well as the internationalization and radicalization of its operations. In November 2013, the US State Department formally designated *Boko Haram* and a splinter group, *Ansaru* as Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) (Ploch, 1) and in 2015, the group claimed to have purportedly pledged allegiance to Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (BBC News, 2015). In Nigeria, the sect has killed more than 20,000 people and subjected many to vulnerability within the States of Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Though, Nigeria bearing majority of the brunt, neighbouring states and the international community have also not been left out from the spillover effect, the corollary that when Nigeria sneezes, neighbours catch cold.

### **The Vulnerable Population and their ordeal**

The vulnerable population or group as defined by the World Health Organisation are children, pregnant women, elderly people, malnourished people, and individuals who are ill or immunocompromised, are particularly vulnerable when a disaster strikes and take a relatively high share of the disease burden associated with emergencies. Poverty and, its common consequences such as malnutrition, homelessness, inadequate housing, and destitution, is a major contributor to vulnerability (WHO, nd). It goes on to

define vulnerability as the degree to which population, individual or organisation is unable to anticipate, cope with, result and recover from impacts of disasters. The *Boko Haram* campaign in the North-Eastern part of the country is itself a 'disaster' which has hitherto spread to other areas of the country even the south of the country. It has led to an incomprehensible increase in the number of displaced populations, public insecurity, livelihood crisis, loss of jobs, incommunicado of the citizenry as a result of the destruction of telecommunication masts unemployment, untold hardship and fear on the part of the citizenry.

It is, of course, a truism that terrorism in the North has had a devastating effect on families and livelihood of many economic groups. The massive destruction of infrastructure, the destruction of telecommunication facilities, frequent attacks on markets and businesses, short hours of operation, have made many to relocate to other safer parts of the country, bringing down incomes and increasing poverty. Even at that, the psychological effect or traumatic experiences still linger, and those who have not experience the impact of the group but have heard of them have a similar feeling of fear and loss. According to an interviewee in Lagos months after the Apapa bomb blast in July 2014, he narrated a scenario thus:

I wanted to board an inter-state bus from Ketu. But after sitting for minutes without passengers coming, I became uneasy together with a few passenger but immediately some Hausa Fulani numbering about four entered, those of us initially seated inside looked at one another and hurriedly disembarked. While the driver asked us why we were leaving, we said those people who joined could be Boko Haram (Interviewee, 21/11/14)

In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) revealed that in 2013, there were some 12,000 Nigerian refugees in northern Cameroon, 1,000 in Chad and 20,000 in Niger including immigrant Niger nationals forced to return from Nigeria, over 20, 000 and 1,000 refugees, respectively in North Cameroon

and Chad. In Niger, the number of displaced from Nigeria has grown to 50,000 (UNHCR, 2014:5). The plight of these displaced people in their various places of refuge can be best described as perilously threatening. This is more so because of dislocation from their families and social capital bases.

Recently, a female University on had to force her child who gained employment after their mandatory one-year National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) in the Northeastern state of Gombe and another in Plateau to return to the West. The terrorist groups in the North have attacked Nigeria's police and army, politicians, schools, religious buildings, public institutions, and civilians with increasing regularity since 2009. More than twenty thousand people have been killed in Boko Haram-related violence, and 1.5 million have been displaced. *Boko Haram's* brutal campaign includes a suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja in 2011, repeated attacks that have killed dozens of students, the burning of villages, ties to regional terror groups, and the abduction of more than two hundred schoolgirls in April 2014 (Sergie and Johnson, 2015). Before the then proposed February general election which was shifted to rout the terrorists, the Nigerian Army began a renewed military action, which resulted in the release of more than 2000 women and girls from the dreaded Sambisa Forest in Borno State.

It is instructive to note that there are 24 official camps in Nigeria: 15 in Maiduguri, 7 in Yola, 2 in Yobe with one being a collection point for IDPs living away from camps with friends or family. As at March 2015, the number of internally displaced persons according to the Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mohammed Sani-Sidi, was placed at 1,188,018 (Dadiya, 2015). On the other hand, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) set up a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) which presently puts the April figure at 1,491,706 in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states (Offiong, 2015). Niger and Cameroon have also deported those who managed to escape to neighbouring states on separate terms. As the number of IDPs increases daily, so do their needs which range from food, portable water, clothing, shelter, Medicare, security and hope of returning home. These vulnerable groups especially the children

and women also face the threat of sexual violence and harassment, molestation, trafficking, lack of education, Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections, harsh weather condition among others. According to a girl in one of the camps, “we want government to save us from this menace of starvation and deprivation which is killing us faster than even the insurgency,” (Yakubu et al., 2015). Some of the pregnant returnees were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and STIs that could affect their health and even that of their unborn babies. The elderly, though in the background, that does not mean that they do not suffer a similar fate. While some are trapped in the war zones, some have lost children or bread winners, others who try to run are also not finding a livelihood. The ordeal of the IDPs can be summed up in the confession of these victims that, “it’s like the government has forgotten us. The government is treating us like we’re not Nigerians”. Another said, “we want the government to end Boko Haram insurgents permanently so that we can return home. Living here is hellish because the weather is not clement at all. There is no ventilation in the makeshift tents we live in” (Sun newspaper, 2015).

### **The Vulnerable Population: The Social Inclusion Question**

In a disaster situation such as this, one of the problems confronted by the government is integration, reintegration, and the inclusion of the affected or the vulnerable population. In other words, apart from providing their basic amenities and needs, there is a need for them to have a sense of belonging and sustain the peace achieved. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development outlined a vision of an inclusive society as a ‘society for all’ in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play (Dugarova and Lavers, 2014). It describes how society values all of its citizens, respect their differences, ensures everyone’s basic needs are met, and welcomes and enables full participation in that community. It involves access to nutritious food, suitable housing, essential material goods, health, medical care and addiction services as well as participatory services such as employment, education, including continuous education, arts and cultural activities, sports and creation, elections, consultations, and decision-making groups



(Westfall, 2010). Thus social inclusion requires overcoming cultural and political barriers to participation at local, national or global levels (Dugarova and Lavers, 1). If there is social inclusion, then there must be the opposite, exclusion. Exclusion usually involves forms of economic exclusion (from labour market participation and adequate income, and as evidenced by income poverty), but it also includes limits on the capacity of individuals or social groups to participate in society—whether due to economic, political or other social (e.g. cultural, religious, gender) factors (Dugarova and Lavers, 1). It focuses on the total population rather than a few target.

From the above analysis of social inclusion and exclusion, it appears as if only the north east suffers from social exclusion but in reality, most of the country's entire population is socially excluded. With a population of 168.8 million in 2012 and 173.4 million in 2013, Gross National Income per capita of \$2,690 in 2013 and \$2,950 in 2014; a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 5.45% in 2013 to 6.3% in 2014; but poverty headcount ratio was 61.8 % in 2004 and 62% in 2010 live below \$1.25 a day (World Bank, no year). The same year, while the rate of the nation's absolute poverty was 62%, it exceeded 70% in eight of twelve far northern states and of Nigeria's 10.5 million children who do not attend school, 92% are estimated to be from the north(Thomas-Greenfield, 4). Nigeria is a country where the majority of its labour force earns only N18, 000 minimum wage, but less than 470 members of the National Assembly earn a whopping N150 billion per annum. The 2015 National Bureau of Statistics on unemployment rate in the country gave this:

The economically active population or working age population (persons within ages 15 64) increased from 102.8 million in Q1 2015 to 103.5million in Q2 2015. Meanwhile, the number of underemployed in the labour force during the review quarter however, increased by 1,362,274 or 11.16% resulting in an increase in the underemployment rate to 18.3% (13.5mn) in Q2 2015, from 16.6% (12.2mn) in Q1 2015. Within the same period, the number of unemployed in

the labour force, increased by 529,923 persons or 9.58% between Q1 2015 and Q2 2015 resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate to 8.2% in Q2 2015 from 7.5% in Q1 2015. This represents a third consecutive rise in the unemployment rate since Q3 2014. Accordingly there were a total of 19.6 million people between ages 15 65 either unemployed or underemployed in the labour force in Q2 2015, compared to 17.7 million in Q1 2015 (NBS, 2015)

Though in a Vanguard editorial of 21 June 2015, Prof. Akpan Ekpo believes the situation may be worse than what is presented. However, it reveals the continued slackening gap between the wealthy and poor; citizenry and political class. Also, the North/South divide in poverty and poverty reduction is regrettably a chasm. The current deterioration or stagnation in poverty alleviation in the Northeast and North -West is likely related to the security situation in the region. The Nigeria Economic Report explains the differences thus: (a) a relatively small level of many public services and (b) a relative remoteness from ports and current points of economic agglomeration in Nigeria. Research in economics continues to stress the high value of primary education for increasing the probability of productive employment. Over 90% of children in the Southern part of Nigeria between ages, 6-16 attend school while this is only true for less than half of the children in the North West and North East. 12 Health indicators show a similar divide. For example, immunisation rates of 14% and 21% in the North West and North East, respectively, can be compared with over 70% immunization rates in the South. Infrastructure that could better connect markets in Nigeria or measures to facilitate higher productivity in agriculture could also have a measurable impact on poverty reduction in the North (World Bank, 2014 p.22)

In ameliorating the security and developmental challenge, the President Buhari administration since inception on May 29 began by visiting African and western states as there are no doubts that the present dispensation is poised to tackle insurgency and rebuild the northeast for the vulnerable group to return home. In one of the

visits of the vice president, Prof Yemi Osibanjo to one of the IDP camps, he said:

The next phase is resettling the displaced persons in their communities in their home, that is the most important thing in the next stage, and that is why I am here to understand the financial implication of that project; what are the material requirements, what the logistics will be etc... The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that all those displaced return to their homes and as much as possible we are able to rehabilitate them, rebuild their homes, markets, rebuild the basic infrastructure that is necessary so that they can go back home and continue with their lives (Vanguard, 2015).

Even the NEMA boss at a time had to appeal to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) to as a matter of urgency lend Nigeria its support to provide support for the IDPs. In ameliorating the problem, the government has incurred about 30 billion-dollar loan from the World Bank and some multinational firms promised to help Nigeria rebuild the Northeast. Despite all these promises and efforts to tackle the menace and restore sustainable peace to the region and the country at large, the question of social inclusion remains unanswered.

The social integration problem goes beyond building back their houses, giving them jobs, providing the basic amenities of life to them, rather it means acceptance into the larger society. There is no doubt that the cause of *Boko Haram* itself is due to social exclusion from the state which entails good governance, the rule of law and provision of essential amenities. According to U.S. officials, its core militants may number in the hundreds, but the group also appears to draw support from a broader following of several thousand young men, primarily from the northeast, who have expressed frustration with perceived disparities in the application of laws (including sharia); the lack of development, jobs, and investment in the north; and the heavy-handed response of security forces (Thomas-Greenfield, 2013; Ploch, 13). The concept of sustainable development,

as popularized at the first UN Earth Summit in 1992, places a triple emphasis on social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. Unsustainable development can be caused by not only environmental and disaster risks and inappropriate natural resources management, but also poverty, inequalities, discrimination and socio-cultural exclusion, insecurity, human rights abuse and corruption. Inequitable growth, consumption patterns, and unjust power relations can aggravate it further. Moreover, progress cannot be achieved or sustained amid conflicts and violence, which are often rooted in social and economic deprivations. While integration and reintegration is a surface solution embarked upon by the government, inclusion is a sustainable one yet to be invented or considered.

### **Conclusion**

While the general population may complain of being socially excluded, the people affected by the disaster caused by the terrorist group in the Northeast have the cause to cry farther. The Nigerian state must not wait for the occurrence of disasters to start before making policies and programmes to arrest such. The formation of the NEMA and other related relief bodies seem to have lost their cause and focus as a result of corruption, nepotism, lack of monitoring and accountability, lack of political will as well as the politicization of issues. In Nigeria's chequered history of her civil war, the Biafrans were integrated, re-integrated but suffered social exclusiveness. This has led to an outcry for secession or re-awakening of the buried rising sun and several insurgents or militant groups in the country. As the government intensifies its effort to arrest the menace of terrorism, rebuild and sustain peace in the northeast, it must not forget that without the social inclusion of not only the vulnerable groups affected by the terrorist groups but the entire population, then sustainable peace and development may be a far cry. To achieve set expectations above requires strengthening of the slumping National Orientation Agency and other stakeholders. To build a stable nation, which Nigeria needs need implementing the above considerations.

## References

- Ajayi, A. I (2012), Boko Haram and terrorism in Nigeria: Exploratory and Explanatory notes *Global Advanced Research Journal of History, Political Science and International Relations* 1(5):103-107. Web. 20/7/15
- BBC News 2015 Boko Haram pledges allegiance to Islamic State 7 March 2015. Web. 23/7/2015
- Burgess, Mark 2015 Terrorism: A Brief History of Terrorism CDI, July 2003 Web. 22/7/15
- Dadiya, Mathew (2015) NEMA Solicits UN support For IDPs *Daily Times*, March 12, 2015. Web. 23/7/15
- Danjibo, N.D. (2009), Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian violence: The 'Maitatsine' and 'Boko Haram' crises in Northern Nigeria *Peace and Conflict Studies paper Series*. Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. 1-21 Print.
- Dugarova, E and Lavers T, (2014). Social Inclusion and the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda *UNRISD*. Web. 23/7/17
- Elshtain J.B. (2003). *Just War against terror: The burden of American Power in a Violent World* New York: Print
- Fapohunda, T.M, Atiku, S.O., Lawal, I.O (2015). Minimum wage implement and management in a post-Recession Economy: The Nigerian Experience *European Scientific Journal*. April 8 (7):18-35. Web. 24/7/15
- Macionis, J. J. (2002). *Social Problems* New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc. Print
- Neumann, PR (2008), Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The rule of law as a guideline for Germany Policy Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Web 22/7/15
- Offiong, Vanessa (2015), Inside Nigeria's heartbreaking IDP problem...over a million estimated to be affected *Daily Trust*. 20 June. Web 23/7/15.
- Onyedi, O. and Obike Grace (2015). NLC to National Assembly: Explain bloated budget *The Nation* 24/7/15. Print

- PlochLaura (2013). Nigeria: Current Issues and US Policy  
*Congressional Research Service*. November 15. Web. 7/21/15.
- Rourke John T. (2003). *International Politics on the World Stage 9<sup>th</sup> edition* Connecticut: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin. Print
- Sergie, M.A. and Johnson, T (2015) *Boko Haram Council on Foreign Relations*. 5, March 2015 Web. 21/7/15
- Statista (2015) Number of fatalities due to terrorist attacks worldwide between 2006 and 2014 Web. 7/8/2015
- Sun Newspaper (2015) "IDPs heart breaking tales" 8 July 2015. Web. 23/7/2015.
- Thomas-Greenfield, Linda (2014) Countering the Threat Posed by Boko Haram, Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in U.S. Congress, House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, 113thCongress, November 13, 2013. 1-10. Web. 21/12/14
- Thompson O. O (2014). The Post-Cold War United States: A Looming stone for this Goliath *CSCanada* 10 (5): 106-113. Web. 22/7/2015
- UNHCR (2015). More than 7,000 flee to western Chad to escape attacks on key town in Nigeria UNHCR. 9 January. Web. 23/7/15.
- UNHCR (2014). Emergency Response for the Nigerian situations. Supplementary Appeal Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service. 1-18. Web.
- Vanguard. Osinbajo commends Borno Govt., NEMA over IDPs' welfare July 1
- Westfall R. (2010). Dimensions of Social Inclusion and Exclusion in Yukon, 2010 *Yukon Bureau Statistics*, Dec. Web. 23/7/15.
- World Bank Poverty and Equity no year. Web, 24/7/2015
- World Bank (2014). Nigeria Economic Report: Documents of the World Bank" No 2 July, 1-23 Web. 24/7/15
- Yakubu, A., Echewofun, S.S., and Balarabe A (2015). We are in danger, female IDPs Raise Alarm *Daily Times*. January 14, Web. 23/7/15.