

## Self-acclaimed Religious terrorism, Refugee crisis, and the Plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The paper examines how the self-acclaimed religious terrorism has forced thousands of Nigerians to be displaced from their homes. Boko haram, a religious terrorist group, has destroyed properties, wasted lives and rendered many homeless. These homeless persons became refugees and internally displaced persons. These refugees are those who fled the shores of Nigeria to neighbouring countries while the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are those persons who are still within Nigeria. The paper critically assesses the plight of displaced persons (Nigerian refugees and IDPs) and the causative factors. It was discovered that there are severe hunger and starvation in displaced person's camp. The methodology used in this paper is the descriptive phenomenological method of qualitative research. It was used so as to provide an objective report on the findings of this research. As part of its recommendation, the paper proposes that the government should make candid effort to see to the adequate care for Nigerians who have been displaced from their homes.*

**Keywords:** Religion, Terrorism, Refugee, IDP, Migration

### 1. Introduction

Religion, an element of culture, is a double edge sword. When it is utilized positively it becomes a source of life to humanity but when utilized wrongly, it breeds hatred which leads to the destruction of lives and properties. In Nigeria, religion seems to be negatively in use; this has led to deaths and displacement in and outside of Nigeria of hundreds of Nigerians. Those that utilize religion negatively have formed themselves into terrorist groups. One of these terrorist groups is Boko haram operating mainly in North-eastern Nigeria. The advent of Boko haram, a religious terrorist group since 2009, has led to many persons been displaced from their homes. These persons are known as internally displaced persons or IDPs.

IDPs refers to persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee their homes, as a result of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters (United Nations, 1998). On the other hand, refugees could be defined as "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group" (The United Nations High commissioner for Refugees, 2016). Hence, from the definitions above IDPs are those displaced persons who remain within the country while refugees are those who have crossed to a neighbouring country.

It was from the year 2009 that Nigeria witnessed an upshot in the number of displaced persons. This was a period when the Boko haram pandemic made its voice louder. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2016) since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed, countless women and girls abducted and children drafted as suicide bombers into Boko Haram. Up to 2.1 million people fled their homes at the height of the conflict, 1.8 million of whom are currently internally displaced and 0.2 million in neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Corroborating further, Soni, Kingsley & Ndahi (2016) put that currently Nigeria has 2.15 million persons have been displaced from their homes and communities. Furthermore, the Internal

Displacement Monitoring Centre (2016) puts that 12.6 percent displaced persons were due to communal clashes/Fulani militants, 2.4 percent by natural disasters and 85 percent as a result of insurgency attacks by Islamists. This shows that the so-called religious terrorism contributes the highest percentage of the high number of IDPs and Nigerian refugees.

Refugees and IDPs have received solidarity from well meaning Nigerians, international government, and agencies. Donations in terms of food, water, and other relief materials have been made to this effect. However, the World Food Programme (2016) reports that "An estimated 244,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition, including up to 49,000 children who are at risk of dying if not reached with treatment". It was also discovered that money and food and other relief materials donated to take care of displaced persons were being diverted. Cases of malnutrition and deaths continue to rise. Security agencies saddled with the responsibility of providing security are amongst those stealing relief materials in IDPs camps and raping girls and women, among others. Hence, the high incidence of HIV/AIDS reported cases. Hilary (2016) reports that in Dalori, the theft of relief materials for the 20,000 displaced people was carried out by security men who were seen shoveling bags of blankets and plastic goods into an auto rickshaw (Keke). Consequently, refugees across the border in Chad were reported to be living without proper shelter, and they do not have access to food or clean drinking water (Medecins Sans Frontieres, 2016). These problems are very needful to find solutions to.

The aim of this research is to bring to the forefront the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons and to find workable ways of providing succor to displaced persons. This paper discovered that this problem could be curbed if relief materials get to displaced persons directly rather than through a middle person. The methodology used in this paper is the descriptive phenomenological method of qualitative research which was very important for objectivity.

## 2. Research Methodology

The data collected was analysed qualitatively. Most of the data were gotten from periodicals such as newspapers, journals, and classical materials as well from textbooks. The descriptive phenomenological methodology was used in the analysis of the findings of this research. This method was used for an objective presentation of the report of this research

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the empowerment theory propounded by Barbara Bryant Solomon in 1976. According to this theory, personal, interpersonal and environmental resources are needed to update the skills, knowledge, and motivation of people to achieve valid social roles. It relates that people contribute their quota to the development of any society if they are given the needed conducive environment. Okala and Ijeoma (2014, p.86) collaborating this theory note that "the empowerment theory helps to enhance citizen participation." It is in the light of this theory citizens who are displaced could be empowered so that they can play their social roles and render their obligations to the society. When they are empowered they would lived their normal lives once again. Camps should not be made to their permanent abode as has been over the years.

## 4. Nigerian Refugees Crisis

On 28 July 1951, United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees adopted a resolution known as the 1951 Refugee Convention treaty. It was in a bid to manage with the aftermath of World War II in Europe. This treaty provides for the care and support for refugees all over the world. According to this 1951 Refugee Convention which is a United Nations multilateral treaty a refugee was defined as:

*Any person who owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.*

Nigeria Refugees are scattered across sub-Saharan African due to the fact that they have been displaced by Boko Haram. The federal government seems to have forgotten that she has her citizens squatting and suffering in another country. According to Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the United States Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, "More than a million Nigerians have been forced from their homes. Close to 100,000 Nigerians are living outside of Nigeria as refugees". According to Premiumtimes(2016) in Kousseri in Cameroun, it camps 32,621 Nigerian refugees. The United Nations in its 1992 reports that, natural disasters, armed conflict, communal violence and systematic violations of human rights are amongst the causes of the refugee crisis.

## 5. The Internally Displaced in Nigeria

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the United Nations secretary-general in a report presented on the floor of the United Nations in 1992 defines IDPs as:

*Persons who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or made-man disasters; and who are within the territory of their own country.*

There is no doubt that the number internally displaced in Nigeria especially from North-east has risen to above 100%. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2016) estimates that there are almost 2,152,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Nigeria as of 31 December 2015. The states with high figures according to IDMC are Abuja (13,481 IDPs), Adamawa (136,010), Bauchi (70,078), Benue (85,393), Borno (1,434,149), Gombe (25,332), Kaduna (36,976), Kano (9,331), Nasarawa (37,553), Plateau (77,317), Taraba (50,227), Yobe (131,203), and Zamfara (44,929). As of August 2016, there are over 1.6 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) spread across various resettlement camps in Borno state alone (Wale 2016). Nigeria is the third country to have a high number of IDPs in Nigeria, after Syria and Iraq.

The sad state of affairs in IDPs shows the failure of the government towards her citizens. From reports "internally displaced persons often suffer persistent violations of fundamental human rights, and their basic needs often go unmet" (United Nations, 1992). This is also corroborated by Olajide (2016) that there is a high incidence of rape and other forms of violence against especially against women and children in displaced persons camps. Furthermore, United Nations Children Emergency Fund (2016, p.13) lamented that "The lack of livelihood opportunities for women inside IDP camps, especially for those who have been rejected by their husbands and separated from families, has reportedly created destitution. Some women and girls have exchanged sexual activities for money." These are few among many cases of sexual violence towards female children.

The high level of dishonesty with regards to the situation in IDP camps is alarming. Ajijoye (2016) observes the state of the camps, the number of unfulfilled promises and allegations of misappropriation of funds donated to the betterment of internally displaced persons in Nigeria tells of an all talking and less action government and networks. It is due to government nonsupervisory role that donations made by Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote such as over 11 million USD to Nigeria's internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially his donation of two billion naira to Borno camps alone, could not be accounted for till this day. Other donations have gone under the carpet including the Turkish government donation of bags of rice, vegetable oil, macaroni, and sachets of powdered milk, among others. It was Kayode (2016) that laments that photographs of malnourished IDPs, mostly children continue to flood the media in the face of all these donations by well-meaning individuals. More recently Mr. Godwin Emefiele, Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), on 4th August 2016 gave 600 bags of rice to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Maiduguri but most of these items were stolen just like others, that was why when Hajia Hadiza Wakili, the spoken person who led the Senators Wives Forum to IDPs to donate their quota, made mention of the fact that they are moved by the rising and alarming reports of hunger, starvation, and malnutrition of displaced citizens, especially young infants and children despite the monies and donations ("Editor", 2016; Iroegbu and Enobhayisobo 2016; Kayode 2016). It was as a result of some of this that Borno government in August 2016 abolished the Central Committee for Feeding, however, the problems still persist because of no proper monitoring by government of affected states.

## 6. The Nigeria 2016 Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP)

The Nigeria 2016 Regional Refugee Response Plan is a response to the high number of refugees from Nigeria caused by the insurgency in North-eastern Nigeria. These refugees fled to neighbouring countries of Cameroun, Chad, and Niger. Nigeria is a signatory and beneficiary to the 2016 RRRP. The RRRP treaty takes care of refugees from Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. It was the RRRP that led to the establishment of camps for refugees as well as internally displaced people (IDPs) in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. According to Liz (2015),

*The Nigeria 2016 RRRP aims to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to 230,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, including Niger nationals who returned to Niger, as well as to more than 514,350 IDPs and members of impacted host communities in these countries. The prioritized, cross-cutting strategic objectives and their respective interventions for the 2016 RRRP are: Ensure protection, including access to asylum. Conduct and maintain civil registration, and provide documentation and capacity building for national authorities to ensure refugees' access to protection, basic services and humanitarian assistance, allow population profiling, and minimize risks of statelessness (p.12).*

According to UNHCR (2016), RRRP outlines the strategy to protect and assist refugees and other vulnerable people affected by the ongoing conflict in north-eastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. This shows the RRRP treaty has the backing of the United Nations. The RRRP is a coordinated effort by UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO) partners, and also serves as a joint platform for advocacy and fundraising for all actors involved.

Chad, Cameroun, and Niger, have been caring for Nigerian refugees as stipulated in the RRRP agreement. The interesting thing is that the RRRP receives donations from agencies of the United Nations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Also, this RRRP treaty presents a coordinated and corresponding number of refugees in Nigeria, Cameroun, and Niger, and Chad. This is in a bid to ensure adequate care for the refugees. Sketching further, Liz (2016, p.7) quips thus:

*As of October 2016, about 170,000 Nigerian refugees were hosted in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The conflict had also internally displaced 192,912 persons in Cameroon's Far North region, 82,260 in Chad's Lake region (as of 31 Oct) and 184,230 persons in Niger's Diffa region (as of 30 Sept). Despite the gravity of the crisis, refugee and IDP responses remain seriously underfunded, with only 36 per cent of required funds received as of November for the 2016 Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP). Despite the limited funding and based on the 2016 Nigeria RRRP, UN agencies and NGOs, in collaboration with the Governments of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, provided protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and host communities in all three countries as well as to IDPs and returning Niger nationals.*

The RRR treaty has benefited Nigeria a lot. It came at a time that Nigeria experiences one of her worse humanitarian crisis after the civil war of 1967-1970. According to report, by the end October 2016, 178,000 Nigerian refugees fleeing the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria's North-east were hosted in Cameroon, Chad and Niger" (RRRP, 2016).

## **7. Factors Fuelling Rise in Number Displaced Persons**

These factors include:

### **7.1 Boko Haram**

It is the highest contributor to IDPs in Nigeria. According to the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (n.d), since 2009, when Boko haram destruction became heightened, more than 20,000 people have been killed, countless women and girls abducted and children were drafted as suicide bombers. Furthermore, UNOCHA notes that up to 2.5 million people have fled their homes, 2.2 million of whom are internally displaced and 187,126 crossed into neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger as refugees.

### **7.2 Fulani Herdsmen**

Due to the menace of Fulani militants Nigeria was ranked as the world 3<sup>rd</sup> most terrorized country. Militants from the Fula ethnic group are believed to have killed at least 1,229 people in Nigeria in 2014 (Ludovica, 2015). Consequently, in 2013, the Fulani herdsmen had killed 80 people and by 2014 their victims rose to 1,229 (Rose, 2015). Also, 710 were killed within the first quarter of the year 2015. Between May 2015 and May 2016 more 525 others were killed by the nomadic cattle rearers (Gbenro & Jesusegun, 2016). Initially, an economic exchange of dairy products for grain was the relationship between these Herdsmen and their host communities, but, these herdsmen have metamorphosed into militias and militia movement (Blench, 2010). Thus, the peaceful co-existence has become a myth. More recently is the activities of Fulani herdsmen in southern Kaduna of Nigeria which has left a lot of people displaced or killed. Dailytrust (2016) reports that the attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen in Southern Kaduna villages at night have been going on and off over the last five years. They have their roots in the violence that followed the 2011 presidential and governorship election in some Northern states in which the herdsmen were massively affected. Furthermore, Moses (2016) notes that on Christmas Eve of 24 December 2016, and on Christmas day armed Fulani herdsmen attacked and destroyed Goska village in southern Kaduna, killing, maiming, and burning.

### **7.3 Natural Disasters**

In Nigeria, there is flooding in the North, gully erosion in the East and the oil spillage in the Niger Delta (South-south

Nigeria). According to the National Emergency Management Agency Report (2015) as at January 2015, 66,087 IDPs were displaced by natural disasters.

## **8. Plight of Displaced Persons**

A lot of hardships are being faced by people in IDP camps. Some of which are:

### *8.1 Food Stealing and Lack of drinking water*

There are growing reports of food shortages in IDPs camps because they are being stolen by those who were entrusted to make sure that IDPs gets them. Also, portable water and medications are lacking (Emman and Johnbosco, 2016). These 'Lords' are allegedly involved in a massive child trafficking scam in the camp (Open Data and Data Visualization Training in Africa, 2015). Most traffic children are between ages 5-15 years, and each child sales between 10,000-100,000 and victims keep silent for fear of being sent out of the camp. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) seems not to know that this ugly incident is happening in IDPs camp or probably pretends not to know.

### *8.2 Selling of Children*

In IDPs camps, especially in North-east and particularly in Borno, there exists "Lord" who serves as the leader of the group saddled with the responsibility of sharing relief materials. Unfortunately, the Lord partakes in trafficking of children. These 'Lords' are allegedly involved in a massive child trafficking scam in the camp (Open Data and Data Visualization Training in Africa, 2015). Most traffic children are between ages 5-15 years, and each child sales between 10,000-100,000 and victims keep silent for fear of being sent out of the camp. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) seems not to know that this ugly incident is happening in IDPs camp or probably pretends not to know.

### *8.3 Prostitution*

Prostitution is thriving in IDP camps in the various parts especially Borno State. According to the Director of the Borno Women Development Initiative (BWDI) a non-governmental organization, prostitution has become the norm within IDP camps such incidents have become significantly high because, in their efforts to fend for their families, the women engage in sex for pay, which may also promote the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, & STDs, among the IDPs. Furthermore, the executive secretary of Borno Agency for the Control of HIV/AIDS, Malam Barkindo Saidu on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016 hints that 512 new cases of HIV infections have been discovered in Borno camps and that two out of the 512 persons were children ("Borno", 2016).

### *8.4 Rape*

There are incidences of rape in various camps in the North East (NEMA, 2015). Furthermore, there was a report of how Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) arrested a 40 year-old man in Maiduguri that raped a 13-year-old victim from Chibok in the Colori Camp. From data, it was discovered that the culprits usually take advantage of the poor living condition of their victims and abuse them (Uduak, 2016). They lure minors with some basic relief materials lacking in camps, and sadly to note is that the girl child is their target victim.

### *8.5 Death*

The high mortality rate, especially amongst children and women is alarming. Levinus (2016) reports that, at least 30 children reportedly die daily from malnutrition. There was a situation where some soldiers stormed the IDP food store in Borno State Government House and tried to force policemen on duty to give up some of the rice meant for the IDPs which resulted in a shootout that left some people injured.

It was necessary to look at some of these problems above mentioned because the first stage of finding solutions to these problems according to Paulo (1972) must deal with the problem of the consciousness of the oppressed and the oppressor, the problem of the man who oppresses and a man who suffer oppression. It must take into account their behavior, and their worldview and their ethics. This made both the subject (Aggressors) and their victims (IDPs) important factors in finding solutions to their problem.

## 9. The Way Forward

Towards ameliorating the plight of the IDPs in Nigeria, all hands of both the government and non-governmental organizations vis a vis concerned individuals must be on deck to salvage the situation. However, the following suggestions could help to improve the livelihood of IDPs in Nigeria.

1. Although President Buhari, in the first quarter of September, ordered the Inspector General of Police to arrest some of the alleged thieves, the government, especially at the state level, should perform supervisory functions by placing trustworthy informants to fish out those who are stealing those foods and facilities donated to the IDPs.
2. The governments of states with IDPs should look among those in the camps and select amongst them capable hands to do the sharing of both food and other relief materials.
3. During sharing, it should be done according to the number of persons in a tent. For example, a family of six given a bag of rice cannot be compared to a family of twelve and be given the same one bag of rice.
4. NEMA and International Organization For Migration (IOM) should make sure that there should be biometric data capture for IDPs because of the reports that some security men and those non-governmental agencies usually bring their relations into the camp pretending to be IDPs and are given most of the relief materials and in the night they leave the camp and come back whenever materials are to be shared again.
5. The UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement stipulates that the management of IDP camps should be the function of existing government agencies instead of military men and vigilantes who have constituted themselves as thieves and rapists. Thus, the governments of affected state should adhere to this convention.
6. Efforts should be made by government and all concerned in a bid to make sure that the IDPs go back to their homes within the shortest possible time. IDPs and Refugee camps cannot continue to be a permanent residence hence the need for infrastructural and economic empowerment so that these IDPs can take charge of their lives.
7. There should be entrepreneurial workshops and training to empower the youths, women and men, and economic empowerment in terms of small loans.
8. Refugees should also be catered for the same way that the IDPs in Nigeria are being catered for. Provisions should be made for refugees to come back to the Nigeria. Means of livelihood such as soft loans could be given to refugees to as to enable them to get back on their financial feet

## 10. Conclusion

This self-acclaimed religious terrorism orchestrated by Boko haram has really done a lot of harm to the society. Scores of thousands have been killed as well as millions displaced both in and outside the country. Those displaced persons have been neglected by the government. Most of the donations made to these displaced persons have been stolen by those entrusted with the power of distributing them. Relief materials both food and money have been diverted. Worrisome is the fact the security agencies is part and parcel of this problem. The government should as a matter of urgent attention, bring to book persons who are found guilty of stealing these relief materials. Consequently, security agents should not be allowed to engage in the sharing of relief materials. Refugees, who have fled the shores of Nigeria, should not be neglected. The same care and support melted out to IDPs in Nigeria should also be accorded to them.

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