

Effect of Terrorism on the Education of Internally Displaced Persons

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is one of the greatest disturbances of social harmony across the globe. Millions of human lives and huge amount of property are lost to terror attacks. But its impact on the education of internally displaced persons is yet to receive sufficient attention. Displaced persons encounter some difficulties in accessing quality education, even though education remains their inalienable rights. Displaced people are faced with over-crowded conditions in camps with children being the most vulnerable. This is because they are faced with myriad of challenges such as poor nutrition, breakdown of health infrastructure, disease epidemics, looting and violence. Education is an essential element of humanitarian response to the people in the crisis area. Every human being has the right to free and compulsory education at the primary level, as well as access to secondary education, including general and vocational education that is free or subject to financial assistance in case of need. Education promotes lifelong learning opportunities. Thus, investments in education, especially for the internally displaced, are of great benefits with many spill-over effects and long-run advantages which include: greater economic growth, improved public health and more resilient and peaceful societies. It is against this background that this paper draws attention to the effect of terrorism on the education of internally displaced people, with focus on the way forward.

Keyword: Education, Internally Displaced Persons, Terrorism, Nigeria, Impact

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has led many people to become internally displaced. The upsurge of insurgency in Borno State which quickly spread to other parts of the Northern Nigeria has resulted in thousands of people being internally displaced. There has been loss of lives and properties worth millions of Naira, schools and business activities have been seriously jeopardized and human activities are in danger. In Nigeria, the insurgent activities of Boko Haram have forced millions of people to flee their homes and this has resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis [1]. Internally displaced persons from conflict caused by the terrorism are dispersed across various locations where they are camped in secondary schools and uncompleted housing estates with no running water, mosquitoes' nets; while malnutrition occurs especially in children at an alarming rate [2].

Statement of the Problem

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are vulnerable people and live under poor living conditions. Also, it has been observed that majority of the IDPs who

suffer from the activities of Boko haram insurgency are women and children. Displaced persons in most IDP camps have lost their parents, loved ones, livelihood; and are faced with wide range of threats to their physical safety and restrictions on their freedom of movement [3]. They are faced with being over-crowded in camps with their attendant adverse consequences. Some of such consequences include displaced children facing many dangers, especially if they have become separated from their families. In the same vein, the importance of education to displaced persons cannot be over emphasized. It has the potential of acting as a catalyst for effective and sustainable recovery. Displaced students with good education skills can contribute to the promotion of peace, social cohesion and development among communities [4]. They foster leadership and serve as role models to encourage other youths who enroll in schools to remain and complete their education cycle, thus helping to prevent or minimize negative tendencies. If displaced people received quality

education, they are more likely to develop necessary skills to make use of in the existing economic, social, and political systems in their host communities. It is against this background that this study intends to ascertain the effect of terrorism on the education of internally displaced persons.

Theoretical framework

This paper is anchored on stress theory, Accordingly, [5] explain that stress theory assumes that reactions to stressful situations like internal displacement would impact negatively on psychological wellbeing and possibly lead to psychopathology and other diseases [6], depending on coping resources. As already pointed out above, internal displacement may affect important sources of social support as a result of spousal bereavement, separation from significant others, and lead to disabilities; and this would impact on psychological wellbeing.

Internally Displaced Persons

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are people who are forced to flee their places of abode and communities for an array of reasons such as effect of conflict, situation of generalized violence, natural or man-made disasters such as flooding; but have not crossed an internationally recognized state boarder. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are forced to flee their places of abode and living in different IDPs camps are faced with many problems due to their displacement which include psychological, educational, health and basic needs problems [7].

The most common psychological reaction found among internally displaced persons in addition to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are depression, somatization and external dilemma; ill health, absence of medical facilities, rape or sexual abuse, and lack of food, water as well as unnatural death of family or friend [8]. [9] enumerated that displaced persons are faced with problems such as communication problems which is on how to get in touch with relations: educational problems which are based on how to obtain sponsorships for children, and economic problem which is on how to

engage in productive economic activities in spite of the limited capital, shelter or accommodation problems which is based on how to make use of optimal and limited room space provided in camps and lastly health problems which are hinged on how to make judicious use of limited medical facilities available [10].

Nigeria has 3.3 million persons displaced by conflict - the highest number in Africa. This information is contained in a report 'Global Overview 2014: people internally displaced by conflict and violence' released by the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) [11]. On a global scale, Nigeria is only ranked behind Syria with 6.5 million IDPs and Colombia with 5.7 million IDPs. The report explains the unprecedented rise in IDPs in Nigeria last year by the increased number of Boko Haram attacks, heavy-handed counter insurgency operations, and ongoing inter-communal violence. After Boko Haram insurgents were pushed out of major towns in the north-east following the declaration of a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states in May 2013, they focused their attacks with increased brutality on towns and villages close to Nigeria's borders with Cameroon, Niger and Chad. The increasing deadly attacks on border communities and the destruction of properties, businesses and farmlands forced many inhabitants to flee to nearby towns and villages as well as into neighbouring Cameroon and Niger [12]. In 2014, the Islamist sect killed about 2,000 people and more than half of those killed were civilians. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA), 300,000 people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe - 70 percent of them women and children - fled their homes since early 2013 (naij.com, n.d.). In March, residents of Mafa village in Borno fled their homes after receiving letters from Boko Haram warning them of impending attacks. When the attack eventually happened there were only the aged and those too weak to flee. Besides, reprisal attacks on communities accused of sheltering Boko Haram insurgents by

the Nigerian armed forces had also added to the number of displaced people in the northeast, the report notes. Communal clash is another factor contributing to the high number of displaced persons in Nigeria. Clashes between farmers and herdsmen over grazing lands in states such as Benue, Taraba, Zamfara and parts of Kaduna left more than 1,000 people dead since December 2014, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said. "The violence has been almost on a daily basis in some places like Benue State and in a few other places you've had it almost on a weekly basis," said Mausi Segun, HRW Nigerian Researcher. In April, NEMA set up 11 camps for over 100,000 people displaced in eight local governments in Benue State. More than 300 people in the last 20 months were killed in attacks on villages in Zamfara State, the local government reported (naij.com, n.d.). Also, many of the victims of the 2012 flooding caused by heavy rainfall across Nigeria are yet to be provided permanent place of residence. According to NEMA, the natural disaster in that year alone displaced over two million people [13].

Literature Review

[14], reported that 800,000 children of school age are victims of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria; 19 out of the 42 camps did not have access to any form of education as at June 2015 (Global Educational Monitoring Report (GEMR), 2016). The UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon at the 2015 General Assembly disclosed that over 60 million people have been displaced from their homes and are living as refugees across the world. The worst hit are those children who lost opportunities of going to school. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) released a report in 2015 stating that over 2.5 million people have so far been displaced from their homes in northern Nigeria due to attacks by Boko Haram, where 1.2 million (about 50%) are school-age children. The IDPs population in Nigeria consisted of 52% females and 48% male. Children of less than 18 years of age constitute 56% of the IDP population and more than half of them less than 5 years old. Ninety-four percent

(94%) were displaced by the insurgency (National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), [15]. Unfortunately, education as an essential need for IDPs children's psychosocial adjustment [16] is being neglected on a large scale [17]. [12] argued that education is an essential element of humanitarian response to the people in the crisis area.

According to [5], education is an essential and inalienable right of citizens especially for IDPs to prepare them for life, for employment and for participation in community development and governance. Education remains an important aspect of our lives and it is vital to our development, our understanding and our personal and professional growth. Education also builds knowledge and skills for self-reliance and resilience. It can also contribute to peace and security and mitigate factors responsible for conflict and displacement (UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) [1]. [12] harping on the benefits of education stated that "providing students with basic cognitive skills could massively boost economic outcomes, especially in developing countries". In an emergency situation such as displacement, education gives hope and reduces the trauma already suffered [10]. The researchers maintained that education provides lifesaving and life sustaining physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection. It offers safe space for learning as well as ability to identify and provide support for affected individuals, particularly for children and adolescents. Education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disaster by giving a sense of normality, stability [7] and it saves lives, provide children with lifesaving information as well as sustain the progress already made by communities. Parents and children who are better educated tend to be healthier, more empowered in their lives and communities, and more tolerant and resolution-seeking. This is why the demand for access to education continues unabated due to its social benefit, especially in a society in which social mobility depends largely on the level of education acquired and where a

competitive marketplace has made education vital to advancement in many professions and meeting the needs of a globalized economy. Unfortunately, displaced young people miss out on months or years of education, and this is damaging to them and their families, as well as to their societies, both in the short and long term.

Influence of Terrorism on Internally Displaced Students

The IDPs are often described as poly-traumatized population because they experience both the direct impact which is due to violence and injury and the indirect impact during mass movement due to physical exhaustion, hunger and snake and other animals' attack. Their conditions are further compounded by a variety of post conflict hardships such as adaptation to new environment, overcrowding, physical and sexual abuses as well as infectious diseases with increased mortality among other vulnerabilities, which are also extremely traumatic [16].

Several factors serve as barriers to internally displaced children from enjoying their rights to education. Many camps are located beyond the access of humanitarian agencies, which makes it difficult to receive basic assistance and relief resources with respect to education. In addition, the closest school buildings may be far away, and walking to school may not be safe for displaced children, particularly girls [8]. Children may encounter armed groups while en route to school and risk being abducted or abused, or could walk on landmines, all of which prompt their ultimate decision not to attend school [14]. Furthermore, displacement frequently results in the loss, destruction, or confiscation of identity documents, such as birth certificates and identity cards, without which IDPs may be unable to enroll in school. It is also possible that they never possessed such documentation even before they were displaced.

Another barrier could be difficulties in buying school supplies, such as pencils, school uniforms, shoes, and books [1]. Internally displaced children often miss

school because they are needed at home to support or supplement household income. In some instances, they are the sole provider for their families in displacement camps. Moreover, education is often seen as a secondary need that should only be addressed after a conflict has waned. Accordingly, few donors include education in their funding for humanitarian aid.

Hence, out of more than twenty-seven million children estimated to lack access to education in emergency situations, substantial numbers are internally displaced [2]. Since the Boko Haram-induced armed conflict commenced in Nigeria, attacks on education have been at the forefront, as evident in the group's name, which means "Western education is forbidden," with teachers and schools as the group's first targets. This has resulted in a significant knowledge gap for students who cannot catch up to their peers after the conflict ceases. Over the years, Boko Haram has carried out coordinated and routine attacks on primary and secondary schools in northern Nigeria. Between 2009 and 2014, the group burned down hundreds of school buildings, threatened and killed teachers, and abducted and killed students [8]. University lecturers have also been attacked. In 2017, five lecturers in the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, were killed, while Boko Haram kidnapped four others who were on an oil exploration assignment in the Lake Chad Basin.

Consequently, internally displaced children are not only denied their educational development, but are deprived of other important benefits as well. The daily routine of going to school provides internally displaced children with a degree of stability and normalcy and can be a source of psychosocial support. It can help to reduce children's exposure to threats like physical attacks, sexual exploitation, and military recruitment. In classrooms, children can be given information regarding the risks around them and how they can guard themselves against such risks. A lack of

access to education undermines their

development and future potential [10].

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Internally Displaced people are exposed to a number of challenges and these remain a pressing issue in Nigeria. While some significant displacement crises have subsided due to the cessation of hostilities and tens of thousands of displaced students have been able to return to their original place of residence, over a million more in the country remain in a precarious situations and new situations of internal displacement continues to occur. Thus, the growth and development of displaced persons lies on proper identification and recognition and

effective management of their education needs. There should be an emphasis on access to good quality education for displaced persons. Accordingly, the ministry of education should formulate policy for education in emergencies that will cater specifically for the needs of the internally displaced students; provision of special educational management skills if the children are to be fully catered for such as training teachers on: Psychosocial skills, Safe school and child protection, peace education, conflict management education are necessary.

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