Post Conflict Reintegration and Challenges of Social Cohesion in North-Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines post conflict reintegration and challenges of social cohesion in North-eastern Nigeria. The paper evaluates the level of social cohesion among four communities affected by the Boko Haram insurgency especially in Borno State, Nigeria. The study presents findings on the nature of social cohesion as both an attribute of a society and as an outcome for peace building interventions aimed to engineer trust across the four communities under study. While adopting qualitative research design, primary and secondary data were used as our source. The paper found out that, Peace building actors like International Alert have discovered building social cohesion in conflict prone areas as key conditions for the sustainability of peace reintegration, resettlement, and rehabilitation of the displaced persons, building state capacity and fostering socio-economic development. The paper also found that, the patterns of social cohesion and strategies that groups/communities use to co-exist peacefully differ from one case to another particularly where there is high level of insecurity, and economic crisis and social polarization and state-led efforts towards constructing trust through new narratives of cohesion and integration. However, citizens of the area expressed willingness to relocate back home but are wary of anticipated challenges for resettlement such as housing, health care, and other basic infrastructures as well as capital to kick-start livelihoods and more importantly security. The paper recommends among others that Provision of social services such as health centre, food, sanitation and shelters by the stakeholders for those living in IDP camps and in affected communities we go a long way in reintegrating the citizens.

Keywords: Reintegration, Social Cohesion, Peace Building, Development, Post Conflict

JEL Code: M20, M2

Contribution/Originality
The paper has contributed to the body of the existing literature on post conflict reintegration and challenges of social cohesion. More so, government and non-governmental organizations would use the findings of this research as a guide in actualizing peace in north-eastern Nigeria. This is an original work by the author.

1.0 Introduction

Over the years, the image of Nigeria facing the menace of Boko-Haram in the North-eastern part of the country has been of a great concern among scholars of both national and international repute. Nigeria had become battered by large scale violence of Boko-Haram in the North-eastern part of the country living citizens in a state of comatose thereby making the North-eastern region of Nigeria in humanitarian

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crisis. For more than 6 years now peace has remained elusive in the region (Ibeanu, 2015, p.12). Boko Haram attacks since 2009 have internally displaced an estimated 2 million IDPs in the region. The displaced are mainly from Borno with 62 percent, Adamawa 18 percent and Yobe with 13 percent of the IDPs (IRIN: 2014). The over 700,000 IDPs in Maiduguri are living in either state-controlled camps or with host families. A rapid assessment mission by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates half of the population of 12 million living in three states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe are directly affected by the ongoing violence (Umar, 2013, p.11). Women and children are the worst affected by the radical Islamist insurgency and constitute 75 percent of the IDPs. The attacks by the insurgents in the Northeast region continue to cause death, displacements, destruction of livelihood and violations of human rights. Many of the victims mostly women, and girls have been raped, abducted and forcibly married. While basic services notably schools and health facilities are being systematically destroyed in the region (Mustapha & Umara: 2015).

As at February 2015 an estimated 5.6 million people are in dire need of humanitarian assistance including the 1.2 million internally displaced people. Apparently, only few humanitarian agencies are on ground in North-eastern Nigeria, mainly because of the insecurity, and also because the government perceived itself as capable of containing the humanitarian crisis despite high level of malnutrition and crumbling health facility in the camps. The only few aid agencies present in the northeast include the Nigerian Red Cross, ICRC, International Rescue Committee, Action against Hunger, Save the Children and the UN Population Fund. However, these agencies are technically overstretched in delivering humanitarian assistance (IRIN: 2014).

Studies have shown that, Boko Haram emerged as a result of political and economic grievances that are deeply rooted in the Nigerian political economy than mere religious cause. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria faces growing insecurity and legitimacy crisis due to bad governance, rising inequality, endemic corruption and social exclusion fosters the growth of radical extremist groups.

Prior to the current humanitarian crisis, the northern part of the country had always been plagued by development challenges with an estimated 50.2 percent of the population in the Northeast living below poverty line (Walker, 2012s, p.16). More than 12 percent of children under 5 years old in the six north-eastern states are recorded, as having acute malnutrition while the national rate is around 8.7 percent. A report by the World Bank revealed that the North more particularly the Northeast region has the highest rate of poverty rate ranging from 54.9 percent to 72.2 percent. More than 70 percent of the rural poor fall within the age category of 25 years and above. Thus, the region is one of the poorest regions in the country (World Bank Report: 2013).

2.0   Literature Review

2.1   Conceptual Clarification

2.1.1   Conflict/Post Conflict/ Post Conflict Reintegration and Social Cohesion

The term conflict is derived from Latin word which means "to clash or engage in a fight". It also indicates a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends. Conflicts, if controlled or managed constructively, do not lead to violence. Some conflicts are "mutually satisfactory while others end up frustrating one or all parties. Peter (2002) recognizes three general forms of conflict: interstate, internal, and state-formation conflicts. Interstate conflicts are disputes between nation-states or violations of the state system. Examples of internal and state-formation conflicts include civil and ethnic wars, anti-colonial struggles, terrorist and autonomous movements, territorial conflicts, and battles over control of government.

Some conflicts are country-wide (Rwanda), and others are localized in specific parts of a country (Sudan). Their origins, often multifaceted, range from ethnic and economic inequalities, social exclusion of sectors of the population, social injustice, competition for scarce resources, poverty, lack of democracy, ideological issues to religious differences (Nigeria and Sudan), and political tensions. The conflicts in the Sudan, Burundi, and Rwanda are, in large measure, the result of historical discrepancies between the ethnic or tribal components of the population. In this work we define conflict as a fight between the terrorist group (Boko-Haram) against the state and citizens which breed destruction of lives and property with adverse effect which cause underdevelopment for the country.

On the other hand, Post-conflict is a "conflict situation in which open warfare has come to an end. Such situations remain tense for years or decades and can easily relapse into large-scale violence". In post-conflict areas, there is an absence of war, but not essentially real peace. Lakhdar (2017) states that "the end of fighting does propose an opportunity to work towards lasting peace, but that requires the establishment of sustainable institutions, capable of ensuring long-term security." Prolonged conflict can lead to terrible human loss and physical devastation; it can also lead to the breakdown of the systems and institutions that make a stable society work.

2.1.2   Post conflict Reintegration

on the other hand, refers to the integration of displaced citizens who have been physically and mentally devastated by conflict, and the provision of amenities to settle the lost glory.

2.2   Social Cohesion

Social cohesion, as a concept to citizens, policymakers and social scientists encapsulate the "glue" or the "bonds" that keep societies integrated. However, for academic purposes it is important to be more specific about what is actually meant by the terms Social cohesion. By social cohesion we mean the belief held by citizens of a given nation-state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other (Larsen 2013). This definition brings us a bit closer to a common understanding. But despite the focus on social cohesion, it is often the absence of social cohesion that is central to the discussion. The very discussion of social cohesion often implies its absence and, even more specifically, the decline of social cohesion. we suggest that we label the decline of social cohesion "social erosion", which we then can define as fewer citizens in a given nation-state having the belief that they share a moral community that enable them to trust each other. Following these definitions, which are in line with the academic origin of the concept, social cohesion is a nonmaterial phenomenon to be observed in the cognitions of citizens. And following this line of reasoning, phenomenon such as equal objective chances of citizens, employment and the rule of law are indeed important, maybe more important than social cohesion, but they are in themselves not indicators of social cohesion (Newton, 2004, p.17).

The question of social cohesion is by no means a new theme. It is a classic concern within social science that the bonds that keep societies together might erode in modern societies or highly differentiated societies. This question was at the very heart of the new discipline of sociology in the nineteenth century. In Durkheim's (1858-1917) terms, the question was what could replace the so-called mechanical solidarity found in pre-modern societies? The solidarity that is established among people who are similar. This similarity could be both materials: similar work, housing and food; and non-material: similar beliefs, morality and feelings. Durkheim labelled the non-material part of the community the conscience collective, which is the academic origin of the term "social cohesion".

Premodern societies were according to Durkheim characterized by a sizeable and strong "collective consciousness", which typically had a strong religious fundament, so that any deviation from the moral

code was typically interpreted as a religious violation. Thus, strong norms of right and wrong and intense monitoring in small communities upheld non-material similarities. Or using the provided definition of social cohesion, the strong religious fundamentalist and close monitoring made the member of society believe that they shared a moral community that enable them to trust each other.

3.0   Methodology

This research used qualitative research and followed strictly on primary and secondary sources of data which was obtained from interviewed which is the primary data and from the study of literatures in the form of books, journals, Newspapers as well as other works that provide scientific information that was relevant to the issue under study, The paper also made use of ex-post facto research design and content analysis as its method of data analysis.

3.1   Social Cohesion for Reintegration: Findings from Field research

In this study, we investigate the level of social cohesion in four communities badly ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency including: Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Bama, Dikwa, and Damboa. Through wide range of interviews IDPs views and perceptions on relocation and the anticipating challenges of the IDPS in camps and host communities were gauged. The aim of this investigation is to-:

a)   Evaluate the level of social cohesion among the selected Local Governments, and Host Communities, which is identified as a key component for early recovery and rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of the Boko Haram conflict in the Northeast region of Nigeria.

b)   To assess ways of promoting trust and inter-group relationships for peaceful coexistence.

c)   To find out whether IDPs are willing to return to their home communities or not.

d)   Evaluate possible challenges for relocation and conditions that are essential for the relocation and reintegration of the IDPs into their respective communities.

e)   The mapping and the monitoring of social cohesion in this report found that social cohesion affects and predicts reconciliation and reintegration such that higher levels of social cohesion will lead to higher chances for reconciliation. Our empirical findings are as followed.

3.2   Finding I: Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC)

Data were gathered in IDP camps including Dalori camp, NYSC, Bakassi and EYN/CAN camps and host communities of Mairi, Gonglong and Wulari. In the IDP camps most of those interviewed in fact almost 90 per cent stated willingness to return back to their communities but are more concerned with challenges for relocation. For example in the Bakassi camp, IDPs pointed to the problem of security, food, shelter and even capital or resilience schemes to kick start livelihood. Other interviewees expressed fears that there may be potential sympathizers of the dreaded group of Boko Haram even among the IDPs/returnees. When asked on whether the IDPs in host communities are getting adequate social service support from governments and donor agencies or not? Almost 80 per cent stated that they received livelihood supports largely from NGOs because governments only provide humanitarian support to IDPs living in camps, which is also meager in comparison with the growing number of the displaced persons. For example, some IDPs interviewed in Mairi and Gongolong complained that no services received from government as they struggle to cope with the negative impact of the insurgency on livelihood. Only NGOS such as ICRC, World Food Programme offer food and cash support for those living in the host communities.

On possibilities for reintegration back to their communities some interviewees expressed willingness to relocate back home but expressed fear and anxiety over possible attacks or forceful conscriptions by Boko Haram. Other IDPs raised concerns about challenges for reintegration and relocation. Almost 90 per cent are worried about security back home and 95 percent pointed to the need for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of social services and infrastructures destroyed by Boko Haram. As observed by some IDPs during a Focus Group Discussion "We all want to go back but our houses are destroyed, farms destroyed and most farming communities are under the territorial control of insurgents almost all of us lost means of livelihoods how can we relocate in this condition". This implies that humanitarian assistance is needed in this IDP camps for development.

3.3   Finding II: Bama Local Government Area

The findings of this study showed that Bama has the largest number of IDPs living in both camps and with host communities and the worst hit by the Boko Haram insurgency. Based on the narratives of those interviewed the attack on Bama Local Government Area by Boko Haram has triggered an appalling humanitarian crisis and gross violation of human rights. As a result of the devastating acts of brutally, destruction and forceful abduction of dissidents by Boko Haram most of those interviewed from Bama are skeptic of the possibilities for reintegration and relocation. Their general perceptions on reintegration largely depends on dealing with issues such as fostering mutual coexistence, forgiveness for victims, governments' effort in designing strategies of screening returnees, involving community leaders and youth groups from the area to dialogue on best way forward for reintegration and evolve community based initiatives for counselling victims' families largely those who lost family members through killings and abductions.

On the challenges for relocation back home some IDPs stated that despite efforts for reconstruction of houses destroyed by the insurgents, reintegration goes beyond mere structural reconstruction as mounting problems on livelihood and basic amenities are essential. During a face-to-face interview with an IDP from Bama whether reintegration is possible or not he stated, "we all like to go back home but the key issue is how do we cope with post-insurgency livelihood? How do we get back our destroyed houses, jobs for the youth, food on our table and even educating our children" Given the colossal problems triggered by the insurgency in the area, most of the interviewees advocated for a collective dialogue among the people of the area on how to advice the governments and donor agencies on reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction of their locality.

The challenges for reintegrating back to their communities identified include: improve security, rebuild houses, livelihood and resilience support such as capital for businesses, rebuild schools and other basic infrastructures will motivate people to go back.

3.4   Finding III: Damboa Local Government Area

The general perception of IDPs from Damboa Local Government Area is similar to the IDPs in other areas of the study. Almost 85 percent are also very concerned and doubtful if at all government will support their post-relocation livelihood. Many of those interviewed stated that there has never been any support of interventions from the government for those living with host communities. During the Focus Group Interview some of the IDPs stated "despites efforts by both the Federal and the State Government on reconstructions and rehabilitation of destroyed communities it has not reached out community". As IDPs we get supports only from NGOs like the ICRC who give food support and cash for resilience supports, Oxfam offered sanitation and other services. When asked whether they will relocate and reintegrate with their communities or not almost 90 per cent responded positively but also outlined

conditions for return. Majority expressed willingness if provided with support such as security, housing and other social amenities. One interviewee stated I fled my hometown for two years now to Maiduguri, we don't have anything doing only begging if I could go back to my community and live in peace, I will be the happiest person. We are all tired of redundancy with nothing to support our family and send our children to schools". Right now, all of us are afraid of going back to meet our houses burnt by Boko Haram and with moral and material supports to restart our lives".

Similarly, from the findings of this report there is also deep sense of distrust about the activities of Boko Haram. Some of the IDPs are concerned about post-relocation security and the possibilities of potential sympathizers of Boko Haram among the IDPs. "We want to go back home but we are also afraid because we don't know when and where will the Boko Haram come from to attack us". This sense of distrust has psychologically affected the minds of most the IDPs on whether they should relocate or reintegrate in the host communities. Others consider almost half of the IDPs in Damboa as Boko Haram sympathizers. This feeling of mistrust has rendered the IDPs to be reluctant about relocation. "We will not go back because we fear for our lives" says the IDPs during an interview.

3.5   Finding IV: Dikwa Local Government Area

Almost 75 percent of those interviewed from Dikwa Local Government Area unanimously expressed willingness to relocate back to their communities if houses are rebuild, security enhanced, education and health care facilities are provided. On their general perceptions about the devastating impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on their lives there was mixed perceptions and feelings among the interviewees. Some accepts their fate, as victims of conflict and others are still traumatized and thus afraid of the potential dangers for relocation. In addition to the structural challenges of resettlement almost 90 per cent of those interviewed identified the following as challenges for social cohesion and relocation: enmity, acrimony, mutual distrust, retaliation and abnormality. One interviewee observed that "we want to go back home there no place like home but this crisis has created a strong feeling of mutual distrust you don't know who to trust, you don't know who is a Boko Haram even among the IDPs and we don't know how people will even accept those forcefully conscripted into the Boko Haram and are now returnees how can they be reintegrated and can people forgive them and avoid stigmatization". Most of the IPDs advocated for a pre-location dialogue aimed at screening returnees and sensitize people on the need for building social cohesion and fostering peaceful coexistence.

The displaced persons from Dikwa also acknowledged supports from NGOs such as ICRC, MSF, UNICEF and World Food Programme. These NGOs have been instrumental in providing food, medical services, counselling and nutritional needs for the malnourished children.

3.6   Perceptions from Respondents

Most respondents largely IDPs from Damboa and Dikwa expressed perceptions of one another that clustered around issues of distrust, association, empathy and consciousness on livelihood and survival. Most of the IDPs interviewed stated that the Boko haram insurgency has created a deep sense of mutual distrust and suspicion as a result of destructions of lives and property by the insurgent. In particular, the general perception of those who fled the violence are stigmatized as "Boko Haram sympathizers leading to breakdown of family ties and social cohesion in communities ravaged by the conflict. When asked about the possibilities for reintegration back into their home of origin most of the IDPs observed that for now reintegration is not the major issue that affects their livelihood and survival as victims of the insurgency, instead government presence to enhanced policy of social protection and develop strategies for coping mechanism through livelihood schemes is key to early recovery for the displaced. This is

simply because almost 90 per cent of the IDPs are dependent on governments and NGOs for support. Similarly, almost all of those interviewed during the Focus Group Discussions argued that fostering peaceful coexistence with host communities is also crucial for the survival of the IDPS.

In this context, it should be argued that the IDPs are all united by the following-:

• Survival and livelihood

• Focus on reconciliation and rehabilitation more particularly stakeholders i.e. governments and NGOS should focus on promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence

• Create resilience and livelihood strategies such as jobs and victim support funds

3.7 Perceptions on Relocation

Most of those interviewed in both face-to-face and Focus Group Discussions expressed willingness to return to their home communities and Local Governments (LGAs) of Origin but on the following conditions-: (a) security collaboration between the military, state government, the Civilian Joint Task Force and Community Vigilante for the protection of returnees (b) reconstruction of destroyed shelter and enhanced housing scheme at communities (c) Stakeholders (governments and NGOs) should partner in developing livelihood schemes such as Small and Medium Enterprises, supply farming equipment, clear landmines and food to empower IDPs who lost means of livelihood to insurgency (d) provision of basic services and amenities such as hospitals, schools, boreholes, doctors, teachers and other infrastructures destroyed by Boko Haram (e) and creation of community based counselling centres for consulting and advices of victims of violent insurgency mostly those suffered from post-traumatic disorder.

Table 1. Perceptions and Challenges of Relocation in IDPs Camp in Four Communities of Borno State.

S/No	LGAs	Perceptions	Relocation	Challenges
1.	MMC	Willing to be back and unite with families	Willing to go and relocate if governments & NGOs should provide enabling environment for relocation	Shelter Fear of possible attack by Boko Haram Lack of capital to kick start livelihood Lack basic amenities such as hospitals & schools

2.	Bama	We would welcome the returnees & we know those who fled genuinely & those that joined Boko Haram. We will respond based on that.	Government should provide basic services as condition for relocation	Reconstruction of houses, food, jobs. Apparently no services only support from NGOs. Security measures for social protection and take off grants for livelihood is key to relocation.
3.	Dikwa	Social reconstruction and rehabilitation of IDPs by government and NGOs should be the first condition for relocation. Security outfits like the CJTF should be put under oath and properly supervised to ensure there are not collaborators with Boko Haram	Willing to relocate if shelter, food and security is provided	Houses and social service structures destroyed. No food, water and more importantly security for the protection of the returnees is not guaranteed. Psychological support such as counseling and cash support for victims of the conflict is crucial.
4.	Damboa	Willing to accept repentant Boko Haram back to communities. Also willing to embrace new challenges to restart post-conflict livelihood	IDPs desperate to return	Willing to return if provided with shelter, food and security

Based on the data gathered from the four communities affected, it is crystal clear that most of the communities are willing to accept repentant Boko Haram back, they are also willing to embrace new challenges to restart post-conflict livelihood. They are also willing to relocate if shelter, food and security is provided. Houses and social service structures destroyed. No food, water and more importantly security for the protection of the returnees is not guaranteed. Psychological support such as counselling and cash support for victims of the conflict is crucial.

5.0   Conclusion

This paper is written against the backdrop of the outcome of the four weeks field experiment in four Local Government Areas badly hit by the Boko Haram insurgency. The study evaluates the level of trust and possibilities for reintegration among internally displaced persons in host communities. Findings indicate that building capacity for social cohesion, post conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of destroyed communities and strengthening humanitarian aid by donor agencies can have a measurable impact on social cohesion and reintegration. The years of conflict and resulting trauma has contributed to deep feeling of mistrust and uncertainty among IDPs. There were also fears of possible regrouping of Boko Haram at the community level. This and many other challenges such as loss of social capital among others to constitute a major obstacle for reintegration.

The pattern of social cohesion and strategies that groups adopt to coexist peacefully differ from community to community especially where level of human insecurity is high. In this context there must be both state-led and NGO led efforts towards constructing trust through new narratives of social cohesion and integration involving community leaders and social groups. Social cohesion is likely to occur in divided societies where strong state institutions cause groups to interact with one another under condition of equality, and where an inclusive state provides basic services to all groups.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the study above, the following are identified as solutions/recommendations for social cohesion and early recovery for the communities badly hit by the Boko Haram conflict-:

1. Provision of social services such as health centres, food, sanitation and shelters by the stakeholders for those living in IDP camps and in communities.

2. Security and protection for the IDPs need to be enhanced in particular the Joint Task force and government conflict over roles need to be resolved.

3. Government and NGOs should collaborate in building capacity for social cohesion and reconciliation for the victims of insurgency prior to their relocation aimed at healing mistrust and disaffections.

4. Soft loan for IDPs to acquire lost agricultural inputs and other coping mechanism such as small businesses to enhanced income capacity for livelihood.

5. Reconstruction of houses, schools, and health centres destroyed by insurgents.

6. Creation of counselling centres in all Local Government Areas for those traumatized by the devastating impact of the conflict.

7. Promote inter-faith dialogue among communities and their leaders aimed at fostering mutual coexistence.

8. Strengthen democratic institutions through good governance and peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms.

9. Governments and donor agencies should empower youth and women who are largely unemployed. This will forestall possible radicalization and even conscription of youth into the rank of the terrorist.

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