

“BOKO HARAM” INSURGENCE AND THE THREAT TO EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Nelson Ejiro AKPOTU, Ph.D.

Department of Educational Management and Foundations

Delta State University, Abraka – Nigeria

Abstract

“Boko Haram” an Hausa name which literarily means “western education is sinful, sacrilege and forbidden” has been an Islamic jihadist militant group operating in most parts of Northern Nigeria that is predominantly Muslim settlement. Since 2009 when the aggressive violence started, over 4,000 people have been killed in the Northern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Kaduna, Kano and Yobe including Abuja. In Borno State alone, since the beginning of 2012, at least 15,000 students have been forced out of schools and over 100 teachers and 100 students killed or wounded due to attacks on educational institutions by Boko Haram groups. Also, over 825 blocks of classrooms have been destroyed; fifty of the 175 primary schools in Borno State have been burnt or destroyed and 209 schools in Yobe State destroyed. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said about 10,000 Nigerians mostly children; women and elderly have fled to neighbouring countries like Cameroun, Niger and Chad. Records show that Nigeria has the highest rate of out- of- school children, numbering about 10.5 million; many of whom are found in the Northern States that is generally regarded as educationally backward. The insurgency of Boko Haram poses further challenges and threats to education. This forms the basis for this paper which tries to examine the consequences of Boko Haram insurgency on school enrolment and attendance of students and teachers; the provision of basic infrastructures for teaching and learning in the educationally backward states of Northern Nigeria It suggests the application of the human rights-based approach to the planning and implementation of the Nigerian education for sustainable socio- political and economic development.

INTRODUCTION

For years now, the mention of Nigeria anywhere in the world stirs up images of poverty, crime, ethno-religious violence, and terrorism. Since the more violent phase of its campaign erupted in 2009, Boko Haram has instilled widespread insecurity across the country and has increased tensions among ethno-religious groups. The sect has been responsible for a series of deadly attacks on strategic governmental agencies, religious centers, educational institutions and innocent individuals. It has also attacked key Muslim clerics, politicians, and Christians. But Boko Haram's attacks have been directed selectively at churches and schools. This is perhaps because of its strategic re-direction and focus to implement its own variant of shari'ah law by inflaming religious animosities and violence in Nigeria.

Given the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria and the dismal socioeconomic conditions in which many Nigerians live, it is believed that Boko Haram terrorism is devastating for Nigeria's fragile unity and, indeed, has a net tendency of further polarizing Nigerians along religious and regional lines. As a result of the deadly attacks on teachers and pupils, almost all schools in Bama, Baga, Jajeri, Umarari, Garnam, Mai Malari, Mungono and Gamboru, all in Borno State were forced to close for a long time between February 2012 and early 2013. This calls for serious concern since the Nigerian government is obliged, as part of its obligation under Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, ICESCR, to protect everybody's right to education and to take measures that prevent third parties from interfering with the enjoyment of this right.

The declaration of a State of Emergency in Adamawa, Yobe and Borno States at the beginning of 2013 appears to make attacks on schools to become more brutal. They frequently happened when schools were occupied, and according to reports received by Amnesty International, teachers and pupils were directly targeted and killed. In some attacks, teachers were killed on school premises in full view of children. In others, school buildings were set on fire and school properties destroyed. Amnesty said teachers in rural communities were particularly susceptible to these attacks. It observed that several attacks on schools in rural communities remained unreported. "Teachers in northern Borno were particularly at risk because many of the towns and communities

are completely outside the control of the government security forces. Even when some teachers continued to teach, they were constantly monitored by the group. Members of the group will stand outside the classrooms to listen to the lessons. It was like teaching under gunpoint. “The situation is worse for us who have received Western education and teach English in the public schools in northern Borno,” said H.H, a Borno based teacher who was forced to flee after he was threatened by Boko Haram.

Many school buildings remain destroyed, damaged and unused. When schools are burnt down, it is not only the classrooms that are lost, leaving children with nowhere to learn, but also all the teaching materials, equipment and school records. Some schools were burnt down two or three times since 2012. The destruction of and damage to school infrastructure and facilities grossly reduce the availability of and access to education for many children. Access to basic education requires that sufficient and proper facilities and services are in place and that students can access adequate books and materials. When education institutions are attacked, the damage and its consequences are far-reaching.

Boko Haram Insurgency and the declaration of a state of emergency in the northeast disrupted academic activities. For instance, it led to the restriction on vehicular movements in the affected areas which led to students resorting to trekking to school no matter the distance of their schools from their homes; with serious implications on attendance and quality. Also, Boko Haram threatens and even kill some teachers that are teaching in schools simply because they were teaching western education. As a result, many teachers either from public or private schools resigned their appointments. For instance, a teacher, Mallam Musa Ngandu who teaches in a public school said; “To be frank with you, teaching profession here in Borno State is no longer interesting because of Boko Haram threats on our lives. We are now on holidays and when school resumes, many of the teachers may not come back to the classrooms because they don’t want to risk their lives. In fact, the situation is worst at the local government areas where you hardly find a school teacher in any school, especially at the North and Borno Central. And that’s why you have high number of school aged children roaming the streets of Maiduguri”, he lamented. The school districts that are worst affected by the arson attacks include old Maiduguri city and four local government areas – Marte, Kala-Balge, GamboruNgala and Mabar all in the northern part of Borno on the border with Cameroon and Chad.

For more than two decades now, there seem not to be any sector of the Nigerian economy that has generated much upheaval and giving much cause of worry in a comparably equivalent degree as the education sector. Yet, education is central to development as it empowers people and strengthens nations. It is a powerful “equalizer”, opening doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty. Education is critical to the world’s attainment of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Investment in education benefits the individual, society, and the world as a whole. Broad-based education of good quality is among the most powerful instruments known to reduce poverty and inequality. With proven benefits for personal health, it also strengthens nations’ economic health by laying the foundation for sustained economic growth. For individuals and nations, it is key to creating, applying, and spreading knowledge—and thus to the development of dynamic, globally competitive economies.

At the heart of the holistic school approach is a human-right-based approach to education. This approach addresses the right of every person to quality education and respect for human rights. A human- rights-based approach increases access to and participation in schooling as it fosters inclusion, diversity, equal opportunities and non-discrimination. It improves the quality of education by promoting student- centred and participatory teaching practices and by creating a safe learning environment, both of which are fundamental for learning to take place. Respect for human rights supports the social and emotional development of children by ensuring their human dignity and fundamental freedoms, which are necessary for students to reach their full potential. The daily practice of a human rights-based approach leads to the creation of a rights-based school, a safe environment conducive to learning where teachers and students together enjoy and fully benefit from the educational process. This conducive and safe learning environment has been absent in northeastern Nigeria since the violent attacks of Boko Haram.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE BOKO HARAM ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR.

Statistics has it that Nigeria has the highest rate of out-of-school children numbering about 10.5 million, many of whom live in northern Nigeria where Boko Haram insurgency has been ravaging. Since the beginning of 2012, at least 15,000 students have been forced out of schools in Borno state alone, and over 70 teachers and 100 students killed due to attacks on educational institutions. And over 800 block of classrooms have been destroyed in Borno and 50 out of the

175 primary schools in the state have been burnt down. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that over 10,000 Nigerians have fled to neighbouring countries like Cameroun, Niger and Chad as at June, 2013. By March 2014, the number of persons forced out of their homes was estimated to be about 300,000. Also, almost these numbers of persons have been displaced from their homes. As at March 18, 2014, Borno State government closed down 85 schools in the north- eastern Borno, affecting nearly 120,000 students in an area that has the country's worst literacy rates.

In Yobe state, on February 25th 2014, the Boko Haram extremists locked some 59 students of a boarding school, Federal Government College, Buni, Yadi, Yobe State into a dormitory and set them ablaze. Another 29 students and a teacher were also killed in another school in Yobe State. The situation necessitated the closure of schools and the relocation of staff and students to neighbouring Katsina and Kaduna states. In the circumstance, schools were forcefully closed; parents withdraw their children from schools and school enrolment drastically reduced. Also, on 29th September 2013, the College of Agriculture in Gujba in Yobe state had 40 of its students killed while more than 150 sustained injuries. Further reports indicated that 78 students were confirmed dead by Monday, 30th September. Before then, in October 2012, over 40 students were murdered in cold blood in Federal Polytechnic, Adamawa State. Also, another Yobe school attack was carried out in July 2013 when a school dormitory was doused in petrol and set alight. No fewer than 46 students were burnt to death.



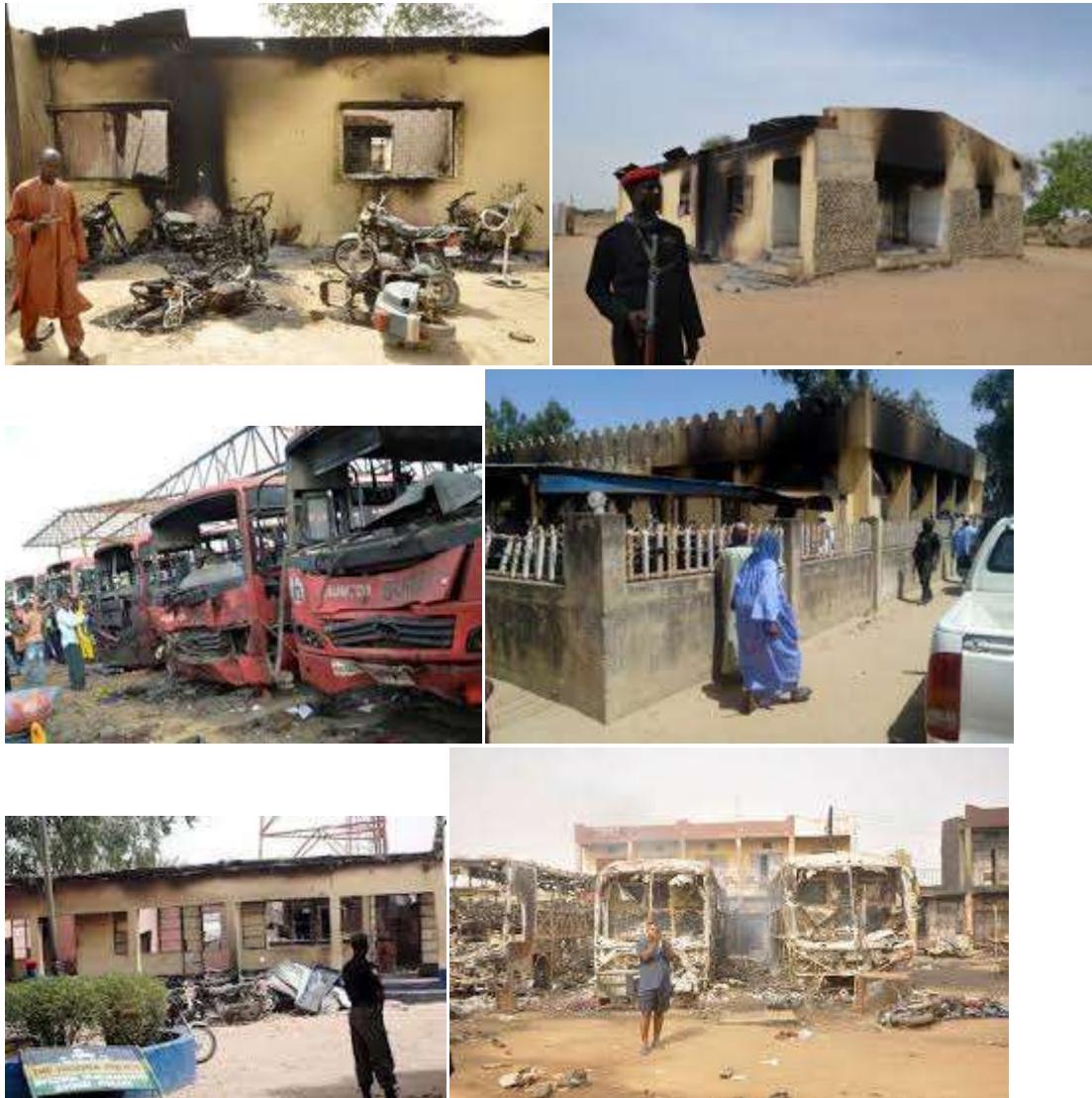
A section of the school burnt down

The deliberate targeting, intimidation, harassment, and killing of school teachers and students have forced teachers and students to leave their communities to go into hiding. The teachers, parents and children who are in school are living in constant fear, shock, distress and severe psychological trauma. Security in schools is elusive, as not only physical, psychological and emotional safety, but also an uninterrupted education in conditions conducive to knowledge acquisition and character development form part of the right to education. The Boko Haram attacks on schools in the area have undermined the rights to education for thousands of children. In Borno State as at 20th April 2012, 14 schools had been burnt down in Maiduguri, the State capital, forcing over 7,000 children to drop out of school pushing down the enrolment rate in an already ill-educated region. According to the Nigeria Education Data Survey, school enrolment is already reduced in Borno to 28 percent, worse than any other state in Nigeria.

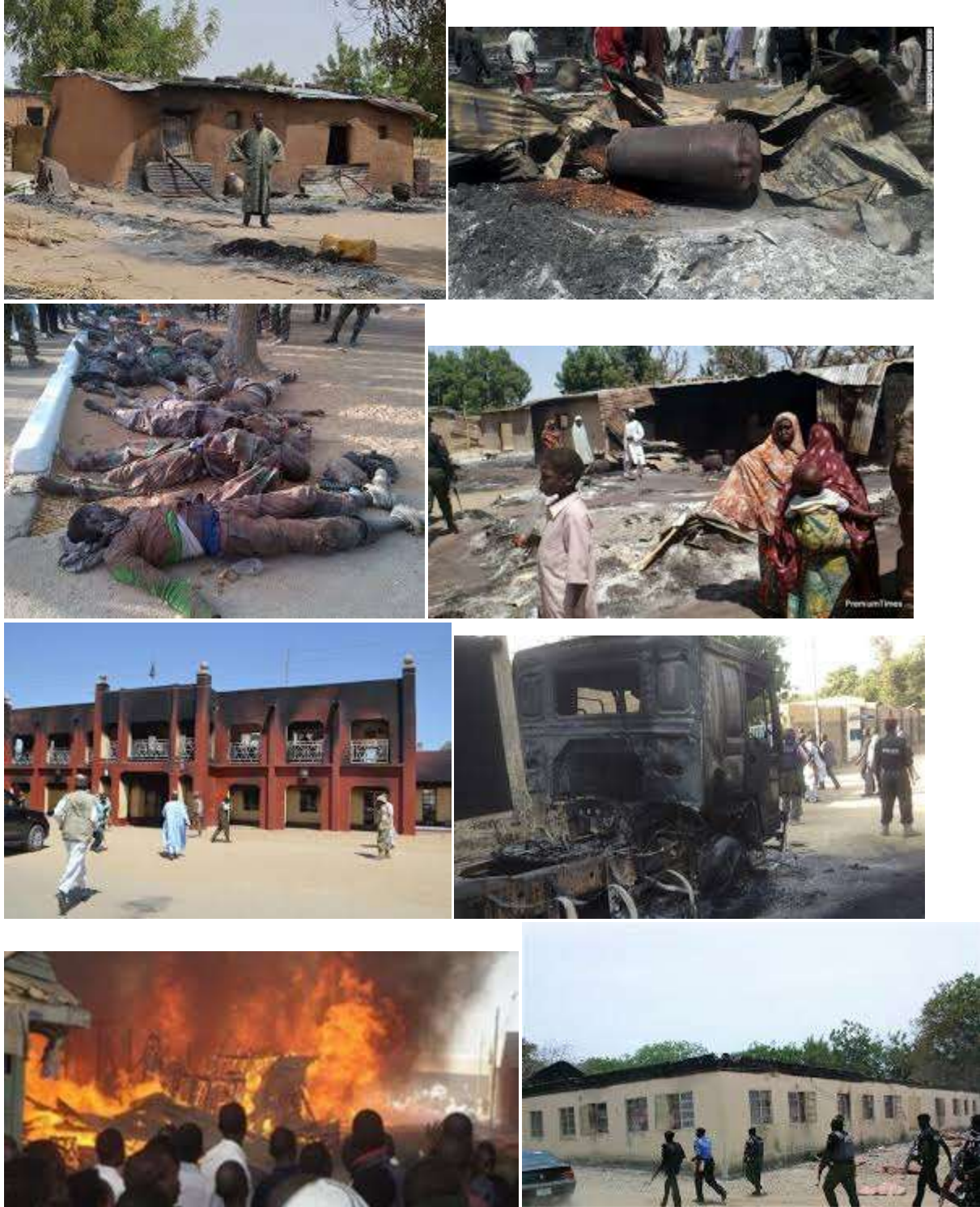


Many school buildings remain destroyed, damaged and burnt leaving teachers and students nowhere to learn. Also, all teaching materials, equipment and school records destroyed. The destruction and damage of school infrastructure and facilities grossly reduces the availability and access to education. Indeed, there is declining and gradual collapse of the educational system in the affected areas.

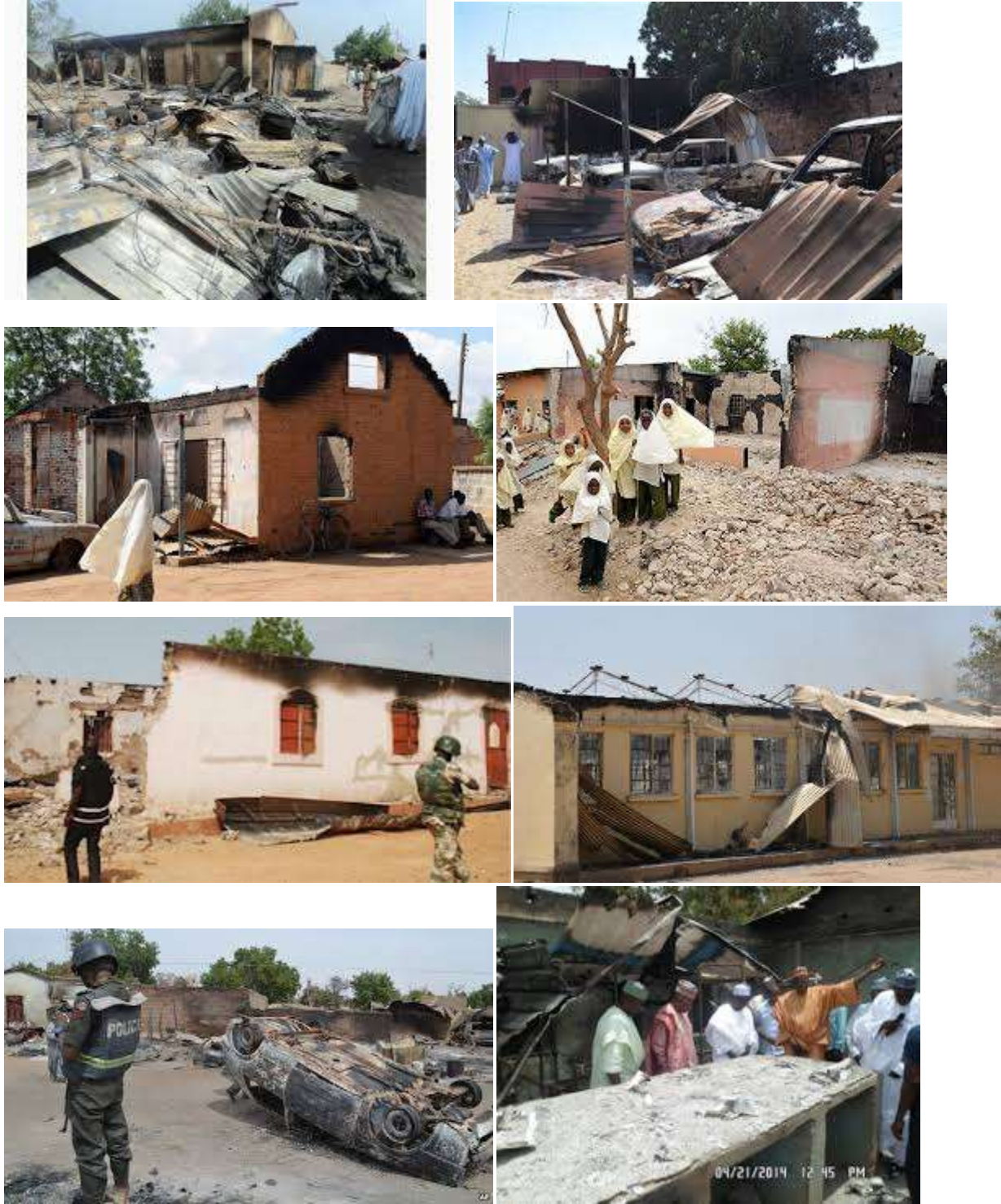
As reported by the Human Right Watch, since the beginning of 2012, so many havoc have been committed by the Boko Haram insurgency leaving several thousand children without access to education. Below are pictures of school buildings and infrastructures that were burnt down by Boko Haram.















Between January and March 2014, no less than 3,000,000 Nigerians were displaced and 1,000 people killed as a result of Boko Haram insurgency. Schools in the affected states have been closed down. According to the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB there is 35 % drop in enrolment of students for the entrance examinations to tertiary institutions in Nigeria because of the Boko Haram attacks on schools. In fact, on the 12th of April 2014, 210 students who were going to write the JAMB Examination were killed by Boko Haram in Borno State. The grave consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency on the educational system in the immediate and foreseeable future can better be imagined. For example, reduced enrolment at all levels of the educational system is eminent and the level of manpower production will be adversely affected.



In April, 2014, no less than 230 girls of Government Girls School, Chibok were abducted by the Boko Haram insurgency. This has grave consequences on the education of the girl child as parents are becoming more unwilling to allow their female children to go to school, with dire further consequences on access to primary and secondary education which has been as low as 30-40 % and 5% respectively before now.

National security is about economic empowerment, it is about protecting the weak, the vulnerable, it is ensuring that they have access to education beyond equal opportunities to about equal access, without equal access there will be no equity and without equity there can be no justice. Yet, majority of the people cannot access education, it means that a lot of our people will continue to wallow, they will continue to be excluded and they will continue to be vulnerable, meaning that they are being dis-empowered and are not yet prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

Boko Haram has become a major threat to the entire nation. Their activities have crippled the socio-economic life of the entire citizenry. Their activities have rubbished the image of Nigeria and hampered the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The impact of

the activities of the dreaded Boko Haram has brought physical, psychological and economic damage to the Nigerian fragile economy. With the increased intensity of bombing .in the North, there is mass movement of households and individuals from the most attacked states. This sudden movement directly affects school attendance among children. Some forced to change location and school. Also, with the massive killing of people, youth coppers of southern origin reject posting to the north to serve thereby affecting the manpower needs of the people.

With the burning and destruction of school buildings, infrastructure and learning materials; the absence of teachers and learners and the frequent closure of schools, the quality of education in the affected states is definitely negatively hampered. Every effort of governments to boost school enrolment and school attendance over the years has been thwarted by repeated attacks, destructions, burning and killings. In reality, considering the renewed wave of attacks and insurgencies in northern Nigeria and north –east Nigeria in particular, it will take decades to bring school enrolment, attendance and educational quality to its former level much more to advance it beyond the level it was. Indeed, the Federal and state governments have a herculean task ahead of them in developing education in the north as a whole.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RECTIFYING THE EDUCATION PROBLEMS

There are urgent steps that need to be taken to correct the situation in the affected states. First, the Federal and state governments must develop the economic and political will power to solve the problem. In addition, the international community must rise to the aid of Nigeria to stop the Boko Haram excesses. There is need to continue to build multinational security ties and networks in the region. Efforts to dialogue with the sect may be necessary to actually know what their grievances are. The Federal government is encouraged to work with northern political, traditional and religious leaders and elites towards a political solution.

The need for mass literacy campaign to educate and enlighten parents on the advantages of western education should start in the mosques, mass media, hausa radio stations and in the communities. The enforcement of the compulsory aspect of the Universal Basic Education Act must be implemented without further delay. This will reduce illiteracy rate and vulnerability. Massive re-construction of the schools should be carried out with the Federal Government giving assistance to the states. Parents have to be motivated and assured of the safety of their children

in schools. This can be achieved from the provision of basic school learning materials including mid-day meals and improved policing of school environments. Indeed, the schools need to be more vocational and technical to instill practical skills in the learners, particularly agricultural skills. Also, the integration of the Almajiri system of education with the western system can help to eradicate lawlessness and hooliganism.

Teachers in the rural settlements also need to be motivated through sustainable health and insurance policies and enhanced financial benefits to the serving and those who have lost their lives to Boko Haram.

Conclusion

Government must begin to tackle the root causes of growing radical Islamic and ethnic militancy by fully developing and implementing sustainable development projects such as anti-desertification campaign, reconstruction of schools, large scale irrigation, agriculture, power, and road projects that are capable of promoting small businesses that could create jobs for the youths.

References

- Adibe, J. (2012). "Boko Haram: One sect, conflicting narratives." *African Renaissance*, 9(1).
- Agande, B; Omonobi, K, and Marama, N (2014). "Do not sleep until peace returns to Borno, Jonathan tells Service Chiefs" *Vanguard*, January 6th p.8.
- Alozieuwa, S.H.O. (2012). "Contending Theories on Nigeria's Security Challenge in the Era of Boko Haram Insurgency". *The Peace and Conflict Review* 7 (1).
- Anyadike, I. and Nkechi, O. (2013). "Boko Haram and National Security Challenges in Nigeria, Causes and Solutions" *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. 4 (5). 2222 – 2855.
- Bekoe, D. (2011). "Nigeria's 2011 Elections: Best run, but most violent" by (Peace Brief, August, 2011) Washington, UNO Publication.

Brock, J. (2012). "Untold Story of how Boko Haram bombed UN house". The Nation, Wednesday, February 1, pp. 2-3.

Chucks, O.; Andrew, J; Olugbode, M. & Paul, O. (2013). "Outrage as Gunmen kill 40 students in Yobe". Thisday, September 29 vol.5.

Duru, P. and Maram, N. (2014). "Fresh Boko Haram Claims 18 lives in Borno" Vanguard January 21st. p.8

Edeh, S. (2014). Almajiri School Project. Vanguard: January 29th, p.55.

Egburonu, S. (2012). "Tension as groups flee over Boko Haram Threats". The Nation on Sunday, January 29, pp.20 -22.

Ezeoha, S. L. (2011) "Causes and Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria" The National Scholar, Vol.8; No.2 (November) pp.28- 38.

Ezea, S. (2010). " Security Challenges from Ringim to Abubakar, Will History Repeat itself ?. The Guardian Saturday, January 28, p.49.

Farouk, S. (2012). Brain Storming Terrorism in Nigeria: How can we detect Boko Haram, Moacn World press.com/2012/.../brainstorming-terrorism-in-nig. Retrieved 10th Nov. 2012.

Fasan, R. (2011). "Will there be peace in our Time?" The Vanguard, Wednesday, September 28, p.36.

Forest, J.F. (2012). "Confronting the Boko Haram in Nigeria" JSOU Report 12-5. The JSOU Press, Mac Dill Air Force Base, Florida.

Johnson, B. (2012) "A Nation on the Brink". The News, February 6, pp 14-17.

Kalu, N.; Agbakwuru, J; Erunke, I. and Ajiya, B. (2013). "Gunmen Massacred 78 Students in Yobe" Vanguard, September 30th, p.17.

Kalu, U. and Balogun, I. (2012). United States Military reports 196 bombings occurred in Nigeria. Vanguard, March 17th, p.5.

Maduabuchi, E. (2012). “Siege of a Nation”. Sunday Independent, January 29. Pp. 15-18.

Mamah, E., Daniel, S. ; Agande, B. and Marama, N. (2014). “ 100 massacred in fresh Boko Haram attacks” Vanguard, February 17th p. 15.

Maram, N. (2014) “ Borno : Their black Sunday !” Vanguard, February 2nd p.42.

Marama, N. (2013). “5 NECO Candidates, 13 others killed in fresh Boko Haram attacks” Vanguard, Wednesday June 19th p.6.

Marama, N. (2013). “Gunmen kill 4 teachers, students and farmers in Borno” Vanguard, June 20th p.9.

Muhammad, A.; Marama, N. and Edeh, S. (2012). “Boko Haram top short killed – JTF” - Vanguard, September 18th p.15.

NOSCEF. (2014). “Time to raise our voices against violence” Vanguard, February 9th p.7. Christian Elders Forum of Northern States (NOSCEF).

Nwadiani, Mon. (2012) Educational Expectations and Realities: Functional Dilemmas in Educational Planning. 126 Inaugural lecture series University of Benin, Benin- City.

Ogunwale, G. (2012). “Army Chief to Federal Government: Do not negotiate with Boko Haram”. The Nation, Wednesday, January 25th, p.5.

Ogunyemi, B. and Align, M.K. (2011). “Is Nigeria under siege? “The National Scholar, Vol.8. No.2 pp.4-5, 26.

Ogunyemi, B. (2011). “Our sense of Security” Thisday, Friday, September 30th p.35.

Okereke, N.C. (2012). “Implementing the Nigerian Defense policy: Reflections on the Boko Haram Crisis” in O. Mbachu & A.A.Sokoto (eds.) Nigerian Defense and Security: Policies and Strategies. Kaduna: Medusa Academic Publishers Ltd.

Okpaga, A; Chijioke, S & Innocent, O. (2013). “Activities of Boko Haram and Insecurity question in Nigeria” *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (OMAN Chapter)* vol.1, No.9. pp77-80.

Olugbode, M. (2013). “Borno Highway Ambush: 142 Corpses Evacuated from bush” *Thisday*, September 20th vol.9.

Oluso, F. and Femi, M. (2013). “Borno lost 800 classrooms to Boko Haram – Governor: Punch, August 9, p.5.

Omonijo, B. (2012). “The Failed or Failing: Endless debate on Nigerian state” *The Nation on Sunday*, Lagos, Vintage Press Ltd.

Padung, L. L. and Datol, G. (2002) Bottleneck to the quality and quantity of women education: A case for concern in *WICEPA J.* vol. 1(1).

The Nation Editorial (2012) “Funding Terror”, *The Nation*, Thursday, 26th, p.19.

Umar, Y. (2012). “Gunmen massacre 40 students in Adamawa: Vanguard online; October 3rd p.2.

Uzodike, U. O. and Maiangwa, B. (2012). “Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria: Casual Factors and Central Problematic” *African Renaissance* 9(1).

Walker, A. (2012) *What is Boko Haram?* Washington: UNO Publication.

Zumve, S and Ingvoroko, M. (2012). “Terrorism in Contemporary Nigeria, a latent function of official corruption and state neglect” Paper presented at the 12th Annual Conference of Nigeria Sociological Society held at the Conference Center, University of Lagos, Akoka – Yaba, November, 27th.