



Humanitarian Assistance and Vulnerability in Conflict-Affected Communities: A Study of Women and Children in Borno State Nigeria (2013-2023)

By

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Abstract

This study critically examines the relationship between humanitarian assistance and women and child vulnerability conflict affected environments, with a particular emphases on the experiences of women and juveniles in Borno State, Nigeria, between 2013 and 2023. Over the past decade, Borno State has experience a protracted armed conflict, largely due to the Boko Haram insurgency, leading to widespread displacement, insecurity, and humanitarian crises. Women and juveniles have borne the brunt of these challenges, facing heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, forced recruitment, economic marginalization, and disruption of essential services such as education and healthcare. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study combines qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys across three local government areas—Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Monguno, and Gwoza—to explore how humanitarian interventions have responded to the specific vulnerabilities of these groups. Guided by Human Security Theory and Social Vulnerability Theory, the research uncovers structural and operational constraints—such as insecurity, limited access, logistical difficulties, and sociocultural barriers—that impede the effective delivery of aid. The findings reveal a significant gap between the needs of women and juveniles and the reach of current humanitarian responses. The study underscores the importance of adopting gender-sensitive, youth-inclusive, and context-specific strategies to enhance the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of humanitarian aid. It recommends strengthening institutional frameworks, community participation, and long-term resilience-building measures to support conflict-affected populations. This research contributes to both academic discourse and policy formulation by offering a nuanced understanding of humanitarian assistance in protracted conflict settings, particularly as it affects vulnerable populations in Northeast Nigeria.



1. Introduction

Globally, conflict settings are more common and complicated than ever before, which presents serious obstacles to peace, security, and human development. Since 2010, there has been an increase in violent conflicts, mostly in Africa and the Middle East, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (SIPRI, 2021). These conflicts range from intra-state confrontations, terrorism, and ethnic unrest to inter-state warfare of varying intensities. The Global Peace Index (GPI), which measures variables like levels of violence, militarism, and political instability, sheds light on the state of peace and conflict throughout the world. In addition, conflict environments have significant humanitarian implications, resulting in widespread suffering, death, and displacement. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that as of 2020, there were over 80 million people forcibly displaced worldwide, including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. The GPI report for 2021 shows a deterioration in global peace, with the average level of peacefulness declining for the ninth time in the last 12 years (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2021).

UNICEF reports that children are disproportionately impacted by armed conflict, with millions of them suffering from severe rights abuses including as sexual assault, enlistment as child soldiers, and being denied access to healthcare and education (UNICEF, 2021). In war contexts, women also suffer disproportionately because they are more likely to experience economic insecurity, displacement, and sexual and gender-based abuse. In Resolution 1325 (2000), the UN Security Council acknowledged the harm that armed conflict does to women and advocated for more female involvement in peacekeeping and attempts to resolve conflicts.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that by the end of 2020, there will be over 82.4 million individuals who have been forcibly displaced globally, which is a double increase over the previous ten years (UNHCR, 2021). Women and children make up almost 80% of those displaced, and this displacement is a direct result of both conflict and human rights violations (UNHCR, 2021). Furthermore, the effects of conflict on the economy are profound. According to the Global Peace Index 2021 published by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), the economic cost of violence on the world economy in 2020



was expected to be \$14.4 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP), or 11.6% of the world GDP or \$1,942 per person (IEP, 2021).

This financial burden accounts for both the immediate costs of conflict, such as those associated with military action and security services, as well as its indirect costs, which include lost productivity, infrastructure damage, and long-term effects on social cohesion and development. Women and children are disproportionately affected by conflicts because they are more likely to be victims of abuse, exploitation, and violence. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) emphasizes that there is a rise in maternal mortality and morbidity risks, a disruption in access to reproductive health care, and an increase in gender-based violence in conflict settings (UNFPA, 2020). Conflict has an especially negative effect on young people, impairing their physical and mental health, interfering with their schooling, and frequently leading to forced labor or recruitment into armed groups.

Conflict parties' constraints, insecurity, and logistical difficulties in accessing impacted populations can impede humanitarian access. Over 235 million people needed humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This is a nearly 40% increase from 2019 and highlights the growing needs amidst limited resources and access constraints (OCHA, 2020). There has been a noticeable rise in the number of military conflicts in Africa in recent years. Over 21,600 combat incidents were reported in Africa in 2020, according to the Armed combat Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). This is a considerable increase from prior years (ACLED, 2021).

In addition to causing fatalities, these conflicts have resulted in millions of people being forcibly displaced from their homes in pursuit of safety. Africa is experiencing a particularly severe displacement issue. Over 26 million people who had been forcibly displaced—including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people (IDPs)—were housed in Africa by the end of 2020, according to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021). Among the worst affected are Nigeria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where internal strife and insurgencies have resulted in serious displacement issues.



The World Bank (2021) notes that conflicts significantly reduce economic growth, destroy infrastructure, and deplete natural resources. For example, the ongoing conflict in the Lake Chad Basin, which includes parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, has severely affected agricultural production and livelihoods, contributing to food insecurity and economic instability in the region.

Women and children are disproportionately affected by conflicts in Africa. They face increased risks of violence, including sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) highlights that in conflict-affected areas of Africa, the incidence of (GBV) rises, and access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, is often compromised (UNFPA, 2020). For juveniles, conflicts disrupt education and expose them to the risks of recruitment by armed groups, exploitation, and abuse.

The evolving nature of the conflict and the complex dynamics within the region necessitated a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women and juveniles and the development of targeted interventions to address their needs. Given the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the critical importance of addressing the specific vulnerabilities of women and juveniles in conflict-affected areas, this research seeks to explore the conflict environment and humanitarian response in Borno State.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Borno State's conflict situation poses a complicated humanitarian dilemma, with women and children suffering disproportionately from its effects. Insurgency, banditry, and intercommunal conflicts have defined the ongoing conflict environment, which presents serious obstacles to people's rights, welfare, and safety, especially for women and children. A troubling trend of targeting educational institutions and using young Nigerians as leverage in conflict negotiations is highlighted by the kidnapping of schoolchildren, as evidenced by the cases of the Chibok girls in 2014, the Dapchi girls in 2018, the Jangebe girls and Kagara boys in 2021, and the most recent kidnapping in Kaduna in 2024 (UNICEF, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021). These acts of violence not only disrupt education but also inflict profound psychological trauma on victims and their communities. Women and juveniles in conflict-affected areas are



further exposed to increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement, and economic deprivation, undermining their fundamental human rights and thwarting development (UNFPA, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Efforts by the Nigerian government, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sought to address the immediate and long-term needs of those affected by conflict. Initiatives such as the Safe Schools Declaration and the intervention programs led by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management like National Emergency Management Agency and Social Development in Nigeria, aim to enhance the protection of educational environments and provide support to displaced and vulnerable populations (Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, 2021). However, despite these efforts, challenges remain in effectively addressing the needs of women and juveniles in Nigeria's conflict zones. Limitations in the reach and scope of assistance programs, underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence, and inadequate implementation of policies designed to safeguard education and uphold children's rights signify gaps in current interventions. Furthermore, the persistent nature of conflict and the evolving strategies of armed groups necessitate ongoing research and adaptation of response strategies to effectively protect and support the most vulnerable groups.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill existing gaps in understanding and response by exploring the connection of conflict environment and humanitarian assistance in Borno State, with a specific focus on the experiences of women and juveniles.

1.3 Research Questions

The research is guided by the following research questions.

- i. What forms of humanitarian assistance were provided to women and children in Maiduguri, Monguno and Gwoza Local Government Areas of Borno State from 2013 - 2023?
- ii. What are the major vulnerabilities experienced by women and children in the selected Local Government Areas as a result of the Boko Haram Insurgency?



- iii. How has the humanitarian assistance reduced the vulnerabilities of women and children in the selected Local Government Areas?
- iv. What challenges have humanitarian agencies faced in delivering assistance to women and children in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. Monguno and Gwoza Local Government Areas?
- v. What measures can be adopted to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian assistance for women and children in the selected Local Government Areas of Borno State?

1.4 Empirical Literature

According to Abubakar (2020), the nexus between conflict environments and humanitarian protection is a critical area of concern in the field of humanitarian action. It refers to the complex interplay between armed conflicts, civil unrest, and violence on one hand, and efforts to protect the rights, safety, and well-being of affected populations on the other. The nexus between conflict environment and Humanitarian Protection underscores the complex relationship between conflict dynamics and the delivery of aid to affected populations. Conflict not only creates humanitarian needs but also poses significant obstacles to the provision of assistance, including access restrictions, security risks, and resource constraints (De Waal, 2017). Conversely, Humanitarian Protection can influence conflict dynamics by addressing grievances, building community resilience, and promoting peace building initiatives (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). Understanding this nexus is essential for designing effective humanitarian interventions that address the root causes of conflict and meet the needs of affected populations.

The nexus between the conflict environment and Humanitarian Protection is a critical area of study that has garnered significant attention from scholars and practitioners alike. This relationship is multifaceted and complex, as conflicts often give rise to humanitarian crises, while Humanitarian Protection seeks to alleviate the suffering caused by conflicts. According to Barnett and Weiss (2008), the conflict environment can both facilitate and hinder the delivery of Humanitarian Protection, depending on various factors such as the severity of the



conflict, the presence of armed actors, and the accessibility of affected populations. In some cases, conflicts create acute humanitarian needs, such as displacement, food insecurity, and protection concerns, which necessitate an immediate and robust humanitarian response (Slim, 2015). For example, the conflict in Syria has resulted in widespread displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and loss of livelihoods, leading to a dire humanitarian situation that has prompted international intervention and aid efforts.

However, conflicts can also pose significant challenges to Humanitarian Protection, including access constraints, security risks, and resource limitations. According to Human Rights Watch (2019), armed groups and governments often restrict access to conflict-affected areas, preventing humanitarian actors from reaching affected populations and delivering life-saving assistance. In addition, the presence of armed actors can pose security risks to humanitarian personnel and assets, jeopardizing the safety and effectiveness of relief efforts. For example, in Yemen, ongoing fighting and insecurity have hampered humanitarian access, leading to delays in the delivery of aid and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the country (OCHA, 2020).

Moreover, conflicts can also politicize Humanitarian Protection, as aid can be used as a tool for advancing political agendas or exerting control over populations. For example, in conflict-affected countries such as South Sudan and Somalia, governments and armed groups have been accused of manipulating aid distribution for political gain, diverting assistance away from vulnerable populations or using it to reward supporters (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2019). This politicization of aid can undermine the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian action, eroding trust and exacerbating tensions between humanitarian actors and conflict parties.

Despite these challenges, Humanitarian Protection plays a crucial role in mitigating the impact of conflicts on affected populations, providing lifesaving aid, protection, and support to those in need. Humanitarian actors often operate in complex and volatile environments, navigating myriad challenges to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Moreover, Humanitarian Protection can also contribute to peace building and conflict resolution efforts by addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting social cohesion, and fostering reconciliation among warring parties (Slim, 2015). For example, in Colombia,



humanitarian organizations have played a key role in supporting peacebuilding efforts by providing assistance to conflict-affected communities and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation initiatives (OCHA, 2018).

The unbiased, independent, and neutral giving of humanitarian relief to persons in urgent danger, as we understand it today, has only been possible since the middle of the 20th century. Generally speaking, giving material relief to those in need has been a practice throughout human history, frequently taking the shape of food or other supplies during hunger, drought, or other natural disasters. The Treaty of Versailles established an international humanitarian system following World War I. However, it was not until the 1990s that the term "humanitarian aid" and its guiding principles were widely recognised (Rysaback-Smith, 2015).

The organisation of humanitarian help into the systems we know today has likely been most influenced by concerns about how soldiers and civilians are treated during conflicts; many fundamental ideas guiding humanitarian aid have their roots in the horrors of war. Many underlying concepts support humanitarian action. As well as ethical notions of proper conduct during the conflict, several religious views are expressed, including the concept of Christian generosity that is prominent in the West and the Islamic practice of Zakat. The Greek and Roman empires were among the first to codify laws that described proper conduct in times of conflict; similarly, Chinese commander Sun Tzu references proper conduct in "The Art of War" (Smith, 2002).

Tomlinson (2003) notes that the multiple Geneva agreements serve as a contemporary consensus on the proper treatment of civilians, injured soldiers, and prisoners of war in times of conflict. Public health boards were established to manage isolation, quarantine, and body disposal during the Black Death Pandemic in the Middle Ages, and they serve as the earliest example of what is sometimes referred to as humanitarian aid (Tomlinson, 2003). In the late 1800s, modern developments in armament, transportation, and communication allowed for unprecedented levels of destruction of human life and property and the dissemination of that information to the general public (Rysaback-Smith, 2015). For the first time in history, timely planning and relief delivery were also made possible by this communication and transportation infrastructure.



Humanitarian aid was historically almost solely associated with armed warfare. However, today it is frequently conceived of as a response to natural and artificial disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, and typhoons. Henry Dunant, a Swiss activist, proposed a permanent relief organisation to relieve injured troops and civilians during combat in "A Memory of Solferino," which introduced the idea of proper treatment for injured soldiers. This book inspired the founding of the Red Cross, one of the first real international relief organisations, in 1863. At the first Geneva Convention in 1864, the Red Cross was tasked to provide neutral and impartial aid to military and civilian conflict victims by establishing national Red Cross Committees. The Northern Chinese Famine of 1876–1879, which led to one of the first official international relief programs, is also where the origins of international monetary aid may be found (Tomlinson, 2003).

According to Mackintosh (2000), the League of Nations, which would later become the United Nations (UN), was founded by the Treaty of Versailles during World War I as the first international body with a permanent mandate for preserving peace and defending vulnerable populations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was passed by the UN in 1945, setting the stage for international engagement in domestic and foreign conflicts for the first time. Several UN institutions were created simultaneously, including UNICEF, the WHO, and UNHCR (formerly IRO). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) saw a fast, extraordinary boom after World War II; more than 200 groups were founded in the first four years. With the expansion of global transportation and communication, aid started to move from Europe to less developed regions. Initially, the phrase "third world" was used to refer to nations that were not members of the North Atlantic Trade Organization (first world) or the Soviet Block (second world). Over time, it referred to these underdeveloped and destitute nations because it included many newly established, poorly developed post-colonial governments in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Tomlinson, 2003). As the concepts of development and underdevelopment started to take root in contemporary society, post-cold war humanitarian aid concentrated on those so-called third-world nations. Advertising ads featuring starving children, mainly from Africa, became increasingly common as NGOs grew, and these images have since dominated Western conceptions of humanitarian relief and continue to do so.



However, the modern age can be substantially defined by a shift in thought from short-term assistance provision and suffering reduction to development, primarily provided by so-called developed countries. There are many debates surrounding the current provision of help. Numerous factors, including growing needs in the post-colonial era, increased natural and artificial disasters, and a more integrated global system, has been linked to the rapid rise of NGOs and relief organisations (The Sphere Project, 2004). It is crucial to remember that this could signal a change in political and governmental financial priorities, with on-demand aid favouring long-term, intricate development strategies.

The current humanitarian aid landscape is complicated, with hundreds of NGOs and other groups from numerous nations contributing a range of help and development initiatives. Today, armed wars and natural calamities impact an ever-increasing number of people. An estimated 7,000 natural disasters between 1980 and 2004 caused an estimated two million fatalities and five billion people to be affected, with significant economic and societal consequences (International Display Monitoring Centre, 2019). Numerous natural disasters and wars are extensively covered by 24-hour media outlets for the general public, and the internet and social media make communication, organisation, and fundraising simple. Proliferation has influenced assistance provision positively and negatively, and it is expected to significantly impact aid delivery for a very long time to come (Assessment Capacity Project, 2018).

Humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence are the four guiding principles of humanitarian aid. The UN General Assembly formally established these principles in 1991 (humanity, impartiality, and neutrality) and 2004 (independence), and the ICRC has since reaffirmed them. In order to safeguard and respect all people, humanity means assisting everyone who needs it, wherever that need may be. Aid organisations must maintain neutrality by refusing to support any particular political, religious, or ideological stance or take sides in disputes. Aid must be distributed impartially, without regard to other factors such as gender, colour, nationality, ethnicity, class, political affiliation, or religious beliefs. The necessity that aid groups be independent of any political or military ambitions or with those goals in mind is called independence. These ideas are explained and expanded upon in several widely respected international texts. A set of uniform standards and a dedication to the four principles are



provided by the UN Code of Conduct, which more than 492 help groups have signed. No matter their race, religion, or nationality, the citizens of all nations have a right to receive humanitarian aid. According to the code, as long as there is no political motivation, the recipient's dignity is upheld, and their culture is respected.

The Sphere Project (2004) was created to create a list of "minimum standards" for global aid that NGOs, governments, and donor organisations could use. It was initially released in 1998 as a draft and has subsequently undergone multiple revisions with the help of several international organisations and unbiased observers. The Sphere project, a coalition of international NGOs, created the Sphere handbook to enhance humanitarian help's efficiency and foster aid organisations' accountability (Gostelow). Additionally, it outlines the necessity of openness, skill development, and long-term planning for recovery and disaster prevention; in this way, it offers an aid framework that is both current and futuristic.

Humanitarian law, precisely the principles outlined by the 1949 Geneva conventions, serves as the foundation for humanitarian action. While not explicitly addressing aid organisations, they provide some justification for the distribution of aid to civilians and injured service members and place responsibility for allowing aid on the ratifying governments. Additionally, they demand that assistance be given in an impartial, humane, and non-partisan manner, enhancing the concepts of neutrality and impartiality. Aid workers today work in a more complicated setting than ever, complete with political conflicts, controversies, and various international organisations. This is only a basic overview of the concepts and history of humanitarian aid. Adherence to the four fundamental principles becomes increasingly crucial as conflicts and disasters increase the frequency and become more geopolitically driven. The primary goals of providing relief are to lessen suffering and disasters' effects (Assessment Capacity project, 2018).

The nexus between the conflict environment and Humanitarian Protection in Borno State, Nigeria, presents a complex and challenging landscape characterized by acute humanitarian needs, access constraints, and security risks. The conflict environment in Borno State, driven primarily by the activities of Boko Haram and other armed groups, has resulted in widespread displacement, loss of lives, and destruction of infrastructure (Akinyemi & Sulaiman, 2018).



This has created urgent humanitarian needs among affected populations, including food insecurity, malnutrition, and lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education. In response to these needs, humanitarian actors, including government agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have mobilized resources and deployed personnel to deliver lifesaving assistance to affected communities.

However, delivering Humanitarian Protection in Borno State is fraught with challenges, including access constraints, security risks, and resource limitations. The conflict environment has rendered many areas inaccessible to humanitarian actors due to ongoing violence, insecurity, and restrictions imposed by armed groups (UNOCHA, 2020). This has hindered the delivery of aid and impeded efforts to reach vulnerable populations in need of assistance. Additionally, humanitarian workers face significant security risks, including targeted attacks, abductions, and intimidation, further complicating relief efforts and jeopardizing the safety and well-being of aid personnel (Amnesty International, 2019).

Furthermore, the politicization of Humanitarian Protection in Borno State poses additional challenges to relief efforts. Humanitarian aid has been instrumentalized by various actors for political purposes, including as a means of exerting control over populations, rewarding supporters, or gaining legitimacy (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2019). This has led to tensions between humanitarian actors and conflict parties, undermining the neutrality and impartiality of aid delivery and complicating efforts to navigate complex political dynamics in the region.

One notable example of Humanitarian Protection in Borno State is the provision of healthcare services amidst the conflict. Despite significant challenges posed by insecurity and access constraints, organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have established mobile clinics and medical facilities in conflict-affected areas. These initiatives aim to provide lifesaving medical care, address public health needs, and mitigate the impact of the conflict on vulnerable populations (MSF, 2020). Moreover, humanitarian efforts in Borno State have also focused on addressing food insecurity and malnutrition among conflict-affected populations. The World Food Programme (WFP) and Action Against Hunger (AAH) have implemented food distribution programs, nutritional support, and agricultural initiatives to improve food security and livelihoods for vulnerable



households (WFP, 2020). Additionally, cash transfer programs have been initiated to provide financial assistance to families in need, enabling them to purchase food and other essential items (AAH, 2020).

Despite these challenges, Humanitarian Protection remains essential in addressing the needs of conflict-affected populations in Borno State. Humanitarian actors continue to work tirelessly to deliver aid and support to those in need, often at great personal risk. Moreover, Humanitarian Protection can also contribute to broader peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts in the region by addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting social cohesion, and fostering dialogue and reconciliation among warring parties (OCHA, 2018). For example, humanitarian organizations have played a key role in supporting the reintegration of former combatants, facilitating community dialogues, and promoting interethnic reconciliation in conflict-affected communities.

1.5 Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory emerged in the 1990s as a response to the shortcomings of traditional security paradigms, which predominantly focused on state sovereignty and military defence (UNDP, 1994). The theory gained prominence with the release of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 1994 Human Development Report, which introduced the concept of human security as a new approach to understanding and addressing global security challenges (UNDP, 1994). The central concept of Human Security Theory revolves around the idea that security should be redefined to prioritize the protection and well-being of individuals and communities, rather than solely focusing on state security (UNDP, 1994). This paradigm shift emphasizes the interconnectedness of various threats to human security, including armed conflict, poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and violations of human rights (UNDP, 1994).

Human Security Theory expands the notion of security to encompass multiple dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994). This multidimensional approach recognizes that people's security is influenced by a complex interplay of factors and vulnerabilities, which extend beyond traditional military



threats. Moreover, Human Security Theory emphasizes the importance of addressing both "freedom from fear" (physical security) and "freedom from want" (economic and social security) to ensure comprehensive security for individuals and communities (UNDP, 1994). It underscores the need to protect people from direct and indirect threats to their safety, dignity, and fundamental rights, including violence, poverty, inequality, and environmental hazards. The basic tenets of Human Security Theory revolve around the belief that security should prioritize the needs, rights, and aspirations of individuals and communities. It emphasizes the following key assumptions:

- i. Security should be people-centered, focusing on protecting individuals from a wide range of threats beyond traditional military threats.
- ii. Human Security is multidimensional, encompassing freedom from fear (physical security) and freedom from want (economic and social security).
- iii. Human Security requires addressing root causes of insecurity, including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and social injustice.
- iv. Human Security promotes empowerment, participation, and resilience among individuals and communities, enabling them to cope with and adapt to challenges.

Human Security Theory possesses several strengths that contribute to its relevance and applicability in addressing contemporary security challenges. One of the key strengths of Human Security Theory is its holistic and comprehensive approach to security. By recognizing multiple dimensions of security, including economic, social, environmental, and political aspects, the theory provides a nuanced understanding of the complex and interconnected nature of security threats (UNDP, 1994). This comprehensive perspective enables policymakers and practitioners to develop more effective and inclusive strategies for promoting security and well-being.

Human Security Theory places a strong emphasis on the protection and promotion of human rights as fundamental components of security. By prioritizing individual dignity, autonomy, and freedom from harm, the theory underscores the intrinsic value of human life and the importance of upholding universal human rights principles (UNDP, 1994). This human rights-



based approach ensures that security interventions are grounded in ethical principles and respect for human dignity.

Another strength of Human Security Theory is its focus on addressing root causes of insecurity and promoting conflict prevention and sustainable development. By advocating for proactive measures to mitigate security risks, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, the theory seeks to prevent crises before they escalate into full-blown conflicts (UNDP, 1994). This preventive approach helps to save lives, reduce suffering, and minimize the long-term social and economic costs of insecurity.

Human Security Theory is flexible and adaptable, allowing for its application in diverse contexts and settings. Unlike rigid security frameworks that prioritize military solutions, the human security approach recognizes that security challenges vary across different communities and regions (UNDP, 1994). This flexibility enables policymakers and practitioners to tailor interventions to specific needs and circumstances, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance.

1.6 Methodology

Research design according to Mbachu (2023), is a framework for planning research and answering the research questions. The study adopted the case study design. The case study design is adopted in this study because it is a research design that entails a detailed and extensive analysis of a single case and is concerned with complexity and particular nature of the case in question. Case studies also focus on a number of categories such as family, community, organization, even individual and events. A case study design is a research approach focusing on in-depth, often qualitative, investigation of a specific case (individual, group, organization, or event) to understand its complexities and dynamics in a real-life context.

The population of the study constitutes the total population of Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Monguno and Gwoza Local Government Areas. Maiduguri Metropolitan Council has a population of 791,200, Monguno has 160,900, and Gwoza has 405,200, bringing the total population to 1,357,300 (NPC, 2022).



The sample size of this study was determined purposively, whereby respondents were purposively selected. With respect to this, the sample size of the study is forty-eight (48). From this number, twenty-three (23) key informants were interviewed, while twenty-five (25) served as participants of the Focus Group Discussions that were conducted in Maiduguri, Monguno and Gwoza. Below tables presented the list of the KII and FGD respondents.

1.7 Socio-Economic Effect of Boko Haram Terrorism in Borno State

Effects on Agriculture and Means of Livelihood

Boko Haram's violent activities have significantly impacted how people live in the state. Borno state is an agrarian society where local economy depends on farming and rearing of animals. More than 70% of the people are employed in agriculture (FAO, 2021). Maize, rice, sorghum and millet are among the agricultural products the state is renowned for (Abbas & Fatima, 2017; Izge, 2019). This agricultural activity has been crippled by the Boko Haram insurgency. Many farmers have been abducted or threatened, many farmers have been killed or forced to abandon their crops (Okorie, 2015). The UNHCR (2021) estimated that about 2 million people, many of them farmers, have been displaced by the insurgency in Nigeria. A report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that during the last ten years, Boko Haram attacks have caused a 40% decline in agricultural production in Borno State (OCHA, 2019). Consequently, agricultural productivity has decreased, leading to food scarcity, shortages and starvation (Odeyemi, Onasoga & Okereke, 2019). Borno State is a significant economic centre with a booming grain, cattle and other commercial activity. This has been greatly disrupted. According to UNICEF (2020), about 1,200 farms have been destroyed by Boko Haram in Nigeria since 2014.

Boko Haram insurgents have stormed market places, causing casualties and damage to properties. Due to the concerns for their safety, it becomes challenging for traders to conduct their legitimate businesses in the state. As a result, numerous enterprises have either shut down or relocated to neighboring states (Nwanna, Ugmioké & Okeke, 2018; Brechenmacher, 2019). The Nigerian agriculture industry's supply chain has been hampered by Boko Haram's attacks, as the farmers are unable to get their product to market because of the crisis. Many people simply lost their means of subsistence. Several schools have been burnt or destroyed and numerous teachers and students have been killed or abducted. Because of this, many kids have



been compelled to leave school, which lowers the standard of education in the state. The means of sustenance in Borno State have been severely impacted by the extremism of Boko Haram. The insurgency has disrupted agriculture, trade, education, tourism, healthcare, and all socioeconomic lives of the people. This also means rapid increment in the country's humanitarian crisis and the region's poverty level occasioned by the loss of livelihoods. The World Food Program estimated that over 4.5 million people in Nigeria required food assistance (World Food Program, 2020). Malnutrition rates have increased as a result of the humanitarian situation.

Effects on Trade and Commerce

Boko Haram has inflicted havoc on the local economy and businesses in the Northeast. The terrorist group's violent actions have significantly disrupted the economy and decreased trade and commerce (Olaseni & Aluko, 2018). The economy of Borno State is reliant on commerce and business. Sadly, many enterprises have been significantly impacted by the terrorism of Boko Haram. The group has attacked markets, traders, and transporters, leading to the closure of markets and a decline in commercial activity. Trading and transportation businesses suffer severe financial losses as a result, and Borno State residents have less access to goods and services. According to World Bank study, Borno State has lost more than \$1 billion in economic activity as a result of market closures and a decline in trade activities (World Bank, 2016). Boko Haram's attacks in Nigeria have hampered commercial lines, making it difficult to transport goods from one area to another. Major thoroughfares and roadways have been targeted by the terrorist group, making it challenging for trucks and other vehicles to convey cargoes between cities.

The attacks by Boko Haram activities have forced Nigerian traders to relocate. To avoid violence, many traders were compelled to leave their homes and places of business. Due to the inability of traders to conduct business in the area, trade and commerce have decreased. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center said that the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has resulted in the displacement of over 2.5 million people (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021). The attacks by Boko Haram have also significantly raised the cost of food in Nigeria. There is a lack of food in some areas as a result of the interruption of trade routes and market closures, which has raised prices. According to a United Nations assessment, the cost of basic staples like corn and beans has jumped by as much as 50% in some regions of Nigeria



(UNICEF, 2020). Due to this, many Nigerians now find it impossible to buy basic essentials. Likewise, this has caused a decreased foreign direct investment in Nigeria. Due to the volatility of the region, it has become more challenging for foreign businesses to operate in Nigeria, particularly Borno state.

Effects on Health

In the same vein, Boko Haram terrorism has had manifest impact on healthcare in Borno state. Hospitals and health facilities have been serially assaulted by the outlawed group, which has resulted in the permanent or temporary closure of these institutions and a decreased access to healthcare services. A rise in avoidable fatalities and the spread of illnesses including cholera, measles and meningitis have been reported as a result of the Boko Haram assaults, according to a report by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, 2018). This was recurrent in the overcrowded IDP Camps. The health and well-being of the inhabitants of Borno State have been significantly impacted by this. Abdulkabir (2017) revealed that among those who have been impacted by Boko Haram terrorism, the prevalence of mental health issues such depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is significant. Many locals have to endure unending psychological anguish as a result of the instability and terror brought on them by Boko Haram assaults, especially those who have personally experienced the carnage (Izge, 2019).

It is natural that individuals who experience violence (and terrorist violence in this case) are prone to depression and anxiety. The intensity of exposure to Boko Haram violence, therefore, correlates with increased anxiety of the victims. The terror committed by Boko Haram in Borno state has also had a significant impact on the people's physical health. The devastation of hospitals and clinics as a result of the violence has made it difficult for many individuals to get healthcare services (UNICEF, 2019). Overcrowding in camps as a result of population relocation has raised the danger of infectious illnesses. Internally displaced people (IDPs) in Borno state had greater malaria prevalence than non-IDPs (Odeyemi, Onasoga & Okereke, 2019). This is because there are no healthcare facilities or good living circumstances in the camps. In the IDP camps, there have also been epidemics of cholera and measles in addition to malaria (UNICEF, 2019). The insecurity created by Boko Haram terrorists has also restricted access to hospitals. The gang has targeted health personnel, killing or kidnapping several of them (Abdulkabir, 2017). This has led to acute shortage of medical personnel in the state,



further decreasing people's access to healthcare services.

Effects on Education

Another sector in Borno State that has been significantly impacted by the Boko Haram conflict is education. The group has attacked schools, murdered teachers, and abducted children, leading to the shutdown of schools and a decline in educational activities. In northeastern Nigeria, particularly Borno State, the Boko Haram insurgency has harmed over 2.8 million children and damaged over 1,400 schools, according to a study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2018). As a result, there are much fewer schools now available to kids, who dread to attend, especially in rural areas where security presence is near absent. Both students and teachers have had to move or be moved. Several schools were compelled to close and many students and teachers ran away from their homes to escape the violence. UNICEF (2020) reported that many of these displaced students and pupils are unable to attend school thereafter. Such violent and fearful atmosphere is certainly not conducive for teaching and or learning. The number of students attending school has significantly decreased, especially among girls. According to Amnesty International (2018), women are disproportionately affected by the violence and are more likely to abandon their studies due to worries about their safety.

Sadly, in order to address the security situation, the government is forced to divert resources away from education. With an estimated 10.5 million children not attending school, Nigeria has one of the highest percentages of out-of-school children in the world (UNESCO, 2021). The attacks by Boko Haram have worsened the situation and made it more challenging for the government to provide education to the locals. Sadly still, the students (and parents) in the violenceprone areas have lost the zeal for schooling. One would recall the terrorists' express threat to recapture the Dapchi victims should they return to school.

Effects on Transportation

With incessant attacks on public transportation, roads and highways, Borno State has been particularly hard hit. The state's transportation business has seen a significant slump as a result of interruptions in the road and highway network, decreased mobility, rising costs, a decline in tourism, and damage to the transportation infrastructure. The road and highway networks are



frequent targets of attacks by Boko Haram through detonating explosives and ambushing travelers to obstruct the passage of people and goods. Important roads frequently targeted for attacks include the Maiduguri-Damaturu Road, a vital thoroughfare between the cities of Maiduguri and Damaturu. At least 30 persons were killed and the road was severely damaged when Boko Haram assaulted a convoy of trucks in February 2020 (BBC News, 2020).

The daily lives of the people in Borno State have also been significantly impacted by the attacks on the road and highway networks. Transit interruptions and fear of attack have made it challenging for many people to go to work, market, school and other important activities. Several individuals are forced to stay at home. This has reduced social and economic activities. Economic activities decline when people are unable to travel for business purposes. In addition to making it more difficult for aid organizations to provide assistance to individuals in need, the disruption of road and highway networks has also reduced the availability of essential services. According to a study by the International Crisis Group (2020), Boko Haram's control of key roads made it difficult for people and products to move across the area. In the same vein, Amnesty International (2021) alluded that Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a number of attacks against tourists, including the kidnapping of women and girls.

In addition to causing people to evacuate their homes, Boko Haram's attacks have severely restricted their movement. Businesses have found it difficult to transfer goods and supplies as a result of the shutdown of major routes and checkpoints. According to a United Nations (2021) report, the attacks by Boko Haram have cost the area's economy an estimated \$9 billion. Transportation costs have skyrocketed as a result of this ugly situation. As other routes must be used, which are occasionally longer and riskier, the cost of delivering goods has skyrocketed. These series of attacks have also affected Borno State's tourism industry. The state is home to a number of historical and cultural landmarks, including the Sambisa Forest Reserve and the ancient city of Kanem-Bornu. However, the security situation has prevented visitors from visiting these locations, which has reduced revenues accruable from tourism (Ojekunle & Ajiboye, 2018). Two of the area's tourism destinations are the Mandara Mountains and the Chad Basin National Park. Unfortunately, the security situation would make it almost a misadventure for any would-be visitors. Businesses that depend on tourism, such hotels, parks and restaurants, have been severely impacted by the decline in tourism.

Terrorism constitutes a critical challenge to Nigeria's drive to development. Boko Haram



terrorism has had substantial influence on Borno state's socioeconomic development. The group's operations have impacted the state's means of livelihood, education, and transportation, causing monumental death, displacement, infrastructural deficit and loss of properties. Boko Haram's attacks on livelihoods, including farming and fishing, result in food insecurity, famine and malnutrition in the state. The demolition of schools and the relocation of instructors and students have disturbed the education system, resulting in a drop in educational quality, loss of human capital and increased out of school children. The transportation assaults and fear of being ambushed have made the mobility of people and commodities difficult.

1.8 Summary of Major Findings

In line with objectives of the study, the following findings were derived from data presentation and analysis:

- i. Humanitarian assistance in selected Local Government Areas mainly consist of food aid, health care, temporary shelter, education WASH, psychological support child protection and livelihood.
- ii. Women and Juveniles remain highly vulnerable due to displacement, food insecurity, disrupted education, GBV and exploitation, poor health care, psychological trauma etc.
- iii. Humanitarian assistance improved the welfare of women and children by ensuring access to basic services even though not sufficient enough to meet growing humanitarian needs. .
- iv. Insecurity, poor accessibility, logistical constraints, inadequate funding, weal coordination among humanitarian actors significantly affected effective humanitarian service delivery.
- v. Improving coordination, increasing funding, improving security and adopting Gender Sensitive and Child Centered Interventions would enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in selected Local Government Areas of Borno State.

1.9 Conclusion and Recommendations

Women and juveniles, who bear the brunt of displacement and insecurity, have been largely



excluded from the design and execution of humanitarian responses. This exclusion has not only weakened the impact of aid interventions but also perpetuated their vulnerabilities. The findings also underscore the need for stronger protection mechanisms, greater inclusion of local actors, improved inter-agency coordination, and policy frameworks that uphold humanitarian principles even in security operations. To redress these gaps, a paradigm shift is needed one that centers local agency, integrates humanitarian action with development and peacebuilding, and addresses structural and systemic inequalities embedded within the humanitarian system itself.

The study concludes that humanitarian assistance in Borno State over the past decade, though extensive in coverage, has not sufficiently met the complex needs of conflict-affected women and juveniles. The prevailing model remains top-down, donor-driven, and insufficiently participatory. While aid has saved lives, it has not always preserved dignity, empowered beneficiaries, or laid the groundwork for long-term recovery.

To address the findings of this study, the following seven targeted recommendations are proposed:

- i. Aid actors should integrate long-term planning into humanitarian response. This includes resilience-building, livelihoods programming, and sustainable reintegration efforts. Donors must support multi-year, flexible funding to reduce the short-termism of current interventions.
- ii. The Borno State government and humanitarian organizations should ensure women and youth are not merely seen as vulnerable, but as decision-makers and resourceful actors. This includes involving them in camp governance, needs assessments, and program design.
- iii. The Borno State government should establish robust community participation structures that ensure regular consultation and feedback. Feedback mechanisms should be safe, anonymous, and accessible, especially for women and young people.
- iv. Humanitarian organisations should invest in the capacity and leadership of local NGOs, women's associations, and youth groups. Promote equal partnerships



between international and local actors with shared control over resources and planning.

- v. Expand gender-based violence prevention and response services should include legal aid, health care, and trauma counseling. Establish safe spaces and provide tailored mental health support for survivors and at-risk juveniles.
- vi. The Borno State and federal authorities should promote policies that safeguard humanitarian access and uphold the rights of IDPs. Humanitarian actors should advocate for the demilitarization of aid spaces and ensure protection is central to security operations.

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