



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CRISES RAVAGED AREAS: A STUDY ON THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA

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Peer-review under responsibility of 4th Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference 2020 Scientific Committee

<http://connectingasia.org/scientific-committee/>

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lat 306 Savoy Residencia, Block 3 F11/1,44000 Islamabad. Pakistan,

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Abstract

Since 2009, the insurgent group popularly known as Boko Haram have carried out targeted assassinations, shootings and bombings, which led to deaths, destructions and displacements of Millions in north-eastern Nigeria. These crippled the region's economic, cultural and social status, which attracted various forms of humanitarian supports from philanthropists, governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the adverse effects of humanitarian supports by NGOs on socioeconomic development in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative approach using Focus Group Discussion in generating data from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of humanitarian support in Shehuri, Sulumbri and Madinatu communities of Maiduguri, Nigeria. The study revealed government reluctances and over-reliance of people on the support provided by the NGOs. The standard of living in the city has also ascended because of the operations of NGOs. Supports provided by NGOs have further distorted the community's social cohesion as it created various forms of domestic violence and conflict between displaced persons and host communities. In addition, it has increased social vice such as sexual exploitation and abuse in an effort to get provisions or employment. There are further continuous accusations that NGOs are supporting the Boko Haram group with food and logistics. The study concluded that the operations of NGOs would contribute in prolonging the physical and social insecurity in crises ravaged areas if not adequately regulated and monitored. Thus, recommended that NGOs do more capacity building programmes rather than emergency relief supports. Governments should further regulate the operations of the NGOs by introducing strict policies that will force them to be transparent and accountable, as well as operate in line with counter-insurgency strategies.

Keywords: *Insurgency, Non-Governmental Organisations, Socio-economic Development, Humanitarian Support*

Introduction

The popular insurgent group, Boko Haram, has carried out targeted assassinations, shootings and bombings, which led to the death, destructions and displacement of numerous people and properties. These have been ongoing since 2009 in the North-East region of Nigeria. It led to the deaths of over 35, 500 persons as at May 2011 and 37,530 from June 2011 to June 2018 (CFR, 2011; Campbell and Harwood, 2018). The total estimate of deaths is therefore over 73,030. As at 2011, they have destroyed properties worth \$5.2 Billion [₦1.9 Trillion] (Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018) and displaced over 3 Million people (Lenshi and Yenda, 2016). These critical conditions attracted a number of humanitarian organisations across the world trooping into the country with supports of various sorts from monetary interventions to relief materials, among others. In the Northeastern Nigeria, Borno is the most affected state in the region. Maiduguri metropolis is the state's capital and the relatively safest city. Over the years, the city





has attracted a number of displaced persons across the state seeking shelter in camps and host communities.

Research Objectives

The study examined the adverse effects of the operations of humanitarian non-governmental organisations in Maiduguri - Nigeria, with specific emphasis on how it affects peaceful coexistence, social cohesion and standard of living. This is in an effort to unveil the negative consequences of the humanitarian support by NGOs despite its relevance in alleviating the problems and improving the lives of the less privilege, poor, vulnerable and displaced persons.

Methodology

The study is a qualitative research that utilised Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as a means of generating data from groups of men and women in Shehuri, Sulumbri and Madinatu communities of Maiduguri, Nigeria. The findings from the FGD are supplemented with secondary data sourced through desk reviews of existing literature. Two (2) separate focus groups were done in each community, which are of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of humanitarian supports by the NGOs.

Results and Findings

The study revealed that governments at all levels do not provide adequate humanitarian support to the victims of insurgency. What is obtainable on the part of government are occasional relief support from agencies such as National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). However, on the part of the Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations (HNGOs), they have mechanisms in place, which allows beneficiaries to continuously benefit from certain support. The victims and other poor people also prefer and rely heavily on the HNGOs provisions as a means of survival. They believe even the government is reluctant because HNGOs provide them with basic needs.

The operations of the HNGOs in the city has escalated the standard of living in the metropolis. Because they have enough resources, they rent houses and offices at exorbitant costs, buy goods at expensive prices and gets services at whatever cost. Similar to these claims, Lawal & Iman (2019) asserts that the operations of the NGOs is a curse in the sense that it has led to increased in the price of food stuff, rent and hotel accommodation, as well as decline in standard of living, state productivity, among others. These organisations seldom bargain when buying goods, and are known by the locals as rich bodies. Whenever anyone is identified as their staff in the market, he is being charged special amount due to the expectations that anyone that is related to them is wealthy.





Various forms of conflicts erupted because of the operations of HNGOs in Maiduguri. There have been conflicts over relief assistance between host community members and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The HNGOs consider IDPs as the most vulnerable groups, even though their host community members can as well be poor. As such, a lot of humanitarian support goes to IDPs leaving host community members who out of humanity share their lands and resources with the displaced persons. Yet, the HNGOs sidelined them in their support. This system has created a rancour between the IDPs and their hosts, which makes some of the host community members sent away the IDPs they earlier hosted. At times, according to Search for Common Ground (2019), the IDPs complained that host communities do not like to cooperate with the IDPs. They divert their provisions whenever they had the chance and the IDPs being settlers and minority cannot fight back. They resort to peaceful resolutions through compromise. The women IDPs painting another gory picture of the relationship complained that their children are being referred to as “the children of Boko Haram” by the host communities.

At the initial stage of their operations, the HNGOs give supports through the most senior male person in a family, usually husband or father. However, they have observed over the years that some of the husbands do not utilise the resources judiciously, as they sell a part of the provisions or even add wife. In correction of this anomaly, the HNGOs began registering mothers and wives as the focal persons in the collection of provisions on behalf of their households. The expectation is that women would be more disciplined to utilise the resource in catering for the needs of their families, especially children. This new system is against the cultural system of Maiduguri, which gave prominence and superiority to men in a family. Thus, created intra-family conflicts.

In their humanitarian work, the HNGO’s usually sought permission from the traditional rulers concerned. This is aside from the other formalities with the government. There are Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), [youth security group] who have also been supportive to the organizations in food and other relief material distributions across different communities. The traditional rulers have been accused as exploitative and corrupt as they recommend their loyalists for the relief support and accept bribes from citizens to get them recommended to the HNGOs. The Military and CJTF despite the trust people have for them, have been accused of abusing poor women and girls through sexual exploitations or rape when they requested for food or assistance in getting registered as a beneficiary of a certain HNGOs. For instance, Amnesty International reported that scores of women described how soldiers and CJTF members abused them with the use of force or threats in IDP camps, including taking advantage of their hunger to lure them into sex on an ongoing basis (Haruna, 2018).

The HNGOs are further accused of supporting the armed opposition groups popularly known as Boko Haram. For example, Punch (2019) reported the accusation of Nigerian Army that such organisations provide logistics supports, including food and drugs to the terrorists. In suspicion of the operations of the HNGOs, a group called Civil Rights and Good Governance





raised alarm over the worrisome activities of the organisations. The group observed that NGOs are accredited under the guise of philanthropic work, but are doing the opposite (Vanguard, 2019). In fact, some NGOs were at a point banned from operating for some time by the Nigerian Army as they are accused of feeding Boko Haram or spying for the group. The organisations earlier involved in these include Mercy Corps, Actions Against Hunger (ACF) and United Nations International Children Education Fund [UNICEF] (Kazeem, 2019). Participants in the FGD have agreed with these accusations as they also have the same believe and understanding. However, most of those who agreed to these accusations are non-beneficiaries of the HNGOs.

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