

The Humanitarian Response To The Victims Of Boko Haram Insurgency In Borno State, Nigeria: A Case Of The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) And United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2014-2015

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Abstract: The Boko Haram insurgency which started in Maiduguri in 2009 after the extra-judicial killing of its then leader, Muhammad Yusuf, spread like a wildfire to engulf the northeastern part of Nigeria and beyond, thereby becoming an international phenomenon. It led to serious political, economic as well as social dislocations of people in Borno State, millions of people were rendered homeless and ended up as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were either hosted in government established camps, privately owned camps or are staying within the host communities in less vulnerable areas of the State. The magnitude of the destruction by the Boko Haram insurgents in Borno State attracted the attention of national and international humanitarian agencies to respond to the plight of the victims of the insurgency starting from 2014. This paper seeks to examine the role of NEMA and UNICEF in supporting the victims of Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State, particularly in providing them with food items, non-food items and in the education sector. The methodology adopted in this paper is qualitative method which uses primary and secondary sources, which are critically analyzed. However, this paper reveals information regarding Boko Haram attacks on some communities in Borno State, when they received intervention from the humanitarian agencies under discussion and the nature of interventions within the period under review.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Camps, Insurgency, Internally Displaced Persons, NEMA and UNICEF

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I. INTRODUCTION

The night of Sunday 7th July, 2009 heralded the start of the Boko Haram insurgency spearheaded by Muhammad Yusuf. The campaign steadily spread to other parts of Borno State and massively spilled-over to engulf the entire north east region of Nigeria. The inroads of the campaign culminated in unprecedented terrorism and carnage which had enormously unleashed debilitation, dislocation and disintegration of social, economic and political formations of the affected societies. Borno State being the epicenter of Boko Haram insurgency became a theatre of conflict hence it suffered most. It witnessed heavy loss of lives of children, women and aged people, displacement of communities and families, never recorded in the history of Borno State. In the same vein, schools, hospitals, markets, public institutions and telecommunication installations became the target of the insurgents. The magnitude of the destruction was so alarming that it attracted global concern. Thus, international and national humanitarian agencies began to map out strategies for effective response to the humanitarian crisis pervading Borno State. In order to effectively address the response needs of the displaced persons, the Borno State Government had to create safe environments. In view of this therefore, camps were established to house the victims of the insurgency.

Largely irked by the precarious conditions of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), prominent international humanitarian bodies took interest in complementing the efforts of the State Government in ameliorating the sufferings of the victims of the insurgency. As a corollary to this, the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHRC), Victims Support Fund, Medecins Sans Frontier (Doctors without Borders), Royal Norwegian Government, among others intervened by

providing necessary supports. These organizations worked closely with National Emergency Response Agencies like the National Emergency Management Agency and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).

United Nations Children Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) Intervention in Borno State

UNICEF intervention in the crisis situation in Borno State was predicated on its mandate as enshrined by the United Nations General Assembly which says; To advocate for the protection of children's rights to help meet their needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potentials.¹

Borno State like other conflict zones, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Congo and the Central African Republic required world attention and support. This is because in the last six years, the State had to grapple with humanitarian crisis with a negative impact on access to safe and quality education for more than 2 million school aged children.² The conflict in Borno State had caused massive displacement of children who have either dropped out from or have never been enrolled in school in their places of origin, or they themselves are in situation of displacement and therefore in need of protection.³

In accordance with its prerogative role, the UNICEF was particularly moved by the atmosphere of displacement in Borno State. Indeed, the displacement in the State has unpleasant consequences for all children, particularly young children, whether they used to access education before the crisis or not. For those who used to go to school the situation causes a disruption of learning that lead to never return to school, and exposure to violence, exploitation and idleness.⁴ For all children including those who were not in school before the crisis- accessing safe learning environments, and engaging in meaningful recreation and educational activities, as part of a daily routine, is a fundamental right especially during emergencies. Conflict and high insecurity caused the closure or major disruption of services for more than 512 schools in Borno State. In addition, well over 350 teachers were killed in the State during the insurgency⁵. Thus, in order to address all those predicaments brought by the security challenges in Borno State, the UNICEF swung into action in aid of the affected communities. It is pertinent to note that the activities of this agency were pervasively felt in the different Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps across the State. However, this is not to say that other functional schools did not feel its impact.

One far reaching role of UNICEF in Borno State in the wake of the Boko Haram crisis was the training of teachers on pedagogy and psychosocial support. The provision of Psycho Social Support (PSS) in the education response is within UNICEF's mandate, 3rd core commitment for children in emergencies (Education) and in the UNHCR Education Strategy (2012-2016)⁶. For the purpose of inculcating teachers with the requisite skills in assisting children in Borno State to erase their traumatic experience, UNICEF began the training of 492 teachers in IDP camps in Maiduguri and Biu in batches. According to Bonomo: PSS is essential not only for promoting healing and resilience building among students and teachers but also for activating processes of peace building and social cohesion promotion through education. Therefore, in mid 2015 UNICEF, in collaboration with Nigeria Country Office launched a vast teacher training programme aiming at building the capacity of the education sector to effectively provide Psycho Social Support in the classroom of crisis affected areas.⁷

The basic assumption of the UNICEF for conducting the PSS was to give teachers confidence and Psychological frame of mind to face their work. With the PSS, teachers in Borno State came to reverse the phobia hitherto developed in them became actively effective.

As important as the PSS, was the enrolment drive/back to school campaign conducted in eleven Local Government Areas by the UNICEF. The Agency's effort was felt in MMC, Jere, Kaga, Konduga, Mafa, Magumeri, Biu, Hawul, Bayo and Shani in addition to 16 camps. This covered 429 schools which were made up of 324 primary schools and 105 Junior Secondary Schools. Following this campaign, a total of 94, 297 pupils and/or students were

¹ A Unicef Mission Statement, WWW.Unicef.org (2014).

² Borno State Universal Basic Education, Directorate of Schools Field Work, July to October, 2015.

³ Concept Note, Regional Meeting on the situation of education in refugee crisis in West and Central Africa, Dakar Senegal, 10 – 12 November 2015, p.1.

⁴ *Ibid*, P.1.

⁵ "The Effects of Insurgency on Basic Education Delivery in Borno State" A paper presented by the Chairman, SUBEB, Borno State at the Quarterly Meeting of UBEC and SUBEBS held at Abuja on.

⁶ *Op. Cit.*, UNICEF Concept Note, P.1.

⁷ Interview with Francesca Bonomo, Unicef Education Specialist (Emergencies), Age; 52 years at Dakar, Senegal, 8/11/2015.

enrolled which was a commendable and remarkable feat. The breakdown shows that 50, 280 boys and 44,017 girls got admitted into primary one and JSS one for 2015/2016 session.⁸

As part of the healing process for the schoolchildren through motivation, UNICEF has distributed over 20,000 school bags with learning materials to the host communities⁹. In the same vein, another 8,000 bags with learning materials i.e. “school in bag” also distributed to schoolchildren in IDP camps. In order to make learning comfortable for the children, the Agency procured 1000 double desks to replace dilapidated ones in all the IDP camps. The general perception of UNICEF is that pupils/students concentrate more in learning activities when they are comfortably seated in their classrooms. It is largely against this background that the Agency became preoccupied with procuring more seats for the children in the IDP camps and host communities’ schools.

The desire for easy identification of schoolchildren became imperative as part of security and safety measures in the face of prevailing security challenges in the State. Thus, as corollary to this, a massive household profiling and enumeration exercises in the host communities of MMC, Jere, Kaga and Biu were conducted. Indeed, the enumeration exercise was also to ascertain whether the children are attending schools or not. In view of this therefore, of the 59, 915 school age children enumerated, more than 36, 000 are already attending classes¹⁰.

Furthermore, the year 2015 was taken to be the “golden” year of UNICEF support to Borno State. During this period, the Agency’s Country Representative and the Regional Head visited Borno State to assess the situation on the ground with the view to increasing assistance to the State.¹¹ Consequent upon the visits of these chieftains, 46 tents were distributed to the schools in the IDP camps to augment classrooms shortfalls in these camps.¹² The provision of these tents increased learning spaces in the camps. Similarly, additional supplies of learning materials were made for both Early Child Care Development and primary schools children in the period under review. According to Yusuf these include;

1. 60, 000 school bags,
2. 600 boxes of ECCD,
3. 320 boxes of recreational kits,
4. 697 boxes of school in a box,
5. 849 cartons of 8mm Ruled exercise books,
6. 634 cartons of 5mm Ruled exercise books,
7. 1, 105 cartons of plain exercise books,
8. 376 packet (60, 000 piece) of colouring pencil,
9. 15 boxes of pencil eraser,
10. 10 packets of ballpen,
11. 48 packets of HB pencils, and
12. 21 packets of pencil sharpener.¹³

Activities of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in Borno State

The Boko Haram insurgency which started in 2009 unleashed several attacks and destructions culminating in thousands of deaths and mass human displacement in Borno State. The insurgency created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis never seen in Nigeria since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war. This catastrophic scenario precipitated humanitarian interventionist agencies, both national and international across the globe to show concern in the plight of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the State. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is among these interventionist agencies that partook in providing succor to the IDPs. By way of involvement in the humanitarian crisis in Borno State, NEMA’s response and/or activities commenced rather late. Indeed, the agency did not come to Borno State until the crisis reached its zenith in 2014. The question is why did NEMA a Federal Government agency belatedly start its activities in Borno State given the enormity of the refugee situation? It is plausible to suggest that the agency acted in accordance with the *laissez-faire* posture of the Federal

⁸ Unicef Desk Office Report, prepared by SUBEB UNICEF Desk officer, 2nd January 2015, p.1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Interview with Dr Frank Ndie, UNICEF Field Officer, Borno and Yobe States Age; 53, at Maiduguri, 5/1/2016.

¹² *Op. Cit.*, SUBEB Desk Officer’s Report, 2016, p.3.

¹³ Interview with Yusuf Ismail, Head of UNICEF Record and Coordinator Safe Schools Initiatives, Borno and Yobe States, Age; 48, at Maiduguri, 21/1/16.

Government towards Borno State's plight.¹⁴ It is also won't be out of place to argue that since the agency is an offspring of the Government, it cannot go beyond the whims and caprices of the Government of the day. Be that as it may, NEMA swung into action side by side with other donor agencies in the State.

The National Emergency Management Agency was established by Act No. 12 as amended by Act 50 of 1990 to manage disasters in Nigeria. It is charged with the responsibility of; coordinating resource towards efficient and effective disaster prevention, preparation, mitigation and response and response in Nigeria¹⁵

In line with its mandate, NEMA provided several relief, rescue and support services to affected areas and people in Borno State. As part of its obligation, when the agency came to Borno State at the heat of the crisis in 2014, it resorted to first identifying the places of origin of the displaced persons so as to have comprehensive and authentic data of people affected. Based on this data, NEMA was able to identify the people and evacuated them to their respective States of origin like Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara¹⁶. Both Borno IDPs and those from other four States identified were given relief items such as blankets, mats, mattresses, soaps, cooking utensils etc. These materials in the interim had significant palliative measures on the IDPs¹⁷. There is no gain saying that NEMA's activities particularly with regard to distribution of relief materials in Borno State was considerably low compared to Boko Haram insurgency less hit States in the North East like Adamawa and Yobe States¹⁸.

Apart from providing relief materials to Internally Displaced Persons, the agency provided training for over 140 Youth Corps members in Borno State in 2014 alone. The Corps members were trained in order to equip them with requisite skills of managing emergencies as Emergency Management Vanguard (EMV). Since disasters or emergencies can occur anytime given the sporadic nature of Boko Haram attacks, there is need for the society to be prepared.¹⁹ Thus, in view of this, the Agency embarked on series of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) enlightenment exercises among secondary schools students and other youths in the State. Consequently, DRR clubs were formed in some selected secondary schools in the State. As a follow up to this, a numbers of workshops and meetings were conducted by NEMA with a view to sensitization and/or creating awareness in people on disaster management. This and other similar activities are usually carried out in collaboration with the stakeholders such as the State Government agencies, Local Governments, community representatives, Non-Governmental Organizations and sister agencies.²⁰

NEMA's mandate as humanitarian outfit has transcended too many facets. As a matter of fact, a lot of sympathy visits and courtesy calls were undertaken to crisis areas, IDP camps, bereaved persons, traditional and local leaders of affected communities by NEMA leadership and officials as to provide psychosocial effect on a heavily traumatized people. In times of bomb blasts, the Agency had glaring role to play by urgent hospitalization of victims in disaster locations. A committee charged with the responsibility of instant evacuation assignment was put in place working 24 hours on alert²¹. Side by side with this committee is the existence of another body occupied with maintaining surveillance through the "Operation Eagle Eye". The surveillance body was instituted to forestall occurrence of attacks by insurgents in all its ramifications.²² The Agency generally engages in assessment visits to disaster hit zones and IDP camps. As part of the assessment mechanism, NEMA came up with up to date data on casualties, deaths, destruction alongside locations and occurrence dates as it affects Borno State up to 2014. (See table 1).

By the closure of 2015, NEMA was literally forced to focus on distribution of food items and building materials to various individuals and communities affected and afflicted by the insurgency. The attention of NEMA was possibly not unconnected with the outburst of public outcry over the lack of concern by the Federal Government

¹⁴ The late response of NEMA and/or Federal Government to Borno's humanitarian crisis attracted vociferous reactions of Borno people especially the Borno elders. For detail see "Borno Elders Position" paper presented to Turaki Committee P.p 2-3, 2014.

¹⁵ See Mission Statement of NEMA, it contains the Act establishing the Agency, operational objectives etc, Maiduguri Zonal office.

¹⁶ See NEMA North East 2014 Annual Report, p.2.

¹⁷ Interview with Awwul Abubakar, Deputy Zonal Coordinator NEMA, 40 years Maiduguri, 2/2/2016.

¹⁸ Interview with Dr. Bulama Mali Gubio, 64 Years, Maiduguri, 2/2/2016.

¹⁹ *Op. Cit.*, Annual report p.4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, P.p. 4-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²² *Op. Cit.*, Awwu.l

in general and NEMA in particular over the agony of Borno State people in the face of Boko Haram insurgency.²³ Borno State elders and other opinion leaders were at the fore of these criticisms. Based on these pressures, NEMA distributed tons of assorted food items to affected peoples within and outside the IDP Camps in the State. The Agency expanded its presence and intervention to all the camps in Maiduguri and quite a number of camps outside Maiduguri, even as far afield as Biu, Bama, Askira and Dikwa. According to NEMA records, Borno State has 402, 039 IDPs by December 2014 (See table 2).

NEMA's activities become noticeably intense when the Borno State Government announced its desire to relocate IDPs occupying schools. This is meant to reopen schools so as to resume teaching and learning activities. Between January and February 2016, the Agency rolled out 1000 kits of assorted materials to 1,000 relocating IDP families. The kits were made up of mattresses, blankets, mosquito nets, mats, cooking utensils and cloths. In addition to these 500 tents were provided and erected at Dalori I, Dalori II, and Bakasi camps respectively as part of accommodation for the IDPs.²⁴

II. CONCLUSION

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) intervention and response to Borno crisis came rather late. The Agency did not commence its activities at the start of Boko Haram hostilities in 2009 until its peak in 2014. The delay in NEMA's intervention in Borno crisis was probably as a result of the posture of immediate past Government towards Northeast in general and Borno State in particular. NEMA is primarily charged with the responsibility of coordinating emergency cases in Borno States and other North East States. On the contrary, UNICEF presence is pervasively felt in Borno State. As an institution, its activities has impacted on the people of Borno State especially in the area of resuscitating educational system which suffered more at the behest of the insurgency. The efforts of the UNICEF by and large restored hopes in the lives of the IDP children and those of the host communities. It also stimulated teachers through intensive training packages which monumentally stabilized the psyche of the teachers, thus, busted teaching and learning activities in the State.

Table I (Data on casualties, deaths, destruction alongside locations and occurrence dates as to how the insurgency affects Borno State up to 2014)

S / No.	L.G.A	Community(s)	Nature of disaster	Nature of destruction	Date of occurrence	Date of assessment	No. of injury	No. of deaths	No. of IDPs	Remarks
1	MMC	Ngomari	Gunmen attack	Air force base, Police station, 2 filing stations and few houses destroyed.	2/12/13	03/12/13		12	300	Intervened
	Gwoza	Wala	Gunmen attack	Vehicles burnt.	7/12/13	09/2/13		15		No intervention
2	Bama, Kala	Gulumbura, Kala	Gunmen attack	Houses, shops and items	11/12/13	21/12/13			4,311	Intervened

²³ Borno elders have been very critical over the apparent neglect of Federal Government on Borno humanitarian crisis. This position was severally echoed by one of its member, Dr. Bulama Mali Gubio and others

²⁴ See report of the committee on reopening of schools, 2016, p. 3

	Balge & Ngala	Balge and Ngala		destroyed.						
3	Gwoza	Wala and Warabe	Gunmen attack	Properties destroyed	7/01/14	11/01/14			4,239	No intervention
4	Damboa	Damboa town	Gunmen attack	Few houses and vehicles destroyed	08/01/14	11/01/14	12	4		No intervention
5	Bama	Banki	Gunmen attack	Houses, security posts and shops destroyed	08/01/14	13/01/14	6	6	5,250	No intervention
6	Mobbar	Gashigarr	Gunmen attack	63 shops and houses burnt	17/01/14	24/01/14		20	2,350	Intervened
7	Jere	Alau	Gunmen attack	House burnt	19/01/14	24/01/14		20	1,864	Intervened
8	Damboa	Jawa	Gunmen attack	30 houses and food items burnt	22/01/14	26/01/14		8	209	No intervention
9	Damboa	Kaya	Gunmen attack	40 houses, food items and motorcycles destroyed	22/01/14	26/01/14		8	269	No intervention
10	Damboa	Kwaljeri, Maude Kura and Maude Chira	Gunmen attack	Entire communities burnt	22/01/14	26/01/14			748	No intervention
11	Konduga	Kawuri	Gunmen attack	Houses, mosque, shops/market and food item destroyed.	29/01/14	22/02/14	45	85	2,111	Intervened
12	Bama	Gulumbana	Gunmen attack	Live and properties destroyed.	07/02/14	05/02/14		15	3,121	Intervened
13	Gwoza	Hambagda town	Gunmen attack	Live and properties destroyed.	09/02/14	13/02/14			3,743	No intervention
14	Konduga	Konduga town	Gunmen attack	250 houses, 3 mosques, schools, market and health facilities destroyed.	11/02/14	14/02/14	11	36	5,478	Intervened
15	Damboa	Wajeriko	Gunmen attack	12 houses and food items destroyed.	11/02/14	15/02/14	6	4	162	No intervention
16	Gwoza	Izge	Gunmen attack	Lives and properties	15/02/14	19/02/14	9	106	8,135	Intervened

.				destroyed.						
17.	Bama	Bama town	Gunmen attack	360 houses, Nigerian Police station. National Programme on Immunization office and lives destroyed.	19/02/14	21/02/14	39	109	5,113	Intervened
18.	Gwoza	Izge	Gunmen attack	Entire community razed.	22/02/14					Intervened
19.	MMC	Ngomari	Gunmen attack	78 houses, vehicles and 39 shops destroyed	01/03/14	02/03/14	43	49	5,000	No intervention
20.	Kaga	Mainok	Gunmen attack	360 houses, shops/market and other valuable properties destroyed.	01/03/14	02/03/14	29	39	2,086	Intervened
21.	Mafa	Mafa town	Gunmen attack	Almost all the community razed down.	02/03/14	03/03/14			2,331	Intervened
22.	Konduga	Jakana	Gunmen attack	80% of the community burnt.	03/03/14	03/03/14		35	2,779	Intervened
23.	MMC	Old GRA	Gunmen attack		14/03/14	14/03/14			410	No intervention
24.	Damboa		Gunmen attack		15/03/14				20	No intervention
25.	MMC		Fire	50 houses, food items and lives stock destroyed.	16/03/14	17/03/14				No intervention
26.	Damboa		Insurgency	5 vehicles burnt.	20/03/14	20/03/14		10		No intervention

Source: NEMA Northeast 2014 Annual Report

NEMA had distributed food and no-food items and building materials to individuals and communities affected by the insurgency.

Table below II (Functional camps as at 31st December, 2014)

S/No.	Name of Camps	No. of IDPs
1	National Youth Service Corps Camp	5,515
2	EYN Church	26,576
3	Government Girls Secondary School, Yerwa	5,939
4	Government Girls Secondary School, Maiduguri	4,148
5	Government College Maiduguri	18,009
6	Women Teachers College Maiduguri	6,750
7	Arabic Teachers College Maiduguri	12,794
8	Sanda Kyarimi Secondary School, Maiduguri	5,340
9	Teacher's Village, Maiduguri	1,720
10	Government Girls Secondary School Biu	491
Total		1,805,562

Source: NEMA Northeast 2014, Annual Report

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