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## **The Impacts of the North-East Nigerian Humanitarian Crisis on the Educational Rights of Internally Displaced Children in Michika Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract:**

*The study is an attempt to assess the impacts of the boko-haram insurgency on the educational rights of children in Michika local government of Adamawa state. The study adopted the use of secondary data gathered from news-papers, magazines, journals, government and Non-governmental organizations publications. The study revealed that the Nigerian government has not lived up to expectation as thousands of children are still out of school or at worst learning under trees or some make –shift class made out of the destroyed structures. Based on the above; recommendations were made to the Nigerian federal; state and the local government to properly look into the plight of the children in the northeast by making sure such vulnerable children enjoy their right to education.*

**Keywords:** Boko-haram, children, education, internally displaced persons, insurgency

### **1. Introduction**

Michika which is originally pronounced as Mwe-cika local government is one of the local government areas of Adamawa state Nigeria. The principal tribe and language spoken in Michika is Higgi. The local government was founded in 1976 and is located in the northern axis of the state and bordered on the east by the Republic of Cameroun. The local government is made of eight districts and has been badly affected by the boko-haram insurgency. The entire town was sized by the dread Islamic terrorists groups and several houses and government institutions burnt down in 2014, but the town was recaptured by the Nigerian armies in 2015. In addition; several schools were burnt down to ashes, several teachers and the school children were chased out to take refuge either with their distance relations or the IDPs camps. However; since the return of normalcy to the area several schools are still not yet reconstructed as most teaching and learning takes place under shades and inside the old structures destroyed by the insurgence. In the recent times; the Victim Support Fund VSF has begun some reconstruction and rehabilitation of some public infrastructure in the area.

It is very unfortunate that in any crisis or conflict situation children are among the vulnerable categories of persons. This is due to the fact that they depend on their care-givers. The displaced children in Michika as a result of the Boko-Haram insurgency are no less different. The millions of children displaced by the insurgency and are living in the camps are experiencing series of untold challenges ranging from malnutrition, diseases, molestation, forced labour, the threat of child trafficking and conscription into the insurgence group etc. In December 2015, Internally Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC 2016) estimated that there are almost 2,151,000 internally displaced persons in Nigeria. The organization classifies the distribution of the IDPs thus: Women 53%, men 47% and more than 56% are children who mostly un-accompanied. The children therefore are most vulnerable groups in the camps. Besides, Millions of children are out of school, and are dying of hunger and diseases and malnutrition daily.

Several of the school children are still displaced and out of school due largely to the inability of their parents to pay for their school fees. Most of the children who are still in school are learning under the trees and in uncompleted building as a result of destructions done by the Boko-Haramists whose major target were schools. Other categories of the school children have gone into the markets as shoe shiners, cleaners, street hawkers and or motor-circle riders even though are not legally old enough to take part in such businesses

It is a known fact that children suffer most in every crisis situation. This is because children are vulnerable and they cannot help themselves but have to depend on their care givers. This has motivated the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and which has since been adopted by the General Assembly of the UN (November 1959). The organization states that "the child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth" cited in Asokpan. A.J. (2016). Nigeria is a signatory to this fundamental right of the children and therefore need to pay serious attention the protection of the child's right to education. The Nigerian government after series of deliberation with experts developed a documentary guideline and what Folorunsho, et al (2014) called "educational goals and objectives of the country". The Nigerian Policy on Education was developed out of this. The Nigeria policy on Education NPE is the overall national document and a guideline for the effective implementation of Education in the entire country i.e. from the Federal down to the local government. Education is a catalyst to the development of all human societies; vis-vis educating a child remains an integral ingredient in the growth and development of all nations. The Nigerian constitution stipulates that the direction of the National Policy on Education towards the provision of equal educational opportunities to all children at all levels and provide compulsory primary education; free university; and free adult education to the citizens. National Policy on Education (2013). In the northeast region which has been ravaged by the Boko haram insurgency the story is different. Thousands of the children are residing in camps some orphans and unaccompanied and completely out of school. Several of the children have been kidnapped and held by Boko haram terrorists and forcefully recruited into child soldiers. The girls on the other hand are forced to become wives; slaves or suicide bombers. UNICEF (2016) states that: "In northeastern Nigeria, conflict has deprived many children of access to education. Teachers have been killed and schools burned down or closed for security reasons". The famous organization states that 2,295 teachers killed and 19,000 displaced; and almost 1,400 schools destroyed since the start of the insurgency in 2009. <https://www.unicef.org/>...It is on the basis of the above that the researcher felt the need for this study.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian state and the international community's since the inception of the boko-haram crisis in the north-east of the country have spent billions of dollars on the menace. Despite the huge expenditure on the victims of the crisis and especially children, the victims have continued to live in deplorable conditions in the camps in the region leading to the demise of thousands of children and especially the un-accompanied ones. Most of the children are malnourished due to lack of medical care, adequate food supply, lack of portable drinking water and poor sanitation in the camps. This has further worsened the disparity between the region and other regions of the nation in terms of growth and development. Segun, Adedeji and Donnelly (2016) laments that "low levels of education and literacy in Nigeria's north-east has been exacerbated by the boko-haram insurgency". Oladije, (2015) revealed that "national surveys in 2013 and 2014 have shown that the northeast region is sitting at or near the bottom states in terms of key indicators related to water and sanitation, maternal health, and nutrition. He also revealed that the region is to some extent within the Sahel region, which is characterized by semi-arid conditions, a relatively high degree of poverty, malnutrition and low level of development.

NEMA as the statutory government agency saddled with the responsibility managing the camp has been coordinating all individuals, NGOs and other donor agencies in handling the plight of the children education in the camps. Billions of naira has been spent in the name of the internally Displaced Children's education. Despite this huge sums of money spent both from within and outside the country; most of the internally displaced children are still out of school. It is on the basis of this that the researcher wants to conduct this study to investigate the rationale behind the plight of the children of the affected communities by the insurgency.

### 1.2. Research Questions

The following are the specific research questions:

- What are the effects of the humanitarian crisis on the children's right to education?
- What has the Nigerian state done in response to the educational plight of the internally displaced children?
- What are the challenges faced by the government in educating the internally displaced children?
- What are the practical solutions to the identified problems?

## 2. Literature Review

Fafunwa in Durajaye (2016), described education as the aggregate of all processes through which a child develops abilities; attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the Nigerian society. In line with this, the Nigerians philosophy of education is based on the following sets of beliefs:

- Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
- Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria ;

- Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self –fulfillment and general development of the society;
- Education is compulsory and a right of Nigeria irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges and
- Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.
- From the above, one can see that education is an all-round development of child if he or she is to live meaningfully. Education helps the child to acquire the right skills, knowledge and values for personal growth and development. When the child is educated he or she will be able to contribute positively to the society.

In situations where children are displaced such as it is obtained in the north-east Nigeria. The United Nations guiding principles on Internal Displacement (1998) and in principle 23 of the document states clearly that the concerned authorities during crises or conflict must ensure the displaced children gets free and compulsory education which should respect their cultural identity, language and religion cited in Durajaye (2016.) The African Union Convention known as Kampala Declaration for the Protection and Assistance of Internal Displaced Persons in Africa requires that parties to conflicts should provide the IDPs and including children food, water, shelter, medical care, sanitation, education and other necessary social services to the victim

### 2.1. An Overview of Child Education in Nigeria

Nigeria like any other countries of the world has pledged commitment to the education of the children. This is so because education is a right of the children and must not be denied for whatever reason. The early childhood education has a significant on the all-round development. Bush in Ajayi, (2008) maintains that the years between birth and birth and age five are the foundation on which successful or otherwise lives are built. Globally every nation is assiduously working towards this direction. In the view of this the Nigerian constitution section 18 of chapter two and cited in Folorunsho et al (2014):

- The Nigerian constitution has clearly spelt out education as one of the fundamental human rights. The Nigerian government is expected to direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels of government.
- Government is expected to promote science and technology
- Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end government shall as and when practicable provide (a) free, compulsory and universal primary education; (b) free secondary education; (c) free university education; and free adult literacy programme.

Most IDPs children in the north –east region have lost their parents during the heat of the boko-haram crisis; and are left at the mercy of government. The true identity of such children sometimes may not be known but it is the responsibility of the government to do everything possible to make sure that such vulnerable children enjoy their full rights as citizens of Nigeria.

### 2.2. Effects of the Humanitarian Crisis on the Education of the Internally Displaced Children

The boko haram crisis in the northeast region has serious negative impacts on the education of the children who are among the vulnerable members of the society. The innocent children who do not have the capacity to help themselves are made pay the ultimate for crisis that is not caused by them. They are forced to miss the joy of childhood as several of them are made to live and cater for themselves without their parents and teachers who would have been their succor. As a result of the insurgence in the northeast region of Nigeria, communities, public institutions especially educational institutions were wantonly destroyed by the insurgency. This led to mass displacement of several communities in the region. Worst still several students were kidnapped while teachers were either killed or displaced. Segun noted that “By February 2016, 910 schools had been destroyed and a further 1,400 schools forced to close. Over 600 teachers have been killed and 19,000 forced to flee”. The boko-haram terrorists targeted schools with more than 910 schools destroyed between 2009 and 2015 were forced to close down. Between 2012 and 2013 many students were attacked by the group and were completely kept out of school and recruited in the deadly group as militants. On the other hand, female students were abducted as wives or sex slaves. The popularly talked about was the kidnap of 276 school children from Government Secondary School Chibok on 14 April 2014. IN November 2014 the terrorists also abducted another in Damask and went away with 300 students. The schools were also used as either military bases or camps for the IDPs. This has further affected the children’s right to education. Several school children from Michika local government have resorted to go searching for menial jobs such as street hawking, shoe shining, house helps and the like. Segun et al (2016) noted that there are about estimated 30 million Nigerian children of school age, approximately 10.5 million are not in school. He noted further that of those not attending school, 62 percent are from the northeastern part of Nigeria. This has buttressed the ideology of the boko-haram that western education is forbidden or sinful. UNICEF (2017) 3 million children need emergency education support at the start of the new academic year. The educational in balance between the region and other parts of Nigeria has worsened.

### 2.3. What Has the Nigerian Government Done So Far to the Education of the IDPS Children?

There are at least four humanitarian actors including NEMA with permanent operational presence in Adamawa state conducting activities to respond to the crisis. There are State Emergency Management Agency SEMA, the United Nations

Population Fund UNFPA, International Risqué Committee IRC and Oxfam with some additional actors and donor agencies like the United Nations International Children Education Fund UNICEF, World Health Organization WHO, Food and Agricultural Organization FAO, USAID and the World Bank.

The proposed national policy on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria states that the Nigerian Education sector lead agency under the sectoral approach established must work in conjunction with local and state education authorities to create conducive learning environment for the internally displaced children in collaboration with UNICEF and other relevant bodies. The document further states that where formal education facilities are not available, informal education options including livelihood skills training should be provided. National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria (2012:31). It is disheartened to note the internally displaced children are denied this rights as the government has not been able to do much in this direction. The UNICEF have enrolled a good number of the children and distributed some learning materials. The emergency respond by the UNICEF has also remained underfund. In line with this the Deputy Director UNICEF noted that the organization has 40% funding gaps in its need for 2017. The Safe School Initiative that was recently launched by the UN Special Envoy for Global Education and former United Kingdom Prime Minister Gordon Brown at the World Economic Forum in Nigeria did not hold much water as the initiative is not enjoyed by most schools yet. Isokpan and Durojaye (2016) reports that "the support rendered by these bodies is limited to only some camps, reaching just a fraction of the numbers of IDPs".

#### *2.4. Empirical Literature Review*

Several scholars have written on the education of children from the north-eastern states of Nigeria. Some of study the study revealed that the insecurity in the state has negatively affected the level of primary school attendance. Awortu, (2015) also conducted a study on insurgency and its impact on development using primary sources of data. He found out that the menace has negatively affected the development of the nation since several schools were destroyed and consequently closed down. Mohammed, (2015) assessed the impact of the insurgency on girls education. He found out that the situation has further worsened the plight of girl-child education in the region as they were afraid of being either hurt or kidnapped. Similarly, Oladujoye and Omemu, (2014) examined the effect of Boko-Haram on school attendance in the north-east; and they found out that the insurgency has negatively affected all levels of education in the region. They maintained that "attendance at school is dependent on the readiness of the child, encouragement from parents, the provision of school materials, the distance to school and very importantly, the security of the child". Bilyaminu, et al (2017) conducted a study and examined the impact of Boko-Haram Insurgency on Education in Adamawa state using primary sources of data. They made use of Structural Equation Model (SEM) in analyzing the data. The result of the study revealed that educational output (human capital development) has affected school enrolment, school attendance and school infrastructure by 71%, 84% and 82% as a result of any 1% increase in Boko -Haram. The study further revealed that extreme religious beliefs, unemployment, and illiteracy contributed to menace.

The impacts of the boko- haram activities on the children in the north-east and especially Michika one of the most heat local government in Adamawa cannot be quantified. Most of school children have completely given up as far as western education is concerned. Some have resorted to farming on people's farmer for food while others are house helps or street hawkers for livelihood.

### **3. Research Findings**

The study discovered among others that Nigeria as a country has not live to expectation in ratifying the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the UN Resolution 46/182 of 1991 which states that "the state has the primary role in the protection and provision of humanitarian assistance to all the IDPs within its territory". Millions of children are still out of school in Nigerian north-east as a result of the insurgency. School attendance has dropped significantly due to the fear of continues attacks in the hitherto affected communities.

### **4. Recommendations**

There is no doubt the insurgency have negatively affected the educational rights of children as stipulated in the Nigerian constitution. The situation demands a sincere and continuous effort from the relevant government agencies and especially NEMA. First and foremost, the government should intensify efforts so that complete peace can return to the region. Education is the bedrock to development, government should come up with measures that will help bridge the educational gap bet the north-east region and other parts of the country. The internally displaced children should be identified and sent to school on scholarship as most of them are orphans. The effort of the Presidential Initiative on Rebuilding the north – is commendable. However there are still more lands to conquer as several of the destroyed schools are still not built and furnished. The teachers in such communities should be given special incentives so that they can be motivated to stay and put in their best in restoring normalcy in education.

### **5. Conclusion**

Education is one of the fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution. Government has an obligation and mandate to ensure that the internally displaced children are protected and care for adequately. More so, the Nigerian government has ratified the Kampala Declaration but has not yet domesticated. The convention Declaration should

be implemented to the core so that the educational rights of these vulnerable can be protected and hold government responsible for any bridge. The UN Guiding Principle on internal displacement should be respected by the all levels of government in Nigeria.

## 6. Methodology

Secondary sources of data were used in the course of the study. Data were collected from relevant journals, publications from NGOs and other Donor agencies, government publications, newspapers and magazines.

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