

Effects of Boko Haram Insurgency on Public Schools and Responses by Government of Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast affected all sectors of human endeavour including education. This study examined the effects of the insurgency on the education sector in Borno State. Heads of institutions from five primary, four junior secondary and four senior secondary schools in each of the three senatorial zones were selected based on the availability of the heads of the schools and interviewed with a structured 24 item questionnaire consisting of both open ended and close ended questions. This was triangulated with official data obtained from Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) and other sources. Analysis showed that schools in Borno Central (23.3%) and Southern (15.8%) senatorial zones are severely damaged in terms of infrastructure. where classrooms, laboratories and hostels were damaged. As a response measure, government embarked on immediate closure of schools, and later their merger into learning centres in Maiduguri and Biu, development of Educational Sector plan and securing of schools including fencing and barb wire. Other measures include increased government spending on education to provide facilities, free lunch and transportation services to pupils through the school bus transit scheme. It was recommended that recruitment of more teachers into both primary and secondary schools as well as sustenance of the school feeding programme are required.

Introduction

Borno State is one of the states that generally falls under the rubric of Educationally Less Disadvantaged States (ELDS) commonly used by educational planners in Nigeria. Such classification is informed by features such as low literacy rates, the relatively fewer number of schools, low enrolment figures at all levels which concomitantly result in poor access as well as achievement of learners in national examinations when compared with other states. While socioeconomic, political and cultural factors are inherent in our understanding of the large inequities between Borno and other states of Nigeria, the recent insurgency unleashed on Borno by Boko Haram especially since 2012 is likely to have exacerbated such inequity which needs to be understood. Such a need for clearer understanding is premised on the debilitating effect of the conflict on the delivery of education in Borno, affecting school infrastructure, teachers, and the learners themselves thus seriously affecting school attendance and performance. At the peak of the insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, Borno State had the highest burden of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with over 500,000 in Maiduguri the state capital alone (reliefweb, 2015). Attempts have been made (see for instance, Abdulrasheed, Onuselogu and Obioma, 2015; Ibrahim, Talba, Monguno & Kelechi, 2015) to assess the effects of the insurgency on the delivery of education in Borno but these are either largely theoretical or too generic to address specific issues affecting the sector's problems. With relative improvement in the level of security and the ongoing efforts being made by government and development partners, there is the need to examine responses made in the sector.

Perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of Boko Haram conflict on social services (including education) in Northeast Nigeria was the Reconstruction and Peace Building Assessment (RPBA) conducted by the World Bank (Federal Government of Nigeria/World Bank Group, 2016). The result of this assessment nevertheless focused largely on infrastructural damage at the state level and cost involved to make case for possible funding by donors. Little was known about the micro-level impact of conflict especially at the smallest unit of government i.e. local government with respect to the damage to social infrastructure (including education). Such analyses blur local variations within the local governments and give little room for understanding these variations (say on the basis of senatorial zones) that could equally yield interesting disparities and which may also be required to inform policy intervention. What is the level of damage to educational infrastructure in Borno and how has the government responded to the impact? This study examined the micro-level impact of the insurgency on education infrastructure and efforts made by government to cope with service delivery in the sector.

Methods of Data Collection

This study is essentially quantitative in design that used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected using an 18 item questionnaire as the main instrument. The questionnaire which elicited both structured and unstructured responses was targeted at school heads i.e. head teachers and principals who were the participants. In a few cases where the head teachers could not be reached, their assistants served as the participants. Responses elicited from them include structured questions like number of schools,

facilities/infrastructure available, and level of damage etc. A few of the responses like year of establishment of school, number of staff, number of students etc. were unstructured. In all, fifteen schools each from primary, Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) category (five from each of the three senatorial zones) were targeted based on the availability and willingness of the school heads to respond. However, at the end of data collection the total number of schools by category interviewed was 15 head teachers of primary schools, 12 JSS and 12 SSS principals. Questionnaires for six schools (three JSSs and three SSSs) were not returned. The selection of the schools and contacts with head teachers/principals were facilitated by the local branch of teachers union i.e. Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT). The questionnaires were issued to the school heads with the help of a research assistant. As most of the questions were based on school records, respondents took time to complete the questionnaires themselves i.e. questionnaires were self-completed. Additional information was generated through unstructured interviews with teachers, officials and school heads as well as personal experiences of the researcher. These were used to complement data generated from the questionnaire.

Secondary data were collected from Borno State Universal Basic Education (BOSUBEB) office, the state Ministry of Education (MoE) and online sources. The quantitative data generated were analyzed using SPSS version 20 software as well as Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and presented in the form of percentages and tables. The three geopolitical regions of the state i.e Borno north, central and south were used as the scale of analysis. Most of the analysis was also limited to secondary schools. In the course of the study, some important concerns were observed and these reported in the following section.

Data Limitations

A few issues that may impinge on the quality of data collected using the procedure described must be borne in mind. First, to the extent that respondents' selection was based on willingness of school heads to participate, the schools selected and information so provided may have been biased. Second, many schools in the northern and central southern senatorial zones assessed in this report have been completely destroyed by insurgents and so school records were based on respondents' recollection of facts rather than routinely kept school records. Data reported in this study are therefore based on information as at 2014. More importantly, even in cases where the schools have not been destroyed, vital school records are either poorly kept (making retrieval a difficult task) or simply nonexistent. Thirdly, despite the assistance of the local NUT in the state and assurances of confidentiality of information provided, some head teachers and principals were apprehensive of the survey. Indeed, a few of them declined to respond. To overcome these limitations, an attempt was made to corroborate data obtained from the schools with that of the Ministry of Education and Borno State Universal Basic Education Board (BOSUBEB). These limitations are worth noting in this paper.

Findings

Damage to School Infrastructure

The availability of school facilities provides sufficient motivation not only for the learners but teachers as well, while parents may also be more willing to send their wards to schools. The availability of important facilities like classrooms was assessed based on their level of damage. It is however important to report that some destruction was recorded after this date. Indeed many schools in the northern, central and southern senatorial zones were completely destroyed; some partially thereby hampering academic activities. Several attempts were made at reconstruction of some of the schools by government but many schools were damaged soon after reconstruction. On the whole about 900 schools (nursery, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary) were destroyed since the beginning of the insurgency (The Cable, 2014). Official data on infrastructural damage to schools arising from the insurgency was available only with respect to Senior Secondary Schools at the time of data collection and is presented on Table 1. Notably, the data available was as at August, 2014 when the insurgency was at its climax stage. Though the information was quite indicative, many schools destroyed after August 2014 were not captured. The data indicates that 72 percent of the schools were undamaged, 11 percent damaged and 17 percent heavily damaged. Data further indicate that Borno Central suffered the most infrastructural damage with 23 percent of the senior secondary schools heavily damaged. As the latter only pertained to the senior secondary schools, the official record was complemented with field data of schools affected by the crisis from the state NUT (Table 2).

Even though the information so provided serves a useful purpose of informing us about patterns of damage to schools, it was also far from being an exhaustive list. The condition of most schools in the rural areas in particular was difficult to determine. From Table 2, it may be observed that more primary and junior secondary schools were damaged than senior secondary schools. Borno South suffered the greatest damage to primary schools (21.1 percent) while Borno Central leads in terms of damage to JSS and SSS; nearly a third of these schools (29.6 percent and 26.7 percent respectively) were destroyed. A lot of similarity may be observed from the data presented on Tables 1 and 2. In both tables, Borno Central suffered the most damage and Borno North

the least.

Table 1. Senior Secondary Schools Destroyed by Senatorial Zone

Senatorial Zone	Undamaged		Damaged		Heavily Damaged		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Borno North	13	86.7	1	6.7	1	6.7	15
Borno Central	20	66.7	3	10.0	7	23.3	30
Borno South	27	71.0	5	13.2	6	15.8	38
Total	60	72.3	9	10.8	14	16.9	83

Source: Borno State Ministry of Education, 2014

Table 2. Number of schools destroyed by Senatorial Zone in Borno State

Senatorial Zone	No. of Primary Schools Destroyed	% of Total Destroyed	No. of JSS Destroyed	% of Total Destroyed	No. of SSS Destroyed	% of Total Destroyed
Borno North*	12	6.7	5	26.3	1	9.1
Borno Central	58	18.0	16	29.6	8	26.7
Borno**	93	21.1	20	20.6	1	2.3
Total	157	16.7	28	16.5	10	11.9

Source: Compiled based on interviews with NUT officials, 2015

*Excluding Abadam and Guzamala LGAs due to unavailability of data

**Excluding Askira/Uba and Gwoza LGAs due to unavailability of data

Responses by Government

In view of the high scale level of insecurity and destruction on schools occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency, several measures were taken by the Borno State government to ensure education service delivery at all levels. These measures were implemented in phases. The immediate policy measure was the closure of all schools in the state to ensure learners and their teachers were safe. This measure was taken immediately following the abduction of over 200 school girls in Government Secondary School Chibok in April, 2014. As the security situation worsened with Boko Haram taking control of more and more towns, public primary and secondary schools remained closed for nearly two years until late 2015 when schools in Maiduguri, the state capital were reopened. Apart from security concerns, another reason why the schools remained closed was the fact that in Maiduguri the state capital, schools were used as temporary camps for the internally displaced persons.

Like earlier discussed, the conflict has had a particularly damaging impact on the education sector in Borno. Apart from school infrastructure, teachers were threatened and in some cases killed; so many schools were transformed into shelter for IDPs. At least 50 schools in Borno State were converted into IDP camps temporarily. Perhaps the most obvious response was the increased budgetary allocation to the education sector in order to undo the colossal damage to school infrastructure by the conflict. The Federal Government/World Bank (2016) estimated that about 143.8 million US dollars was required to make the schools ready for teaching and learning. This amount represents about 53 percent of the entire resources required for reconstruction of critical education infrastructure in the Northeast that were devastated by the conflict. Table 3 shows the 8 year trend of the state's budgetary provision for education. The table shows a fluctuating trend in the percentage allocation to education over the period with highest allocation recorded in 2016. It is instructive to note that education has consistently been the leading sector in terms of resource allocation, attracting the highest budget allocation. Yet, worthy of note is that the figures in Table 3 do not capture all education related agencies within the sector. Agencies such as Borno State Primary Education Board (BOSUBEB) with huge budgets and tertiary education spending are considered separately in the budget. Generally, while it may be argued that there is a difference between budgetary allocation and actual monetary release, it is expected that actual expenditure is likely to follow a similar pattern with education attracting the highest spending.

Access to external sources of funding was also vigorously pursued to help fix the infrastructural needs of the sector. The State Education Programme Investment Programme (SEPIP), a World Bank credit facility was accessed in the last two years where the sum of N1.2 billion was paid as matching grant by Borno State government. Using this amount, about 17 mega schools including schools for children orphaned by the conflict were built in the conflict-affected communities. It was disclosed officially that:

‘..... with funding from SEPIP and the state government releases, we

have been able to rebuild and secure schools to reflect 21st Century needs of teachers and learners where state of the art facilities have been provided even in remote communities’ (interview with Chairman, BOSUBEB).

Similarly, it was further argued that:

‘the insurgency by Boko Haram which destroyed education infrastructure is a blessing in disguise because we have built back better most of the infrastructure destroyed’ (interview with Borno State Education Commissioner)

Table 3:. Borno State Budgetary Allocation to Education 2011 – 2018

Year	Total Budget	Allocation to Education	Percentage Allocation
2011	99,806,804,000	16,619,251,000	16.65
2012	130,606,674,000	14,284,268,000	10.94
2013	184,307,992,244	19,269,395,800	10.46
2014	178,500,582,000	11,061,666,000	6.20
2015	175,918,759,525	14,562,412,700	8.27
2016	155,674,453,870	27,498,980,098	17.66
2017	183,840,489,081	24,510,742,541	13.33
2018	170,312,405,456	22,842,343,523	13.41

Source: Borno State Government Annual Budget 2011 – 2018

An important planning tool, the Borno State Education Sector Plan (2017 – 2019) was developed with the support of United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). The plan was aimed at holistically addressing the challenges of education in Borno especially with regards to funding and is now being implemented peace-meal. It was estimated that about N20.6 billion, N30 billion and N29.2 billion was required for 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively in the six thematic areas of physical and management reforms, physical infrastructure and facilities, quality assurance, increasing access and opportunities, school security and safety, and sustainable funding of education in the plan period (Borno State Ministry of Education, 2017). In order to improve access and opportunities, a free school bus service was introduced to shuttle students from home to school and back. A school feeding programme was also piloted in some schools. These policies seem to have improved school attendance in Maiduguri and the rural areas despite the ongoing insurgency. According to SUBEB Chairman; there are now more girls in primary schools than boys and retention of pupils has increased because of these policy measures put in place by government.

A major policy shift to provide education despite the emergency situation in Borno State was the grouping of schools in safer communities especially in Maiduguri. Upon resumption of academic activities in 2016, following relative improvement in security, schools were grouped into centralized learning centres across the state. A learning centre is the co-location of several schools in one physical space with shared facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, toilets and playgrounds but each school having its teachers. Table 4 shows for instance a list of sample learning centres in Maiduguri and the schools within them. These centres consist of schools from three to ten within the same premisis. For example, Mustapha Umar El-Kanemi Arabic College has the highest number of schools (Table 3), playing host to schools in the Northern and Central geopolitical zones. Sanda Kyarimi Senior Secondary School, Maiduguri hosts up to three other schools from the central geopolitical zone. The immediate implication of this merger of schools is the massive pressure exerted on the facilities of host schools by the coming of displaced schools. Classroom facilities, toilets, water supply etc. have become overstretched and inadequate so that some primary schools are forced to take lessons under tree shades (Plate 1). As coping measure, academic activities in some centres are therefore staggered so that the host schools hold academic activities in the mornings while the displaced schools hold sessions in the afternoons as was observed in Sanda Kyarimi Senior Secondary School (interview with respondent #3). A major problem identified was the dearth of teachers to cater for the needs of the students. This has arisen because many have been direct victims of the insurgency - either killed or missing, or have retired, leaving a large vacuum in the civil service which is compounded by the ban on employment placed by government.



Plate 1. Primary school children studying under a tree shade in Maiduguri

Table 4: Sample Learning Centres and the Geopolitical Areas Served

Learning Centre	No. of Schools served	Geopolitical Areas Served
Mustapha Umar El-Kanemi Arabic College, Maiduguri	Mustapha Umar Arabic College, Maiduguri Government Secondary School, Gajiram Government Secondary School, Ngamdu Government Secondary School, Benesheikh Government Secondary School, Kukawa Government Senior Science Secondary School, Monguno Government Secondary School, Malamfatori Government Secondary School, Marte Government Secondary School, Abadam Government Secondary School, Damboa	Borno North & Borno Central
Yerwa Govt Girls Secondary School, Maiduguri	Government Girls Secondary School, Gajiganna Government Girls Secondary School, Monguno Government Girls Secondary School, Baga Yerwa Govt Girls Secondary School, Maiduguri Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok Government Girls Technical College, Damboa	Borno North & South
Sanda Kyarimi Sen. Day Sec Sch Maiduguri	Sanda Kyarimi Senior Day Secondary School Government Secondary School, Dikwa Government Secondary School, Ngala Government Day Secondary School, Gamboru	Borno Central
Mairi Day Secondary School, Maiduguri	Mairi Day Secondary School, Maiduguri Government Day Secondary School, Kirawa Government Day Secondary School, Ashigashiya Government Day Secondary School, Izge Government Day Secondary School, Bama Kur Mohammed Day Secondary School, Bama	Borno Central & South
Zajiri Day Secondary School, Maiduguri	Government Day Secondary School Zajiri Government Secondary School Damasak Government Day Secondary School Monguno Government Day Secondary School Baga Government Day Secondary School Abadam Maimalari Day Secondary School Maiduguri	Borno north

Source: Field Data, 2018

Conclusion

Boko Haram insurgency has had a devastating effect on education infrastructure across the three geopolitical zones of the Borno State. In particular, destruction of school infrastructure was heaviest in the central and southern geopolitical zones. To ensure education service delivery despite the ongoing conflict, several policy measures were adopted by the Borno State government including increased spending on education to rehabilitate damaged infrastructure, merger of schools into learning centres, development of a state education sector operational plan and free school transportation system with Maiduguri the state capital. But the greatest challenge for the state government at present lies in the recruitment of more teachers to service the large number of students across the learning centres, and to adequately cater for the students that would be enrolled into the newly constructed mega schools for the purpose of retention.

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