

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POST-INSURGENCY PEACEBUILDING IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the Boko-Haram insurgency has impacted negatively on the social, economic, and political landscape of the people of Northeastern Nigeria, particularly Borno State, which is considered to be the birthplace of the insurgency. Recently, there have been improvements in terms of peace, particularly within the Maiduguri metropolis. Post-conflict reconstructions have begun in different dimensions, and the State is gradually returning to normalcy. However, it has been observed that peacebuilding initiatives in this area have often neglected the roles women play in the sustenance of peacebuilding in Borno State, Nigeria. This study, therefore, assessed and examined the contributions of women towards peace building in Borno State. The study focused on the roles of women in the Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Baga Market, Gamboru, Polo, and selected Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camps in Maiduguri. The study adopted the qualitative approach as data collection method. The primary data was collected using Key Informant Interviews and Focused Group Discussions. Secondary data was also sourced from available literature. The study found that there has been a change in the narrative as market women, women in communities, and selected IDP camps have taken significant steps in post-insurgency peacebuilding in Maiduguri. Through the increased collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and NGOs, women have been empowered through workshops and training to participate fully in the post-insurgency peacebuilding of Borno State. Despite the successes recorded, there exist issues of stereotype by some who still see women as just home keepers. This is in line with the theory of social roles adopted in this study as a framework for analysis. The theory looks at how cultural landscape and socially constructed roles affect the full participation and recognition of women in post-conflict peacebuilding reconstruction. The study, therefore, recommends capacity building and further integration of more women in post-insurgency peacebuilding processes at the community levels. There should be a recognition of the informal peacebuilding activities by women in local communities. Lastly, the custodians of culture and religion should be consulted and involved in the process of women's inclusion and recognition in post-insurgency peacebuilding in Borno.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Post insurgency, women, Boko Haram, IDPs

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Introduction

Globally, armed conflicts and insurgencies have continued to undermine the fundamental rights of people to live and pose a serious threat to peace and security. Nigeria, in recent times, has had to deal with numerous problems brought on by different terrorist organisations, problems that have a terrible human cost in terms of lives lost or permanently altered, internally displaced people, and extremely detrimental effects on economic and social growth (UNODC, 2020).

Nigeria's North East region has, over the last decade, been entangled in an insurgency that has given birth to one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world. The Boko Haram insurgency or conflict remains the driver of extreme insecurity across the North East of Nigeria and parts of the Sahel. A report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reveals that 14 million people across the six states in the region have been affected by the conflict (UNDP, 2017). In many of these areas, women and children were the only ones left after Boko Haram either forcibly recruited or killed the men and older boys or the military arrested them.

The insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria, began in Maiduguri, the capital of the Northeastern state of Borno, in 2009 with a religious group known as Boko Haram headed by the late Mohammed Yusuf. Although Boko Haram, which means "Westernization is sacrilege," was given to the group by neighbours based on how they perceived its lifestyle and teachings, the group's original name is Jamat Ahl al-Sunnah li-l-Da'awah wa al-Jihad, often translated as "Association of the People of the Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad" or "People Committed to the Prophet's Teaching for Propagation and Jihad" (Aro, 2009). The widespread interpretation of this, in turn, was that "Western education is a sin" or "Western education is forbidden" (Da'awah Coordination Council of Nigeria, DCCN, 2009). Boko Haram opposes Westernization from an ideological standpoint because it believes it has a negative impact on Islamic principles. The group attributes Nigeria's culture of corruption, which has widened the gap between the few wealthy and the many impoverished, to Western influences (Britannica, 2023).

Since the Boko Haram insurgency erupted, tens of thousands of civilians and displaced millions in Borno State and across the Lake Chad region, which straddles Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and (Brechenmacher, 2019) the government's military response has been centred on kinetic approach which has further increased the death toll and destruction of property (Asqura-Heim & Mcquid, 2015).

The Nigerian State and the security forces have had difficulties deciding what to do with the thousands of survivors. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have come under suspicion because they must subsist in Boko Haram-controlled regions and because the distinction between victims and offenders is hazy. A humanitarian crisis with significant long-term consequences has been brought on by this distrust, the subpar performance, and abuses of Nigerian officials, as well as some of their international partners, who are supposed to help the internally displaced people (ICG, 2016).

Also, a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) shows that the insurgency, which has spread into the Lake Chad region, has left

about 7.1 million people in need of humanitarian support and about 1.8 million people from the Borno., Adamawa and Yobe States are internally displaced (OCHA, 2019). Due to the Northeast's very low socioeconomic development status in the nation, pre-existing structural factors have been made worse by the humanitarian effects of the conflict. These factors include years of neglect of appropriate investments in education, the impact of climatic changes on economic activities, and the influence of radical religious beliefs, amongst others.

The negative effect of Boko Haram's activities also has a gender dimension. The most crucial component of their tactics is the abuse of women. By using gendered strategies, Boko Haram makes use of female fragility to advance its anti-Western goal. The organisation abuses women by raping, kidnapping, forcing them into marriage, and holding them captive. By utilising women as weapons and objects of war, such as sex slaves, human shields, and suicide bombers, Boko Haram also objectifies women (Okoli, 2022).

Furthermore, women's and girls' importance for Boko Haram insurgents stems from their roles and how they are perceived in society – both in the North East and in Nigeria as a whole. As wives, they enhance social status and provide sexual or domestic services (sometimes forced), thereby becoming valuable incentives for potential male recruits. Their adherence, willing or forced, to the movement's version of Islam can also contribute to the spreading of its ideology among other women, but possibly also young men. Women can perform roles very differently from traditional stereotypes. Women have taken on roles as soldiers, spies, recruiters, housewives, recruiters, and willing or forced suicide bombers as the conflict evolved. In substantiating this assertion, the International Crisis Group (ICG) report on the impact of the Boko Haram group on women in 2016 stated that it was easier to gain support, create a political ideology that was opposed to the state, and occasionally attack Nigerian institutions where it was thought it would cause the most harm by focusing on women and girls in certain groups. The report further noted that in the early stages of the insurgency, starting in late 2010, militants targeted primarily men, who were thought to have helped the security authorities during their initial crackdown on the sect (ICG, 2016).

In the face of these mounting challenges, communities in Borno have evolved new strategies and coping mechanisms to survive. They have devised and sustained community-based practices that have helped to build community resilience and maintain peace in these communities. Hundreds of women assist security forces as vigilante militia members, including those with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). They mainly aid in the pat-down of women at checkpoints, the gathering of intelligence, and the identification of suspects, as well as occasionally in combating Boko Haram. Others labour for women's organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or they provide private care for war victims. As seen by the founding of many new women-led NGOs in Maiduguri and Nigeria's participation in the global Bring Back Our Girls campaign, the war has occasionally created chances for women's action. However, the Nigerian government has not made any apparent attempts to include women in counterinsurgency operations despite the fact that they are widely believed to have been insurgents' enablers (OCHA, 2017). The focus on local efforts by women in these communities is underscored by the growing recognition of the need for adaptation of national

and global policy approaches to local contexts and the inclusion of local actors in peacebuilding processes (Nextier, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the role of women in post-insurgency peacebuilding in Maiduguri, while the specific objectives are to;

- i. explore and assess approaches adopted by women in communities and IDP camps in sustaining peacebuilding
- ii. examine the role of the Ministry of Women Affairs in peacebuilding in Borno
- iii. identify challenges faced by women in the sustenance of peace in Borno

The research questions were in line with the research objectives. The questions were aimed at exploring the strategies adopted by women, especially in the context of the post-insurgency era. Respondents were also engaged in discussions on how effective these strategies are and the factors that are likely to affect these peacebuilding efforts negatively.

Conceptual clarification of key variables

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a loose concept that does not have any one generally accepted definition rather, various definitions abound. However, conflict and peacebuilding studies often underscore the interconnectedness of peacebuilding and post-conflict or post-insurgency, as to say they are inseparable phenomena. For instance, Maiese (2003) defines peacebuilding as a process that addresses the underlying causes and effects of conflict through political and economic transformation, institution building, and reconciliation in order to help establish a lasting peace and attempt to prevent the recurrence of violence. King (2005) also contended that ‘in general, the term peacebuilding refers to policies and programs to restore stability and effective social, political, and economic institutions after a war or serious upheaval. An extremely broad concept that encompasses democratisation, gender, human rights, and development, peacebuilding can be thought of as a bridge from conflict resolution to ‘positive peace.’ Furthermore, Garba (2015) asserts that peacebuilding is a post-conflict initiative that tries to bring back, to a very large extent, some form of normalcy and peaceful co-existence which can be sustained in conflict-torn areas over a very long period, thereby avoiding the reoccurrence of violence, after violent conflict has reduced or has come to an end. This is usually through intervention by the military, negotiations, etc. From the above conceptualisation, it can be discerned that peacebuilding and post-conflict cannot be discussed in isolation, rather, they are both sides of a coin.

Post-insurgency

Post-insurgency, as used in this paper, refers to initiatives taken to stabilise and reconstruct a territory after insurgent activity has ended. This is aptly captured by (Hasley, 2024), who stated that in order to stop violence from escalating, these initiatives include infrastructure reconstruction, combatant reintegration, peacebuilding, and addressing the root causes of war.

Literature Review

Peacebuilding and post-insurgency are inseparable concepts that are not mutually exclusive. Scholars such as Hasley, F. (2024) and Myrntinen et al. (2014) demonstrate the deep interconnectedness of these concepts in their study by contending that the aftermath of violent conflict creates new spaces, new roles, and new vulnerabilities for people according to their gender identity. For the women in Borno, these new spaces, new roles, and new vulnerabilities have taken a toll on them for more than a decade since the insurgency began in 2009. Psychological and emotional repercussions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder brought on by the unexpected deaths of family members, particularly spouses, have left many women widowed and unable to adjust to their new duties as breadwinners, taking care of not just themselves but also other family members. Also, separations of other family members through abductions and kidnapping (such as the over 200 Chibok girls' abducted in 2014), loss of means of descent livelihood, as well as loss of social networks. Other effects include sexual and physical assault in the form of rape leading to unwanted pregnancies, health concerns like the Vesicovaginal Fistula, other life-threatening infections like HIV/AIDS, etc. Also, separations of other family members through abductions and kidnapping (such as the over 200 Chibok girls' abducted in 2014), loss of means of descent livelihood, as well as loss of social networks. Other effects include sexual and physical assault in the form of rape leading to unwanted pregnancies, health concerns like the Vesicovaginal Fistula, other life-threatening infections like HIV/AIDS, etc. Loss of homes resulted in victims' forced relocation to camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), where overcrowding has resulted in a shortage of essential amenities. Another reason contributing to the rise in sexual assault is the deterioration of social institutions in times of conflict (Mutunga, 2004).

According to the 2015 World Report from Human Rights Watch, 'Since 2009, Boko Haram has destroyed at least 211 schools in Borno alone and abducted more than 500 women and girls from the northeast, of which at least over 100 either escaped, were rescued by security forces, or were released by insurgents. Some abductees experienced additional maltreatment, such as forced marriage, forced conversion, and sexual assault (World Report, 2015). Women are also uniquely and adversely affected by violent conflict because of their gender both during the conflict and post-conflict period. It is in line with this realisation that the United Nations, through its most important organ, the United Nations Security Council, adopted the UNSCR 1325 in 2000, a 'Landmark resolution on Women, Peace, and Security' (un.org). The Nigerian government committed to involving women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding because it is a UN member and has experienced violent conflict, particularly in the past 20 years. When it introduced the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan in 2013, it showed the world that it had domesticated the resolution (Tobore, 2013). This move to domesticate UNSCR1325 is very important, admirable, and long overdue because Nigeria, like all Sub-Saharan countries, is predominantly patriarchal. As a result, women have been marginalised across a variety of divides, and their voices are rarely heard or represented at peace talks. However, since the domestication of this resolution in 2013, not much has been achieved in terms of the full inclusion of women in this respect. The little progress is, however, not evident (Garba, 2016).

In the case of Borno State, the Ministry of Women Affairs has collaborated and worked with humanitarian organisations in organising capacity building workshops for women in Maiduguri

in order to address the challenges faced by women as well as advancing their role in sustaining peace within their communities (Mohammed, 2022).

Role of Women in Post-conflict Peacebuilding

Women in peacebuilding is also a concept that has found popularity within the Nigerian environment only recently. Several studies on this subject have underscored that in a country like Nigeria, where patriarchy is entrenched, there is a need for a change of attitude towards women's empowerment, and inclusion in peacebuilding processes is key and fundamental (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022).

This is because men and women are affected differently by conflict, and as such, their conception of protection will also differ. Therefore, considering women's perspective in peacebuilding is very vital and provides a more holistic approach to achieving peace in post-conflict situations. There are several reasons why Nigerian women's capacity should be increased so that they may fully engage in peacebuilding. First, more than any group, women and children are the most affected; hence, their experience becomes valuable in building peace (Garba, 2015).

According to Ekiyor, there is a disconnect between the traditional roles of women as key agents in the socialisation process and peacebuilding initiatives (Ekiyor, 2004). If conflict and peace, which are human dynamics, lack the participation of women, outcomes of initiatives would, therefore, favour one sector of society and completely skew human socialisation.

Additionally, it appears from studies like those by Schnabel and Tabyshalieva (2012), Schirch (2012), Kadenke Kaiser (2012), Graybill (2012), Adrian-Paul (2012), Niaolain and McWilliams (2013), and others that post-conflict peacebuilding approaches fall short in documenting the complex, varied, and critical nature of women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives after conflict. This (complexity and variability of experiences) arguably should inform post-conflict planning approaches, frameworks, and initiatives, as we are more likely to appreciate young women's strengths and resilience when we try to understand their experiences in totality.

Agbajobi (2010), in his paper, argues that paying special attention to the different experiences of women and men is critical in designing successful conflict management and peacebuilding programs. He examined the role women play in post-conflict resolution and peacebuilding as well as the obstacles they continue to face in this aspect. The study found that efforts to foreground the perspectives of women in peace processes and to prevent gender-based violence are limited by a number of factors, including but not limited to cultural pressures against women putting themselves forward that pressure women to refrain from travel and not engage in important public arenas. When women do participate, it is possible that they lack the necessary skills or knowledge.

Post-Insurgency Era in the context of Boko Haram Insurgency in Borno

The goal of post-conflict/insurgency reconstruction is to address the needs of post-conflict nations, including those of the affected populations, prevent conflict from escalating, prevent violence from returning, address the causes of conflict, and solidify a

lasting peace. According to the African Union policy on post-conflict reconstruction and development in 2006, while post-conflict activities are interconnected and many must be conducted concurrently, they are envisioned in the emergency (short-term), transition (medium-term), and development (long-term) phases. It is conceptualised within the African vision of renewal and sustainable development. Six illustrative components make up the ambit of these initiatives: security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, political governance and transition, socioeconomic reconstruction and development, human rights, justice and reconciliation, and women's and gender issues, which constituted the main focus of this paper.

Similarly, [Brechenmacher](#) (2019) noted that approaches to post-conflict reconstruction address post-conflict conditions and focus on reconstruction efforts following violent conflicts, as in Borno State. There is a stronger emphasis on conflict stabilisation measures put in place since early 2017 as a result of military successes and increased security in several areas of northeastern Nigeria ([Brechenmacher](#), 2019). This has made it imperative for reconstruction amidst pockets of ongoing conflict in other rural settings within the outskirts of the State. In Maiduguri, which is the largest LGA in Borno, the conflict is almost non-existent because the insurgents have been completely dislodged by security forces and Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members. This led to major donors' establishment of the Oslo Consultative Group on the Prevention and Stabilization in the Lake Chad Region (Borno State inclusive) to coordinate their response efforts on a worldwide scale. The Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union Commission have supported the regional stabilisation strategy that highlights the need for short-, medium-, and long-term stabilisation, resilience, and recovery (African Union, 2018).

Furthermore, one of the most fundamental indicators of the post-conflict reconstruction is the launching of a 25-year development plan in 2020 to drive stability and stimulate growth by the Borno State government. This plan is currently in its implementation phase. The government in 2021, as part of its commitment to post-conflict reconstruction in Borno, relocated all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Maiduguri IDP camps to their respective Local Government Areas.

Similarly, there was also the establishment of a national framework for demobilisation, deradicalisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) in 2016 under the Operation Safe Corridor for repentant and surrendered ex-Boko Haram members to facilitate the post-conflict reconstruction process. This initiative garnered support from donors who also provided funding for reintegration projects at the local level. There is the transitional justice programme which is presently ongoing in Borno. Transitional justice as a reconciliation mechanism occurs mostly in times of post-conflict reconstruction. The program is currently ongoing in Borno State and is executed through a joint effort of government and NGOs ([Okoye](#), 2022; [Wakil](#), 2023). In light of the preceding, this study assessed the roles and contributions of women in the post-conflict reconstruction of Borno State.

Methodology

Study Area

The study area for this study is Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State in the Northeastern part of Nigeria. Maiduguri has the largest number of LGAs in Borno. As a result of the insurgency, Maiduguri has witnessed an influx of people migrating from rural areas to settle in either IDP camps or with relatives in communities. At the time of conducting this research, Maiduguri had 32 official Government-run Camps. There were also an estimated 200 or so unofficial settlements in which NGOs provide support (Bilak, 2019).

The study selected some of the affected communities during the heat of the Boko Haram insurgency in order to assess the peacebuilding strategies adopted by women in these communities in the post-insurgency era. These communities include Madinatu (El-Miskin IDP camp), Dalori Camp, Gamboru, Polo, and Baga Market. Women social workers from the Ministry of Women's Affairs working closely with IDPs (women), NGOs, and women in the communities were also included for interviews in this study.

Research Design

The study employed qualitative research methodology utilising data collected from primary and secondary sources. Firstly, the researcher familiarised with the respondents through several familiarisation visits to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, selected communities, and IDP camps in order to gain acceptance, trust, and cooperation that brought ease, added value, and gave a stable direction to the research. This also enabled the researcher to gain first-hand knowledge and experience about the activities of women towards the sustenance of peace within the selected communities and camps.

Furthermore, 4 Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted for women social workers in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. Also, three women leaders from Baga market, El-miskin, and Dalori IDP camps were interviewed. 3 Focused Group Discussions (FGD) each were conducted with women in the markets, IDP camp, and communities. Each of the FGDs had seven (7) participants. Four female research assistants were trained and utilised through several workshops to orient them about the purpose of the research. Although the research assistants were residents of the Borno community, research ethics were strictly adhered to in order to minimise bias. Additionally, a desk review of relevant literature was conducted to complement the findings of the research. The data was analysed thematically and presented systematically based on the research questions.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the social role theory proposed by Eagly and Wood in 1999. The theory contends that gender-based behavioural differences are caused by the way that labour is divided in a community. In other words, the social role theory posits that men and women perform roles that the societal norms have prescribed. Because it separates the traits and roles that each gender is better at performing, this frequently results in shared gender stereotypes. Social roles are formed through societal processes, including observations, socialisation, and the broader expectations of members of the general society. For instance, women's higher nurturing is a result of their assignment to care for children rather than the cause of it.

Individuals' adjustments to the specific roles they are allocated, as well as the roles that are prescribed, lead to psychological gender disparities.

The theory further posits that male and female biological distinctions are significant because culture tends to emphasise them. Because of their physical superiority, men have historically chosen to engage in pursuits like combat that have elevated them above women in prestige, power, and riches. The relevance of this theory to the study rests in the link between culture and women's participation in peacebuilding in the post-conflict era. It highlights the role of cultural values, specifically power distance and masculinity/femininity, in influencing the representation and involvement of women in peacebuilding efforts. This has to do with whether or not biological sex should determine the roles that individuals play in their homes, organisations, and communities. Power distance in the context of this theory refers to the extent to which societal members endorse unequal distribution of power. These essentially force individuals to adopt the predetermined gender roles of society. According to the social role theory, it may be stated that gender roles in the majority of African nations are typically perceived along the conventional lines of "homemaker" and "breadwinner." More precisely, males are viewed as the breadwinners and women as the homemakers (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Despite the prevalent patriarchal cultural constraints present in the majority of African societies, women have made substantial contributions to reconciliation. In fact, women have broken the persistent dominance of men in politics and peace activities, challenging and transcending the subordinate status that patriarchal norms imposed on them globally. There is substantial evidence of women emerging as active agents of peacebuilding in Africa and in many other non-African societies (Chitando, 2019).

Discussion of Findings

Approaches Adopted by Women in Sustaining Peacebuilding

The research explored strategies that women have adopted in the post-insurgency era. Evidence from literature suggests that there is a widely-held view among scholars that many post-conflict rebuilding and development programs fail to include and value women and their perspectives adequately. This, too, has been identified in Borno State, Nigeria. The implication of this is that it limits room for the inclusion of women and the opportunity for women-oriented views to see the light of day. However, women have been playing vital roles in the sustenance of peacebuilding in Borno since the ousting of the insurgents within the Maiduguri metropolis. One of the women leaders in the Gamboru market, which was one of the most affected areas in the past narrated that there have been several measures adopted by the women's association in the market to ensure that peace is maintained. The respondent noted that:

“We have been affected seriously by the Boko Haram insurgency in the past and now that there is peace, we are out to sell our goods. The difference, however, is that we have tasked ourselves to complement the efforts of the men and security men in the market and in our community by taking turns in mounting secret surveillance right from the entrance of the market.”

“We attend weekly meetings to discuss issues of peace and other matters pertaining to the community and market. Sometimes, we report to the overall male market head for appropriate action if the need arises.”

“Because we have been in this market for so many years, I can confidently say that we know our customers and we can easily tell when we see a strange face in the market. What we do is monitor the movements of such persons closely to know who they are meeting with or what they are buying.”

“We make weekly contributions to pay young boys to help secure our shops when we are not around and also observe if there is any form of strange movements or behaviours.”

“We believe that one of the most important contributions towards peacebuilding is to raise our children most appropriately because the Boko Haram insurgency that led us to this situation is composed of youths who had a poor upbringing. Therefore, as a woman and a parent, I have taken it upon myself to pay closer attention to my children and the kinds of company they keep. I have also taken it upon myself to advise younger women to make sure their children get a good upbringing so that the children do not grow up to become a problem for us in society.”

The study also revealed that there are women from the community who are now part of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a paramilitary vigilante group that joined the armed forces in hitting the streets of Maiduguri in 2013. Working closely with the military in safeguarding strategic points in the community, the CJTF is a group of youths who played a key role in dislodging the Boko Haram insurgents. The role of the CJTF has also been enhanced to maintain peace in the communities. One of the female respondents, who is also a member of the CJTF, noted:

“I am happy to have joined the CJTF in maintaining peace in the community. I have my unit, and I report to my superior. Because of the culture and norms of the society, sometimes women feel more comfortable telling me or reporting issues of conflict in the community rather than meeting a male security agent. I receive information and report to my superiors.”

Another role played by women in post-insurgency peacebuilding is found in religious worship centres. In the past, when the height of the insurgency was very high, women suicide bombers carried out heinous attacks in mosques and churches. The crucial factor responsible for this is that the society is a conservative one, with religion and culture playing a key role in the dressing and way of life of the people. Since the return of peace in Maiduguri, more women have been involved in search operations for women coming into the mosques and Churches, especially on Fridays and Sundays, respectively. One of the respondents stated:

“Women may sometimes look very innocent in a decent dress covered fully with the hijab (veil). In such cases it will be difficult for a male security agent to even talk to her. This can only be done by a fellow female security woman. As a woman, I volunteered and have been trained to search women and detect anomalies during Friday prayers in the mosques and other gatherings involving many people.”

Normally, in this kind of community, the culture, religion, and traditions of the people demand that men should be the providers for the women, and as such, the loss of the men to the insurgency posed a great threat to the survival of the women even as it is expected that their closest male relative should cater for them. They further explained that some of the men who shouldered their responsibilities as a result of the conflict have lost their economic livelihood engagements. All these problems have made some of the women widows while others are made more vulnerable. It has also led to a migration of people, especially from rural communities, to IDP camps in the capital city of Maiduguri. The poverty level has made young girls and women go into prostitution as well as been used by the “enemy” to get information in order to cope with the harsh realities. Women in the IDP camps also stated the changes they experienced in the camps upon arrival. Apart from the cultural practices, there is a change in terms of gender roles. The traditional role of men as sole providers for women in communities affected by insurgency and IDP camps has been altered. Women from the Gamboru market stated that their husbands and children needed their support, and as such, they had to go out and hustle as well. As it relates to peacebuilding, the women also stated that there are several approaches adopted such as the detection of strange faces in the community and the market areas. There is a local community leader, and CJTF members within the community whom women report directly should any strange face or movement be observed. Although very minimal, some communities have young girls as part of members of the CJTF, helping to detect strange movements and giving early warning signals to relevant authorities.

Respondents in the communities stated that the insurgents took advantage of the structural imbalance, illiteracy, ignorance, and poor economic situation to lure young boys and girls into the group, but now that there is peace to a great extent, they have resolved to give the best moral upbringing to their children. They further stated that the best contribution towards the sustenance of peacebuilding is to educate their children properly in terms of both Western and Islamic education coupled with moral orientation from home. In the face of collapsed livelihoods, some residents of the communities, as well as those in the Camps, have also relied on menial jobs and learned new skills to make a living. Women made efforts to provide for their families by venturing into various businesses, including – tailoring, knitting, hair making, and clothmaking, amongst others.

The Role of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development

The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Maiduguri has played a key role in the sustenance of peacebuilding in Borno State in the post-insurgency era. The role of the ministry has advanced with the inception of the insurgency in 2009. Findings from the field indicate that efforts of the Ministry have been channelled towards the rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons, reintegration of ex-Boko Haram members, including women, as well as partnering with Non-Governmental Organisations in providing psychosocial support to men and women victims of the Boko Haram in communities and IDPs camps. Social workers from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, in collaboration with CBOs and other NGOs, constitute important agents of support for women. They serve as a platform for the social organisation of women with which social functions are executed, and communities are kept moving. One of the heads of the ministry noted:

“We have an obligation to support these women and their children. Some of them were born in the bush and have never tasted what freedom feels like. Now that we have peace restored in our communities, we have been training and teaching them skills they can cope with in the community. We train them, empower them, and release them into the communities so that they do not have a course to beg or regret escaping the terrorists in the bush. This is because some of them have told us that they get to eat and drink well while in the company of the terrorists in the bush.”

“We give women psychosocial support and counselling sessions because some of them were not just wives of the terrorists but also leaders as well. We make sure that we house them here in the rehabilitation camp for at least 4 months where they undergo counselling and other forms of social support by female social workers and NGO staff members who are experts.”

Respondents have cited instances where women-led organisations have organised workshops and training sessions, mostly attempting to equip women with the consciousness and motivation to play key roles in the sustenance of peace within their communities. The respondents also stated that they have been empowered economically by these women-led organisations. One of the respondents noted:

“We work with local and international NGOs who implement projects on reintegration and rehabilitation with a special focus on women and the girl child. There has been considerable progress and emphasis on women and girl child by the ministry in collaboration with NGOs.”

Several workshops and meetings have been organised to empower and encourage women to participate in ensuring that peace and stability are maintained in society. These meetings are carried out to demonstrate further the significant roles that women play in society. Prior to the insurgency, there was nothing like meetings or workshops of this nature. These meetings serve as an avenue to empower and prepare women psychologically to play their part in the sustenance of peace in the community.

Challenges Faced by Women in Peacebuilding

There are several challenges currently faced by women in their bid to contribute to peacebuilding in the post-insurgency era in Maiduguri. Some of the respondents expressed displeasure with men still regarding them as passive contributors to the sustenance of peace in society. In one of the KII sessions, a respondent stated:

“Despite our role in society as mothers and the first institution of learning for our children, the men still see us as mere housewives. We may not have physically gone out to confront the insurgents while they were in Maiduguri, but we made sure that our children remained with us. We have protected them through our unwavering advice, and we still do now that the insurgency has ended so as to prevent further relapse. It is sad when we hear that men are getting all the accolades. We are, however grateful that NGOs and the Ministry of Women affairs are supporting women to play key roles in the sustenance of peace in the society.”

The challenge that is yet to be overcome, as relayed by women leaders from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, is that despite all the efforts to awaken the consciousness of women, many of them still feel uncomfortable working openly with men. As a result, very few succeeded in working with male champions who believe in gender parity and progress and also enlisting local and traditional authorities who are like-minded. One of the respondents noted that:

“From all indications, many of the women are still timid to conceive the idea that they can actually partake in sustainable peace initiatives openly. They prefer to do things quietly in the company of fellow women. In fact, when we try to facilitate meetings with a mix of men and women, we realise that the majority of the women usually do not talk. By the end of the meeting, some of them come to us privately to give their suggestion.”

“In our end as a ministry, the challenge in the future with regards to women's participation in the sustenance of peace is that there is a shortage of social workers with expertise in the ministry. The bulk of experienced female social workers are old and will retire soon. Hence, the importance of collaboration with NGOs. There is, therefore need to train more female social workers who will sustain this aspect of empowering women psychologically, socially, and through counselling”

Furthermore, women in the IDPs camps expressed interest in going back to their original settings but lamented that the houses may have been burnt or destroyed.

“I am happy we have found peace after several years of conflict and running from one point to the other. All I wish for now is to reunite with my family in my village. The only problem is that the insurgents destroyed the house. If it can be fixed, I will return and continue life there.”

Another respondent who had a different view stated that:

“Although we are aware that calm and peace have returned to our communities in our local governments, I would prefer to settle in the Maiduguri community and start a new life. I wish to continue staying in Maiduguri and attend programs on enhancing peace in our communities with fellow women.”

According to [Brechenmacher](#) (2019), the programs that promote community security through early warning systems, peace clubs, and dialogue mechanisms in post-conflict reconstruction in Northeastern Nigeria typically operate best with local actors who are familiar with the relevant concerns. In contrast to similar platforms at the state and federal levels, the British-funded NSRP discovered that local-level platforms that brought together Local Government Area (LGA) officials, religious leaders, traditional authorities, community members, and formal and informal security forces to discuss and respond to local security threats had the greatest impact on conflict prevention and response (NSRP, 2017). Involving a wide range of people, holding regular meetings,

reaching the appropriate government and security stakeholders, and being well-prepared have all been associated with the effectiveness of such community mechanisms (DFID, 2017).

Conclusion

From the preceding, it is clear that women in Borno are normally not expected to partake fully in discussions or initiatives that have to do with security as it was considered within the jurisdiction of men. Only the male counterparts could take part in such matters, even though it is obvious that the insurgency affected men and women differently. However, the narrative has changed within the last few years as women have often come up with strategies both formally and informally for the sustenance of peace within their locality. There is, however, the problem of poor recognition and stereotyping of women. This can further discourage other women from coming up with post-insurgency peacebuilding ideas and initiatives. As a result, the study recommends the following;

- i. There should be a recognition and strengthening of the capacities of women in IDPs and markets who are taking informal steps in sustaining peace within their domain.
- ii. Women in local communities and markets should be integrated into formal peacebuilding and post-conflict initiatives.
- iii. The cultural dynamics of the people should be considered while trying to integrate women in peacebuilding. As such, there should be consultations with traditional and religious leaders so as to preserve culture while advancing the roles of women in post-insurgency peacebuilding.
- iv. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Borno should be strengthened and given more support to reach out to a wider range of women. This will further pave the way to ensure that women play a key role in the design and implementation of post-conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities.

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