

GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

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Women and girls are often perceived as relatively weaker than men and as victims of violent conflicts, while men are considered stronger and combatants in same situation. Similar perceptions are prevalent about the Boko Haram insurgency. However, women are more than victims; rather, they continue to play strategic roles in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency. This however, has not been adequately investigated. This study investigated the response of grassroots women to the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews; and secondary data from documents, videos and transcripts from past interviews. Data were analysed using content analysis. Findings revealed that grassroots women responded to Boko Haram insurgency by protecting men from the insurgents; providing supplies to the hidden men; offering physical, material, and moral support; undertaking reconnaissance operations; and joining the civilian vigilante group as combatants against the insurgent group. This paper concludes that women's life experiences should be integrated into issues of security to help build sustainable peace at all levels in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism predates the 21st century and has its roots in the histories of early resistance and political movements. One of the early cases of terrorism can be traced back to November 5, 1605, when a group of conspirators led by Robert Catesby attempted to destroy the English Parliament on its State Opening by King James I. They planned in secret to detonate a large quantity of gunpowder placed beneath the Palace of Westminster.¹ In the 21st century, the Moscow theatre hostage crisis involved the seizure of a crowded Moscow theatre on October 23, 2002, by some 40 to 50 armed Chechens who claimed allegiance to the Islamist militant separatist movement in Chechnya.

The September 11 attacks (also referred to as 9/11) were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda against the United States on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The attacks resulted in 2,977 victim fatalities, over 25,000 injuries, and caused at least \$10 billion in infrastructure and property damage.² In Kenya, on September 21, 2013, gunmen associated with Al-Shabaab targeted and shot customers at Nairobi's Westgate Shopping Mall. At least 67 people were killed in the attack.³

In recent years, Nigeria has also had to deal with insurgencies. The first were the militant attacks in the Niger Delta region perpetrated by the activities of militant groups such as Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for the Emancipation for the Niger Delta. All of these affected the socioeconomic well-being of the nation. Equally, just when the government appeared to have resolved the militant crisis in Niger Delta, the Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad ("People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad"), which later became Boko Haram insurgency erupted.⁴ Boko Haram gained widespread exposure in July 2009 when, after an incident in which group members were allegedly subjected to the excessive use of force by police but were unable to get an official investigation into the matter, the group launched attacks on police posts and other government installations, killing scores of police officers.⁵

While men have been disproportionately killed, women are an overwhelming majority among the estimated 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northeast. As former wives, slaves, or fighters, many

bear the stigma of association with the insurgents and are barred from reintroduction into their communities, in part because the line between militant, sympathizer, and a forced accomplice is blurred.⁶ Although Boko Haram faces strong pushback, it remains capable of launching attacks and conducting multiple suicide bombings. Understanding how women experience the conflict, not only as victims but also as actors, needs to directly inform policies and programs to tackle the roots of the insurgency and strategies for curbing it, as well as facilitate women's contribution to lasting peace.⁷ This group has perpetrated several bombings in Chad and Cameroon that have killed thousand of innocent citizens. These activities are geared to make people in the northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria embrace the Boko Haram's view of Islamic and Western education.⁸

Notably, it could be argued that women have disproportionately suffered the consequences of Boko Haram insurgency.⁹ They are affected by rape, death of husbands or breadwinners, death and loss of their children, kidnapping of their children, loss of their homes, psychological trauma, and susceptibility to sexual STDs. On the night of 14–15 April, 2014, 276 female students were kidnapped from the Secondary School in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria. Responsibility for the kidnappings was claimed by Boko Haram, an Islamist extremist terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria.¹⁰

Several women all over the world reacted to the incident by forming the Bring Back Our Girls group (BBOG) led by Dr. Oby Ezekweli, a former minister of education. They held rallies and petitioned the Federal Government. Through the rallies and the use of several media outlets, they gained the recognition of the international community. The wife to the former president of the United States of America, Michelle Obama, released a video condemning the act of the insurgent group and joined women across the world to show their aversion to the activities of the insurgent group.¹¹ Angelina Jolie, an actress in the United States, also released a video condemning the activities of the insurgents.¹² The #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS campaign went viral across several social media platforms. The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, attended a protest by BBOG in Nigeria.¹³ The kidnapping generated international condemnation from women across the world who termed this act as inhumane and barbaric. However, as of April, 2019, five years after the Boko Haram attack, more than 112 girls are still missing.¹⁴

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and similar documents have identified the critical roles women play in peace, security and development. Studies have shown that women participate in the conflict, conflict resolution, and counter-insurgency. Their participation usually covers tactical, strategic, humanitarian and psychosocial support. Women are not only affected by conflict, they are also involved in conflict resolution, and peace building. The Liberia and Somalia civil wars show some of the different ways in which women have been involved in conflict, conflict resolution, activism, and peace building. Their activities in these conflicts are well documented in literature.

The Boko Haram insurgency started in 2009¹⁵ and has also received wide coverage in local and global media since then. Empirical studies have also covered attacks, casualties, and military and non-military interventions against the insurgents. However, empirical investigations have not been adequately focused on women's response to Boko Haram insurgency, with even less attention on women at the grassroots, individual women, and women-led organizations. It is, therefore, pertinent to investigate, the unacknowledged roles of women in combating Boko Haram insurgency. Thus, this study examines women's response to Boko Haram insurgency at the grassroots level, including women who went on the offensive at the grassroots level and their motivation for fighting against the insurgents.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Insurgency

According to the United States Marine Corps, insurgency is "an organized resistance movement that uses subversion, sabotage, and armed conflict to achieve its aims."¹⁶ Insurgents normally seek to overthrow the existing social order and reallocate power within the country. The Department of Defense goes further to say an insurgent group can be characterised by the following: they seek to overthrow an established government without a subsequent social revolution, establish an autonomous national territory within the borders of a state, cause the withdrawal of an occupying power, and extract political concessions that are unattainable through less violent means. This suggests that an insurgent group seeks to overthrow a government to gain control of the state through violent means. Therefore, insurgency is a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives

through conventional means or by a quick seizure of power.¹⁷ Those too weak to do otherwise use it.

For this study, insurgency can be characterised with guerilla warfare against a nation or state to gain dominance against the group, based on political, economic, and religious ideology, usually in the context of a weaker group against confronting a stronger group or sovereign state, which is why guerilla warfare frequently requires support from external or shadow parties either nationally or internationally.

Terrorism

There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism, due to the ambiguity of the concept itself. However, one of the most-used definitions of terrorism given by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), which defines terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government or any segment of a civilian population, in furtherance of political or social objectives.¹⁸ This definition still has faults since it fails to look at the methods used by terrorists through surveillance, spying, reliance on shadow parties, and/or a host of other strategies designed to achieve their goals. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566 gives a more complete definition: "criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."¹⁹

For the purpose of this study, terrorism can be said to be the use of unlawful force, violence, coercion and threats, surveillance or other activities intended to influence political, economic, social, and/or religious ideologies, usually undertaken by a weaker group against a stronger one or a sovereign government, and often financed by shadow parties to cause fear and achieve specific goals.

Women's Participation in Community and Political Affairs in Northeastern Nigeria

Women in countries such as India, Egypt, Nigeria, and Bangladesh are governed by social norms that restrict their physical mobility, referred to in the literature as female seclusion. This seclusion involves the veiling of

head and face in some instances, as well as restrictions on unaccompanied travel to such places as shops, pharmacies, or hospitals, and limits on direct contact with unrelated males.²⁰ Male dominance has been entrenched in law. Colonialism did little to challenge patriarchal structures in the mostly Muslim north, and independence altered little. At the urging of religious conservatives, Borno and eleven other northern states enacted a stricter version of Sharia (Islamic law) in 2003, including elements of Islamic criminal law. Other provisions reinforced male dominance and further restricted women's freedoms and rights, including access to education and jobs. Therefore, even in the cases where the women need to make decisions in relation to household consumption, expenditures, or health care, they will have to seek the consent, help, and agreement of either the husband or mother-in-law before taking action or conducting such transactions.²¹ Anusanthee Pillay notes that, while the conflict situation seems to have had severe negative impacts on the lives of women and girls, in the north-east of Nigeria they have been subjected to patriarchal oppression and gender-based violence for eons before the current conflict situation.²² The region's religious and cultural norms, codified in law, have defined women's status through marriage and childbearing and largely confined them to a domestic role.²³

The armed group's main ideology, for instance, casts men in hyper-masculine combat roles, which makes male recruits hold a sense of security in their gender norms. Moreover, by "awarding" wives to male combatants, the group attracted more recruits and increased their human capacity.²⁴ Wives enhance social status and provide sexual or domestic services (sometimes forced), thereby becoming valuable incentives for potential male recruits. As the war evolved, women have become recruiters, spies, domestic labour, fighters, and forced or willing suicide bombers.

For the purpose of this study, women's participation refers to women's ability to participate equally with men, at all levels, and in all aspects of household, public, and political life and decision making, including activism.

EXAMINING TERRORISM, BOKO HARAM, AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN NIGERIA

Terrorism predates the 21st century and has its roots in the annals of early resistance and political movements. Nigeria also has had to deal

with insurgencies. The first was the militant attacks in the Niger Delta region perpetrated by the activities of militant groups such as Niger Delta Vigilante, Joint Revolutionary Council, the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force and the Movement for the Emancipation for the Niger Delta.²⁵ The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force is one of the largest armed groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and is composed primarily of members of the region's largest ethnic group, the Ijaw. The group was founded in 2004 in an attempt to gain more control over the region's vast petroleum resources, particularly in Delta State. Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) is also known as Niger Delta Volunteer Force.²⁶

The issue of local government ward allocation has proven particularly contentious, as the Ijaw feel that the way in which wards have been allocated ensures that their superior numbers will not be reflected in the number of wards controlled by politicians of Ijaw ethnicity. Control of the city of Warri, the largest metropolitan area in Delta State and therefore a prime source of political patronage, has been an especially fiercely contested prize. This has given birth to heated disputes between the Ijaw, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo about which of the three groups are "truly" indigenous to the Warri region, with the underlying presumption being that the "real" indigenes should have control of the levers of power, regardless of the fact that all three groups enjoy ostensibly equal political rights in their places of residence.²⁷ Moujahid Dokubo-Asari, who heads the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, is seen as a folk hero by many poor residents who complain they've never shared in the country's oil wealth. Dokubo-Asari claims to be fighting for self-determination in the region and greater control over oil resources for more than 8 million Ijaw. The NDPVF says it is seeking a better deal for the Ijaw people, the largest tribe in the Niger Delta, which accounts for most of Nigeria's oil production. However, the government says it is nothing more than a criminal gang which finances itself by stealing oil from pipelines and selling it clandestinely to tankers offshore.²⁸ The NDPVF's strongly Ijaw agenda has led to conflict with both the Nigerian state and federal governments, as well as with neighbouring ethnic groups, notably long-time rivals the Itsekiri. This rivalry precipitated a number of conflicts in the region, centred primarily on the cities of Warri and subsequently the "oil capital" of Port Harcourt.

All of these impacted on the socio-economic well-being of the nation. Just when the government appeared to have resolved the militant crisis in

Niger Delta, the Jama'atu AhlisSunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad ("People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad"), which later became Boko Haram, arose. The exact date of the formation of the Boko Haram is shrouded in controversy and its philosophy unclear. S. O. Alozieuwa observes that "while the popular belief is that it was founded around 2001 or 2002,²⁹ while Idama Madike traces the date back to 1995, and argues that one Lawan Abubakar, who later left for further studies at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, actually founded the Boko Haram sect.³⁰ Under Abubakar, the sect was known Al-Sahaba. Freedom Onuoha also supports this view.

The exact date of the emergence of the Boko Haram sect is mired in controversy, especially if one relies on media accounts. Most local and foreign media traces its origin to 2002 when Mohammed Yusuf emerged as the leader of the sect. However, Nigerian security forces date the origin of the sect back to 1995, when Abubakar Lawan established the Ahlulsunnawall "JAMA" ahhijra sect at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State.³¹

Notably too Paul Gilber contends that Boko Haram's origin is traceable to the 1990s when its pioneering leader, Abu Mohammed Yusuf, popularly known as Mohammed Yusuf, led a radical Salafist Islamic youth group called Shababul Islam, meaning Islamic Research on Humanities and Social Sciences.³² It has been established that the insurgent group has existed for years and, at its emergence, it was non-violent until 2009 when it adopted violent methods. Oladayo Awojobi captures it thus, "Since the first attack of Boko Haram in 2009 in one of the police barracks in Bauchi State that killed scores of people, including police officers and members of their family, and the subsequent killing of the leader of the sect, Yusuf Mohammed, the coordinated attacks by Boko Haram have intensified."³³ The source of controversies is traceable to the poor intelligence gathering of the Nigerian security forces.

Boko Haram carried out its first attack on a police station in Maiduguri on July 26, 2009, and has since been unleashing more terror on the Nigerian state. Their activities were concentrated in Yobe, Adamawa and Borno State states in north-eastern Nigeria.³⁴ According to Adam Nossiter, Boko Haram started an armed rebellion against the government of Nigeria, which led to deaths of many women and men, and significantly changed the lives of thousands of women and girls, often casting them voluntarily or by force

into new roles outside the domestic sphere.³⁵ Some joined the Boko Haram sect to escape their social conditions; others were abducted and enslaved. On November 13, 2014, the United States designated Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnati Lil Da'awatiwal Jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram, a terrorist.³⁶

The philosophy of the Boko Haram insurgency is not clearly defined and it is rooted in controversy. Several theories have been adopted by scholars to explain the activities of the insurgent group and most of these theories are of the view that poverty is a major cause of the Boko Haram insurgency. Authors who share this view include Simeon Alozieuwa who used the Human Needs theory³⁷ to attribute the Boko Haram insurgency to the very high incidence of poverty in Nigeria, something he sees generally as a northern Nigerian phenomenon.³⁸

In addition, according to Salisu Shuaibu, Mohd Salleh, and Abdullahi Shehu, the Poverty Theory can be used to explain why people join Boko Haram.³⁹ According to Samson Eyituyo Liolio, the successful recruitment of people into insurgent and terrorist groups depends on the nature of the economy and poverty level in the area because most terrorist, and insurgent groups gain members by claiming their struggle is for the people and that they would provide necessities for the general population if supported.⁴⁰ In view of this, the origin of the Boko Haram insurgency can be attributed to the high rate of poverty in the region. Onuoha opined that its members are mainly disaffected youths, unemployed graduates, and former Almajiris (street children). The phenomenon of Almajiri is a popular old practice whereby children are sent to live and study under renowned Islamic teachers in some cities in northern Nigeria. These Almajiris live and study in appalling conditions, thereby making them vulnerable to recruitment into extremist sects like the Boko Haram and Kala Kato, largely through indoctrination.⁴¹ As of 2010, Nigeria hosts about 9.5 million Almajiris, with over 80% concentrated in northern Nigeria. Almajiris form the bulk of its foot soldiers. Similarly, Chris Ngwodo observed that the emergence of Boko Haram signifies the maturation of long-festered extremist impulses that run deep in the social reality of northern Nigeria. "The group itself is an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos."⁴²

In response to the activities of the insurgent group, the Nigerian government have adopted several strategies towards bringing to a halt the

activities of the Boko Haram insurgent group. Former President Goodluck Jonathan declared Boko Haram a terrorist organization and also declared a state of emergency from May 2013 through May 2014.⁴³ In addition, the federal government deployed Joint Task Force (JTF) troops made up of police, soldiers, and agents from the State Security Service to combat Boko Haram on the ground and fighter jets to bomb Boko Haram camps from the air. Despite the Nigerian government spending a huge amount on countering Boko Haram's violence, little of that money made its way to the frontlines, and insecurity in the region was on the rise in 2013. Trapped between the violence of Boko Haram on the one hand and the incompetence of the military response on the other, were civilians whose livelihoods were being destroyed.⁴⁴

The meagerly funded federal response was supplemented by vigilantes from civilian Civilian Joint Task Forces (CJTF).⁴⁵ The CJTF was formed in May 2011, when Baba Lawan Jafar, a trader from Maiduguri, who would later become the overall Chairman of the CJTF in Borno State, chased down and captured a Boko Haram gunman with only a stick handed to him by the soldiers of the JTF. After this act he was joined by several men who then formed what became popularly known as the Civilian-JTF.⁴⁶ The CJTF grew into a local militia that helps the Nigerian security forces in the fight against insurgency in northeast Nigeria, and comprises of predominantly young male civilians who want to identify and apprehend Boko Haram insurgents amidst growing insecurity in northern Nigeria. Initially, the CJTF "were not given arms, but armed themselves with sticks and machetes,"⁴⁷ though over time they came to acquire locally-made guns to aid in manning checkpoints. After emerging in Borno in 2013 to protect communities against the attacks and atrocities being committed by the Boko Haram sect, the CJTF expanded to fight in Maiduguri, Benisheik, Damboa, Konduga, Bama, Dikwa, Gamboru Ngala and Monguno, among other places. In addition, they were able to force the insurgents out of Maiduguri, the birthplace and the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency, later in 2013.⁴⁸

The role of the CJTF in countering Boko Haram insurgency cannot be overemphasised. The protracted insurgency, coupled with youth frustration and annoyance at the destruction of their society, gave rise to the vigilante group. In the Northeast of Nigeria, women also joined the CJTF in response to the Boko Haram insurgency. According to a study conducted by the Centre for Civilians in Conflict in 2018, civilians give credit to the CJTF

for bringing back some stability and safety to Borno state.⁴⁹ In March 2017, the CJTF boasted between 25,000-36,000 members including both men and women.⁵⁰

On March 2015, Boko Haram declared allegiance to Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in a move that helped it anchor its international profile in a way that the slaughter of thousands of Nigerians had failed to achieve. Nearly a year later, little by way of evidence has emerged to prove a financial or instrumental link between the two groups.⁵¹ Elected in 2015, Muhammadu Buhari moved the military's headquarters from Abuja to Maiduguri, increased funding for operations in the area, and appointed new military leadership.⁵² On 24 December 2016, President Buhari declared that Boko Haram had been ousted from their last stronghold in the Sambisa Forest, effectively reducing Boko Haram to an insurgent force. Also, Buhari said that, technically we have won the war because people are going back into their neighborhoods." He further stated that "It is a must win war. I want to encourage our troops not to be distracted by speculations but remain focused and committed to the task of eliminating Boko Haram from the surface of the earth."⁵³ Women and children have not only suffered from the activities of the insurgent group; they continue to play key roles in fighting against them leading discourse amongst scholars on conceptualizing gender in conflict situations.⁵⁴

Gender is a dynamic concept. The gender roles for women and men vary greatly from one culture to another and one social group to another within the same culture. Race, class, economic circumstances, age—all of these influence what is considered appropriate for women and men.⁵⁵ Furthermore, as culture is dynamic and socio-economic conditions change over time, so gender patterns change with them. Sudden crisis, like war or famine, can radically and rapidly change what men and women do. Sometimes, however, the old attitudes return after the crisis (as women ex-combatants in liberation struggles have found).⁵⁶ Sometimes, the changes have a permanent impact. Conflict situations often force women to organise themselves to safeguard their basic necessities and carry out activities related to education, health care, food distribution and care for family, internally displaced persons and refugees.⁵⁷ Due to the temporary absence of men, women assume political responsibilities. Despite difficulties encountered, many peace activities do have emancipating functions and should therefore also be continued in the post-conflict phase. Women begin to play prominent

roles in societies agitating for the better protection of women in IDP camps and many women assume roles as peace activists.⁵⁸

METHODOLOGY

The research method adopted for this study comprised of both historical and documentary research designs. The historical methodology is the process by which historians gather evidence and formulate ideas about the past. Historical research is also seen as comprising the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence, to research and then to write histories in the form of accounts of the past. Historical research can take several forms, which are primary sources, secondary sources, and oral sources.

This study relied on both primary and secondary data and adopted purposive and snowballing sampling methods for the selection of the target population. There are three Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps in Abuja—the Area one, New Kuchingoro, and Kuje IDP camp. Two of the camps, those in Area One and New Kuchingoro, were selected for the study.

A total of 17 participants were sampled for this study. In-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted with seven women at the Area One IDP camp with a population of 2,000 IDPs. Focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with six participants at the New Kuchingoro IDP camp, consisting of five women and a male with a population of 1,445 IDPs. In gender research, women are not studied in isolation; the views of men are also assessed alongside women as it gives a different perspective on the subject matter. In addition, four in-depth interviews was conducted with four women and women-led organizations. A phone in-depth interview was conducted with Aisha Yesufu, the co-convener of the Bring Back Our Girls, and Bukky Shonibare, the Manager of the Light Foundation, and a respondent at the Ministry of Women Affairs.

The research instrument used for data collection comprised of the semi-structured interview study guide. The researcher used a separate interview study guide for interviews at the Area One IDP camp. The researcher then modified the interview study guide questions as a result of the data gotten from the camp and used it for FGDs at the New Kuchingoro IDP camp to get informed data on the subject manner. The interview study guide at

the two IDP camps was in English but the researcher interacted with the respondents through Hausa to ensure and limit the threat to the validity of the research. For the in-depth interviews with women and women-led organizations, the researcher used a separate interview study guide. Primary data for this study were transcribed, coded and then analyzed using thematic content analysis. Equally, data from secondary sources were coded and analyzed using thematic content analysis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Grassroots Women's Response to Boko Haram Insurgency

Women have responded in ways such as protecting men, provision of food, emotional and moral support, arresting Boko Haram insurgents and information gathering. Women protect the men through activities like disguising them as women and escorting them to safety in groups, women hide men in the roof in their houses, and dig holes for them as well as alerting neighbouring communities that the Boko Haram members are coming. Women provide food to the men through carrying food like babies and smuggling same from the village. Women offer emotional and moral support by escorting pregnant women out of the village. Women in Civilian Joint Task Force led several efforts in arresting the Boko Haram members. Among such women is Aisha Bakari Gombi, a member of the Hunter's Association who is nicknamed "Queen Hunter" by the community. Women also carry out reconnaissance for Civilian Joint Task Force and are known to have gone to places the men could not. Through these activities, the women protect the lives of men and women who would have been killed by Boko Haram insurgents.

Protecting Men

When attacking communities, Boko Haram members kill the men in the villages. They give men the options of joining Boko Haram in fighting Jihad or submitting to decapitation. Boko Haram displays the heads to serve as deterrence to other men. Women hide the men in the roof of their houses and dig holes to protect them from getting killed by Boko Haram. A respondent said:

I hid some men wey them run enter my house, them climb the ladder and enter ceiling, they did not know some people enter ceiling.⁵⁹

By hiding men in the roof and holes, women are recorded to have saved the lives of the men that would have been killed by Boko Haram. Women are known to disguise men in order to escort them out of the community to shelter in caves in mountainous areas. Muslim men wear Hijab and carry babies to look more convincing; Christian men wear skirt and blouse with bra and make up to look more convincing. At times, the women carried out the operation around 1 to 2 a.m. when the Boko Haram members would have retired for the day. A respondent observed:

I gave some men hijab, that will give us more sense giving them hijab and clothes. If they see one or two packing a baby they will not go to be sure that they are men, [we] sneak them out to the mountain.⁶⁰

This study also revealed that, women care for the wounded. In situations where a man is injured, the women convey him to safety and tend to the wound. Where expedient, the women collaborate to make it appear as though the men are dead. A respondent recalled how she saved a man who was shot by Boko Haram who thought he was dead, but she noticed he was alive and rescued him by transporting him in wheelbarrow to safety and tended to his wounds.

Provision of Food

Women played key roles in assisting their male friends, family, and neighbours who ran for their lives and hid in caves and mountainous areas. Several of the men in hiding had no access to food and water and relied on women to provide them with necessities. Providing the men with food was not easy since the women were watched continuously by the Boko Haram members, but this did not deter them from taking the risk to assist the men. They had to devise new tactics where some carried the food like babies and wore hijab so that the Boko Haram members would not suspect that the women were taking food to the men who were hiding in the caves. A respondent said:

We cook food and pack it like a baby and wear hijab to cover it, so the Boko Haram will not expect. The men that hide around the house, we wake up with them and go to the Bush around 1 a. m. That is what the women were doing.⁶¹

Women provided men with foods like *garri*, pap, and water. The meals

provided sustenance to the men for the period they were hiding in the caves and mountains.

Emotional and Moral Support

Women at the grassroots level also assisted other women. They provided emotional support and moral support to their fellow women as well as helped them against the Boko Haram belligerents. This indicates how people unify in times of conflict. A respondent gave account of how women in the community assisted her to run away; at that time, in 2014, she had six children and was pregnant with another one when Boko Haram attacked her community. She was encouraged and escorted by the girls in the community to flee. The respondent said:

A woman that came to encourage me to run, that woman that encourage us they are also encouraging some women to go, that my neighbour primary school teacher.⁶²

The women who assisted other women escape helped saved their lives, and prevented them from being forcefully married or used as sex slaves.

Women Fighting and Arresting Boko Haram Members

There are also stories of women who trained for war all their lives. Stories have been told of women who were known to be more fearless than men in battling the Boko Haram. A woman who identified herself as Murjanatu Umar, a member of CJTF, who was involved in arresting Boko Haram members said publicly:

We assist in identifying insurgents, and were instrumental in the arrest of numerous potential female suicide bombers before they hit their targets, thereby saving the lives of would-be-victims.⁶³

Women also carry out searches and arrest those who are caught with arms. The Boko Haram is known to use women as suicide bombers; only fellow women can search other women thoroughly while men cannot. Zannah Santalma, a member of CJTF, revealed publicly:

We discovered a woman who hid a pistol under wig.⁶⁴

A woman named Kaka Mohammed, one of the founding members of the CJTF, was said to have successfully joined in the arrest of a man named Umar believed to be a commander of the sect. She confirmed that she successfully coordinated the arrest of Boko Haram member:

I singlehandedly coordinated the arrest of a wanted Boko Haram member. It all started when soldiers gave me the number plate of a tricycle belonging to a suspected insurgent. When I saw the tricycle, I pretended as if I was on the way to a place and quickly alerted the soldiers that we were coming towards them. The soldiers arrested him on the way.⁶⁵

A woman named Aisha Bakari Gombi, a hunter who lives near Sambisa forest, is known to be fearless in her activities against the insurgents. She leads a group of men aged 15-30 and is also called the “Queen Hunter” by her people, because she is adept at hunting the Boko Haram insurgents. She says:

Boko Haram knows me and fear me.⁶⁶

Before going hunting for the Boko Haram insurgents, Queen Hunter and her fellow hunters sometimes smoke a potion or rub it on their bodies to protect them from the bullets of the Boko Haram insurgents. Also, her team captured several members of the sect and took them to military officers. She has also rescued several people from the Boko Haram insurgency. A woman named Altine Mohammed, a member of CJTF, who has carried out several arrests of the Boko Haram commented publically:

...I have participated in the arrest of many Boko Haram members who wanted to sneak into Gamboru market to wreak havoc.⁶⁷

This shows that women have responded proactively to the Boko Haram insurgency and are directly involved in the fight against the insurgency.

Reconnaissance

Women also helped to carry out reconnaissance for the Nigerian Army, the CJTF, and men in the communities. The women are said to be used for information gathering; this could be attributed to the fact that women are less likely to be suspected and are viewed as vulnerable and casualties of war. A woman named Hauwa Danladi, a 35-year-old and a divorcee, carried as her major responsibility as member of CJTF, to gather intelligence and report this to security agencies for appropriate action. Baba Shehu Abdul Ganiu, the head of the sector commanders of CJTF in Borno State, commented:

[Women like Danladi are] very important to our operations in the state. They are mostly used for intelligence gathering which we report to the military and security agencies and this has been

useful in arresting many of the insurgents.”⁶⁸

This goes to show that women are very active in providing information to the Nigerian military who will take the best course of action they deem fit.

When Boko Haram attacks communities, they spare the women and the women are able to alert neighbouring communities of an impending attack. By this, the women can save the lives of thousands of men that would have been killed by Boko Haram or forced to join the so-called Jihad. In the words of a respondent:

The women giving us information really helped us a lot, I feel it was really important since many of us would have killed and we are still alive because of the women that helped us.⁶⁹

Women's Motivation for Fighting against Boko Haram?

Women were motivated differently to go on the offensive against Boko Haram. Factors like their quest for vengeance and the will to restore peace to a once peaceful region motivated women to pick up arms against Boko Haram. Women joined the CJTF for vengeance because their family members were killed by Boko Haram. A woman identified as Mama T who joined CJTF because of what the insurgents did to her and her family. Boko Haram insurgents made her watch while they killed her mother, then abducted her and turned her into a sex slave.

The insurgents dragged me to a compound at Murari, behind Baga park and converted me to a sex slave for five hellish months.⁷⁰

She has witnessed and participated in several arrests of Boko Haram. She derives joy from witnessing those responsible for the death of her family brought to justice. She gave an account about when she was at an army sandbag, sector 1. She heard noise from a crowd and, after getting to where the noise was originating, she saw one of men that raped her, after he was killed by the mob. She felt happy and relieved knowing that the man who raped her was killed, although, she still felt like he should have suffered a worse fate than death.

A woman named Altine Mohammed who is a member of CJTF witnessed the killing of her neighbours and family members and this motivated her to join the war against the Boko Haram Insurgents:

A friend and three of my neighbours were killed by the

insurgents. All these irked me and eventually made me resolve to work against the insurgents by exposing them.⁷¹

Another female member of CJTF, Hauwa Danaladi, joined CJTF for vengeance because Boko Haram had killed her brother. A female member of CJTF, Murjanatu Umar, originally from Argungu in Kebbi State, was living at Daban-Masara in Kukawa Local Government said that the Boko Haram insurgents stormed their houses and killed their neighbours, and destroyed her properties which made her flee to Maiduguri where she joined CJTF.

Women took up arms against Boko Haram to restore peace to a war-torn state. A woman named Kaka Mohamed who is also a member of CJTF joined on grounds of morality, and to restore peace to a once peaceful state that has been desecrated by warfare. In addition, a woman named Hauwa Danaldi, a founding member of CJTF, stated publicly:

I joined to contribute towards the restoration of peace in the North and to assist in salvaging lives and property.⁷²

Also, a female hunter named Aisha Bakari Gombi, the leader of a hunter association, took up arms to protect the people in her community. Several women who had seen their country in ruins and turmoil believed they were able to positively impact the society and make it as peaceful as it was before, educating the women and girls on the positive impact they could have on the society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from this study have shown that there is shift in gender roles. This could be observed where women played key roles as combatants in war as they went on the offensive against the Boko Haram insurgents. Thus, one could argue that contrary to popular belief that women are the ones who suffer more in conflict situations because of culturally ascribed roles of femininity, while men are combatants because of their masculine nature, women were fighters and were strategic and tactical as they packed foods like babies encouraging men to cross dress and reconnaissance. Thus, the importance of roles of women in war times and insurgencies cannot be over-emphasised. Accordingly, this underscores the important role of women in peace and security in consonance with the provisions of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325; women's life experiences, perspectives,

priorities, and capabilities should be integrated into issues of security to help build sustainable peace and development at all levels in Nigeria.

This paper, therefore recommends the following:

- Individual women who have played key, strategic, and tactical roles in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency should be acknowledged and awarded national awards and chieftaincy titles. This will help promote women's participation as combatants, and activist in conflict situations.
- As women have played key roles in combating the Boko Haram insurgents, their learnings from their engagement with Boko Haram should be harnessed for community development and social change, which would be a more fundamental route to peace building and improving women's status quo.
- Women organisations should be formed at the grassroots level to help increase the participation of women in the peace process as well as encourage those who are willing to fight against insurgency and formulate peace-building strategies.
- Women should be encouraged not to feel inferior to male counterparts, thereby promoting gender equality. Women should be enlisted for counter-insurgency since many of them are conversant with the various tactics used by the insurgents.

A return to patriarchy in the form and substance in which it existed before the insurgency, might be impossible. The communities would probably have to enact participatory and discursive processes that engage all members of their communities; women, men, children, old people, etc, and recognize and reckon all forms of difference for peace building and community development.

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