A Conceptual Framework for Netting-off the Effects of the Boko Haram Insurgency

Background and Context

*Boko Haram*, a Hausa phrase meaning ‘Western Education is forbidden’ or ‘Western Education is sinful’ is the name commonly used to refer to the movement ‘Ahlisunnah Lidda’awati wa’l-Jihad’, or the ‘People Committed for the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad’. The movement has its origins in Maiduguricity, the capital of Borno state in North East Nigeria. The phrase *Boko Haram* gained popularity in the early 2000s in the immediate post September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States of America and although now widely used, it does not adequately capture the real objective of the movement which is to overthrow the secular government and establish an Islamic state run under *Sharia* law, ultimately, rid the territory of all forms of Western influences.

After a period of relative ‘low activity’ during the 2000s, the group re-emerged in 2010, a point in time which coincided with a sharp decline in economic growth and a change in fortunes for many Nigerians. Since then, the attacks, abductions, loss of lives, displacement of persons and destruction of properties attributable to the group have grown in number, intensity and scope precipitating the current multifaceted and multidimensional humanitarian and development crisis in the region. The cumulative impact of *Boko Haram* in terms of the deaths alone between 2011 and 2018 is partially captured in the figure below, although actual number of fatalities are difficult to come by. From its original operational base, Maiduguri city in Borno State, the movement has since spread its activities not only to the entire North-East region and across the borders into Cameroon,

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1 This Policy Brief is produced by the Strategic Policy Advisory Unit of the UNDP Nigeria Country Office. The opinions expressed in this Brief however, are those of the author (Ojijo Odhiambo) and do not represent the views of UNDP, the United Nations or any of its affiliate organizations.

2 From a high of 8.35 percent in 2008 and 11.26 percent in 2009, the Nigerian economy grew by 4.89 per cent in 2018 before further declining to 4.28 percent in 2011.
An Examination of the Root Causal Factors

Given the scale of reported abductions; loss of lives and livelihoods; and destruction of property, as well the manifestations of the crisis in practically all spheres of life, a logical question then arises: what are the root causal factors of the insurgency and the resultant crisis? While the latter day (early 2000s) calls for universal jihad following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States of America has been cited as possibly exacerbating the Boko Haram insurgency, the root causal factors of the insurgency and the crisis can be traced back to the jihad of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio and European colonisation and subsequent rule during the early 19th century. It will be recalled that the North East region has a long history of religious contestations and opposition to western influence, in general, among certain groups, in preference to the strict application of Sharia law; and, specifically, western education (makarantar boko) in preference to Qur’anic school (makarantar allo) and Advanced knowledge school (makarantar ilmi) which had flourished in the region for centuries. Indeed, such groups associate western education with the oft-cited prevalent governance deficit and, critically, the failure of government to deliver real opportunities, critical services and prosperity for the people. The peculiar geo-political setting of the North East Nigeria at the confluence of east -west and north- south trade corridors of illegal arms trade and human trafficking and the fact that the region is the gateway to Nigeria from neighbouring countries...
some of which have weak governance structures have also been cited as important contributory factors. But perhaps more significantly, the economic hardships and political instability witnessed during the 1980s, coupled with the diminishing capacity of government to deliver basic services, jobs and prosperity for a vast majority of the peoples all served to exacerbate the resistance to western education, in particular, and western influence, in general. Moreover, due to historical asymmetry in access to education and skills acquisition for the labour market between the northern and southern Nigerian ethnic nationalities, many people in the north began to feel a sense of structural inequality and systematic exclusion manifest in the form of lack of job opportunities, high levels of poverty and inequality and, more worryingly, conspicuous consumption in the midst of great deprivation. It has been argued that the display of ostentatious wealth, conspicuous over-consumption in the midst of poverty, the control of productive assets and resources by a small number of people at the expense of the vast majority all have the potential to render the less privileged resort to violence in order to gain what they believe rightly belongs to them. But beyond this, there are many other reasons why people engage violence all or most of which are applicable in the Boko Haram context including: the desire for material gain and other benefits including capture and retention of political power; psychopathic mental state; breakdown of moral senses; sacred ties to a particular identity or ideology; and the need to preserve the sanctity of societal cultural values and norms, including the sustenance of self-honour and societal moral order. The foregoing, alongside the use of religion as a tool for economic and political mobilisation by the elites have all served to lay the foundation for the Boko Haram insurgency.

Effects of the Insurgency

As is widely known, the insurgency has left in its wake a trail of abductions, epitomised by the April 2014 abduction of 276 girls from Government School in Chibok in Borno State; deaths and displacement of large numbers of people; and destruction of social and economic infrastructure, among other effects. Indeed the effects of the crisis are felt in practically all spheres of life in the region but are perhaps more pronounced in terms of violence against people, loss of lives and destruction of property; displacement of people within local communities and even beyond international borders; loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition; provision of basic services (health, education and water sanitation and hygiene) and the lack of shelter and accommodation, especially for those in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps and those facing secondary displacement; with the situation in Maiduguri city and its environs being apical.

A Proposed Framework Model for Addressing the Insurgency and its Effects
The proposed framework model is intended for use as an analytical and interventional tool that can help suppress the Boko Haram insurgency and its impacts, as well as guide reconstruction and resilience building in the region. The model is founded on two premises. The first is that Boko Haram’s several acts of insurgency are perpetrated by different role players whose combined actions often result in: violent destruction of human life and property; abduction and trafficking of persons; displacement of persons from their homes and livelihoods; and radicalization of populations through religiously articulated ideological indoctrination and extremist political propaganda. The second premise is that the envisaged intervention measures would ordinarily include concerted steps to suppress the insurgency; coordinated measures for reconstruction, and resilience building to restore affected communities accompanied by interventions in key areas such as improved security, physical and social infrastructures development; economic and livelihoods recovery; rehabilitation and reintegration of displaced persons and deserting fighters, and establishment of institutional infrastructures for inclusive governance systems.

The key indicator variables are identified as, on the one hand; the quantum factor of the Boko Haram terrorism, made up of levels of its recruitment, perpetration and radicalization; all these having negative impacts; and on the other hand, positively impacting variables, namely; levels and intensity of counter-insurgency measures; rehabilitation and reintegration efforts; rebuilding community resilience, depending on degrees of degradation of original resilience levels; and the amount of reconstruction of physical and social-economic infrastructures in affected regions.

In a modular sense, positive impacts of reconstructive resilience building; restoration of affected communities’ infrastructures and livelihoods; de-radicalization, reintegration, resettlement and psycho-social support for abductees, displaced persons and fighters deserting the insurgency, etc, would net off negative direct impacts of the insurgency and corresponding ripple effects, to arrive at what is referred to as the Insurgency Quantum Factor (IQF) which is given as:

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IQF = (\text{amount of terrorism} + \text{recruitment} + \text{radicalization}) - (\text{resilience} + \text{rehabilitation} + \text{eco-economic support})
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**Conclusions**

The Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism is deeply rooted in historical and contemporary socio-economic, socio-cultural and political conditions that are prevailing in North east region of Nigeria. There exists a significant positive relationship between perceptions of exclusion, inequality, widespread unemployment, poverty, religious bigotry, disdain for western education and the increased activities of Boko Haram
insurgents in the form of terror, violence, destruction of property, loss of lives and displacement of people leading to destruction of infrastructure; loss of property; unemployment, loss of lives and livelihoods and psychological trauma. The insurgency and its effects lead ultimately to a humanitarian and development crisis that extends to the health, education, agriculture, developmental infrastructure sectors that require urgent attention.

**Policy Recommendations**

In order to address urgently and conclusively - the insurgency and the resultant complex and multi-faceted humanitarian crisis, there are a number of policy options that could be considered by the relevant authorities including:

i) restoration and guaranteeing of safety and security for local communities and humanitarian development actors through appropriate and coordinated deployment of international, national and local community security apparatus;

ii) adopting prevention as the penultimate weapon in the fight against insurgency through addressing conclusively, rather than glossing over, the root causes of the crisis; early detection and tackling of potential crisis triggers such as the incessant headers- farmers conflict in the neighbouring locations; delinking state from religion; strengthening and decentralising the deradicalization policy;

iii) tackling the co-joined problems of youth unemployment and poverty and deprivation;

iv) increased investments in human capital and empowerment of women and girls; and

v) moving beyond rebuilding and reconstructing better to rebuilding and rebuilding sustainably.

**Reference**