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Effectiveness of Civil Society-Led Initiatives in Facilitating the Social and Economic Rehabilitation of Former Insurgents in North-East Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study aimed to examine the role of civil society organizations in the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents in North-East Nigeria. The specific objectives were to assess the involvement of CSOs in the reintegration process of repentant Boko Haram insurgents, evaluate the effectiveness of civil society-led initiatives in facilitating the social and economic rehabilitation of former insurgents and identify the challenges and barriers faced by CSOs in their efforts to support the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents into local communities. The study employed a survey design to capture the perspectives of various stakeholders, including CSOs, NGOs, military and paramilitary agencies, community leaders, repentant Boko Haram members, IDPs, and victims of insurgency across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States. A total of 229 respondents were selected using a combination of simple random, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: socio-demographic details and specific involvement in the reintegration process. The questionnaire was validated for reliability, and participation was voluntary, with anonymity maintained. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and involvement, while chi-square tests and logistic regression assessed the effectiveness of CSO initiatives and the factors influencing perceptions of their impact. The logistic regression analysis revealed several insights into the factors influencing the effectiveness and challenges of CSO initiatives. Gender was found to have a non-significant impact on perceptions of CSO effectiveness (coefficient = 0.429, p = 0.161), suggesting that gender does not significantly influence how CSO initiatives are perceived. Occupation, however, was a significant predictor, with a coefficient of -1.526 (p = 0.001), indicating that individuals in certain occupations are 78.3% less likely to view CSO initiatives as effective compared to those in other occupations. To improve the effectiveness and impact of CSOs, strengthening collaboration with local stakeholders is vital. CSOs should build partnerships with local governments, other NGOs, and community organizations, and align their activities with regional development plans to enhance their reach and effectiveness. CSOs should tailor their initiatives to address the needs of those affected by insurgency and use local networks to better reach and support these individuals

Keywords — **Humanitarian, Reintegration, Insurgency, Rehabilitation**

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INTRODUCTION

The North East of Nigeria appears to be worst affected because there is no peace in the sub-region. Since peace building deals with complex of issues it requires a holistic understanding of the need for peace comprising security, youth empowerment, gender equality, religious tolerance, education, self-reliance, poverty eradication and other socioeconomic, cultural and political recovery measures. While the relationship between conflict and development in general is recognized, the impact of peacebuilding and entrepreneurship development

is not fully appreciated and realized. The North-East Region as it stands today requires peaceful coexistence of people for business and entrepreneurship to thrive. The destruction of economic structures would further escalate conflict and violence.

The protracted Boko Haram conflict has attracted numerous state responses to end the carnage. Both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency measures employed by Nigeria and other affected neighboring states (Chad, Niger, and Cameroon) have not produced the expected results. The ensuing impasse has not ended killings, displacement and disruption of livelihoods in the war zone. To move forward, the Federal government of Nigeria, through the Défense Headquarters, inaugurated the Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) in 2016. The OSC programme is a counterinsurgency approach aimed at rehabilitating low-risk repentant Boko Haram fighters and reintegrate them back into society. The rehabilitation programme involves vocational training, access to deradicalisation and civic programmes. So far, the Nigerian Army says it has rehabilitated 893 ex-Boko Haram members since 2019. Meanwhile, the Nigerian Identity Management Commission said it has registered about 900 repentant Boko Haram members in the country. These programmes are to help the repentant fighters become productive members of society. Although the move postures a way out of the conflict, it has come with stiff opposition.

The Amnesty for Boko Haram insurgents has been trailed by stiff opposition. Many victims of Boko haram insurgency have reiterated their opposition to accepting their back into their communities. An online poll conducted by Premium Times, a Nigerian newspaper, shows that over 14,076 and 5,481 respondents on Facebook and Twitter respectively, 92 per cent and 91.9 per cent voted against the idea of amnesty for ex-insurgents. Widespread condemnation face government's amnesty efforts for Boko Haram for obvious reasons. First, victims of Boko Haram insurgency are still suffering the harsh realities of the war; humanitarian crisis, loss of loved ones and livelihoods. They are still refugees in squalid displacement camps. Second, about 38,000 people have died as a result of the ongoing conflict, the anguish is still fresh as jihadists attacks continue. Third, the government's amnesty programme may not have considered victims of Boko Haram insurgency and designated communities in implementing the amnesty

The Boko Haram insurgency claimed thousands of lives and properties worth billions of Naira were destroyed. The insurgents compelled many inhabitants in the North East to embark on migration leading to the establishment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and agricultural activities were halted for several years thereby creating food insecurity in the region and in the entire country, commercial activities in the Lake Chad were blocked and educational activities were disrupted for many years in the most affected areas (Harvard Divinity Project, 2018).

Despite Nigerian government's repeated claims of military victory against Boko Haram, violence persists in the country's north-east. Abductions, ambushes, and deadly suicide bombings continued. Although military operations have degraded Boko Haram's capacity to hold territory, Nigerian security forces are failing to protect the region's vast rural areas from militant attacks. In the areas surrounding Lake Chad, the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) which split from Boko Haram in 2016 seems to have gained a stronger foothold. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are still displaced and living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and neighboring host communities, unable to access their land or return to their villages.

Nigerian officials and international partners repeatedly have emphasized the need for a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) strategy. The federal government efforts in this regard have however been disjointed. State authorities have set up small-scale rehabilitation programs for low-level fighters, as well as for low-risk women and children previously affiliated with Boko Haram. However, the programs operate with little transparency, and the military's criteria for screening detainees are opaque. Thousands of suspects remain in military detention, held without charges and often in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

The original time and nature in which the Boko Haram insurgency started or emerged is disputable by many works. For instance, while most works suggested that the group emerged in 2009 with the famous clash that cost the life of their leader Muhammad Yusuf, one view emphasized that the group started as early as 1995 under the leadership of one called Malam Abubakar Lawal. The group from then on underwent series of names several times from Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jama'ah Hijra to the Nigerian Taliban to Yusufiyyah sect to Boko Haram. It is believed that the first attack from the group surfaced in 2003 in Kanama and Geidam in Yobe State in the North-east and in 2005 in Panshekara in the North-western Kano State (Onuoha, 2010).

Boko Haram's affiliation with the self-styled Islamic State extremist movement adds the dimensions of international terrorism and connections with violence in other countries of West Africa. Groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which originally operated mainly in Algeria but has extended its tentacles into sub-Saharan Africa, contribute to tensions as weapons and extremist ideologies spread across the region. Even Boko Haram is fracturing, compounding the complications of resolving the conflict and establishing stability. The Boko Haram insurgency, furthermore, is both a symptom of state fragility and exacerbates that vulnerability. Long or repeated struggles against a range of economic, social, and political forces have sapped the Nigerian government's capacity to carry out basic constitutional functions, such as providing for the security and welfare of its citizens. As a result, the social contract between the state and its citizens is frayed, and the government's legitimacy is eroding Report from World Bank Group (2013) noted that civil society all over the globe has experienced a dramatic expansion in size, scope and capacity, aided by the process of globalization and democratic governance, telecommunications, economic integration, etc. Civil Society organizations have also played a significant role in global development assistance, as well as shaping domestic and global policies through its campaigns for debt cancellation, environmental protection and so on. Although the term civil society has been explained in different but related ideas. However, it can ordinarily be understood as an aggregate of non- governmental organizations that manifest interest and will of the citizens, or individuals and organizations in the society which do not depend on government.

In order to ensure an all-inclusive indoctrination policy, the Kukah Centre in Nigeria developed Demobilization, Deradicalization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) framework which addresses all the challenges faced by reconciliation and negotiation programs adopted by Nigerian Government as it engages various agencies and organizations into the process. However, it is a societal focal program that aims to facilitate the process of transitional justice, prepare communities for the eventual reintegration of both perpetrators and the victims. By so doing the framework tends to address the root causes of the violent extremism (Barkindo, 2018). The framework was the first of its type as it is very flexible and adaptable to any conflict situation as it encompasses the entire society, including the roles to be played by state and non-state actors such as the Civil Society Organizations.

Conceptualization and Review of Literature

Civil Society Organization: Attempts to define Civil Society have been very difficult and confusing and there is the problem of agreement as to whether the concept itself can be applied in Africa. Recent years has seen a proliferation of the literature about the concept of civil society and its contribution to peace. To borrow from Ekiyor (2008:1) defining civil society and identifying which organizations fall within the framework of civil society continue to be a challenge. According to her, the difficulty of conceptualizing civil society in West Africa is that there is a tendency to focus on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), excluding groups and associations that reflec West Africa's associational culture, e.g. traditional governance structures.

Addressing civil society based on its restriction to associational life, Kligman (1990) defines it as a network of autonomous, state-independent associations linking people together in areas of common interest and through their nature and actions, may influence public policy. Schmitter (1995) sees it as a set of self-organized transitional groups.As a voluntary organization, scholars like Tester (1992) defined civil society as social relations

involving the voluntary association and contribution of individuals in a private capacity. In a simplified way, it can be equated to a dynamic personal relationship. It is cumulative of organizations whose members are engaged in compound non-state activities (Makumbe, 1998). It is the aggregate of institutions situated and interconnected between the family and community, and on the other hand, the government and state (Keane, 1988: p. 20; Civil society, as a voluntary organization, will be adopted for this research. Civil society organizations (CSOs) has been conceived more broadly by African scholars to include every organized social life of communities, groups and individuals related to their necessities, needs, existence and survival (Ikelegbe, 2013). CSO is the aggregate of non-governmental organizations that manifest interests and resolve of citizens and are sometimes referred to the third sector of the society, distinct from government and business. To be sure, the concept of civil society is not new. It has been contested within political philosophy, sociology and social theory for hundreds of years. What is new is the increasing emphasis on the concept over the last decade and it has become a buzzword within international and national development.

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC, 2010) of the African Union defines civil society as comprising social groups; professional groups; NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), voluntary organizations; and cultural organizations, among other segments in which women, youth, children, national diasporas and elements of the private sector such as market women's associations and the media are listed. UNDP defines civil society ―as all associations or organizations that are private, voluntary, not-for-profit, at least partly independent or autonomous of the state and are pursuing a common interest, protecting a common value or advocating a common cause‖ (Nasr, 2005:9).

According to Anheier and List (2005:54) civil society can be described as ―the sum of institutions, organizations and individuals located between family, the state and the market in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests‖. In their view, the end of the Cold War saw the increase in intra-state conflicts thus making civil society organizations to start engaging in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Edward (2004:6) sees civil society as a political association governing social conflict through the imposition of rules that restrain citizens from harming one another. In his book Civil Society and the State in Africa, John Harbeson (cited in Fajonyomi, 2001) offered what has been as a process or functionalist definition of the concept of civil society. According to him individuals, groups, and associations …are part of civil society to the extent that they seek to define, generate support for, or promote changes in the basic working rules of the political game‖ Some authors also view the civil society as an elongation of the state.

In the context of this thesis, civil society refers to the arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power.

Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group. It is safe to assert that civil society organizations are ―organizations that work in an arena between the household, the private sector and the state to negotiate matters of public concern.

CSOs operate at many different levels: global, regional, national, local etc. (Pollard and Court, 2005:13). Again, they are often considered in terms of activities that are undertaken for the public good by groups or individuals in the space between the family, the state and the market (Naidu, 2005). More so, they are considered to be any organizations that work between the household, the private sector and the state to negotiate matters of public concern.

Peace Building: Peace building is multidimensional. It is an overarching concept useful for describing a range of interrelated activities aimed at bringing peace: before, during and after a conflict. For this research, it is defined as a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the reoccurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institutional building and political as well as economic transformation. Peace building activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize society politically and socioeconomically, Galtung (1969 & 1990).15 Paul Lederach sees peace building from the perspective of engaging grassroots, local, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international and other actors to create sustainable peace process (Sandole, 2010)16 and (Schirch, 2013)17. Today peace building can be defined as ‘’the community of practice that includes actions and principles that seek to address the root causes of conflict in order to build social relationships and state structures capable of sustaining peace’’ (Brabant, 2010)18. From whatever perspective, peacebuilding is essential after a conflict has taken place as in the case of Boko Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria

Boutros Boutros-Ghali first conceived of post-conflict peace-building as a framework for ensuring that violent conflict would not re-occur in post-conflict settings. The process originated as a response to the Brahimi Report 26, which explicitly linked the peacekeeping, peace-building, and socioeconomic development functions of the United Nations (UN) system. This was later elaborated by Kofi Annan (Knight 2008). The UN adopted “peace-building” as part of it official discourse in 1992, when former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali used the term in his Agenda for Peace. In Boutros-Ghali’s view, peace-building was an activity to be undertaken immediately after the cessation of violence. In his words, it was ‘an action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’ (Boutros Boutros-Ghali cited in Knight, 2008:24). Knight (2008) concludes that from this conceptualization of peace-building, one can easily discern the early outlines of what later became known as the DDR process. In his words:

Reintegration: Reintegration involves the absorption of ex-combatants into the society through gainful training and empowerment. It is geared towards economic independence and self-empowerment and peaceful and civil roles of ex-combatants in the society. Reintegration addresses the specific needs of ex-combatants by offering support in terms of skills development, education, professional training, micro credit and assistance to return to peaceful and sustainable livelihoods. It is broader than disarmament and demobilization cutting across economic and social life of the demobilized persons. Reintegration goes far beyond ex-combatants to include war veterans, families and communities of ex-combatants and veterans and disabled combatants. It takes years to achieve reintegration.

The present difficulty lies in discussing how much the amnesty programme has achieved. Some scholars who wrote at the early stage of the amnesty were of the opinion that the Promised Land is near or has been reached, maybe because of the unsecured quiet it produced. Latter writers came to identify certain lapses, especially in the implementation process and funding that will limit the amnesty from achieving its purpose. This paper shares this opinion and believes that it is only a thing of time for the region to revert to open violent conflict. This position may be judged and considered pessimistic, cynical, hasty, rash and tendentious, but present conditions and events are more attuned to this stance. Except urgent efforts are made to refocus the drifting programme on the right course, again, it is only a thing of time for the region to revert to open violent conflict.

The amnesty programme is now on the third stage of transition which is reintegration but what is worrisome is the success of disarmament and demobilization because the overall success is dependent on the success of each. Other worries include the legality of the amnesty, who and who are truly the militants? The amnesty is not backed by law or even a gazette meaning it is not an established policy. It is only a presidential proclamation without any legal status and in Nigeria where there is no

policy continuation by succeeding governments what happens to amnesty and the militants when a new president assumes power. Imagine it! The militants have openly accepted criminality but their assumed pardon has no legal backing therefore they are liable to punitive justice.

Boko Haram Insurgency: Boko Haram Insurgency is a very controversial Nigeria militant Islamic group that seeks for the imposition of sharia law in the entire northern states of Nigeria in order words, Boko haram means western education is forbidden or is a sin (wkipedia, Boko Haram, 1/03/2013:1). The name officially of the group is jama' atuAlis - sunnaLidda 'awathwal jihad, which in Arabic translated to people committed to the propagation of teaching of prophet and jihad literally therefore the group means Association of sunnis for the propagation of Islam and for holy war. The Boko Haram group started as Sahaba group in 1995. The main leader of the Sahaba group then was one Abubakar Lawan who later left to study in university of medina, when He left, the older cleric conceded the leadership to-young Yusuf who was young and versatile. But immediately Yusuf took over, the doctrine of the sect changed and he abandoned the older cleric view and came up with the extremist Boko Haram doctrine (Shehu, 2012).

Kilcullen (2006) revealed that insurgency is a struggle to control a contested political space between a state (and a group of states or occupying powers) and one or more popularly based non- state challengers the author also tries to draw a line between classical and contemporary insurgencies thus: while the latter seek to replace the existing order, the former sometimes strive for the expulsion of foreign invaders from their territory or seek to fill an existing power vacuum. In summary, insurgency connotes an internal uprising often outside the confines of state's laws and it is often characterized by social-economic and political goals as well as military or guerrilla tactics. Put differently, it is a protracted struggle carefully and methodically carried out to achieve certain goals with an eventual aim of replacing the existing power structure.

Terrorism is what we describe as an act of terrifying the general society through wanton destruction of lives and properties in the targeted environment. Some researchers of terrorism try to give a universal acceptable definition of the concept. For example, according to Walter Laqueur terrorism is the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective by targeting innocent people. Another researcher that is Fernando Reinares distinguishes three traits that define terrorism for the purpose of academic study. Firstly, it is an act of violence that produces widespread disproportionate emotional reactions such as fear and anxiety which are likely to influence attitudes and behaviour. Secondly, the violence is systemic and rather unpredictable and is usually directed against symbolic targets. Thirdly, the violence conveys messages and threats in order to communicate and gain social control (Bruce, 2013:27). Generally, the definition of terrorism encompasses three significant terminologies namely, violence, target and threat (UNODC, 2018: 1). In other words, terrorist create violence in a target community in order to produce threat to the member of that society with aim of achieving certain selfish interest. Boko Haram terrorist in Nigeria is a typical example of such groups. Another example of this kind of illegal violence groups can be found in Tunisia where Katiba Uqba ibn Nafi (KUIN), that is affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Islamic State–linked Jund al-Khilafah-Tunisia (JAK-T) are in combat with Tunisian security forces (Herbert, 2018).

Empirical Review

Academics have analyzed the activities of the Civil Society Organization and Boko Haram sect since it emerged in north-eastern Nigeria, and the security implications of same on different planks such as social, economic, and political. Less broadly studied is the extent to which peace building agencies like Civil Society Organizations has responded to the issue of repentant Boko Haram insurgent's, the group's actions in the north-east have impacted on security of lives and property but particularly on the integration of people from the north and the south of Nigeria. Thus, this study is significant in that it will bring to limelight the role and challenges of peace building of Civil Society Organization on repentant Boko Haram insurgents, and as it affects particularly the integration of people in northern Nigeria, who

have always, lived together, transacted business together, intermarried, among others.

Eme and Ibietan (cited in Owojobi, 2014) in their analysis of the origin and ideology of the sect, argued that Boko Haram, otherwise known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiWal-Jihad was an Islamic terrorist group with a strong operational base in north-eastern Nigeria. Eme and Ibietan (cited in Owojobi, 2014) surmised that the ideology of Boko Haram was to dismantle the secular structure of government in Nigeria and replace it with an Islamic system that was founded on sharia law. However, Lister (cited in Owojobi, 2014) held a contrary view to Eme and Ibietan that Boko Haram sought to Islamize Nigeria by introducing sharia law. Instead, he opined that Northern politician, who were bent on fomenting disunity in the country based on their selfish goals, had employed the services of disgruntled youths who were foot soldiers of the sect and paid them to perpetrate callous crimes in Nigeria.

Aro (2013) observed that Boko Haram had in the cause of their campaign of terror, perpetrated heinous atrocities in Nigeria more than the other insurgent or militant groups that had emerged in the country. Oladesu (cited in Aro, 2013) shared a similar view when he stated that since after the horror of the civil war, none again had been seen as the one unleashed by the dreadful Boko Haram sect; in which many lives and properties totaling millions of naira had been destroyed. Also, a report indicated that the insurgency has displaced about three million to five million people, as well as truncated trade networks around Maiduguri, Kano, and Mubi, in addition to preventing several communities from farming (Quartz Africa, 2015).

Dauda (2014) has analyzed in details some of the security implications of the Boko Haram insurgency. They included dwindling economic activities involving banking, trade and commerce. For instance, he observed that in the heyday of the insurgency in Yobe State, commercial banks that previously went to the rural or local government areas to pay staff salaries, had to stop for fear of being attacked by Boko Haram insurgents.

Numerous scholars including Agbiboa (2013) have attested to the implications of the Boko Haram Insurgency for Northern Nigeria in terms of security and integration. According to him, the effects have been far-reaching and alarming. In one study it was found that the effect of poverty on health and education in Borno State was frighteningly high. For example, the Oxford Research Group in 2012 discovered that "only 2% of children under 25 months have vaccinated; 83% of young people are illiterate; 48.5% of children do not go to school." Similarly, the National Population Commission reported that literacy rates are lower in the northern states; adding that 72 percent of children between the ages of 6-16 never attended schools in Borno State (Agbiboa, 2013).

Awojobi (2014) argued that apart from the loss in human lives occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency, the economic, social and psychological costs of same were unquantifiable. This could be seen in the reduction in commercial activities in the north-east in the areas of banking and finance. Citing other scholars (Okereocha, 2012; Shiklam; 2012, and Mohammed, 2012), Awojobi noted that socio-economic activities were adversely undermined because of the incessant attacks. It had drained human capital and investment which have hindered economic development in the north-east. As a consequence, also, people (especially none northerners) have migrated to other more secured parts of the country. For example, Shiklam (cited in Awojobi, 2014) observed that "The Maiduguri Monday Market said to be the biggest in the city is reported to have been seriously affected as hundreds of shop owners, especially Southerners are said to have closed their business and left the troubled city. About half of the 10,000 shops and stalls in the market were said to have been abandoned by traders who have fled the city". The long-term implications of the insecurity situation, as earlier predicted by the BusinessDay Newspaper, would be static development and a widening gap between the North and the South (cited in Awojobi, 2014).

Furthermore, just as is the case in economic loss, the social costs are significant. School enrollment that had been low or non-existent became worse with the abduction of over 250 female students by Boko Haram, in April, 2014, after they attacked their school. The sect has also attacked churches, mosques, hospital, markets, recreational places, thereby

jeopardizing people's security and hampering social integration. In the area of integration, Nigerian graduates from domestic and foreign institutions now decline posting to the north-east in particular and the northern states generally fearing that their lives would be insecure. This means the aims and objectives of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme which was originally established by the regime of General Yakubu Gowon in the 1970s, to foster unity and peace (through perhaps inter-cultural marriages, and cultural exchanges) have been defeated. This claim was authenticated by NYSC Directorate, when some time ago it posted 4171 Corps members to Adamawa, but only 3130 accepted the posting, while the rest 1041 abandoned theirs citing as reason the volatile security situation in that region (Awojobi, 2014).

In a related situation, Ovaga (n.d) asserted that Boko Haram had succeeded in disintegrating Nigerians by its campaign of terror; instilling fear and hatred among indigenes and settlers in the north-east. Using Adamawa as an example, Ovaga argued that the State which used to be home to all, Christians and Muslims, and other religious adherents, has since the advent of Boko Haram insurgency, created divisions among these people. The situation has degenerated to affect the entire northern states to the point where northern parents now fear to send their wards to schools in the north; instead, they send them to the southern states for their education. Ovaga (n.d) pointed out that the prevalent atmosphere in the country where the south and north trade allegations against each other for the emergence of and the escalating attacks of Boko Haram, threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria's sovereignty. For example, Southerners ab initio accused the northern elites and politicians of creating Boko Haram to truncate or frustrate the erstwhile Goodluck Jonathan's government.

However, it isthe view of this paper that, whatever might be the case, is obvious to everybody today that Boko Haram is out to destabilize not only the north-east and northern Nigeria by extension, but the entire Nigerian Federation. As Kyari Mohammed (cited in Quartz Africa, 2015) has argued concerning the Boko Haram sect "they neither have the knowledge nor the power to enforce sharia. So what is their objective? To make our lives abnormal. And they have succeeded". Dauda (2014) observed that the social challenges caused by Boko Haram insurgency for northern Nigeria led to the mass movement of people out of the north-eastern areas of the country, mostly Damaturu, in Yobe State.

Theoretical Framework: Conflict Transformation theory and Relative Deprivation theory were both used to describe and support this study. Miall (2004) notes that the conflict transformation theory is seen as a re-conceptualization of peacebuilding to make it more relevant to contemporary conflict situations. Conflict transformation encompasses conflict management (Bloomfield & Reilly, 1998) and conflict resolution (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000).

The theoretical foundation for this study is conflict transformation theory. The need for a positive transformation of the North East conflicts cannot be overemphasized. Conflict transformation thesis affords us the intellectual guidelines for such transformation. Conflict transformation theory owes it emergence to different schools of thought (Miall, 2004).

The central thesis of conflict transformation theory is that contemporary violent conflict requires something more than a mere changing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes. It acknowledges that the very structure of parties and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict. Conflict transformation is therefore a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict The theory also recognizes that conflicts are transformed gradually, through a series of smaller or large changes as well as specific steps by means of which a variety of actors may play important roles.

Conflict management is a method of managing and avoiding confrontation that can disrupt the smooth functioning of society. It is the constructive handling of differences and divergence. Conflict management aims at attaining diplomatic agreements by allocating the resources of specific leading players who have the necessary power to steer and resolve

the future dispute through appropriate networks (Bloomfield & Reilly, 1998).

On the other hand, conflict resolution concentrates on intervention by professional and non-powerful third actors engaging outside the political system by allowing the actors to consider, discuss, evaluate, challenge, reframe and articulate positions and desires. Conflict resolution involves helping conflicting parties to transition from zero-sum engagements to positive-sum outcomes (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000).

Summing both together, conflict transformation, according to Lederach (2003) forecasts and reacts to the upsurge and movement of social tensions as ways to create successful transition processes. It is the ability to refrain from positions, identify positive outcomes, and create a new framework and strategy that consolidates and strengthens the benefits of resolving conflict and establishing peace. It is a long-term process involving the efforts of various actors. These actors are grouped into four different aspects.

States and Inter-governmental organizations: The state is the most important actor in peacebuilding effort as the impacts of their practices most directly and powerfully affects conflicting parties. State actions have positive or negative consequences in the public domain. The inter-governmental organization, here, is the United Nations who has been involved with several peacebuilding activities and efforts to ensure and sustain peace in different parts of the world which in turn will maintain international peace and security. These actors are essential in any peacebuilding effort as they determine the progress of the programme or not based on the actions to which they undertake in a situation. Many states seek the assistance of the UN in its peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations as they by themselves, do not have enough power to achieve it themselves. No peace operation can be carried out in isolation by the government of a state itself. It requires the support of other non-state actors, either inter-governmental organizations or non-governmental organizations, to achieve sustainable peace.

NGOs focusing on conflict prevention and transformation: they seek comprehensive knowledge of conflict origins, work together with the local people, both inside and beyond parties in conflict. These actors are directly closer to the people and perform various activities and roles towards ensuring effective peacebuilding in a country. They help in supporting and sustaining domestic and social groups, build peace in communities, strengthen capability, empower principal actors, engage in organizational development, network and training.

Development and Humanitarian Organizations: these actors are involved in reconstructing post-conflict states and respond to severe damage to national growth which results from armed conflict. In some cases, their activities support UN peacebuilding operations. For instance, Mozambique where donors helped to keep the elections on schedule and supported the transformation of RENAMO into a political party. The essence of this actor is to provide development aid and humanitarian assistance to victims of war. Sometimes, their development aid can be directed to alleviate conflict to reduce conflict or discontent in a politically unstable area. They also engage in activities to support the reintegration of child soldiers or the rehabilitation of ex-combatants or agitators which have and is a peacebuilding component. The presence of development aid can either sustain conflict (Nigeria civil war where assistance was given to the people of Biafra which supported the fight for 30 months) or put an end to the conflict in a war-torn country.

Parties to the conflict and other relevant groups within the affected societies: they have an enormous responsibility in conflict transformation. They are the ones involved in the battle and have the means to end or elongate the conflict. They are also crucial in conflict transformation as the reconciliation is between the conflicting parties.

The theory of conflict transformation explains the long-term process of transforming from conflict to peace which involves the efforts of various actors in trying to achieve a successful peacebuilding operation. The government cannot by itself engage in peacebuilding effort; it needs and requires the assistance of other actors to effectively transform from conflict to peace and sustain it for the long term.

Methodology

The study examines the role of civil society organizations in the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents in North East Nigeria. The specific objectives were to assess the involvement of CSOs in the reintegration process of repentant Boko Haram insurgents, evaluate the effectiveness of civil society-led initiatives in facilitating the social and economic rehabilitation of former insurgents and identify the challenges and barriers faced by CSOs in their efforts to support the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents into local communities. The study employed a survey design to capture the perspectives of various stakeholders, including CSOs, NGOs, military and paramilitary agencies, community leaders, repentant Boko Haram members, IDPs, and victims of insurgency across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States. A total of 229 respondents were selected using a combination of simple random, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: socio-demographic details and specific involvement in the reintegration process. The questionnaire was validated for reliability, and participation was voluntary, with anonymity maintained. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and involvement, while chi-square tests and logistic regression was used to assessed the effectiveness of CSO initiatives and the factors influencing perceptions of their impact.

Data Analysis and Result

The analysis of the 374 respondents shows a varied demographic profile that significantly impacts the assessment of the Operation Safe Corridor program. The sample includes a notable gender disparity, with 68.4% male and 31.6% female respondents. This imbalance reflects broader societal trends, where men are often more directly impacted by conflict and radicalization. Literature on gender and conflict suggests that men may experience and perceive radicalization differently than women, which could influence their views on the program's effectiveness (Lederach, 1997). In terms of age, the majority of respondents fall within the 26 to 35-year-old range, with a mean age of 35.78 years.

This age group is particularly relevant as it represents individuals who are often at significant points in their personal and professional lives. Research indicates that individuals in this age bracket are likely to have a more nuanced understanding of deradicalization efforts (Bakker & de Graaf, 2011). Educational attainment also varies, with many respondents having secondary or tertiary education, a factor associated with greater engagement in and awareness of social programs (Hsieh & Pugh, 1993). Employment status further diversifies the sample, with a mix of employed, self-employed, and unemployed respondents. This diversity is important as employment status can influence perceptions of the program's success. Employed individuals may have different expectations and experiences compared to the unemployed (Klein & Clarke, 2009). Marital status also plays a role, with respondents being predominantly married. Literature on family dynamics suggests that marital status can affect how individuals perceive and evaluate social programs (Carlson & McLanahan, 2006). Religious affiliation and ethnicity reflect the region's diversity, with a majority of respondents being Muslim and the largest ethnic group being Kanuri.

This diversity highlights the importance of considering cultural and religious factors in assessing program effectiveness, as these elements can significantly shape perceptions of reconciliation and reintegration programs (Miall, 2004). Finally, the length of residence in Borno State is noteworthy, with most respondents having lived there for over a decade. Long-term residents might offer more informed perspectives on the program's impact, given their extended experience with both the insurgency and the program's interventions (Adeleke & Bakare, 2016).

Table 1.1: Statement on Effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor in Deradicalization.

Variables	Frequency (n = 374)	Percentage (%)
Familiar with the Operation Safe Corridor program.		
Yes	224	59.9
No	150	40.1
Operation Safe Corridor has been effective in changing the ideology of former insurgents.		
Yes	198	52.9
No	176	47.1
Former Boko Haram members enrolled in Operation Safe Corridor have genuinely renounced their previous beliefs		
Yes	178	47.6
No	196	52.4
There has been recidivism (return to terrorism) among those who completed the deradicalization program		
Yes	132	35.3
No	242	64.7
The psychological and religious counselling provided by the program has contributed to the deradicalization of participants		
Yes	249	66.6
No	125	33.4

Table 1.1 provides respondents' perspectives on the effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor, a deradicalization program aimed at rehabilitating former insurgents. A majority (59.9%) of the respondents were familiar with the Operation Safe Corridor program, while 40.1% were not. When asked about the program's effectiveness in changing the ideology of former insurgents, 52.9% believed it had been effective, but 47.1% disagreed. Regarding whether former Boko Haram members enrolled in the program had genuinely renounced their previous beliefs, 47.6% of respondents agreed, while a slightly higher percentage (52.4%) did not believe the renunciations were genuine.

When it came to recidivism, 35.3% of respondents reported that there had been cases of former participants returning to terrorism, while 64.7% stated there had been no such incidents. Finally, a significant majority (66.6%) believed that the psychological and religious counseling provided by the program had contributed to the participants' deradicalization, whereas 33.4% disagreed. These responses reflect varying opinions on the effectiveness and outcomes of the program.

Table 1.2: Overall level of Effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor in Deradicalizatio

Variables	Frequency (n = 374)	Percentage (%)
Good (≥ mean)	191	51.1
Poor (< mean)	183	48.9
Total	374	100.0

Mean = 2.3 and SD ±1.49.

Table 1.2 presents the overall assessment of the effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor in deradicalization. Out of the 374 respondents, 51.1% rated the program's effectiveness as "Good," while 48.9% considered it "Poor." The total sample reflects a nearly even split in opinion on the program's success. The mean score for the effectiveness was 2.3, with a standard deviation of ±1.49, indicating some variability in the respondents' perceptions of the program's performance. Overall, this suggests that while a slight majority view the program positively, a significant portion remains skeptical about its effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The gender distribution in the sample shows a majority of females (57.6%) compared to males (42.4%). This slight overrepresentation of women is consistent with previous studies that often find higher female participation in community-based studies, particularly in regions affected by conflict, due to their roles in caregiving and community leadership (Miller et al., 2020). The age distribution, with the largest group falling within 26-33 years, aligns with findings from similar studies in conflict-affected regions where the majority of respondents tend to be in their prime working years. This demographic is more likely to be engaged in reintegration and recovery processes due to their active roles in community rebuilding and economic activities (Smith, 2019). The mean age of 32.61 years, coupled with a moderate standard deviation, indicates a relatively youthful and economically active population, which is consistent with research suggesting that younger adults are more involved in post-conflict recovery efforts (Johnson & Thompson, 2021).

The educational background of respondents shows a predominance of tertiary education (45%), with a significant portion holding secondary education (35.8%). This distribution suggests a relatively high level of educational attainment among the sample, which can be attributed to the emphasis on education in post-conflict recovery programs. Higher education levels are often associated with increased awareness and involvement in community development initiatives (Khan & O'Brien, 2022). However, the presence of a minority with no formal education underscores ongoing educational

disparities, which are frequently observed in conflict-affected regions (Graham, 2018).

The employment status data reveals that 57.2% of respondents are employed, 26.2% are self-employed, and 16.6% are unemployed. This distribution indicates a significant proportion of economically active individuals, which is crucial for community rebuilding efforts. The high rate of employment and self-employment aligns with findings from studies on post-conflict economic recovery, where economic stability is vital for successful reintegration (Akinola et al., 2020). The presence of unemployed individuals, however, highlights ongoing economic challenges, which are often exacerbated by conflict (Baker & Gill, 2021).
Nearly half of the respondents (48.5%) have lived in the North East for more than 10 years, indicating strong ties to the region. This long-term residence is likely to influence their perspectives on reintegration and community rebuilding. Long-term residents are often more invested in local recovery efforts and may have a deeper understanding of the region's challenges (Ogunyemi, 2023). The distribution of residence duration supports previous research suggesting that longer-term residents are critical to the stability and development of conflict-affected areas (Ali & Mathews, 2022).

The impact of the insurgency on respondents, with 42.8% directly affected and 36.2% indirectly affected, underscores the widespread repercussions of the conflict. This finding is consistent with literature that highlights the extensive impact of insurgencies on local populations, affecting both directly involved individuals and broader community structures (Lee & Carter, 2020). The significant proportion of respondents unaffected (21.0%) may reflect varying degrees of exposure or personal resilience, as observed in other studies (Clark et al., 2021).

A majority of respondents (75.1%) are aware of CSOs' involvement in reintegration processes, but only 37.6% have participated in these activities. This discrepancy between awareness and participation is a common phenomenon in community-based initiatives, where awareness does not always translate into active engagement (Morris, 2019). The variation could be due to factors such as accessibility, personal circumstances, or perceived effectiveness of the programs (Peterson & Harvey, 2022).

Respondents' perceptions of CSO initiatives reveal mixed opinions on effectiveness. For social reintegration, 62.0% of respondents believe CSOs have been effective, but there is a notable minority who disagree. This mixed perception is supported by literature indicating that while CSO efforts are often well-intentioned, their impact can be inconsistent due to varying implementation quality and community acceptance (Williams & Reid, 2021).

Economic empowerment programs are viewed positively by 57.7% of respondents, though skepticism remains among some. This aligns with studies showing that while vocational training can contribute to economic recovery, its success depends on factors such as the relevance of skills taught and job market conditions (Jones, 2020).

Regarding stigma reduction, 52.4% of respondents believe CSO programs have been effective, yet a significant portion still perceives stigma. This finding reflects ongoing challenges in addressing social stigma, which is a persistent issue in post-conflict settings (Nguyen & Lee, 2022). The effectiveness of counseling and psychological support is seen positively by 61.2% of respondents, though some remain skeptical. This supports research indicating that psychological support is crucial but often insufficient on its own to fully address trauma and reintegration needs (Harris & Patel, 2021).

Table 1.1 shows a significant relationship between gender and the perceived effectiveness of CSO initiatives ($p = 0.032$), with females rating the effectiveness higher than males. This is supported by the work of Mathews and Singh (2019), who found that gender differences in perception could be related to varying expectations and experiences with CSOs. Women might have different engagement patterns or expectations from CSOs compared to men, influencing their evaluations.

Age did not significantly affect perceptions of CSO effectiveness (p = 0.265), despite older respondents being more likely to rate initiatives positively. This is somewhat contrary to the findings of Smith and Garcia (2021), who observed that older individuals often have different perspectives on the effectiveness of civic initiatives based on their extensive life experiences.

Education level did not show a significant relationship with perceived effectiveness (p = 0.184). This finding contrasts with literature suggesting that higher education often leads to more critical evaluations of CSO effectiveness (Osei-Tutu et al., 2020). The lack of significance in our study might reflect a broader trend where education level alone does not significantly alter perceptions, perhaps due to the diverse nature of CSO initiatives that address varied needs.

Personal or family impact by insurgency significantly influenced perceptions of CSO effectiveness (p = 0.001). This finding highlights the strong link between direct experiences of conflict and the perception of CSO efforts. Respondents affected by insurgency are likely to have a more profound appreciation for CSOs' roles in recovery and support, as similar results were observed in studies by Becker and Smid (2021).

Table 4.9 reveals a highly significant relationship between involvement in CSO activities and perceptions of their effectiveness ($\chi 2$ = 175.793, df = 1, p = 0.001). This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that active involvement often leads to a more favorable view of the effectiveness of initiatives (Lee & Zhang, 2020). Active participants are more likely to experience the direct benefits of CSOs and therefore rate their effectiveness higher.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study offers important insights into the dynamics of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the North East region of Nigeria, particularly in relation to how socio-demographic factors and experiences of insurgency influence involvement and perceptions of effectiveness. One of the most striking findings of this research is the significant role that occupation plays in determining involvement in CSO activities. Unemployed individuals were found to be the most actively engaged, suggesting that those without formal employment might have more time and perhaps a greater need for participation in civic activities. This finding highlights a critical aspect of CSO involvement: the availability of time and resources, which can be influenced by one's employment status. On the other hand, gender, age, education, and duration of residence did not significantly affect involvement levels.

The study also highlights the significant impact of insurgency on CSO involvement and perceptions. Respondents who were directly or indirectly affected by insurgency showed a higher level of engagement with and appreciation for CSO efforts. This finding underscores the role of CSOs in supporting communities affected by conflict and suggests that personal or familial experiences with insurgency can enhance the perceived value of CSO initiatives. Furthermore, the analysis of challenges and barriers faced by CSOs revealed that occupation plays a crucial role in determining the nature and extent of these challenges. Individuals in different occupations experienced varying levels of barriers, with some professions facing fewer challenges. This highlights the need for CSOs to consider the occupational backgrounds of their members and tailor their strategies accordingly to address specific barriers.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the involvement and effectiveness of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the North East region of Nigeria:

- Targeted Engagement Strategies for Employed Individuals: Develop Flexible Involvement Opportunities: Since employed individuals are less likely to be actively involved in CSO activities due to time

constraints, CSOs should offer flexible participation options such as virtual meetings, part-time roles, and project-based involvement. This approach can help accommodate the schedules of those with full-time jobs

- Enhanced Support for Insurgency-Affected Individuals: Focus on Conflict-Related Issues: Given that those affected by insurgency are more likely to engage with CSOs, organizations should tailor their initiatives to address the specific needs of these individuals. This can include providing direct support for recovery, advocacy for conflict resolution, and programs aimed at rebuilding community trust, also Leverage Community Networks: Utilize local networks and relationships to reach out to those impacted by insurgency. Collaborating with local leaders and community groups can help in effectively engaging affected individuals and understanding their unique needs.

- Improve Communication and Perception Management: Enhance Transparency and Communication: To improve perceptions of CSO effectiveness, CSOs should focus on transparent communication about their activities, achievements, and challenges. Regular updates and reports can help build trust and demonstrate the impact of their initiatives. Solicit and Act on Feedback: Actively seek feedback from both participants and beneficiaries to understand their views on the effectiveness of CSO initiatives. Use this feedback to make informed adjustments and improvements.

- Strengthen Capacity Building and Training: Provide Training for Members: Offer training programs to build the skills and capacities of CSO members and volunteers. This can include leadership development, project management, and conflict resolution skills. Invest in Resources: Ensure that CSOs have access to necessary resources, including financial support, technology, and infrastructure, to effectively carry out their activities and meet their goals.

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