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Challenges and Barriers Faced by Civil Society Organizations in Their Efforts to Support the Reintegration of Repentant Boko Haram Insurgents in North-East Nigeria

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Abstract:

The Boko Haram insurgency has caused widespread devastation, displacing thousands and disrupting livelihoods. The major player in addressing terrorism and its aftermath globally are Civil Society Organizations. In North-East Nigeria. 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 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 — **Peacebuilding, Reintegration, Insurgency, Rehabilitation**

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INTRODUCTION

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 emphasised 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; Bratton, 1992: p. 56; Harbeson et al., 1992: pp. 285-290; Ikelegbe, 1999).

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.

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, peace building 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 reoccur in post-conflict settings. The process originated as a response to the Brahimi Report26, 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.

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 property in the targeted environment. Some researchers of terrorism try to give a universally 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 behavior.

The Roles Civil Society Organization Played in Peace building includes:

*Protecting the liberty and freedom of beneficiaries***:** the CSOs were very active in protecting the rights, privileges and latitude of the recipients, particularly, the ex-combatants in the reintegration programme. They played a role in ensuring that they were not discriminated against either were their rights denied to basic amenities of life or source of livelihood. They had the right to education, religious organizations as well as get employed. They were protected against the hate of the community in ensuring that they were properly secured and not left out in the provision of amenities and jobs. They advocated for their right to free movement as well as basic other things which gave them access like every other civilian to the resources of the country. Orjuela (2005) posits that these protection functions are generally performed by International Non-Governmental Organizations (I-NGOs) that support domestic civil society either indirectly through their presence as monitoring watchdogs or directly through international accompaniment. It aided the success of the reintegration programme as they saw themselves as one being accepted to the system

rather than an enemy of the state. The contribution of CSOs towards protection function was limited as the government is charged with the primary responsibility of performing this function.

Human Capital Development: the CSOs were active in seeking for jobs and opportunities for these beneficiaries after the reintegration phase. It was required to ensure that they were financially capable, which will enable them to have something to live for and contribute positively to the economy rather than carrying arms. The conflict intensified due to the high-level unemployment, poverty, environmental pollution in the region. The CSOs realized if jobs are not provided for them despite the reintegration programme, they are likely to return to militancy. Thus, they sort to provide jobs and opportunities for them to earn a living, survive and be able to provide and fend for themselves. In such a way, they alleviated poverty from them and gave them a source of life. For some, the CSOs helped to start up their own small business which is additional cash flow to the economy.

Also, to achieve this, CSOs became active participants in the micro credit finance sector through accessing and managing micro credits and supervising funded projects to ensure the growth of the project. Majorly, they were involved in enhancing access to credit facilities, self-employment for the people, development of skills, providing job opportunities and providing support for them. Human capital development is being prioritized in Nigeria to ensure an increase in economic growth.

Economic and Social Empowerment: the non-governmental organizations focused on short-term empowerment while the federal government focused on both short- and long-term empowerment of the beneficiaries. By providing job opportunities for the beneficiaries as well as providing funds for them to start their small-scale businesses, they, in turn, empowered them economically. Economic empowerment is the capacity of individuals to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. They could contribute meaningfully to the GDP of the economy through their source of livelihood and jobs created for them. In some situations, some beneficiaries who were trained overseas got jobs immediately after their training.

This is as a result of the influence of government and the CSOs. Social empowerment, on the other hand, is the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that excludes the poor people and keep them in poverty. The CSOs were also concerned with developing the self-esteem and confidence of the ex-combatants as it is a means to be self-aware of themselves and their surroundings, thus, building themselves up and engaging in activities that will yield positivity. Primarily, they assisted and implemented small-scale projects to enhance their livelihood, give loans to individuals and groups, and assist in establishing and managing cooperatives amongst themselves.

Relief and Humanitarian Assistance: some organizations primary goal was to provide humanitarian assistance to people of the Niger Delta who had lost their homes and families during the conflict. Welfare assistance was delivered to the ex-combatants to get them well settled and prepare them for the reintegration programme and to have no reason to carry arms again before the reintegration programme. They were also at the forefront of the rehabilitation exercise as they are in closer relations to these people than the government. Some of the local organizations partnered with international organizations and also received fund support from various international organizations and corporate

bodies to ensure that the victims and ex-combatants are assisted in several ways. Food, toiletries, medicines, clothing and shelter were provided for them in preparation for their reintegration programme and even during the programme itself. The organizations endeavor to cater for the beneficiaries' needs pending the end of the programme and at the end of the programme, keep monitoring their progress and growth to make sure they don't return to the militancy lifestyle.

Monitoring the progress of the ex-combatants: as the reintegration programme gets implemented and different beneficiary taken to different places to be trained informally or formally, the growth and development of each ex-combatant are monitored to know the state of mind of the person. Also, the CSOs monitor the actions and progress of the government in honoring their promises towards the reintegration programme. The close monitoring was essential to avoid the outbreak of another conflict and maintain the existing peace.

They also monitor the policies such that it does not violate the right and freedom of the ex-combatants. This function is essential. It follows the successes of the reintegration programme and at the same time observe the progress of the ex-combatants in dropping the militancy mindset and inculcating the civilian status which will, in turn, shape their life and manner of the way that will eventually add something positive to the country. Through the role of monitoring, the civil society is better able to realize and recognize the needs of the ex-combatants, their fears, successes, failures and their progress to being socialized into the civilian community. They observe how self-aware the ex-combatants are and tender to whatever requirement is needed for them to be effectively transitioned and integrated into the civilian status.

Advisory Roles and Socialization: the socialization function was provided by non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, and educational institutions as they have a direct impact on the beneficiaries of the reintegration programme than the government themselves. The organizations help to provide advisory services to these beneficiaries with the issues bothering them and how they can go about doing better with their reintegration and socialization into the civilian society. Pieces of Advice are given at different levels, and their progress is monitored. They serve as mentors who provide advice, suggestions and solutions to the needs of the ex-combatants and play advisory roles to the government on the best and most effective way of managing the reintegration programme.

These roles and functions are essential to avoid the relapse of the conflict or the discontent of the people that will further lead to another agitation. The CSOs help the ex-combatants to socialize freely with other people and activities that are going on their surroundings. They initiate citizen-based initiatives, strengthen citizen efficacy and participation in the society so that they can develop their self-confidence and self-esteem and make positive changes both in themselves and to the community. It reconditions their mindset away from the armed world to the civilian status and advises them on how to cope, adjust and maintain a positive relationship with people around.

Advocacy Roles: according to (Aall, 2001; Paffenholz, 2003), advocacy is one of the core functions in peacebuilding and primarily a role for domestic civil society. Niger Delta wasn't left out in carrying out this function. The CSOs articulates the interests of the people, their needs, and interests and create communication channels to the government and the general public. They advocated on the rights, needs and freedom of the ex-combatants. It aided in government providing jobs for the people, women inclusion in the reintegration and empowerment programme as well as ensuring the effectiveness in the socialization and integration of the ex-

combatants into the civilian society without any discrimination or rebel.

Social Service and Welfare: CSOs assisted in providing certain services and provisions that could not be met by the government. They advocate for the provision of basic needs, the affordability of social services and public subsidization of social services for the ex-combatants. Their contribution to the reintegration programme in the aspect of social assistance is such that they engaged in various activities as well as partnered with the government to meet the basic needs of the beneficiaries in terms of food, employment, adequate training, and a monthly stipend for food and cash flow.

The civil society organizations in partnership with the government provided several training programs for the reintegration programme where they were trained in literacy, numeracy and entrepreneurship which could be used in sustaining their livelihoods and contribute positively to the society. These trainings were not done directly by the actors involved but were contracted to consultants to help in implementing them. In general, they were active in efforts at providing safety nets for the ex-combatants during the reintegration programme. Summarily, they conducted literacy programmes, health awareness and welfare programmes for the challenged, campaigns against human trafficking, immunization campaigns and implementing health projects.

Environmental Governance: CSOs raised awareness about the need to protect the environment from progressive degradation, industrial pollution and deforestation. The ecological degradation of the region was the cause of the conflict. Thus, there was a need to protect the environment to prevent it from further damage and the increase in armed groups against the government. The awareness also aided the reintegration programme as the ex-combatants finally felt their voices were being heard, and their needs met. The central objective of this has been sustaining the environment for development, awareness on the issues of the situation, the identification of environmental pollution sites and remediation, and compliance of industrial organizations with environmental policies. It will further reduce the environmental hazard in the region as well as the harm it causes to the people living in that area.

Infrastructure Provision: civil society organizations were also responsible for providing infrastructural facilities for the community and region. Many of their homes were destroyed and had become displaced. Thus, some organizations helped in implementing small-scale community infrastructures, providing loans for housing, advocate for infrastructure improvements for the people to ensure a better standard of living for the people and region. One of the basic needs of any individual is shelter, a place to lay their heads on. The civil society organizations –religious organizations, helped in making this available to the beneficiaries during their rehabilitation and reintegration programme, providing social care and needs for them to make them feel accepted and wanted in the society thereby increasing the efficiency of the reintegration programme.

Theoretical Framework: Conflict Transformation theory and Relative Deprivation theory were to adopted 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 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.

Results and Data Analysis

To examine the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents in North East Nigeria, this study focuses on their contributions, effectiveness, and challenges in supporting the reintegration process. A total of 229 respondents were approached, and all consented to participate, resulting in a 100% response rate.

Table 1.1: Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency, n = 229	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	132	57.6
Male	97	42.4
Age group (years)		
18-25	46	20.1
26-33	85	37.1
34-41	65	28.4
42 and above	33	14.4
Mean ± SD	**32.61±7.94**	
Education Level		
No formal education	12	5.2
Primary education	32	14.0
Secondary education	82	35.8
Tertiary education	103	45.0
Occupation		
Employed	131	57.2
Self-employed	60	26.2
Unemployed	38	16.6
Duration of Residence in the North East		
Less than 5 years	45	19.7
5-10 years	73	31.9
More than 10 years	111	48.5
Personal or Family Impact by Insurgency		
Directly affected	98	42.8
Indirectly affected	83	36.2
Not affected	48	21.0

As depicted from Table 1.1 above, the gender distribution shows that a majority of the respondents are female, making up 57.6% of the total, while 42.4% are male. This indicates a slight overrepresentation of women in the sample. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents (37.1%) fall within the 26-33-year age group, followed by 28.4% in the 34-41-year range. A smaller percentage of participants are aged 18-25 years (20.1%), while those aged 42 and above make up 14.4% of the sample. The mean age of the respondents is 32.61 years, with a standard deviation of 7.94 years, suggesting that the sample skews towards a younger population, with a moderate degree of age variation. Education levels among respondents are varied, with nearly half (45%) having attained tertiary education, while 35.8% have completed secondary education. Only 14.0% of respondents reported having primary education, and a small minority (5.2%) have no formal education.

This data indicates that the majority of respondents possess at least a secondary education, with a considerable portion holding higher education qualifications. When considering employment status, 57.2% of respondents are employed, while 26.2% are self-employed, and 16.6% are unemployed. This reflects a predominantly economically active population, though a notable portion of respondents are either self-employed or without work. Regarding the duration of residence in the North East, almost half of the respondents (48.5%) have lived in the region for more than 10 years, indicating strong ties to the area. Meanwhile, 31.9% have resided there for 5-10 years, and 19.7% have been in the region for less than 5 years. Finally, the data on the impact of the insurgency reveals that 42.8% of respondents have been directly affected, and 36.2% have been indirectly affected, with only 21.0% reporting that they have not been affected at all. This highlights the significant toll that the insurgency has had on the lives of the majority of respondents, whether through direct or indirect means.

Table 1.2: The Involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Variables	Frequency, n = 229	Percentage (%)
Are you aware of civil society organizations involved in the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents?		
Yes	172	75.1
No	57	24.9
Have you participated in any reintegration activities organized by CSOs?		
Yes	86	37.6
No	143	62.4
Have CSOs provided skills acquisition or vocational training for former insurgents in your community?		
Yes	130	56.8
No	99	43.2
Do civil society organizations in your community offer counselling or psychological support for former insurgents?		
Yes	111	48.5
No	118	51.5
Do you think CSOs have played a significant role in the reintegration process in your community?		
Yes	157	68.6
No	72	31.4

Table 1.2 above shows that, a significant majority of respondents (75.1%) are aware of CSOs' involvement in the reintegration process, while 24.9% are unaware. However, when it comes to direct participation, only 37.6% of respondents have engaged in reintegration activities organized by

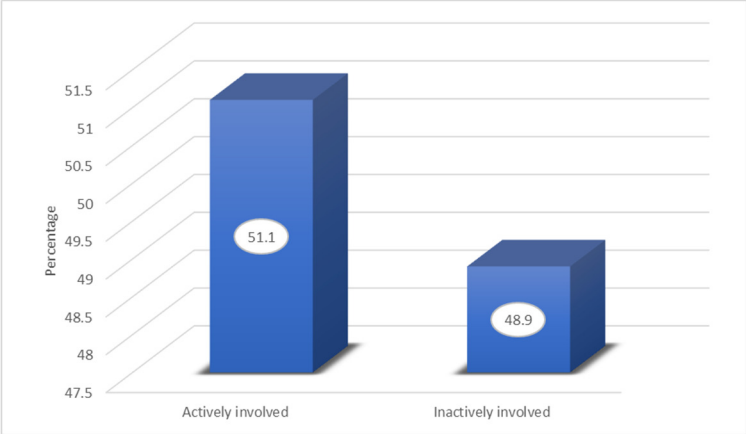
CSOs, leaving 62.4% who have not participated. Regarding skills acquisition and vocational training provided by CSOs, 56.8% of respondents indicated that such training has been offered to former insurgents in their communities, while 43.2% noted the absence of these programs. The provision of counseling or psychological support by CSOs shows a nearly even split, with 48.5% affirming its availability and 51.5% indicating that such services are not offered in their communities. Finally, a significant portion of respondents (68.6%) believe that CSOs have played a crucial role in the reintegration process within their communities, while 31.4% think CSOs have not made a significant impact.

Table 1.3: The Involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Variables	Frequency, n = 229	Percentage (%)
Actively involved	117	51.1
Inactively involved	112	48.9
Total	229	100.0

Key: Actively involved = ≥ 50%; Inactively involved = < 50%

Table 1.3 presents the level of involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the reintegration of repentant Boko Haram insurgents, as perceived by the respondents. Out of the 229 respondents, 51.1% believe that CSOs are actively involved in the reintegration process, meaning they perceive CSOs to be engaging in the reintegration activities at a level of 50% or higher. On the other hand, 48.9% of respondents view CSOs as inactively involved, implying that they perceive CSOs' participation to be below 50%.



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 counselling 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).

Respondents identified several challenges faced by CSOs, including insufficient funding (73.4%), community resistance (48.9%), difficulties in government collaboration (37.1%), security concerns (68.1%), and lack of resources (66.4%). These findings align with literature highlighting common barriers to effective CSO operations in conflict-affected regions. Funding shortages, security risks, and community resistance are well-documented challenges that hinder the effectiveness of reintegration programs (Adams & Johnson, 2020; Smith & Garcia, 2021). The divided opinions on community resistance and government collaboration reflect the complex dynamics involved in post-conflict recovery, where different communities and organizations may experience varying levels of support and cooperation (Lewis & Mills, 2022).

Education level did not significantly affect CSO involvement ($p = 0.184$), a finding that challenges some assumptions in the literature. For example, research by Lee and Zhang (2020) suggests that higher education often correlates with increased civic participation due to greater awareness and understanding of societal issues. However, our results showing higher involvement among those with primary education could suggest that other factors, such as the immediacy of needs or socio-economic conditions, might be more influential in this context.

Occupation emerged as a significant factor ($p = 0.001$), with unemployed individuals showing the highest level of active involvement. This result is consistent with findings by Rogers (2021), which argue that unemployed or self-employed individuals may have more time to engage in CSO activities compared to those with formal employment. The inverse relationship between occupation and CSO involvement could be attributed to the demands of formal employment that limit time and energy for civic engagement.

The duration of residence did not significantly relate to CSO involvement ($p = 0.474$), which contrasts with studies indicating that long-term residents often have a deeper connection to their community and higher levels of involvement (Morris & Morris, 2022). In this study, the lack of significance could reflect the complex interplay of other factors influencing CSO involvement, overshadowing the impact of residence duration.

Personal or family impact of insurgency significantly influenced CSO involvement ($p = 0.016$). This finding underscores the role of direct and indirect experiences with conflict in motivating engagement with CSOs. Studies such as those by Becker and Smid (2021) have similarly noted that conflict and crises often drive individuals to participate in civic activities as a means of coping or contributing to recovery efforts. Table 4.8 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.

Occupation was a significant predictor of perceived effectiveness (p = 0.001), with unemployed individuals rating CSO initiatives more positively. This result aligns with Rogers (2021), who suggests that those without formal employment may have more direct experience with CSO services and thus a better understanding of their effectiveness. The positive perception among unemployed individuals could also reflect their greater reliance on CSO initiatives for support.

The duration of residence in the North East was significantly related to perceived effectiveness (p = 0.029), with long-term residents rating initiatives more positively. This supports the idea that longer-term residents might have a better understanding of and appreciation for CSO efforts, as they have witnessed the evolution and impact of these initiatives over time (Morris & Morris, 2022).

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).

Personal or family impact by insurgency was positively associated with perceptions of CSO effectiveness (p = 0.118), although not statistically significant. This aligns with the chi-square findings, suggesting that while there is a trend towards higher ratings among those affected by insurgency, it is not strong enough to be a reliable predictor in the regression model. The coefficient for age in relation to challenges faced by CSOs (p = 0.086) suggests a potential inverse relationship, though not statistically significant. This result is somewhat contrary to the findings by Green et al. (2021), who suggest that age can influence the types of challenges faced by CSOs based on varying levels of experience and resources.

Occupation significantly affects the challenges faced by CSOs (p = 0.002), with certain occupations encountering fewer barriers. This finding aligns with literature indicating that job-related factors can influence the nature and extent of challenges experienced by CSOs (Rogers, 2021). The involvement of CSOs is strongly associated with the prevalence of challenges (p = 0.001). This result reflects the idea that greater involvement may bring to light more significant challenges, as active engagement often uncovers deeper issues within organizational operations (Lee & Zhang, 2020).

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 occup ation 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.

This challenges some commonly held assumptions and points to the need for a nuanced approach when addressing participation in CSO activities. In terms of perceptions of effectiveness, the study revealed that both occupation and duration of residence significantly impact how CSO initiatives are viewed. Unemployed individuals and those who have resided in the region for longer periods were more likely to rate CSO initiatives positively. This could be attributed to their deeper engagement with and observation of CSO activities over time, which may foster a greater appreciation of their effectiveness. While gender and education also play a role, their influence was not as pronounced as that of occupation and residence duration. This suggests that while demographic factors such as gender can influence perceptions, they are not the primary determinants of how effective CSO initiatives are seen to be.

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 the study recommends:

Targeted Engagement Strategies for Employed Individu als: 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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