

## **Amnesty for Boko-Haram Jihadist in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects.**

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### **Abstract**

Boko Haram sect was granted amnesty by President Muhammadu Buhari through the Operation Safe Corridor and Disarmament, De-radicalization and Rehabilitation (DDR) program in 2016 and 2017 respectively. While in the program, repentant combatants were expected to under-go months of intensive de-radicalization, religious teachings and vocational training in designated camps to prepare them for reintegration into the society. However, the program has been marred with challenges that question its efficacy as a counter insurgency tool. This study aims to identify these challenges and also the prospects of amnesty as a tool to end Boko Haram insurgency. The identified challenges include; categorization and admission of wrong people into the amnesty program, community hostilities to rehabilitated combatants, constant drive and recruitment of new members to replace repentant and dead combatants, community exclusion in the amnesty. The research employed the use of secondary sources to generate data. Methods used include; documents from both classified and open sources. The study recommends the regulation of religious teachings, community inclusion in the amnesty program, reconciliation between ex-combatants and the host communities before reintegration, stringent measures should be put in place to stop the adoption and recruitment of new members into the sect and the need to address the factors that led to the growth and spread of Boko Haram ideology in the first instance and concludes that a committed implementation of these recommendations would go a long way to address the Boko Haram menace in the country.

**Key Words:** Boko Haram, Amnesty, Operation Safe Corridor, DDR.

### **Introduction**

The Security situation in Nigeria, especially in the North-East region has deteriorated since the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in 2009. The terrorist sect has turned the once safe and peaceful North-East region to a den of incessant killing, kidnapping, suicide bombing, mass abduction of people, destruction of properties and other inhumane acts. The sect also tirelessly unleash terror to all and sundry especially the residents of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Gombe states that are in the region. No one is safe or spared from the gruesome and random attacks on villages, homes, farms, schools, market, offices, places of worship and other public spaces. The dire security situation has made the region insecure and also crippled the once thriving academic, farming, markets and other commercial activities that used to characterize the region. The once prosperous residents of the region have fled their homes and taken refuge in dilapidated Internally Displaced Peoples Camps scattered around the country and other communities that are



relatively safe from Boko haram sect. This ugly reality of insecurity, homelessness, poverty, and total destruction of sources of livelihood has impoverished and affected the people's quality and outlook of life. In fact, residents of the region, especially those in rural areas live at the mercies of Boko Haram insurgents who do not hesitate to kill and destroy at any given opportunity.

Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist sect in Northeastern Nigeria that operates mostly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. The sect according to Walker (2012) consist of radical Muslims who "believes politics in northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims, it wants to wage war against them, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally, to create a "pure Islamic state ruled by sharia law".

The activities of the sect are not limited to the North-East region as they have attacked other parts of the country including the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), Kano, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Niger states e. t. c. on several occasions .The sect is also active in the following African countries; chad, Niger, and northern Cameroon. Their mode of operation is not the conventional warfare but they rely on the use of force on members of other religions and also Muslim Faithfull's that oppose their ideologies through suicide bombings, destruction of public and private properties , kidnapping, mass abductions among others. The radical and unconventional mode of operation brought the group in confrontation with the government and law enforcement agencies and it led to the arrest of some members of the sect and the extra judicial killing of the group's leader Mohammed Yusuf by the police in 2009. This extra-judicial killing of its leader made the sect more radical and it has since engaged in a bitter battle against the Nigerian state that does not spare children, women, men, the young or aged. It is estimated that the group has killed over 37, 500 people and displaced over 2.5 million and the number of casualties are increasing daily (Global Conflict Tracker 2021).

These dreadful deeds of Boko Haram have placed Nigeria on the global map as a terrorist and dangerous country to live in. Accordingly, the Global Terrorism Index for 2019, ranked Nigeria as the country with the second highest number of death recorded from terrorism worldwide, the most terrorized country in Africa and third most terrorized in the world. ` This global image and the grim reality of daily killing of people and other destructive acts perpetrated by the sect has made the Nigerian government to explore all means to end the terror reign of Boko Haram , restore peace to the North-East region and the country at large and also to redeem Nigeria's image globally. In the quest to achieve the aforementioned, Nigerian government together with other well-meaning individuals and organizations had expended so much time, human and financial resources to combat the sect though the desired result is yet to be achieved as Boko haram radical ideology still thrives and has birthed and aided other vices like armed banditry and kidnapping that is ravaging almost every region of the country. It has also led to increase in other vices such as drug abuse, prostitution and other illicit trade in small and light weapons.

To win the fight against the Boko Haram, Nigerian government at all levels in collaboration with both local and international organizations came up with different initiatives including amnesty to members of the sect that willingly drop their arms and surrender to the state. Operation Safe Corridor and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration(DDR)are the amnesty programs rolled out in 2016 and December 2017 respectively to give a soft landing to Boko Haram

combatants that decides to leave the sect, stabilize security and return normalcy to the North-East region (Crisis Group Africa 2021 and Uchegbu, 2019). The programs are carefully mapped out plans that seek to disarm, rehabilitate and reintegrate repentant Boko Haram fighters into the society. They are divided in phases and is a collaborative work between the Nigerian government, the Army, religious bodies, and other local and international NGO`s like the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The programs are progressions that are done within a space of six months where ex-combatants are disarmed, de-radicalized and reintegrated into the society. They are also schooled or given vocational training to aid them reintegrate and survive smoothly. However, after years of their existence, the programs are yet to deliver the expected result. The number of arms in the hands of Boko Haram insurgents is still high especially after the sect had raided several military bases and made away with ammunitions. Attack and destruction of human lives and properties, violation of human rights are constantly witnessed, armed assault and hostage taking are still experienced on constant basis while youths, men, women and children are either lured or forced into the sect. These negative realities necessitated the interrogation of the challenges and prospects of Operation Safe Corridor and DDDR as a counter terrorism measure to fight Boko Haram sect.

## Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this work, the researchers employed the qualitative method to gather data. Primary and secondary data were collected for the study. The primary data were from the researcher`s observations and discussions with relevant people while the secondary data were gathered from published books, journals, edited books e.t.c and relevant materials from the internet.

## Conceptual clarification

There are basically six words that need clarification in this study. These words are amnesty, Boko Haram, Operation Safe Corridor, Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration.

**Amnesty:** The word amnesty refers to legal measures that have the effect of prospectively barring criminal prosecution and, in some cases, civil actions against certain individuals or categories of individuals in respect of specified criminal conduct committed before the amnesty`s adoption (United Nations 2009). Amnesty in this instance refers to official pardon of someone or group of people previously involved in fighting the Nigerian state and allowing them to return to society. Amnesty is often adopted as a counter terrorism measure when the use of force and other military tactics to allay conflict has failed. It can also be described as official pardon for crimes committed in the past.

**Boko Haram:** is a terrorist organization based in north-east Nigeria, which is also active in neighboring countries of Chad, Niger, and northern Cameroon. The sect consist of radical Muslims who “believes politics in northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims, it wants to wage war against them, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally, to create a “pure Islamic state ruled by sharia law”(Walker (2012). Since the insurgency began in 2009, the sect has killed thousands of people and displaced more.



**Operation Safe Corridor:** is Nigeria's home-grown amnesty program for providing low –risk recruits with a voluntary exit route from Boko Haram (International Crisis Group 2021). It was established by the Nigerian government in 2016 and handled by the military to receive voluntary low-risk defectors from factions of the jihadist group, Boko Haram. Over 2000 defectors have passed through the program since its inception.

**DDR:** The United Nations defines the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration as “a process of removing weapons from the hands of members of armed groups, taking these combatants out of their groups and helping them to reintegrate as civilians into society, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration seeks to support ex-combatants and those associated with armed groups, so that they can become active participants in the peace process.” The DDR is a globally accepted initiative for reducing armed combat and restoring peace to conflict ravaged areas. It is also the process of demilitarization of official groups and unofficial armed group by controlling and reducing the possession and use of arms, by disbanding non-state armed groups and rightsizing state security services and by assisting former combatants to reintegrate into civilian life. The DDRR process can help create an environment in which the overall peace process, political and social reconciliation, social and economic rehabilitation, and longer time development can take root (Ball, 2006). The DDRR was deployed in so many war torn states like Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire. It is worthy to note that the wrong application of DDRR can lead to further empowerment of terrorist group. Nigerian DDRR for Boko Haram Jihadist was launched in 2017 by President Muhammadu Buhari.

### **Disarmament**

Ball (2006) defines disarmament as the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. It also includes the development of responsible arm management programs. The short-term aim is to enhance security by reducing the number of weapons owned by individuals and to restore trust among warring parties, while the long-term aim is to prevent the circulation of small arms in particular and their proliferation. Adaora (2013, p.255) views disarmament as important tool for building a world free from fear through controlling of arms. Accordingly, she opines that disarmament programs can facilitate diffusion of tensions and encourage relationships, help to impede the development of and spending on new weapons and diminish the risk, incidence and severity of armed conflict, thus improving stability and freeing resources for other activities such as economic and social development.

Parties in disarmament program willfully surrender all weapons in their possession publicly. It is done to gain the trust of the people and also signify that it is a willful act and the participants were not coerced. Disarmament as used in this paper is the willful surrender of arms by combatants and the civilian population.

### **Demobilization**

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Chukwuzitara (2019) conceptualize demobilization as basically the official expulsion of combatants from their armed units. It is the genesis of separating them from the armed forces and preparing them to reintegrate into the civil society. Ball (2006) also defines demobilization as the formal and



controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. Demobilization is classified into two stages; the first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centers to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion. This includes all the assistance offered to combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration.

### **Reintegration**

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Re-integration is the process by which ex-combatants or other armed groups are re-integrated into the society, and this is done by giving them sustainable employment or means of income. Osundu, (2013, p. 257) conceptualize reintegration as the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level (Chukwuzitara, 2019).

### **Literature review**

Many opinions have been aired for and against the amnesty granted to Boko Haram insurgents by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. While some people welcomed it as a positive development that will aid in the fight against insurgency, a larger percentage of the populace had contrary opinion on the gesture that has and is still gulping so much of the nation's resources. For conspicuous reasons that include but not limited to the high level of destruction of lives and valuables, continuous offensive against Nigerian security forces and the terrible living conditions of people displaced by the insurgency, the amnesty program has been under extensive criticism on account of its effectiveness, timing and whether the insurgents are deserving of the official pardon.

Salihu & Yakubu (2021) have expressed the view that Operation Safe Corridor; the arm of amnesty that caters for low-risk repentant defectors from the sect is "another attempt to masquerade the counterproductive nature of military onslaughts and negotiatory efforts". They argued that the radical and revolutionary interpretation of Islam by Boko Haram sect does not give room for negation or amnesty, thereby making the amnesty counterproductive. Ewi (2013) opines that granting amnesty to Boko Haram insurgents will send a wrong signal that "Nigeria is becoming a safe haven for impunity for those who perpetrate mass violence against civilians". He further avers that the amnesty cannot be effective nor would it stop the violence since it does not deal with the root causes of the insurgency. Hassan (2021) argues in the same line with Ewe, she elucidates thus "granting blanket amnesty in this insurgency will make peace and justice more difficult to achieve" she implied that amnesty alone is not sufficient as transitional justice neither is it capable of ending the widespread violence perpetrated by the insurgents. She further posits that the use of amnesty is only an interim solution that can relapse into violence on a larger scale if the causes of the insurgency are left unchecked.

The screening process that admits defectors into the amnesty program has not been without criticism. International Crisis Group had noted that the programs fail to bring in the right people as hundreds of individuals who have gone through or are currently in the program are not from the target group thereby defeating the aim of amnesty. They also noted that non-combatants who were forced to live as passive subjects under Boko Haram rule were added to Operation Safe Corridor and only a few of those in the operation were actual Boko Haram fighters while the majority were mainly villagers and farmers who stayed in areas under Boko Haram control to protect or feed their families. This implies that the program's target group is still at large, while time, money and other valuable resources are invested on the wrong group, thus making the operation not to have significant impact in the fight Boko Haram insurgency and also defeating the aim of the amnesty.

Prominent Nigerians like Ali Ndume the Senator representing Borno South has also kicked against the amnesty as he noted that it will not bring the required peace in the region. The senator opines that granting amnesty to the sect when they are actively engaging the Nigerian military will encourage others to join the sect. He proposes that "amnesty should only be an option when the war against the insurgency has been won" (Sahara reporters, 2020). Farooq Kperogi; a Nigerian academic and media scholar described the amnesty as not only "immoral and unwise, but a signal that mass murder has no consequence". In his view, there is no moral justification of granting pardon to insurgents who delight in inflicting death, destruction, and misery on innocents (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, 2021). Arewa Youth consultative Forum, through its national president Yerima Shettima, have also condemned the government's decision to grant amnesty to Boko Haram fighters, the group rather called on the government to come "all out to fight them once and for all, prosecute them and make them face the law "to serve as deterrent to those thinking of committing such crimes" (Daily Post, 2021).

Despite the opposition against the amnesty granted defectors of Boko Haram Jihadist group by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, the program has been lauded by some who see it as having the prospective solution to the insurgency that has bedeviled the Nigerian state for almost two decades. Arewa Consultative Forum; Northern Nigeria socio-political group, described the gesture as a "welcome development, considering the insecurity posed by insurgency". Through its National Publicity Secretary; Alhaji Muhammadu Biu, the group expressed the view that considering the insecurity posed by insurgency in the last nine years "amnesty will pave way for Nigeria to pursue order, justice, liberty, peace and prosperity for all" (Daily Post, 2018). The Nigerian presidency through its spokesman Mr. Garba Shehu also described the amnesty granted to Boko Haram members as a win-win situation. He opined that amnesty will "help the insurgents to be useful to the nation, save lives that are being lost through bombing, stop the killing of security personnel and Nigeria will be saving money used to procure weapons so that such money can go into services and infrastructure and welfare of the citizens".

### **The Challenges of Boko Haram Amnesty in Nigeria**

Contrary to the expected amnesty outcome of ceasefire and return of peace in the North-East, Boko Haram has waxed stronger and is more sophisticated than ever with international alliances

with other terrorist groups such as ISIS, ISWAP and also having presence in neighboring African states. The impact of the initiative on the quest for peace in the region is minimal as people are still being killed, kidnapping, looting, and other atrocities by the sect continues after years of its implementation. The program does not address factors such radical religious teachings, wide spread poverty, unemployment, high rate of illiteracy, corruption and other societal vices that the founders of the group capitalized on to gain popularity and followership among the populace. Without properly addressing these factors, Boko Haram will continue to gain sympathy, more members and ultimately undermine the purpose of amnesty.

The sustainability of the amnesty program vis a vis the reality of forced or voluntarily recruitment of new members into the sect is questionable. The insurgency has not ended and the sect is on constant drive to recruit new member including women and children that are sometimes forcefully adopted to serve the group in different capacities. What this implies is that the sect replaces the “repentant and de-radicalized” combatant with new recruits making the impact of their exit non-existent or felt. Hence, for every combatant that “repents” and abandon the sect, one or more are recruited to take his place thereby making the cycle of amnesty and de-radicalization endless.

Unlike the amnesty program in the Niger- Delta region that gave militants an ultimatum of 60 days to lay down their arms or face the wrath of the state, amnesty for Boko Haram jihadist has no stipulated time frame for execution, as jihadist especially these classified as high risk are free to exit the group and embrace amnesty anytime they deem fit. The open time frame gives the combatants more time and freedom to commit crimes as they can choose to accept the offer of amnesty at any time and be free of every crime they have committed.

Among the shortcomings of the amnesty is the recruitment process that fails to bring in the right people. The “free for all” admission of people into the program has greatly undermined the attainment of the set goals. Only a few of those who are under the Operation Safe Corridor program were real insurgents; the reason being that the operation picks up non-combatants and local civilians who were forced to stay back as passive subjects of Boko Haram rule after the group`s attacks on their settlements. The program has also been reported to be a “catch-all for a wide range of other individuals, including minors suspected of being child soldiers, a few high-level jihadists and alleged insurgents whom the government tried and failed to prosecute and who say they have been moved into the program against their will”(International Policy Digest & International Crisis Group). The wrong categorization of non- jihadist as ex-combatants, their admission into the camp and forcing them to undergo the de-radicalization process is a source of concern that calls for overhaul of the screening process to ensure only jihadist who willingly embrace the amnesty are admitted into the program as failure to admit the right people prolongs the conflict and the losses associated with it.

Another worrisome trend of DDR for Boko Haram defectors is disarmament or the surrender of their arms to the appropriate authorities. From inception in 2017 to September 2021, over 7000 jihadists have reportedly surrendered to the government but there is no concrete record of the arms they surrendered. On the contrary, the number of arms in the hands of Boko Haram

insurgents is on the increase as stipulated by Laura Boushnaq when she opines that “Boko Haram extremists, are now better armed than ever and have more sophisticated drones than the demoralized Nigerian military” (New York Times, 2019). A Plausible reason for such opinion could be attributed to the many attacks and defeat suffered by the military when members of Boko Haram sect raided their camps in the North-East and neighboring country Niger, carting away fire arms and other military gadgets. Aside the stolen weapons, these attacks left tons of soldiers death, some wounded and many others missing. The sect’s association with other international terrorist groups also gives it access to more funding and weapons; the availability of which makes it easier to perpetrate violent crimes in the North-East region and beyond.

There is animosity against DDR by some members of the political, military and the civilian communities for diverse reasons. So many citizens are of the opinion that the sect has not shown any sign of readiness for amnesty and the continued hostilities despite the offer of amnesty indicates they do not deserve it, at least for now. It is important to note that without the support of the aforementioned groups, achieving lasting peace and the successful reintegration of ex-combatants into the society will be a charade. The first noted cause of this animosity is the disparity in the treatment of ex-combatants and the victims of the insurgency. While the former are given offers of free education and economic empowerment, the latter are left to wallow in abject poverty in dilapidated IDP camps and other deplorable places around the nation with no hope of education or any form of economic empowerment. Injured Military personnel who have suffered bodily injuries and relatives of soldiers that died at the war fronts also resents the “unfair” treatment enjoyed by ex-combatants while they live in horrible conditions with little or no attention from the concerned authorities.

These perceived gaps are reasons for resentment of not just the amnesty program but ex-combatants who benefit from it. Rehabilitated ex-combatants are also resented in their communities for these reasons and others such as apprehension on the genuineness of their repentance. Reconciliation between ex-combatants, affected communities and other stakeholders has not received the required attention. So much effort is made on disarming, demobilization and reintegration of the repentant insurgents into the society without corresponding effort to ensure a smooth reintegration and peaceful relationship with the host communities the ex-combatants are reintegrated into. Renouncing membership of terrorist group is only the first step in a chain of processes for achieving permanent peace. It is paramount that ex-combatants seek forgiveness from the people they wronged and receive same before they are reintegrated into the community. Without this, reintegration of ex-combatants will only be a charade that will sooner than later collapse and make futile all the efforts put in the process. Residents of these communities have on many occasions expressed their displeasure and vehemently oppose the idea of living side by side with the people that have caused them such immeasurable pains. Nextier in 2020 reported that “many victims of Boko Haram have reiterated their opposition in accepting back into their communities, prospective rehabilitated ex-insurgents”. Such opposition makes them to openly resent and not want to have any dealing with reintegrated ex-combatants. The implication of isolated life is far reaching and could push ex-combatants back to the crimes they renounced to seek companionship since man is a social animal that cannot dwell in isolation.



Lack of restitution by ex-combatants has watered down the efficacy of the amnesty, giving it the appearance of an easy conduit for escaping punishment for crimes committed. While the government's effort of a non-military approach to end the insurgency is commendable, it is not enough for ex-combatants to receive pardon and act as if these crimes were never committed when the evidences are glaring and are constant reminder to the victims of what they have suffered and lost. Fortunately, the Borno state Government under the leadership of Professor Zulum has embarked on a mission to rebuild the places and infrastructures destroyed by the insurgent, this could serve as avenue for ex-combatants to prove the genuineness of their repentance and also make restitution by being part of the work force engaged in rebuilding the ruins. It will also serve as a source of economic empowerment to augment the little amount they were given from the camp.

The security and well-being of the rehabilitated ex-combatants is also a cause for concern. Their safety in the communities they reside and from the unrepentant insurgents should not be overlooked. As repentant fighters, they are not looked at favorably by the active jihadist and this could make them easy targets of attacks by the combatants that controls some parts of the northeast and have been responsible for a gross number of atrocities in recent times like the killing of over 30 people in Konduga village in June 2020, ambush of a military base in Mainok village that left over 30 soldiers death and the killing of over 40 farmers on November 29 2020 e.t.c the stigma and isolation ex-combatants face in communities also leaves them vulnerable and dejected with no form of support to lean on or companionship. Such conditions are liable to push to the lives they renounced.

### **The Prospects of Combating Insurgency Through Amnesty for Boko Haram**

Amnesty program for repentant Boko haram fighters that started in 2016 is commendable and an indication of government's effort to end Boko Haram insurgency that plagued the nation for more than a decade. However, the observed gaps in the programs examined above are hindrances to achieving objectives of de-radicalizing the sect, reducing the amount of arms in circulation, rehabilitation of ex-combatants and ultimately achieving lasting peace in the region. Given the above, it is the position of this paper that to achieve a sustainable amnesty, stringent measures should be put in place to reduce or stop the adoption/recruitment of new members into the sect. without such measures the amnesty programs will only be an endless circle since Boko Haram are massively recruiting new members that will replace those that exited the sect. This can be achieved through state control of religious teachings, political and social ideologies to curtail extreme and radical views that often mislead especially young people to join illicit groups such as Boko Haram. Other conditions such as illiteracy, unemployment and poverty that make people vulnerable to radicalization should be properly addressed. Gainful employment of the youths should be top priority of the government because a gainfully employed youth is less likely to join such groups unlike one who has no source of livelihood.



Secondly, the importance of reconciliation in every amnesty program cannot be overemphasized. There is need for the repentant insurgents to openly ask for forgiveness from people they have wronged and ensure they receive same before they are reintegrated into the society. Government must ensure this is done openly with the help of professional in the field of conflict resolution and other relevant stake holders like religious leaders. Without genuine repentance and forgiveness, any peace recorded will be superficial and in no time suppressed anger, pains and sufferings of the victims will lead to further conflict. Victims of the insurgency also need to be counseled, sensitized and encouraged to openly forgive, embrace and learn to live with their former tormentors.

Thirdly, community inclusion should form part of the amnesty program to ensure its success and sustainability. Involving the communities in some aspects of the amnesty will not only give members a sense of belonging and ownership, it will create room for forgiveness and reconciliation between ex-combatants and the communities. Community members that lost sources of livelihood should have a place in the economic and other forms of empowerment given to ex-combatants. It could be free education for all, capital for small-scale enterprises, opening skill acquisition centres for youths and women, among others. Also, Families that lost their bread winners should be adequately catered for and compensated. Children who have been made orphans, women who lost their husbands and men that lost their wives and other loved ones should be catered for and not left out of the amnesty program. A home grown model of amnesty peculiar to the Nigerian situation could be developed to cater for all stake holders in the conflict.

Additionally, the communities should be made habitable and safe for the repentant insurgents and victims of the insurgency to return to. Government needs to do more on this aspect to enable those that have been driven out of their places of abode to return and have a normal and fulfilling life that they deserve. Schools, hospitals, police stations, places of worship, markets e.t.c that were destroyed should be rebuilt for the displaced persons to have something to return to. The Reconciliation phase of the DDDR should engage the repentant insurgents in rebuilding the destroyed infrastructures as part penitence for the crimes they committed in the past. Security in the rebuilt places should be top notch for both the repentant Boko Haram fighters and other members of the community. The repentant insurgents should be employed as local guides of the communities. Their knowledge of the mood of operations of Boko Haram can be of tremendous value in securing the communities from threats and attacks of the dreaded Boko Haram sect in future.

Similarly, there is need to build strong institutions, good amenities and infrastructures that gives every Nigerian citizen a sense of belonging. Since terrorist groups are known for providing sense of belonging to disgruntled, disenfranchised and marginalized individuals in order to lure them into joining them. This should not only be done in the North-East but the entire country to promote peace, effective governance, justice and comprehensive security for all and sundry. Rule of law should also be adhered to and all crimes should be punished irrespective of tribe, religion, political affiliation or region of the perpetrators. Putting these in place will restore

citizens hope in the country which could in turn deter them from joining illicit sects that are out to destroy the image, people and resources of the country.

Lastly, there is the need to address the factors that ushered in Boko Haram insurgency which cannot be over emphasized. Government at all levels needs to create meaningful job opportunities, sensitize religious teachings and put mechanisms in place to reduce poverty. A happy and gainfully employed person is less likely to join such groups while individuals without jobs or other forms of support are more likely to Boko Haram sect.

### **Conclusion**

The amnesty granted to Boko Haram insurgents by the administration of President Muhammad Buhari is an indication of Nigerian government's commitment to end insurgency in the North-East region. However, the structure, admission process into rehabilitation camps and implementation patterns of the programs have made it difficult for the program to achieve its set goals and objectives after five years of existence. More so, the program is not sustainable due to the continuous willful and forceful recruitment of new members into the sect to replace the combatants that were killed and others that embraced the government's amnesty program. Without properly addressing the fundamental issues such as radical religious ideologies, poverty, unemployment, injustice e.t.c that led to the insurgency, the amnesty program will remain an endless unsustainable cycle of rehabilitation for insurgents. Community inclusion in amnesty program also has the potential to increase the chances of its success and sustainability. Having a defined plan for communities affected by Boko Haram insurgency and their inclusion in the program is panacea for its success.

This could be through Compensation plans for victims of the insurgency or known relatives of these whose lives were lost as a result of the insurgency. Genuinely seeking forgiveness from affected communities can also make them more receptive to rehabilitated ex-combatants thereby increasing the chances of a successful amnesty program.

For the foregoing reasons, the amnesty programs needs a more comprehensive screening process that will ensure only members from the targeted group are admitted in the camps, the implementation of the de-radicalization processes needs to be broader, there should be more commitment in reconciling ex-combatants and the host communities, religious extremism and other factors that is responsible for the spread and growth of Boko Haram ideology should be quickly addressed in order for the amnesty to succeed.

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