

# Contemporary Insecurity/Insurgency And The Issue Of Food Crisis In North-Eastern Nigeria: An Alternative View

Dr Lawan Jafaru Tahir

Yobe State University, Department of History

*Abstract: This research work focuses on current problem of food insecurity and crisis in the North-Eastern Nigeria which has been devastated by the activities of Boko Haram insurgency in the last ten years. In Borno State, where the crisis emanated, out of 27 Local Governments Areas, 10 have been displaced and are currently at the mercy of the government being caged in the IDP camps. The overall effect of this catastrophe is absent of complete productivity and means of survival in the region. Farms were abandoned, markets were closed down, roads were blocked and chances of survival in the rural areas were minimal due to the frequent attacks carried out by the insurgents. However, naturally the outcome of this phenomenon is, but the shortages of foods, and other security of survival. This paper examines the current difficult situation of food security where a survey was carried out and come up with reality on ground regarding food security. A survey with a data of four-year prices of some locally produce foodstuffs have presented in is an indication that the people in the region are facing serious economic crisis. Unless measure is taken on the situation, there is tendency for the food to become unobtainable looking at the current prices that keeps shooting annually due to the insurgency crisis. People should go back to the farm and volume of production must be increase to carter for the high level of population of the region.*

*Keynotes: Food, Security, Insurgency, Hunger, Boko Haram*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The history of food crisis in the world is as old as the world itself. Human societies have been battling the issue ever since the development of societies over time. Because, human institution as well as political institution are devised and developed to carter for the need of man that arouse particularly food in the course of his existence. In fact, food is the overall source and security of human existence.

This work intends to examine the crisis of present food security in North-Eastern Nigeria, a region that have been engulfed by the activities of Boko Haram (BH) insurgency and Fulani Herdsmen for more than a decade. North-Eastern region was known to have achieved greatness in terms of productivity in food supply other human development needs particularly when one look at its position bordering with two west African Countries and one Central African Country: Republic of Chad, Niger republic and Cameroun. The

population of the region as at 2006 preliminary census result was about 18,984,299.

The emergence of terrorist religious group who vehemently opposes the western style of education and the nagging Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis around Taraba area have created serious shortages of food in the last ten years. Farmers were driven out of their land and forced to flee into the urban area in search of security. The volume of production and supply therefore has been drastically reduced to the minimum level which naturally rendered the region helpless and devastated. People could no longer sustain the simple subsistence farming for house consumption not to talk of larger production for market purposes. This work therefore intends to examine the extent of food insecurity in the region, how the current crisis affected the human societies and how far government can go to surmount the issue. It should be noted that more than 70% of the population in the region are farmers.

Because of the insecurity, majority of them have now been rendered homeless, taking shelter in the Internally Displaced Persons camps (IDPs). Their food security is now in the hands of government and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is fascinating to note that the crisis has virtually led to the total collapse of all economic institutions in the region despite the intervention of Joint Task Force security head by the Nigerian army since 2010.

This research shall try and carry out a survey on how this particular phenomenon that crippled all the development aspects of the region from 2009 to date with special emphasis on the crisis of food security which today has become terrible situation in and within the North-Eastern region. More importantly, attention and emphasis must be given to synergy between government and food producers at the local level through industrial growth, small scale businesses and even partnership to enable the society to be self-reliant and productive like other developing economies of the world.

The research also intends to come up with the level of the food shortages in the region by comparing the volume of food supply in some areas prior to this crisis and how the supply drastically dropped with the activities of the insurgents in the region. At the end, the outcome of the work shall come up with possible measures to tackle the situation in the future.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The data for this paper is based on the fieldwork carried out in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State which the melting point of the insurgency, through our research assistants who are well acquainted with the state. They served as informants, and through them this research work was able to identify and established contacts with other people. The methodology used to gather information included in-depth interviews with stakeholders such as the security agents, university lecturers, farmers both in IDP camps and those who are still active, petty trader/artisans, government officials as well as religious leaders. A total number of 53 people were interviewed. Most of the interviews were conducted in confidential manner and as the time of writing this article, the security challenges and threats are still prevalent in the town. All interviews were recorded on audio-tapes and later transcribed for purpose of data analysis. The article was also complemented by field notes taken at the time of interviews.

The elite interviewed spoke at the intellectual level and with strong conviction about the threats of Boko Haram activities in respect to food security in the state, while farmers and petty trader/artisans even though they could not effectively communicate in English language, they however understood the security challenges posed by BH sect with regards to the same issue. Also, with the help of our research assistant, 400 survey Questionnaires were administered to the people who were randomly selected in the r

levant towns of the state. Only 222 questionnaires were returned and analyzed to generate data for this paper. These methods were complemented by observation and secondary information sourced from news, journals and internet materials.

## SCOPE

This work covers the problems of food security in the North-East region of Nigeria and specifically centred the discussion on Maiduguri metropolis which is the melting pot of the insurgency crisis. The research mainly concentrated on the food security crisis and its causes in the region. Most of the analysis hammered on the local food produced in the area which serves as almost 80% of type of food the people depends on for their survival. However the work took a case study of four-year food commodities supply analysis with variance in the fluctuation of prices.

## III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TERM FOOD SECURITY

Food security simply refers to opportunity to cultivate food items, accessibility to cultivate land to produce food by the people at any given time. On the other hand, it is a situation where society can be able to afford and purchase food needed for their well-being

Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), opined that food security can be achieved by ensuring adequate food supply in terms of quantity, quality and variety of food; optimize stability inflow of supplies and secure sustainable access to availability by those who need them (Food Security Policy Brief, 2006).

Also during the World Food Summit (1996), it is generally defined as: "when all people at all times, have physically and economically access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs food preferences for an active healthy life."

But there some situation or circumstances that can caused setback to food security at any given time. These include natural disaster, conflict and terrorist activities etc.

Historically, the world had witnessed several food crisis and insecurity. Some societies had managed to take precautions before it affects the security of the people, while others couldn't overcome the situation because of some either natural or artificial circumstances.

Way back to the BC2000, during the era of prophet Joseph, Egypt had witnessed food crisis which forced the government to established reservoir for the emergency period. For almost seven years, the people of Alexandria went through hell until much later the situation was surmounted. (Quran: V:12Ch:46-48)

However, security crisis has become very common in the world today. Almost two third of the global nations are today facing crisis of insecurity in one way or the other. Thus the impacts of insecurity are multidimensional in nature, but most of the related literature to this research focused on physical issues. (its effects on lives and properties) according to the review of those literature, the concentration on the implication of food security as a result of the North-Eastern Nigeria insurgency caused by Boko Haram is indeed very scanty.

It is generally believed every crisis if not managed could grow and matured into full scale conflict, which shall be compounded by the element around it, and gradually give birth to political and economic instability which subsequently

entangled the people involved into general insecurity and poverty.

The above description is what aptly defined Boko Haram crisis which emanated since 2009. This research work thus look into the activities of those Islamic militants and the consequences of their activities on the food security in the North-East region, especially access to the land availability and cultivation, with special reference to Maiduguri the centre of the crisis.

The major problems and question asked by this work are: What was the factor behind this food insecurity threat make that posed serious challenge to people? For more than seven years, majority of the farmers in the region cannot cultivate their land because of the insecurity surrounding their communities despite the military intervention why? For how long shall the people continue to remain as Internally Displaced Persons? What could be the solution to the current food crisis and insecurity in the region? It is clear that the Volumes of supply of food has drastically go down with the crisis, is there an alternative measures to revive the old legacy so as to overcome the shortages and food crisis? If yes what are the ways forward? It is against these questions, an analysis shall be carried out to bring into light by assessing the situation using research methodology as tool of establishing the fact and way forward.

#### IV. CAUSES OF FOOD CRISIS IN NORTH-EASTERN REGION

Before 2009, Maiduguri the capital city of Borno state was the centre for the supply of food to all places surrounding the state as well as the neighboring countries of Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic and Republic of Niger. The true reality is that, 70% of the Maiduguri people and its surroundings are farmers. Thus they relied heavily on what they annually produce in terms of both subsistence and commercial purposes. Three markets in the metropolis: Baga fish market, Gomboru market and Monday market are the major commercial centres of the town.

Unlike in other places where commercial activities reached its highest volume on weekly basis or fortnightly, these markets supply basic commodities on daily basis because of the general high demands. However with the advent of Boko Haram insurgency, and the concurrent attacks and counter-attacks between the militants and security personnel, almost all commercial centres in the city were shut down for quite sometimes. One informant narrates:

*“Between 2011 and 2015, which was the hardest time for the marketers in Maiduguri, the melting pots of the commercial activities has now turned to a mere shadow of its former self.”*

It is of great significance to note that, more than 80% of the data collected in this research are of the view that among all the development sectors affected by the insurgency, food security featured top. Furthermore, for instance, previous study reveals that prior to insurgency, annual grain flow between Maiduguri and her trade partners was 294,940 tons, but with the emergence of Boko Haram militants, it was

revealed that flow of grain decrease to 94,500 tons by 2nd quarters of 2014. (AGI:2014)

Also according to World Bank report 2016, among the 27 grazing reserve areas in the state, which include lakes, river bank, orchards, about 16 areas have been either destroyed, contaminated or poised. (Awodolo: 2015) According to United Nations latest report, not less than \$5.9 billion properties were destroyed. And more than three million persons were displaced. Equally, no fewer than two million were killed and about 470,000 livestock were killed or stolen. Also this research finding reveals more 75% of the youth in Maiduguri have relied on government because they lack capital to sustain themselves or to be self-reliant in terms of Business technical practice. (S Shettima: 2018)

However, from the field survey and data collected during this research, below are some of the factors that posed serious threat to food crisis in the region.

#### A. ABANDONED FARMLAND AND COMMERCIAL CENTRES

With the climax of the fight against Boko Haram in almost all the length and breadth of the North-East region, several villages and other rural communities were shattered and families scattered without traces in many cases. It was estimated many 5000 hectre of land have been abandoned in Northern Maiduguri along around Monguno, Baga, Gomboru, Mafa, Abadam, Magumeri, Nganzai etc. One central factor argued in the escalation of this crisis is human right violation by the Nigeria security. Their inability to differentiate between insurgents and innocent farmers led to the mass flee of the villagers to abandon their farms. And this had caused the larger society significant reduction in the volume of food production capacity.

#### B. URBAN-RURAL MIGRATION

With the continue and merciless attacks and killings of people by the Boko Haram, there was mass movement of people or migration from more than 50% of the major towns especially northern Borno and even some neighboring countries into the urban cities of the region particularly Maiduguri the capital of Borno state. By the end of 2016, the estimated number of Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) had reached 1,434,149, which is said to be the highest in the Northern part of the country. However, there are total number of 36 IDPs camps within the city of Maiduguri and 16 camps outside the city. The number of IDPs under the control of the Borno state government reached about 130,000 while outside the state reached about 40,000(NEMA: Premium times: 2016)

#### C. CLOSURES OF MARKET

If there were very few that remain in the village on their farmland, equally there had not been opportunity for them to carry out any transaction because majority of the commercial meeting points were closed down by the security personnel due to incessant attacks by the Boko Haram. To Put it more clearly, the people in Maiduguri may no longer be able to afford the minimum dietary energy requirement and satisfying

their hunger have been also jeopardized as consequences of social security. Indeed, the study revealed that most shops were under lock in the three major markets in Maiduguri, which is an indication of the destruction of most agro businesses. Major Markets, such as Monday market, Gomboru, Baga, Custom markets, and even cattle market like Kasuwan shanu were all scattered. Economic activities therefore witnessed a serious setback and billions of investment went under the bridge. The consequences were inability of the people to be self-reliant as thousand relied on this commercial activities to survive. (Effects: hunger, starvation, poverty, increase crime etc).

#### D. BLOCKAGE AND HIKE IN TRANSPORTATION FARE

Another very complicated situation that further compounded the food crisis in the Boko Haram ravaged area is closure of some important commercial roads that link various places to the main centre. For instance apart from Maiduguri-Damaturu high way, all other incoming roads to the city had been closed by security personnel due to constant attack. For almost five to six years, there was only one exit to Maiduguri, (Kano Road) and this make it difficult for marketers to patronize the city, and thus scarcity and inflation is inevitable. The overall analysis hammered on the prolong journey to the city ultimately make transportation fare to summersault. For instance, back in 2016, to transport 40 basket of tomatoes and pepper from Biu to Gomboru market in Maiduguri amount to 9000 naira. By 2016 it reached 14,000 and by 2017 and 2018 the suppliers have to pay up to 19,000. One informant of this research said currently transportation of such goods attracts 25,000 which indirectly and finally shall fall on the local consumer. Such high prices of transportation of goods to the city had immensely contributed to the inflation of foodstuffs.

#### E. POPULATION INCREASE

Population had increased rapidly with the movement of people into the city because of the insecurity. According to Maiduguri, Nigeria Metro Area Population, prior to the emergence of Boko Haram crisis, the entire population of Maiduguri metropolitan was estimated to have a population 644,000 about 1.42 growth rate, by 2019, it is nearly to a million that is almost 3.0 growth rate due to the mass influx of displaced persons from other parts of the state, affected by the insurgency. Furthermore, according to State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the entire population of Bama Local Government was estimated to be 260,000 which were forced to moved to Maiduguri when the town became inhabitable because of Boko Haram activities. Also about 100,000 resident of Marte Local Government also moved to Maiduguri. This indicates the high demand of consumption of food in the city which automatically superseded the supply capacity, because the producer has now become the consumer. 80% of the IDPs who were initially local producer have now resorted to dependency on the goodwill of national and international donors. Therefore the increase in the food consumption and the decrease in the production is a natural

law of food crisis and insecurity unless overcome. Thus what appeared to be the danger signal of the situation is how annually prices of foodstuffs keep shooting. Below table indicates how the prices of locally produce food annually multiply in Naira currency per bag.

S/N	Locally produce Food Items	PRICE (2017)	PRICE (2018)	PRICE (2019)	PRICE (2020)
1	Millet 40kg	#9,500	#12,000	#17,000	#22,000
2	G/Corn 40kg	#7,600	#10,000	#15,000	#21,000
3	Maize 40kg	#15,000	#16,500	#18,000	#28,500
4	Local Rice 40kg	#24,000	#28,000	#35,000	#48,000
5	Beans 40kg	#26,000	#30,000	#35,000	#56,000
6	Sesame 40kg	#40,000	#41,000	#40,000	#45,000
7	Wheat 40kg	#15,000	#22,000	#24,000	#28,000
8	Onion 40kg	#15,000	#16,500	#18,000	#28,500
9	Tomatoes 40kg	#5000	#7000	#12,000	#22,000
10	Pepper 40kg	#3000	#4500	#8000	#17,000
11	Sweet Potatoes 40kg	#5000	#6,500	#8000	#14,000
12	Yam per bowl 100 pieces	65,000	68,000	83,000	115,000
13	Groundnut 40kg	38,000	40,000	45,000	60,000

Source: Author's fieldwork (2021)

Table 1: List of Price of foodstuffs in Maiduguri from 2018 to 2020 showing how annually the price multiplied

#### V. IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF FOOD CRISIS IN NORTH-EAST REGION

The availability of food which is strongly connected to cultivation of crops as well as breeding of live stocks has considerably decline due to activities of BH, creating a situation of food scarcity. From the above table and research carried out, it clearly show the possibility of food crisis in Maiduguri or North-East in general is quite inevitable, particularly if the activities of the BH intensifies. The study shows that the cultivation of crops, a critical aspect of food security, is gravely under threat given low cultivation of crops as a result of BH atrocities.

This fact has also affects availability/supply, accessibility and affordability of food items in the area. As indicated by respondents, supplies of food are increasingly hampered by many road blocks put in place by security personnel as well as hike in prices of transport and risk of transporting farm products to the markets in Maiduguri. The study shows that the hike in transportation of farm produce has affected the prices of food items considerably (see table 1 above) and affects the purchasing power of the people.

#### VI. WAY FORWARD

By the above research, the people of Maiduguri and its environs may no longer be able to afford the minimum dietary energy requirement for the purpose of overcoming their hunger, so long as the crisis continue and food security measure were not taken. With closure of markets and shattered

farmland, hazardous highways to the town, inaccessible commercial routes, corruption and human right abuse by the security personnel, Boko Haram merciless attacks, and above all general psychological fear instilled in the minds of the rural areas people, are all combine factors that could make it difficult for agro business to go back to the shining days. An example of such compounded situation is the indiscriminate number of check points mounted along the way. For instance, study reveals along Potiskum and Maiduguri highway, there are about 35 to 39 different security personnel check points. The level of bribes taking place is enough to create artificial inflation and increase in the price of basic foodstuffs. How few suggestions are forwarded for the situation to be arrested before it went out of control.

- ✓ There should be full effort to restore and tackle security situation in the region. Abandoned agricultural area must be bring back to life. For instance activities at the Border of Chad such as Doron Baga, Maina soro, Baga town should be fully restored economically. Major towns in Northern part of Borno such Monguno, Mafa, Magumeri etc that have been among the major suppliers of food to the main market should be also brought back to action.
- ✓ People must to go back to farm and other businesses without fear of insecurity. According to this research not less than 2700 hectre of land have been abandoned in every 15 major towns that were rendered displaced and homeless.
- ✓ Government and Non-Governmental Organizations should intervene into areas of priority not unnecessary budgets and emphasis on non-priority areas. There should be synergy between NGOs and the Local Governments at the grassroots levels with the view to identify some of the vital areas of concern on the food crisis.
- ✓ Full re-resettlement of the displaced persons back to their rural areas is necessary in this alternative. United Nations must come into the matter to intervene and reshape the future of the war victims and introduce relevant agricultural programmes with the view to overcome the crisis of food shortage and support farmers in boosting their morale to produce enough food.
- ✓ A policy of buy and stored from the farmers by the government is fundamental at this critical moment. What has been produced and taken to the market by the farmers should be bought by the government on reasonable and encouraging price and sell it to the people at affordable price. This shall ginger the farmers to go back to farm fully and with zeal to produce large quantity of food. In this way the situation can be brought under control.

## VII. CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the research, it should be noted that food crisis and security is now a global issue to be addressed. The North-East region under the current crisis of Boko Haram insurgency has several challenges. From the foregone above research, the prices of locally produce foodstuffs is a clear manifestation of the danger posed by the current insecurity. The prices on the table displayed shows how foodstuffs keeps shooting on annual basis which is an indication if not tackled

shall wallow the whole region into serious shortage of food and thus hunger and other related calamity may further befall the area with much more poverty at maximum capacity. Among the areas identified as the solution to this crisis include: restoration of security for people to go back to farm and other businesses without fear of insecurity, government and non-governmental organizations intervention into areas of priority not unnecessary budgets and emphasis on non-priority areas, full re-resettlement of the displaced persons back to their rural areas, United Nations intervention in reshaping the future of the war victims and relevant agricultural programmes with clear target to support farmers in boosting their morale to produce enough food. If all shall be done the issue could be tackled however little.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Saheed M, and Isa E. (2017) The challenges of food security in Nigeria. Open access Library Journal Vol 4 ISSN: 2355-4705
- [2] Jacob O. I. (2013), Food Security in Nigeria: Way Forward. An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia Vol. 7 (4) Serial no 31 ISSN:2070-0083
- [3] A note on slavery, seclusion and agrarian change in Northern Nigeria. (Journal of African history 1989) Cambridge university press
- [4] F. Shaw, (2010), Economic Resources of Northern Nigeria. Cambridge University Press. (Cambridge Books online)
- [5] F. Tyron, (2013) The process of Agricultural Modernization in Northern Nigeria. An over determined analysis. UK Published by ProQuest UMI Dissertation.
- [6] G. K. Helleiner, (1966), Peasant Agriculture, Government, and Economic growth in Nigeria. Publishers Richard D. Irwin INC Hoomwood, Illinois USA.
- [7] M. Waziri, (2008) Colonial Export: Trade of Borno Province Northern Nigeria; 1902 - 1945. Apami Publishers Kaduna, Nigeria.
- [8] J, S. Hogendorn, ((1978), Nigeria Groundnut Export: Origin and Early Development. Nigeria ABU Press Samaru Zaria.
- [9] J C. Well (1974) Agricultural Policy and Economic Growth in Nigeria 1962 - 1968. Oxford Press Ibadan, Nigeria.
- [10] Uadiale, M. (2012), Implication of the Political and Economic Factors in the rise of Boko Haram Insurgence in Nigeria. Published in Internal Journal of Advance Legal studies Lagos Nigeria
- [11] Yahya O. I. (2004), Religious Crises and Social Disruption in North-Eastern Nigeria. Loud Books Publishers Ibadan.
- [12] Ojo E. O. (2012), Food Security in Nigeria: an overview. European Journal of Sustainable Development. Vol 2. ISSN: 22399-5938
- [13] Romanus O, Evans O, and Ese U. (2018), Food Security, Institutional Frame work and Technology: Examining the nexus in Nigeria Using ARDL Approach. Journal list Bentham Open Access.

[14]Amala G. M, Kenchukwu O. and Olisa D. (2016)  
Achieving Sustainable Food Security in Nigeria:

Challenges and Way Forward. Published in Journal of  
African Development Issues. ISSN: 2449-075

IJIRAS