



# Trafficking and the Boko Haram Conflict: The Not So Good, the Bad, and the Outright Ugly

Eleanor Ann Nwadinobi

## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Boko Haram .....	3
Boko Haram and Trafficking .....	5
Chibok Girls' Abductions .....	8
Dapchi Girls' Abduction .....	9
The Stigma Associated with Trafficking .....	9
Trafficking and Interrupted Access to Education .....	10
Female Suicide Bombers .....	11
Importance of the Women Peace and Security Agenda in the Prevention of Trafficking .....	12
Role of the Media and Trafficking .....	13
Role of Female Hunters .....	13
National Response to Trafficking .....	14
Conclusion .....	15
Recommendations .....	16
References .....	17

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the situation affecting women and girls who are trafficked within the Boko Haram conflict. It navigates the entrenched cultural and traditional norms existing in the geographical area and how the conflict poses a double jeopardy for women and girls who are already marginalized. The added element of trafficking as another author calls it builds the arsenal of Boko Haram. This crisis within a crisis looks at the nexus between trafficking, and the Boko Haram conflict is categorized as the “not so good,” the “bad,” and the “outright ugly.” The abductions of the Chibok and the Dapchi girls are examples which are discussed, as well as the stigma that survivors undergo. The women, peace, and

---

E. A. Nwadinobi (✉)

Widows Development Organisation (WiDO), Abuja, Nigeria

e-mail: [elenwad@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:elenwad@yahoo.co.uk)

security agenda, the role of the media, and the role of female hunters provide avenues for addressing the issue. The paper ends with a set of recommendations.

---

**Keywords**

Boko Haram · Nigeria · Trafficking · Chibok

---

## Introduction

From the fifteenth through to the nineteenth century, over 3.5 million African slaves were transported across the Atlantic to Europe, North and South America, and the Caribbean by the Europeans who had expanded and colonized those territories (Harvard Divinity School 2018). This is what is now known as the transatlantic slave trade. Slaves were provided by local rulers and traders, among others, and in exchange, they were given guns, gunpowder, rum, cloth, horses, etc. These slaves were used individually for domestic slavery or in larger groups. Domestic slaves worked mostly in shops and households, whereas larger numbers of slaves were employed to work on farms. The slave trade was abolished in the nineteenth century; however, it still continues in the form of human trafficking or modern-day slavery.

According to the United Nations definition, human trafficking is the acquisition of people through means of force, fraud, or deception, with the intention of exploitation (Wilken 2017).

The paper uses the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) definition of trafficking (UNODC 2018).

Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

The UN Protocol on Trafficking defines trafficking in humans as “all acts related to recruitment, transport, sale or purchase of individuals through force, fraud or other coercive means, for the purpose of exploitation” (Caritas Nigeria 2018). On the basis of the definition given in the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, it is evident that trafficking in persons has three constituent elements:

### **The Act** (what is done)

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons

### **The Means** (how it is done)

Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim

### **The Purpose** (why it is done)

For the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or similar practices, and the removal of organs.

Individuals are trafficked locally, regionally, and internationally across land borders, across seas, and by air. Difficulty in defending Nigeria's extended borders has allowed traffickers and pimps, as well as groups like Boko Haram, to exploit this weakness and cross borders unimpeded (Petal 2014). 1,479 illegal borders exist in Nigeria, which shares about 773 km border with Benin Republic, about 87 km with Chad, and a stretch of 1,049 km with Niger Republic and 1,690 km with Cameroon (<http://nationaldailyng.com/porosity-of-border-why-nigeria-must-tighten-border-security/>).

Nigeria is regarded as a "source, transit, and destination country." Nigeria is a source country because a number of the trafficked people come from different parts of the country. It is also a transit country, as this is where trafficked women and girls pass through and are eventually distributed to other countries. It is a destination country; in some cases, it is the end of the road for trafficked victims: "Trafficked Nigerian women and children are recruited from rural areas within the country's borders — women and girls for involuntary domestic servitude and forced commercial sexual exploitation, and boys for forced labour in street vending, domestic servitude, mining, and begging" (Osimen et al. 2014). Women and children usually bear the brunt of trafficking and are exported externally and internally for purely economic reasons. Internal trafficking involves the movement of individuals from local regions to bigger cities, i.e., for prostitution and child labor (domestic work and hawking). The root causes of trafficking in Nigeria include widespread poverty, violent conflict, and the desire to migrate to study/work/live in a better environment. Human traffickers adopt various methods to lure individuals into captivity. These methods include drugging, kidnapping, coercing with the promise of a better future, and offers of better opportunities for education or jobs.

Some of the external trafficking routes are better known than others. Recently, 26 Nigerian girls and women were reportedly sexually abused and murdered while trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. Most of the dead victims are teenagers aged 14–18 (Toromade 2017). In the account of a journalist, Ben Tuab, in 2016 alone, 11,000 Nigerian women and girls were trafficked. The route of trafficked girls is from Benin in Edo State, northward to Niger and Libya and onto boats across the Mediterranean to end up in Italy (Taub 2017).

---

## Boko Haram

In 2005, a group emerged calling itself Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lida'awati Wal Jihad (JAS), translated as People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad.

Initially, their motive was to protest unemployment and Western influence of universities. It was headed by a young cleric Mohammed Yusuf who preached that the leaders who benefitted from Western education in northeast of Nigeria were

corrupt. In July 2009, Mohammed Yusuf died while in police custody in Maiduguri, and his deputy, Shekau, emerged as his successor. More recently, they have become more militant and criminal. (Barna 2014)

The group has since morphed and is currently split into at least two distinct groups: JAS headed by Abubakar Shekau and Wilayat al Islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah (Islamic State West Africa or ISWA) headed by Abu Musab al-Barnawi in 2016 (Gender Assessment of Northeastern Nigeria conducted for Managing Conflict in North East Nigeria (MCN)). JAS is now popularly called Boko Haram meaning “books are forbidden or western education is forbidden.”

The attack on non-believers draws from the “al-Wala wal-Bara” doctrine, which is portrayed as a defensive policy. All Muslims must fight to defend themselves and retaliate against the Kuffar (non-believer), who always instigate war (<http://acdemocracy.org/islam-and-the-other-the-al-wala-wal-bara-doctrine/>).

Boko Haram has robbed the northeast of Nigeria of its security and stability. Ironically, one of the northeastern states and most affected by Boko Haram was previously known as the “Home of Peace.” Deep-rooted patriarchy, rates of child marriage, literacy among girls, and women in positions of power are far worse than in the rest of Nigeria (Nwaubani 2017).

The Boko Haram sect has caused societal damage by negatively affecting millions of people by “daily killings, bombings, abductions, looting and burning,” and “schools, churches, mosques and other public buildings have been attacked and destroyed” (Amnesty International Nigeria 2015). The conflict has left in its wake fatalities, widows, acute food insecurity, widespread forced displacements, and insecurity.

According to the EU parliament, over 20, 000 people have been killed and more than two million displaced, including from neighboring countries, since Boko Haram began its attack; and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported in November 2017 that in Northeastern Nigeria, 8.5 million people were in need of lifesaving assistance and that 6.9 million people were targeted for humanitarian assistance in 2017, whereas the International Criminal Court (ICC) has stated that there are reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute have been committed in Nigeria by Boko Haram, including murder and persecution (European Parliament resolution on Nigeria (2018/2513(RSP))The European Parliament).

The conflict has largely been driven by a failure of governance as well as nonadherence to existing laws and policies. The lethal cocktail of violent conflict has a mixture of unaddressed root causes, exclusion, and poverty and conflict entrepreneurs. Conflict entrepreneurs are those who benefit in one way or the other from the conflict.

## Boko Haram and Trafficking

The Boko Haram conflict has affected communities in Northeastern Nigeria Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. Millions of people have suffered “daily killings, bombings, abductions, looting and burning,” and “schools, churches, mosques and other public buildings have been attacked and destroyed” (Amnesty International Nigeria 2015).

In the context of violent conflict, such as Boko Haram, human trafficking has become the preferred trade of terrorists as it viewed as more profitable economically than any other trade. “Human trafficking is an extremely profitable industry that not only generates financial revenue, but also provides fighting power, helps terrorists vanquish the enemy, and destroys communities” (Wilken 2017).

The type of trafficking that occurred in the Boko Haram conflict fits the three constituent elements of trafficking: (1) **The Act** with the harboring or receipt of persons; (Wilken 2017) **The Means** with abductions; and (UNODC 2018) **The Purpose** with sexual exploitation, forced labor, or slavery or similar practices.

The trafficking routes can however not be categorized into distinct geographies such as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims. In the context of conflict, these are blurred into one another. What is more obvious is the trafficking style and the destination.

The Boko Haram prototype of trafficking is the spectrum of women and girls most times forcibly married in a hybrid type of marriage or coerced, forced, or pressured because the sect used marriage as a simple way of recruiting women as wives, sex slaves, and even suicide bombers.

The unconventional war of Boko Haram, “the bad,” brought a new dimension of trafficking where the trafficked were forcefully married or abducted and married to Boko Haram terrorists.

According to a human watch report, Nigeria is seen as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking (Abubakar 2016). This as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency intertwined with the poverty and the violent state of the nation. Trafficking of women and girls has risen since the introduction of the Boko Haram sect.

The recurrent Boko Haram attacks have led to a mass exodus of people across the country and to neighboring countries with a number of internally displaced person (IDP) camps springing up. Women and girls are obviously the most vulnerable and in some cases undergoing several layers of trauma. The first layer is the disruption of their lives which may already be one of marginalization and exclusion which exists in times of relative peace. The endemic inequalities include early marriage and lack of access to education and land. The next layer as a consequence of conflict includes abduction, sexual exploitation, and child widowhood.

The phenomenon of the “layered widow” is depicted in the personal testimony below with a child widow losing first her militant husband and later her peacetime husband.

Maryam Ali, now 17, was 14 years old and 5-month pregnant when she was abducted from Bama in Borno State and taken to the Sambisa Forest and married out to a Boko Haram militant.

“I am from Mayanti a village near Bama. When I got married about a year before my abduction, my husband took me to Bama where we were staying. During the attack on Bama, my husband escaped to Maiduguri because the militants were looking for men to kill. When they came to our house and met me alone, they took me away. Shortly after, I delivered my first child, I took in again for my militant husband,” she narrated.

“When my husband saw me with a child and another pregnancy, he fell down and died.” (Lillie 2014)

The plight of internally displaced girls is a continuum of the plight of the girl in the community with an additional layer of marginalization and vulnerability brought about by the situation of violent conflict, displacement, and survival of the fittest.

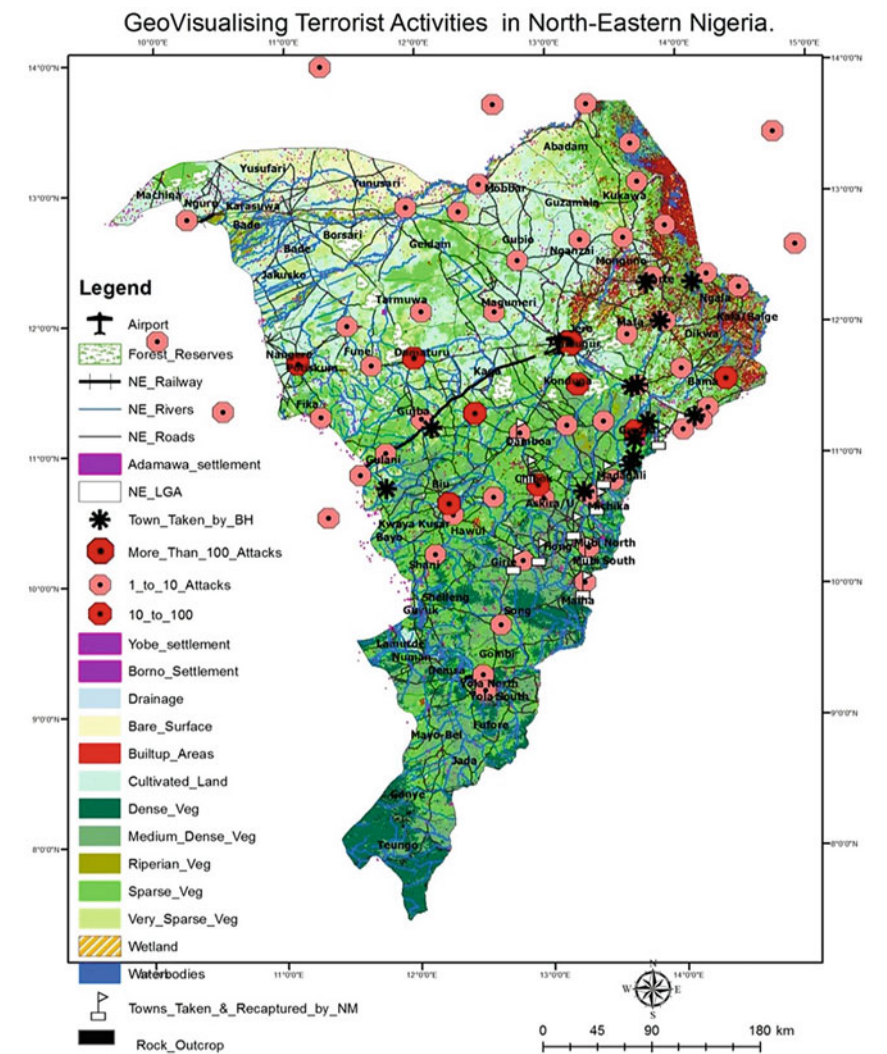
The rise of Boko Haram has also led to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) where women are either used as agents of terror or targets of terror. With the number of attacks growing, links have been drawn with the role of human trafficking and the operations of terrorist groups. “Human trafficking now serves three main purposes for terrorist groups: generating revenue, providing fighting power; and vanquishing the enemy. This is as trafficking intimidates populations and reduces resistance just as enslavement and rape of women were used as tools of war in the past” (Shelley 2018).

With IDPs lacking the basic amenities and poor camp conditions, they also become prey to human sex traffic workers who often paint a false picture of a better life abroad. In some cases, it is those who are meant to offer protection to the displaced, i.e., the military and police, that are often involved in the sexual exploitation of women and girls where sex is offered in exchange for food.

International human rights organizations have reported SGBV incidents. A Human Rights Watch report stated that Nigerian officials have raped at least 43 women and girls in the IDP camps (Reporters 2016). In a very recent report by Amnesty International released in May 2018, titled “‘They betrayed us’: Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved and detained in Nigeria,” the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) were alleged to have assisted in finding women for sex, for soldiers in the Bama Secondary School IDP camp. They were pressured or coerced in order to access food and other essentials. Young girls were systematically separated from their families and raped (<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4484152018ENGLISH.PDF>).

In an account by a 30-year-old woman from Bama, Maiduguri:

“A few weeks after soldiers transported us to the camp, near Maiduguri, one of the soldiers guarding us approached me for marriage. He used to bring food and clothes for me and my remaining four children, so I allowed him to have sex with me. He is a Hausa man from Gwoza. That is all I know about him. Two months later he just stopped coming. Then I realized I was pregnant. I feel so angry with him for deceiving me. When he was pretending to woo me he used to provide for me, but as soon as I agreed and we began having sex, his gifts began to reduce until he abandoned me. Now my situation is worse as the pregnancy makes me sick, and I have no one to help me care for my children.” (Human rights watch 2016)



**Fig. 1** Geospatial analysis of terrorist activities in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. (Courtesy presentation by the National Space Research and Development Agency)

The abductors’ enclave and destination of abducted women and girls were mostly in a wild conservation area called the Sambisa Forest. According to the report of the visit by the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement following a guided tour of the war zone with the Nigeria Air Force, the Sambisa general area is 60,000 Km<sup>2</sup> (Bring back our girls 2017) (Fig. 1).



## Chibok Girls' Abductions

“At least 2,000 women and girls have been abducted by Boko Haram since the start of 2014” (Amnesty International 2015). It is important to note that, before these major kidnapping events, news reports highlighted a number of rape and kidnap cases. “They (the militants) were doing it (raping her) almost on a daily basis,” the young girl, whose secondary school education was forced to end in her fourth year as a result of the kidnapping, said. “When one militant gets tired, another takes over (Obaji 2017).”

Trafficking associated with the Boko Haram conflict targeted especially young girls in schools. Not only did this traumatize them, but worse still, it discouraged the young girls and parents from sending their children and wards to school, especially boarding school. In Northern Nigeria where female enrollment in schools has been the lowest in the country, this constitutes the “not so good.”

The trend of mass abductions was brought to the fore on the international scene with the abduction on April 2014 of 276 girls from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, in Borno State.

The international outcry and outrage was made visible through the hashtag #bringbackourgirls. The Bring Back Our Girls movement organized daily sit-outs at the Unity Fountain in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. International public figures like Malala made a special visit to Nigeria to advocate for their release.

The good news is that some of the girls have returned or have been released. The first 57 escaped, followed by 3 who returned on their own and 21 whose release was negotiated in October 2016 and then another batch of 83 in May 2017. In January 2018, another Chibok girl was rescued. To date, it is presumed that 112 are still in captivity (Wikipedia.org).

The girls said they started documenting their ordeal a few months after the abduction when the terror group gave them exercise books to use during Koranic lessons. To hide the diaries from their captors, the girls would bury the notebooks in the ground or carry them in their underwear. The diaries were said to have been written by Adamu and her friend, Sarah Samuel – the authenticity of the book cannot be verified. According to one account, “They (the militants) were doing it (raping her) almost on a daily basis”; the young girl, whose secondary school education was forced to end in her fourth year as a result of the kidnapping, said “When one militant gets tired, another takes over (Obaji 2017).”

According to them, life in Sambisa involved regular beatings, Koranic lessons, domestic labor, and pressure to marry and convert. On another occasion, the militants gathered those girls who had refused to embrace Islam, brought out jerry cans purportedly filled with petrol, and threatened to burn them alive (Akinloye 2017).

One report also stated that the released girls said 61 of the 142 girls had married Boko Haram militants and 8 died during air strikes, 3 during childbirth, and 1 of an unknown cause.



The 21 Chibok girls recently released by Boko Haram terrorists have said they were not raped or abused during their stay in captivity, according to a source (Omojuwa 2016).

---

## Dapchi Girls' Abduction

In the course of writing this paper, a similar abduction to that of Chibok was reenacted.

On February 19, 2018, 110 schoolgirls aged 11–19 years were kidnapped from Government Girls Science and Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi, located in Bursari Local Government Area of Yobe State, in the northeast part of Nigeria. (The number was later confirmed as 113 by the Ministry of Information, Lai Mohammed.) Gunmen who were dressed in military fatigues and turbans arrived in Dapchi unchallenged and started firing indiscriminately shouting “Allahu Akbar” (“God is greatest”). The insurgents had attacked Government Girls Secondary School (GSS) Damaturu, GSS Mamudo, Federal Government College Buni Yadi, College of Agriculture Gujba, and GSTC Potiskum leaving scores of students dead and injured in the past (Marama 2018). One of the accounts of a school girl from Dapchi, Yobe State, Rakiya Adamu, SS2, who was among the lucky few who escaped on February 19, when dozens of her friends and schoolmates were kidnapped, said, “I will not go back to Dapchi again (Premium times 2018).”

Their return was even more sinister because it was fraught with controversy. Tomi Oladipo, the BBC African security correspondent in his analysis, said: “Boko Haram definitely got something in return for waltzing back into Dapchi and dropping off the girls.” The manner of their return raised issues around the Boko Haram their manner of kidnappings and negotiations and the feeding of the pattern that has the potential to perpetuate such occurrences.

---

## The Stigma Associated with Trafficking

The stigma associated with survivors of trafficking occurs at different levels. Girls returning from periods of abduction and forced marriage are stigmatized as wives of Boko Haram.

Boko Haram has forcefully married several of their abductors, some of them as young as 12 years old. These Boko Haram wives suffer additional layers of torture when their “husbands” are killed. The child widows when rescued are stigmatized as Boko Haram widows. These children carrying children are further stigmatized because their newborn babies are seen as having “bad blood (Toogood 2016).”

“Bad blood” means that these children are perceived to be tainted with the blood of Boko Haram and stand a chance of being ostracized, given fewer opportunities, and abandoned to a life on the streets. Women and girls are stigmatized or not trusted by fellow IDPs, security personnel, and their families.

With more women likely to be freed from Boko Haram or widowed as Nigeria's military strives to defeat the militants, experts say insults, rejection, and even violence toward them as they return to their communities could hinder efforts to repair the social fabric of a region splintered by Boko Haram. For some, the fear of losing the status they acquired by being with their abductors is real. "Only when you get married to a rich man or a man of authority, can you get that kind of power" (Nwaubani 2017).

---

## Trafficking and Interrupted Access to Education

The Boko Haram conflict presented the Nigerian state with an unconventional war like no other, with the ideology of Western education being forbidden. The education environment that was hitherto seen as a safe space especially for the girl child was breached by targeted attacks on schools. This was compounded by the fact that Northern Nigeria already had issues around poverty, inequality, and poor development indices including low girl child education. Education is traditionally seen as the greatest form of empowerment of an individual, and this has been eroded by the presence of a conflict that attacked the very foundations of the educational system.

In one account, a young lady whose education was interrupted said, "I had completed my secondary education waiting to get admission into a tertiary institution. They brought out N2, 000 (The equivalent of approximately 6 dollars) and gave to my father as my bride price and dragged me into their vehicle and zoomed off. I was in the forest with them moving from one camp to the other until I took in for my so-called husband, Bakura, from Alagarno. Bakura left me in one of the camps and went for an attack when I was pregnant for 8 months but he was killed in the attack." (Abubakar 2016)

During 2016, the UN documented nearly 500 attacks on schools or related education personnel in 18 of the 20 conflict countries (Human rights watch 2017).

Currently, in the northeast of Nigeria, all boarding schools closed. This has affected school attendance especially for those living at a distance from the schools and where protection on the way to school is lacking.

In the wake of the Dapchi school abductions, the Emergency Coordination Centre advocated for and achieved the signing of Nigeria of the Safe Schools Declaration on March 8, 2018 (Emergency coordination center. Women, Peace and Security-Gender Based Violence Fact Sheet).

Even after a conflict ends, it can take years to rebuild destroyed facilities and get the education system back on its feet – during which time whole cohorts of children are denied an education (O'Malley 2018).

## Female Suicide Bombers

According to Elizabeth Pearson, writing in the *International Business Times* in an October 16, 2014, article, the first attack by a female was carried out on the military barracks in Gombe in July 2014. According to Guilbert, female members of Boko Haram are almost as likely as men to be deployed as fighters in northeast Nigeria (Guilbert 2016).

Women are not usually considered a threat, and the recruitment of females would throw the government off their scent as they were used to an all-male terrorist group. Female followers and forced conscripts can circulate in government-controlled areas more easily, as spies, messengers, recruiters, and smugglers (International crisis 2016). The attacks by females have typically been against “soft targets,” such as markets, mosques, and bus depots, and have taken place in urban settings. Boko Haram, like other terrorist groups, has used women because they draw less attention and are less likely to be subjected to searches than men (Bloom 2016).

The spike in the use of suicide bombings constitutes the “outright ugly.” The attacks on soft targets rather than direct assaults using conventional weapons could also be evidence of the group’s dwindling resources, as reports of fighters riding horses rather than traveling in vehicles and utilizing weapons such as crude knives and machetes instead of guns seem to attest. According to one interview with a Nigerian soldier, the use of suicide bombers is a cheap and terrifying way to wage a war and also has the effect of sowing seeds of suspicion and fear among and between citizens, a tactic that furthers the group’s aim to unspool the thread of society. To be certain, in reports received from the field through the NSRP Observatory Platform as well as the P4P Map, over the course of late 2014 to the end of 2015, targets increasingly included mosques, churches, schools, petrol stations, markets, and, as noted in the beginning, IDP camps. (Confronting the Unthinkable: Suicide Bombers in Nigeria. The Complex Dimensions Behind Women and Children Suicide Bombers in Northern Nigeria, Fund for Peace, Patricia Taft and Kendall Lawrence.)

UNICEF states that between January and August 2017, 83 children were used as “human bombs,” 55 were girls, most often under 15 years old, 27 were boys, and 1 was a baby strapped to a girl. (Emergency coordination center. Women, Peace and Security-Gender Based Violence Fact Sheet) In 2005, the Security Council established a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to systematically monitor, document, and report on violations committed against children in situations of concern around the world (<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/>).

“They gave us N200 each which they said we should use to buy food for ourselves. It took us three days to come to Maiduguri on a motorcycle. We were directed by the sect members to detonate our explosives anywhere we saw any form of gathering (Dachen 2017).”

The Nigerian army revealed that some parents donate their daughters to the Boko Haram for suicide attacks. The Army in a statement by its spokesperson, Sani Usman, therefore warned such parents to desist forthwith. Mr. Usman said the appeal became necessary following revelations by some intercepted female suicide bombers during interrogations.

It was discovered that most of these hapless minors were ‘donated’ to the terrorist sect by their heartless and misguided parents and guardians, as part of their contribution to the perpetuation of the Boko Haram terrorists’ dastardly acts against the Nigerian society and humanity. (Ibrahim 2017)

---

## **Importance of the Women Peace and Security Agenda in the Prevention of Trafficking**

Nigeria is currently on her second-generation National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (2017–2020). The essence of a National Action Plan is to (Harvard Divinity School 2018) help implementers set priorities, coordinate action, and track progress; (Wilken 2017) prompt meaningful changes in behavior, policies, and funding; (UNODC 2018) create space for governments, multilateral institutions, and civil society to work together for greater impact; and (Caritas Nigeria 2018) provide civil society with a mechanism to hold governments accountable. (A review of Nigeria’s 1st National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2013–2016). Anna Parke, Amy Harrison, Eleanor Nwadinobi and Uchenna Nwokedi August 2017)

Other reinforcing resolutions and conventions provide the opportunity to strengthen the WPS agenda:

The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation 30, adopted October 31, 2013, provides for WPS reporting.

UN Security Council, Resolution 2242, adopted October 2015, calls for “the greater integration by Member States and the United Nations of their agendas on women, peace and security, counter-terrorism and countering-violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism.”

UN Security Council Resolution 2349, adopted by the Security Council on March 31, 2017,

Section 7 calls upon the countries of the region to prevent, criminalize, investigate, prosecute, and ensure accountability of those who engage in transnational organized crime, in particular in arms trafficking and trafficking in persons.

*In the words of the permanent representative of the UK to the UN, Amb. Matthew Rycroft, at the Security Council briefing on “Peace and Security in Africa” with the focus on Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo:*

It’s unacceptable that women continue to be so poorly represented in formal governance and peace processes when time after time studies show that women’s participation in these processes aids their ultimate success. (George 2017)

## Role of the Media and Trafficking

Media accounts of the happenings attempt to give us a true picture of the situation. It is the media that played a key role in the #bringbackourgirls campaign. The print media kept a daily count of the number of days that had passed since the Chibok girls had been abducted. Each day the number was updated in the print and electronic media.

Unlike regular bombings and shootings, tactics long used by the group, human trafficking poses a new kind of threat: everyone is a target for slavery and anyone can be morphed into a tool for Boko Haram to use in its efforts (Wilken 2017).

Conflict-sensitive reportage ensures that the narrative does not further drive the conflict. It was important for the media to provide information in a way that maintained the dignity of the victims and to avoid reprisal attacks. The narrative had to be sensitive to around labeling or stigmatizing of abductees of Boko Haram. These survivors now face intense stigma and in some cases brutal beatings, when they return to their communities, according to humanitarian groups. Some women who have escaped report psychological trauma and rejection by their communities despite the best efforts of religious leaders. Particularly for those who have been forcibly impregnated, reintegration is practically impossible (Bloom 2016).

Media also has a role to play in investigative journalism. With the Chibok and Dapchi incidents, there were conflicting reports followed by discrepancies in the numbers. The media at that time gave conflicting reports.

In a video, the leader of the Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, claimed responsibility for the abduction of over 200 Chibok school girls in Northeastern Nigeria and threatens “I will sell them off.” (Guardian 2014) This threat drew more attention to the reality of human trafficking and introduced an aspect of Boko Haram that had not previously been considered.

In a recent study, respondents agreed that the media enlightenment was useful in informing people about the dangers of associating with JAS and dissuading them from joining the sect. (Perceptions and experiences of children associated with armed groups in Northeastern Nigeria 2017 NSRP/UNICEF.)

The media is also what the terrorists feed on, as evidenced by the timing of their communications to coincide with countering the announcements by government. The announcements of containment by government are soon followed by an attack to inflict fear on the population or to refute the government narrative.

---

## Role of Female Hunters

In the case of Boko Haram and the trafficking of women and girls, the narrative usually focuses on their vulnerability and the ease with which they can be abducted. Little is said of the resilience of women and girls and their role in peacebuilding or as active participants in fighting off Boko Haram.

Female hunters are a part of security response to Boko Haram that includes the yan gora (Civilian Joint Task Force – CJTF), yan banga (vigilantes), and kungiyar

maharba (hunters). A recent study is looking at the perception that the civilian population are largely unanimous in their thinking that CJTF were courageous in standing up to the armed gang and largely responsible for the decimation of Boko Haram.

The CJTF members have however assumed a new status in the community of respect on the one side; some have taken it to the extreme and have become extortionate at checkpoints, violence against women, and indulging in drugs.

The concern is what will happen now that the conflict has died down since they are armed and are therefore more easily be used by politicians in the upcoming elections.

The presence of children associated with Boko Haram has largely been stopped due to the signing of an MOU with a commitment not to engage children ([https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018.06.CJTF-Report.Africa-Program.Web\\_pdf](https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018.06.CJTF-Report.Africa-Program.Web_pdf)).

The account of Bakari Gombi a hunter is fascinating. Bakari Gombi is one of only a handful of women involved, and she has become a heroine for hunters and local people alike. Her gallantry has won her the title “queen hunter.”

Like many in the rural regions of northeast Nigeria, Bakari Gombi is a Muslim but also believes in traditional spirits. One of her rituals is to douse fellow hunters with a secret potion to protect them from bullets. The 38-year-old leads a command of men aged 15–30 who communicate using sign language, animal sounds, and even birdsong.

“Boko Haram know me and fear me,” says Bakari Gombi whose band of hunters has rescued hundreds of men, women, and children (<http://www.thebusinessdispatch.com/meet-aisha-former-antelope-hunter-now-tracks-boko-haram/>).

---

## National Response to Trafficking

In an effort to curb the trafficking more broadly, the Nigerian Government has put in place an agency to address trafficking. Nongovernment organizations have also made an effort.

The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 otherwise known as VAPP Act.

A bill for an act to eliminate violence in private and public life; prohibit all forms of violence *sexual, psychological, domestic, and harmful traditional practices* and *discrimination* against persons; and to provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and punishment of offenders, 2015 (hb. 191).

The bill which among other things has varying punishment for rape (s1), female genital mutilation (S6), harmful widowhood practices (S15), violence by state actors (S 24).

Section 10 depriving a person of their liberty, Section 12 forced financial dependence, and Section 13 forced separation from family and friends, all resonates with trafficking.

Part IV section 44 of the VAPP act puts the onus for policing the act on the NAPTIP. “Part IV Regulatory body, section 44, “The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other related matters (NAPTIP)” is mandated to administer the provisions of the act and collaborate with relevant stakeholders including faith-based organisations”.

The anti-human trafficking women and children unit is a unit of Force Criminal Intelligence and Investigation Department (FCIID) of the Nigeria Police Force. It came into existence in 1994 following an upsurge in cases of trafficking in human beings. There are officers across all police formations and divisions currently headed by a Deputy Commissioner of Police. The key role of the anti-human trafficking unit is investigation and prosecution of cases of human trafficking, gender-based violence against women/children, and other related offenses. In addition, they are engaged in interception at airports and land borders of deportees and victims of human trafficking.

There have been efforts by civil society; these efforts are mostly targeted at the trafficking route which commences in Edo State of Nigeria, “routinely cited as the main area in Nigeria from where young women are trafficked,” efforts such as those of Titi Atiku-Abubakar, wife of the former vice-president of Nigeria. In 1999, she stood on her husband’s ascendancy to the office of vice-president to establish the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) (<http://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atjournal/article/view/64/62>). In addition, there is the initiative of the wife of the Edo State Governor, Eki Igbiniedion, the Idia Renaissance project which brought traffickers to book and was able to repatriate some of the girls. Surprisingly, parents were unhappy that their children were repatriated because things were difficult at home (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/05/horror-human-trafficking-edo/>). More recently, a nongovernmental organization, Media Campaign Against Human Trafficking (MECHAT), launched a film called *Desperate Journeys* on anti-trafficking in February 2018.

---

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the cultural vulnerabilities of women and girls which exist in relative peacetime have been made worse by the Boko Haram conflict. The development of a stabilization and recovery strategy that aims to create an enabling and safe environment and increase access to quality education will contribute to restoring confidence for trafficked girls to go back to school, thereby addressing this “not so good” phenomenon.

The presence of good governance, human rights, and dignity alongside addressing structural inequalities and marginalization of groups is the recipe for restoration of lasting peace. In the post-conflict phase, this will require sustained and coordinated peace building efforts, reconciliation, and the consolidation of resilience, thus addressing the “bad,” the unconventional warfare of Boko Haram.

The emergence of women and girls, especially the young girls among them as female suicide bombers, is considered to be the “outright ugly.” The different



theories are yet to be fully understood. These include the fact that they may have been coerced, used as human bombs, or made to believe that they are practicing the doctrine of “al-Wala wal-Bara” and targeting those they perceive to be unbelievers. Whichever it is, this trend can be addressed through effective implementation of legislation, policies, strategies, and practices which will need to be adopted to counter and prevent violent extremism.

---

## Recommendations

1. High political will is needed to prevent and respond to trafficking in the context of the Boko Haram conflict.

*“It means governments holding to account those who have committed these crimes; showing that there can be really no impunity and no escape; that the rule of law applies to everyone (George 2017).”*

This will include appropriate compensation and restitution, measures to counter the financing of terrorism, and keeping dialogue options open with abductors.

2. Community engagement with traditional institutions and leaders.

This will require the use of traditional media, social media, community radio, community announcers, songs, poems, art, and traditional folklore and drama.

3. Domestication and implementation of related Security Council resolutions.

Full implementation and funding of the NAP on WPS will address issues of trafficking which appear as a priority activity in all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security – survivors of trafficking in conflict should be part of prevention of conflict, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction.

However, this involves not only providing financial and coordinating oversight but is part of a much bigger project of political buy-in and strategic prioritization.

Civil society actors also have a key role to play in supporting NAP WPS implementation.

4. Making schools safe.

Schools should provide the incentive for enrollment, retention, and completion.

Security Council members should endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, an intergovernmental political commitment, to protect education in armed conflict and to avoid the use of schools for military purposes, Human Rights Watch said (Human rights watch 2017).

Young girls in a safe space feel safe to play games and can build their voices to make demands on society.

Life skills clubs for girls provide an opportunity to engage girls in productive past time provision of second chance options for dropouts.

5. Services for returnees of trafficking.

Services should be holistic providing opportunities for girls involvement in humanitarian aid.

Women and girls also have a key role to play in the rebuilding of a war ravage areas.

## References

- Harvard Divinity School. (2018). The Transatlantic Slave trade. Retrieved from <https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/transatlantic-slave-trade-nigeria>.
- Wilken, D. (2017) **Trafficking the Innocent: Building Boko Haram's Arsenal**. Retrieved from <https://www.projecttrafficked.org/single-post/2017/04/05/Trafficking-The-Innocent-Building-Boko-Harams-Arsenal>
- UNODC. (2018). *Human Trafficking*. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>
- Caritas Nigeria. (2018). Background. Retrieved from: <https://www.caritasnigeria.org/en/human-trafficking-in-nigeria>.
- Petal, K. (2014). Boko Haram: Spotlight on Human Trafficking. Retrieved from <https://worldpolicy.org/2014/05/22/Boko-haram-spotlight-on-human-trafficking/>
- <http://nationaldailyng.com/porosity-of-border-why-nigeria-must-tighten-border-security/>
- Osimen, G.U., Pedro O., & Ahmed T.M. (2014). Human Trafficking and Interface of Slavery in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*.4 (21). Retrieved from <http://iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/download/15799/16614>
- Toromade, S. (2017, Nov 6). 26 Nigerian girls, women killed at sea. *Pulse NG*. Retrieved from <http://www.pulse.ng/news/local/26-Nigerian-girls-women-killed-at-sea-id7561789.html>
- Taub, B. (2017, April 10)“*The Desperate Journey of a Trafficked Girl*”. The New Yorker. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/10/the-desperate-journey-of-a-trafficked-girl>
- Barna, J. (2014). In-Depth Analysis: Insecurity in context: The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Retrieved from [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/536393/EXPO-AFET\\_NT\(2014\)536393\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/536393/EXPO-AFET_NT(2014)536393_EN.pdf)
- Nwaubani A T. (2017, February 11) how Boko Haram brides fear returning to lives without power, sex, slaves. Premium Times. Retrieved from <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/223230-boko-haram-brides-fear-returning-lives-without-power-sex-slaves.html>
- Amnesty International Nigeria. (2015). ‘Our Job Is To Shoot, Slaughter And Kill’: Boko Haram’s Reign Of Terror In North East Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/1360/2015/en/>
- Abubakar, S. (2016, November 19). ‘Our lives as ex-wives of Boko Haram militants’. *Daily Trust*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/-our-lives-as-ex-wives-of-boko-haram-militants/172338.html>
- Lillie, M. (2014). Beyond Boko Haram: Human Trafficking in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://humantraffickingsearch.org/beyond-boko-haram-human-trafficking-in-nigeria/>
- Shelley, D. (2018). Isis – Boko Haram and the Growing role of Human Trafficking. Retrieved from <https://wsnia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ISIS-Boko-Haram-and-the-Growing-Role-of-Human-Trafficking-in-21st-Century-Terrorism.docx>
- Sahara Reporters. (2016, OCT 31). President Buhari Calls for Investigation into IDP Abuse. Retrieved from <http://saharareporters.com/2016/10/31/president-buhari-calls-investigation-idp-abuse>
- Human rights watch (2016) Nigeria: Officials abusing displaced women, girls. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/31/nigeria-officials-abusing-displaced-women-girls>
- Bring back our girls. (2017). Special report by the #bring back our girls movement following the return of four of its members as apart from Federal Government, local and foreign media guided tour of the Sambisa war zone.Retrieved from <http://www.bringbackourgirls.ng/?p=2793>

- Amnesty International (2015). Nigeria: Abducted women and girls forced to join Boko Haram attacks. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/04/nigeria-abducted-women-and-girls-forced-to-join-boko-haram-attacks/>
- Obaji, P. (2017) inside the trafficking of a boko haram rape victim. Retrieved from <http://venturesafrica.com/features/inside-the-trafficking-of-a-boko-haram-rape-victim/>
- Akinloye, D. (2017, August 19) Boko Haram: **Horrific** experience of kidnapped Chibok girls captured in secret diaries. *Pulse NG*. Retrieved from [http://www.pulse.ng/local/boko-haram-horrific-experience-of-kidnapped-chibok-girls-captured-in-secret-diaries-id7170754.html?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=daily](http://www.pulse.ng/local/boko-haram-horrific-experience-of-kidnapped-chibok-girls-captured-in-secret-diaries-id7170754.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily)
- Omojuwa. (2016). 61 captured girls married to Boko Haram fighter – report. Retrieved from <http://omojuwa.com/2016/11/61-captured-chibok-girls-married-boko-haram-fighters-report/>
- Marama, N (2018. March 3) Dapchi: How insurgent abducted our school girls – Residents. *Vanguard Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/dapchi-insurgents-abducted-school-girls-residents/>
- Toogood, K. (2016). ‘Bad Blood’: Perceptions of Children Born of Conflict Related Sexual Violence and Women and Girls Associated with Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/bad-blood>
- Human rights watch. (2017). UN Security Council: Protect Education from Attack. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/12/un-security-council-protect-education-attack>
- O’Malley, B. (January – march 2018). When going to school is an act of faith. *The UNESCO courier*. (e-issn 2220–2293) Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/courier/2018-1/when-going-school-act-faith>
- International crisis group (2016)
- Bloom H. and Matfess (2016)
- <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/>
- Dachen, I (2017, February 8) Boko Haram paid me N200 to detonate bomb - suspect. *Pulse NG*. Retrieved from [http://pulse.ng/gist/boko-haram-paid-me-n200-to-detonate-bomb-suspect-id6187138.html?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=daily-2017-02-08](http://pulse.ng/gist/boko-haram-paid-me-n200-to-detonate-bomb-suspect-id6187138.html?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily-2017-02-08)
- Ibrahim, I (2017, August 5) Shocking: Parents donate daughters to Boko Haram for suiciding bombing, Nigerian Army says. *Premium Times*, Retrieved from <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/239362-shocking-parents-donate-daughters-boko-haram-suiciding-bombing-nigerian-army-says.html>
- Guardian. (2014, May 6). Boko Haram Leader. ‘We will sell the girls on the market’- video. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2014/may/06/boko-haram-sell-girls-market-video>
- <http://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atjournal/article/view/64/62>
- George (2017) We Can’t Forget the Anguish of Boko Haram Victims – UK. Retrieved from <http://www.tori.ng/news/70391/we-cant-forget-the-anguish-of-boko-haram-victims-u.html>
- Premium times (2018). <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/263131-dapchigirls-i-wont-return-to-dapchi-school-ss2-student.html>
- Guilbert, K. (2016). Women in Boko Haram fighting, not just cooking and cleaning - researchers. Thomson Reuters Foundation. <http://news.trust.org/item/20161003160739-cag1p/>