

Women and Children in Terrorism in Nigeria 2009 - 2016

Dr VS Akran

ABSTRACT: Women and children, for the first time in the history of Nigeria participated actively in terrorist activities, not only in the northeastern Nigeria but in several communities in Nigeria. A large number of the women and children became members of the Jama'at Ahlis Sunna Lidda awwati maljihad sect by their membership of the heads of the families. Other women and children became members of the sect by themselves. Many other children were members due to their membership of the almajirai. The leaders of the fundamentalists set up a welfare scheme which enticed women traders the poor and the unemployed who enjoyed the scheme and so remained loyal to the group, while school children were abducted and forced to be indoctrinated. But through indoctrination and torture, many women and children became foot soldiers of the group. They used as spies, for information gathering and for suicide bombing. The methodology adopted in this research made almost equal use of both primary and secondary sources especially data from the newspapers and published works. This work attempted to draw attention to this neglected area of the history of terrorism in Nigeria. It has shown that the active participation of women and children in terrorism helped to sustain its war on the Nigerian state especially in the northeast.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women and children featured actively in acts of terrorism in Nigeria. But the various roles they played in other forms of crises were not as much as they played in terrorism in Nigeria.

Due to the increasing awareness of their rights, as citizens of Nigeria and as indigenes of their communities and ethnic groups, women and children have participated in agitations, protests, riots and conflicts in the defense of their rights. But in all of these cases of crises, women and children have accompanied their husbands and adult male citizens. And apart from the Aba women riot of 1936, which was carried out mainly by women traders, very few of such riots, no other violence has been carried out only by women. Other riots, agitations, protests and conflict that occurred in Nigeria women, and children were always positioned behind the men. Majority of them gave assistance to their men. They took part in the mobilization of the men through speeches and dances. They also provided provision for the men fighters, and they ran errands for them, in terms of taking information arms and ammunitions and charms to the male fighters. Women are known to have given shelter to male fighters at critical stages during conflicts.

However in more recent conflicts few women and children featured permanently side by side with men. This was the case with Jamat Ahlis Sunna Lidda awwati waljihad, an extremist Islamic sect. Women and children featured prominently within the period of this study. The level of the participation of women and children in this terrorist group and the various roles that they played in terrorist activities raised serious concerns among Nigerians and so the need to examine this new phenomenon in terrorism. This paper examines the mode of recruitment, training and the various ways by which women and children carried out their missions.

II. JAMAT AHLIS SUNNA LIDDA AMMATI MALJIHAD

There are divergent views on the establishment of Jamat Ahlis Sunna Lidda awwati waljihad sect. There is a claim that it was established in the 1960s as a small sect of spiritually liberally minded group of muslims. But during those early years, its leadership was not known. The relative quiet nature of the group and its activities can be explained in terms of the attitude of its leader. He must have been a liberal, moderate and refined leader whose attention was strictly on preaching and teaching the lesson of the religion. As such he did not draw attention to himself and his group. There is another view that the sect was established in 1995.¹ There is a third view that this sect originated from the Maitatsine extremist group of 1970s which violently confronted the security agencies in the 1980s². And that the founders of Jamat Ahlis Sunna Lidda awwati wadjihad sect were a part of the Almajiral of the Maitatsine group led by Muhammed Marwa.

After crushing Maitatsine group in Kano (1980) Bullum kutu (1982), Rigasa (1982) and Jimeta (1984), the remnants of the group especially the youth followers vanished or went underground. With time they went their separate ways. Some of them have gone to school, but majority must have joined some other sect leaders in

Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe, Adamawa and Borno States. Certainly a large number of the remnant youth followers (almajirai) of Muhammed Marwa later became followers of one of the notable Muslim Scholars. Among the remnant almajirai of Muhammed Marwa were Muhammed Yusuf, Abubkar Muhammed Shekau, Kalleed Abdul Banewi and Adam Kambal. They were the childsoldiers when the Maitatsine riots broke out. For instance Muhammed Yusuf was born on 29 January 1970 in Girgir village, Jakusko in Yobe state while Abubakar Muhammed Shekau was born in 1971, in shekau village in Yobe state³.

A few years later, they joined one or two other Muslim scholars. But Muhammed Yusuf was a student under Sheikh Muhammed Jafar. He was regarded as one of Jafar's most promising students.⁴ With time, the radical, fanatical extremism in Yusuf began to manifest in his attitude and in his interactions with his fellow students. It was due to his extremist posture, that he fell out with his leader. Consequently Yusuf and his fellow extremists left Jafar's sect and set up a new sect which was known as Jama'at ahl as-sunnah li-d-da'awati wa-l-jihad. This is an Arabic name which in English means "People committed to the Prophet's Teaching and Jihad"⁵. The formation of this sect was with a clear objective - to carry out a jihad in order to impose the shar'ia, and purify Islam by establishing a fully Islamic state in Nigeria.

Between 1995 and 2002, the sect was led by Mallam Lawal. It was the period of gradual expansion and increase in its membership. The sect must have focused more on the educated as well as students in higher institutions. Perhaps Mallam Lawal was a moderate radical. During his time, the sect was named Shabaah, and a Muslim Youth Organisation⁶. For a period of seven years of his leadership, Lawal was not known to have attacked the state, the government and the security agencies. Infact there was no report of any violent clash with the security agencies. However it was the period of consolidation of the sect. But the era of the leadership of Lawal ended in 2002, and the leadership passed on to Muhammed Yusuf. But up to 2002, it seems that the sect was based in Yobe state.

III. Who was Mohammed Yusuf?

Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf took over leadership in 2002, and he radicalized the sect tremendously. Yusuf was educated. He was a graduate. He was proficient in spoken English and lived a lavish lifestyle⁷. It follows that his leadership, like that of Lawal, drew the attention of students in tertiary institutions due to the fact that both leaders were University graduates. But in addition, Yusuf was a trained Salafist i.e. a school of thought which associated with Jihad. He was an apologist of Ibn Taywiyah, a fourteenth century legal scholar who preached Islamic fundamentalism and an influence on radical groups in the Middle East⁸. As an educated Muslim cleric, Yusuf embraced technology but applied modern education with Islamic scholarship.

Yusuf was an outspoken violent preacher. He was a good orator with a good mastery of Islamic education. He communicated freely with the populace because he had a good command of Hausa and Kanuri languages which were the most spoken languages in the north eastern Nigeria. Yusuf moved the campaign of his sect to Maiduguri and later to other parts of northern Nigeria including Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Plateau, Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto states. In each of these states Yusuf took his preaching to the rural area and to remote communities and so formed cells or small groups. Each cell had a commander called Amir⁹. He established the headquarters of the sect in Maiduguri. It was a religious complex, known as Markas. Within the complex, there was a mosque as well as a school. The school was for the almajirai (religious students) and other children from poor family background both from within the country, and from outside Nigeria¹⁰. Since his target area were mostly the rural and remote communities, his audience too were mainly the Jobless, school dropouts, the unemployed youth, street boys and traders. He attracted his followers due to the nature of his preaching. He attacked security agencies, the government and politicians, accusing politicians of corruption and embezzlement of public funds which was the cause of poverty in the land. He often promised his audience of the plan by his sect to embark on a Jihad to flush out the bad government in the country, to rule the country based on the sharia and so make life more abundant to everyone.

Due to his style of preaching, his followership ran into hundreds of thousands of people in the poverty bracket. However within the group were also Muslim scholars, clerics and sheikhs. Mohammed Yusuf was always criticized and condemned for his preaching. For instance in 2002, he was expelled from two separate mosques in Maiduguri. In addition to his expulsion, from two mosques, Sheikh Muhammed Jafar, his teacher and mentor, parted ways with him¹¹. It was claimed by Sheikh Jafar, that the council of ulama in Maiduguri had persuaded Yusuf to change his style of preaching. Twice he accepted to change but never really changed, because his followers were more interested in his violent style of preaching and his condemnation of the leaders of the state and government.

Women and children were more attracted to the sect when Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf began a form of welfare scheme in the form of Dawah¹². This was a combination of propaganda, education, medical and welfare action for followers. It was the strategy adopted by similar violent extremist groups to attract members to their cause. In this way, the groups invest in alternative ventures so as to provide for the comfort of the members; just as other terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah provide extensive social service networks for their members¹³. This form of social welfare scheme became a source of attraction to many women and their

children. So, the first category of beneficiaries were Jobless unsuspecting parents and their children who began to benefit from the welfare scheme. In addition, orphans, widows and the vulnerable youths who had no means of livelihood were forced by circumstances to seek assistance from the social welfare scheme. The third category of benefits were poor students who had difficulties in paying school fees. They went to Yusuf's house and school for regular free meals¹⁴. Apart from regular feeding many followers especially the women sympathizers and men followers, benefitted from the start-up capital which the sect made available to petty traders who were members. Similarly motorcycles, wheel barrows small grinding machines and other means were also given out to members. All these were done so that members could become self employed¹⁵. The sect also promoted inexpensive marriage ceremonies among young members.

From the above described elaborate Social welfare scheme, it is clear that Muhammed Yusuf deliberately derived his membership from a large population of very poor men, women and youths in the northeastern region of Nigeria. This region had the largest population of poverty stricken people with over 70% population living below poverty level and 80% population of children out of school. It is understandable therefore that due to his welfare scheme, hundreds of thousands of women, youths and children easily associated with Yusuf and his group, when their hopeless situation could not be improved by the state or the government. The people then transferred their loyalty and allegiances to Yusuf and his sect whom they believed had responded positively to their hopeless and deplorable conditions. In such circumstance such followers could go to the extreme in demonstrating their loyalty, allegiance and support to the sect.

These followers openly demonstrated extreme loyalty to Yusuf when he publicly directed his members to renounce and reject Western education and the present western form of government. The followers responded by publicly destroying their certificates and other documents. It was this demonstration and the constant condemnation of Western culture that earned the group, the name "Boko Haram" given to it by the general public in Maiduguri.

Boko is a Hausa word meaning Western education (bo-ko literally derived from the English word "book" while "Haram" is an Arabic word meaning "Sin" or "forbidden")

From this time onwards, the sect assumed the name Boko Haram and it embarked on the campaign of civil disobedience. It fell-out with politicians who were fraudulent and who refused to implement Islamic law; with other Muslim scholars who criticized and condemned the sect and; with the security agencies who represented oppressive government. The members disobeyed laws of the state. It was the civil disobedience that led to their refusal to wear protective motorcycle helmets which led to the arrest and detention of some of the members while on funeral procession. It was this incident that led to the eventual violent confrontation against members of the state security outfit: Operation Flush it was the Borno state security team which enforced laws and ensured security¹⁶.

Mohammed Yusuf reacted swiftly and decisively to the incident by ordering his followers to retaliate by confronting security agencies for the shooting of his men. Consequently in June and July 2009, violence erupted in Bauchi, Kano and Maiduguri with attacks on police stations while the police also attacked Boko Haram cells and operational bases. The killed many members of the sect, including their leader Mohammed Yusuf. This marked the commencement of the protracted and the on-going war on terrorism in Nigeria.

IV. THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Children who are mainly almajirai (itinerant students) and yancirani (itinerant workers) had featured prominently in past religious and ethno-religious conflicts and crises in the north. They featured during the Maitatsine riots which occurred in some parts of the north between 1980 and 1985. Also they featured in the kafanchan religious conflict in 1987, especially when that conflict spread to Kaduna and other parts of the state. Again during the riot against the hosting of Miss World pageant in 2002 and the Sectarian crisis of 2000 etc this category of children also featured. With these examples in past conflicts, it was not a strange thing to see children participating in crises in northern Nigeria. However it was a much different matter seeing children participating in acts of terrorism, like this case of Boko Haram terrorist group. It was strange for two reasons:

- a) The circumstance under which the children participate and
- b) The various rolls they played in the terrorist efforts.

Muslim women are not known to have participated actively or openly in religious crisis in any part of the north, prior to the Boko Haram terrorism. Majority of Muslim women are supposed to be secluded from public view but because if they must appear publicly, either because they go to work or market, they must put on the hijab or veil. It is therefore ironical that house wives and other women participated actively in acts of terrorism in the north east.

The first time that children featured in the Boko Haram effort was during the group's violent confrontation with the security agencies in 2009 in the attempt by security agencies to capture, and arrest

Muhammed Yusuf, it was reported that during the operation which gained entrance into his house, he used children as a cover in his attempt to escape arrest¹⁶. Even though he was eventually arrested and taken away, it is interesting to note the boldness and fearlessness in those children when they were face to face and in-between the cross fire between the security operatives and Yusuf's gun men. After the ruthlessness of security operatives in 2009, which resulted in colossal loss to Boko Haram in terms of men and property, the rest of the Boko Haram sects went underground and remained silent till 2010.

The period of silence provided the much needed time which the group used to reorganize, re-strategise to consolidate before the group came out stronger, more violent, deadly and more ruthless. The main aspect of the reorganisation was the rise of Abubakar Shekau as the leader of the group, in July 2009. He was fluent in kanuri, Hausa and Arabic languages. He, like Yusuf, communicated freely with the down trodden. Also like his leader, Shekau was a violent, outspoken person. And he also an extremist, a fearless loner, a complex paradoxical man, partly intellectual and partly gangster. He was fondly called Imam. Another indication of reorganisation is that small cells were created all over the states in the north where there were substantial number of followers. A commander or Amir was in charge of each cell. Furthermore, members and commanders received vigorous training in unconventional warfare but in a kind of guerrilla attack, using dangerous and sophisticated weapons including the knowledge of assembling and detonating IEDs at targeted places.

Women and Children (boys and girls) also received informal training in certain areas of terrorism. They were not active terrorist soldiers but they did not engage in active shooting. They acted in various forms which aided and promoted terrorism. Women and children were connected to terrorism in various ways and so they played different roles. There were women and children who were bonafide members of the terrorist group by their conviction, indoctrination and the fact that their husbands and parents were true members. There were women and children who were forced by circumstances to engage in act of terrorism. In order to have clear understanding of the various connections that women and children had the terrorist group, it is necessary to discuss the roles of women separate from those of children.

V. WOMEN IN TERRORISM

From the onset there were women who were members of the terrorist group, also there are women in the north east today who have very close relationship with the terrorists either by blood relation (mothers, aunties, sisters, wives) or as friends and neighbours in Maiduguri, Damaturu, Shekau, Shehuri, Giggir, Jakusko and other parts of the northeast. These close relations may not be terrorists by conviction. They may not even agree to the ideology and philosophy of Boko Haram. But by virtue of their relationship, they were abreast with day to day developments in the terrorist group. They may also be in possession of classified information on individual members or leaders of the group, or two of these relations, might know the where about of Abubakar Shekau, whether he is alive or dead and if still alive, whether he is still in Sambisa forest or not.

One of such close relation is Hajiya Aisha Wakil who is known earlier by close relations and now by the general public as Mama Boko Haram¹⁸. Her relationship with the group began several years ago, when Mohammed Yusuf was her neighbor in Shehuri north of Maiduguri. Her friend, Amina was the daughter of her Islamic teacher and spiritual father, called Baba Fugu. Amina her friend also was the wife of Mohammed Yusuf, leader of Boko Haram. So the relationship between Aisha Wakil and Boko Haram was very close up to their engagement in terrorism¹⁹.

In the cause of the interview, Hajiya Aisha Wakil claimed that Mohammed Yusuf and his close associates were always in her house either to eat or to play. But she did not admit that Jama'at ahhl al-sunnah li damahma-l-Jihadd had the plan to embark on a Jihad to Islamise Nigeria. Rather, she claimed that Yusuf advocated, in his preaching that Muslims and Non-Muslims should live peacefully together²⁰. The point must be made that the closeness between Aisha Wakil and the group was deeper than just being neighbours because she claimed that she was having a link with them that even several times, at times she spent some days up to a week in sambisa forests. But she declined to link anyone up with the terrorists, for security reasons²¹. Infact she declined to disclose the where about of Abubakar Shekua and the remaining Chibok girls, but she admitted that there were factions in the group such as the Habib faction, Mamman Nur faction and the Bukar Mainok faction²². It is interesting also to note from the interview that Aisha Wakil single handedly stopped the terrorists from bombing St Augustine's church, in Maiduguri son Christmas eve of December 24, 2017²³.

Considering the close relationship between Hajiya Aisha Wakil and the Boko Haram terrorists, particularly that she prevented the bombing of a church goes to show that she had a great influence on the terrorists which she did not explore much earlier in the years of the group. Was it not possible for her to have convinced Mohammed Yusuf to drop the idea of a jihad in a secular country like Nigeria? And since she could not do that, she could have raised a loud alarm before the government of Goodluck Jonathan as earlier as 2009 and 2011 of the plan by the group while stock piling arms to carry out a jihad, in the country. Furthermore, was it not even possible that when the chibok school girls were abducted, they were first taken to her house where

they stayed for some days before they were moved away to unknown destination? The case of Hajiya Aisha Wakil confirmed that there were women close to the terrorists who should have played more positive roles to prevent the escalation of terrorism in the northeast in particular and other parts of Nigeria in general. But unfortunately such women could not sum the courage and the strong will to act.

But having allowed the situation to degenerate to the level it is, Aisha Wakil exhibited a level of emotion and sympathy for the terrorists urging the state and federal governments to find a peaceful resolution to the problem, stating that the terrorists are "fellow Nigerians, our children, brothers and our sons"²⁴.

Women who were not, in any way, related to the terrorists but were bonafide members of the group were fully committed to terrorism. Between 2011 and 2012, when the terrorists were still living among the general public, their arms and other weapons were kept in the women's apartments referred to as "kule" or designated "ba shiga". So the men picked their weapons, gathered at appointed places, carried out their operations and returned home to deposit their weapons with their wives in "Kule". In this way, the wives were the custodians of the arms and weapons, of their terrorist husbands. This arrangement was a very effective and secure device in hiding weapons even at a time when soldiers and other security agents of the Joint Task Force established for the northeast went on house to house search for weapons in certain areas, based on intelligence reports²⁵. Thus the "Kule" was the safest part of the house to hide arms and weapons because, the "Kule" in Islamic practice was forbidden for male strangers and male visitors. So soldiers respected that practice. In this way, women helped to sustain terrorist attacks.

Another role that women played was as weapon traffickers. They were used by the terrorists to move arms and other forms of weapons from one point to another. They hid the weapons and arms under their "hijaab", the long flowing gown that Muslim women wear on top of their dresses. The weapons were tied on their bodies and this was covered by the long flowing "hijaab". The hiding of weapons in this way became necessary in order to beat the check points mounted by security agencies at certain designated points in the towns and in the outskirts of towns²⁶. In this way, a lot of small arms and light weapons, were moved in and out of towns over a long time unnoticed by the security agencies since in Islamic practice, women could not be searched publicly. At the time that the terrorists moved out of towns into Sambisa forest, the role of women traffickers in the movement of arms and other weapons into the forest was very effective. Perhaps because of the large number of such arms, even women who were not committed to terrorism were employed and paid as traffickers²⁷. In addition to trafficking in arms, women were also used for courier services. They ran errands by delivering messages and information between cells and between Commanders of cells²⁸. Perhaps it was partly for the purpose of running errands that Boko Haram terrorists invaded remote communities and abducted girls and women in large numbers who were taken away into sambisa forest. Some of the messages were neither written on paper, in the form of letters nor given to the carrier by words of the mouth. In some very risky cases, the messages were written in Arabic language on the back of the carriers. In this way, even the carrier never knew the message she carried. Such messages were top secrets and were carried this way for security reasons²⁹. Women were abducted for several other reasons including taking care of cooking and helping to buy goods in far away markets. Women were also used to propagate and recruit members of the public into Boko Haram terrorism. The recruitment system often began with members of their family. In some cases, women threatened their extended and immediate family members accept Boko Haram or faced death. A woman who probably was in sambisa forest, sent a male Boko Haram to her household to join her as Boko Haram members, failing which she threatened to eliminate them. It was after her second threat that member of her household alerted security agents who advised them to relocate³⁰, from their homes to undisclosed locations.

VI. THE ROLE OF CHILDREN

Children from the age of 6 years played active roles in Boko Haram terrorism not only in Maiduguri but in other parts of the northeast. Except for the teenagers who were foot soldiers, some of those below the age of 12 years served as spies. Majority of those male children were not conscious of the roles they were playing. They were sent out as almajirai, in groups. Some of them roamed about the streets around military units and around checkpoints in the midst of other children, begging for alms or for food. Some ran errand for security agents. Many of the children lived around the towns where they operated, but there were indications that they spied and gave out certain information which had to do with security. For instance it had been found that each time a military unit received consignments like new vehicles vans or ammunition, Boko Haram terrorists would strick³¹. In some other instances, when a unit was in the process of carrying out an operation, hours or a day to the operation, there would be Boko Haram terrorist attack.

In one or two instances, operation vehicles were ambushed on their way. Even officers were attacked on their way. These ambushes were certainly carried out by Boko Haram soldiers based on prior information. This shows that the Boko Haram intelligence gathering was active and effective. One of such several ambushes was carried on Lt. Col Obasanjo who was shot and wounded. Even villages, travelers and traders along the way were often ambushed, attacked and their goods were taken away.

Child soldiers also leaked information leading to several attacks on communities which lasted for hours, where Boko Haram often had field day without the presence of Nigerian security agencies. Children were trained in camps both in Nigeria³² and outside, especially in Cameroon³³, Somalia³⁴ Niger, Mali³⁵ and Algeria³⁶. In the early months of 2015, Boko Haram group confirmed the indoctrination and training of children as child soldiers in its training camps. It is ironical to note that the terrorists trained children as young as 6 years old. The children were trained mainly as suicide bombers and their targets were limited to market place, mosques, churches, motor parks and other public places that permitted crowding³⁷. The fact that women and girls abducted in recent years also engaged in suicide bombing shows that they were also trained as soldiers of Boko Haram.

Children were taught and trained to brutalize and torture newly abducted men and women who did not freely and willingly become members of Boko Haram. Although the forms of the torture were not known but the torture and brutalization were necessary in order to radicalize the new comers and to force them to Boko Haram terrorists through traumatic experiences in the hands of the boy soldiers. At the end of the traumatic experiences, the boys, girls and women so traumatized. Any one of them could be ordered to join a term of Boko Haram terrorists, on an invading or plundering mission in a community. Also, some could be sent on suicide missions. It follows that between 2013 and 2016, several suicide attack cases took place and the attackers were children (boys and girls) who were groomed and prepared for suicide attacks.

They were trained to carry the improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to specific targets. They also learnt on how to detonate the bombs. However it required more than just the training for a young boys and mostly young girls, to walk confidently to violent death. The evidence given by Hajiya Aisha Wakil on the process that a Suicide bomber often went through, seemed convincing. According to her, a suicide bomber was usually prepared for the mission. He/she was prepared for death by being given an injection and was prepared by making him/her to take an oath to die³⁸. So having taken the oath, he was no longer a full conscious human being. But he headed to his target and blew up himself and his target. But in a particular case, the suicide bomber was prevented from carrying out his bombing mission yet he could not be prevented from dying alone. In her telephone conversation with the Boko Haram, she claimed she suggested that according to Aisha, "the boy could be sent to a nearby bush, so he could go and die alone"³⁹. In the particular case, a suicide bomber who was prevented from bombing his target, later died alone, because he had taken the oath to die. From this account, it means that it was this process that all suicide bombers took before embarking on suicide missions.

The female children and adults played unique roles in addition the general roles discussed earlier. Females were particularly sought after by the Boko Haram commanders. Several hundreds of them were abducted. One example was the abduction of 276 girls of Government Secondary School Chibok, Borno state in April 2014. After this incident, several more girls were abducted and as recently as 19th February 2018, 110 girl-students of the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State were abducted. Boko Haram leaders went for Secondary School girls because at such tender age, they could be easily recruited, trained and orientated to accept the way of life they were conditioned to live. It was also claimed by Abubakar Shekau that many of the girls have been sold out to married out.

In the first stage, since many of the girls were Christians, they were forcefully converted into Islam by reciting passages in the Qur'an. The next stage in the indoctrination was that they were forced into partnership or marriage with the male Boko Haram members. Those girls who refused to accept Islam and also refused to be indoctrinated and radicalised were referred to as slaves and were treated as such. They did all the house and kitchen chores. A good example was the girl who was not released to her parents this year when some girls from Dapchi School were released to their parents.

The use of hard drugs was common to both hard core child soldiers and the new and young members. Child soldiers, both male and female were forced to take hard drugs. This was necessary in order to bolden their spirits and make them fearless in whatever activity or mission they were directed to do.

The use of women and children (boys and girls up to secondary school) in the activities by terrorist was very tactical, and deliberate. The idea of using them was conceived by the Boko Haram commanders as a way of beating security network, in most parts of Borno state and in other parts of the Northeast. In addition to the successes recorded by women and children in suicide attacks at particular targets, they also moved weapons from one to another successfully. For women and children to have the boldness to carry out all their actions and missions, means that they had been well trained, tortured and brutalized.

However, the year 2015 marked a turning point for the collapse of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The recorded successes of the Nigerian military in its operations against the terrorists has shown that hundreds of the terrorists have been captured and put in detention camps. Also hundreds of women and children captured and brutalized were also recaptured by the Nigerian military. For instance in May 2015, a total of 687 women and children were rescued from Boko Haram captivity while another 453 person including women and children were earlier rescued. Up to date a higher number of women and children have been rescued. By May 2017 additional 998 people had been rescued including women and children.

Considering the population of Boko Haram members and the addition of the population of abducted men, women and children, all living in sambisa forest, though in different camps, one cannot but agree with Lami Musa who stated that all Boko Haram members and the abducted people had horrible experiences and conditions⁴⁰ and a long period of torture. There were many women like Lami who were abducted with their pregnancies. There were others abducted with their children after their husbands had been killed. The horrible conditions, horrible experiences and the long period of torture had made many women and children to be mentally unstable. Many of the children were abducted after the killing of their parents in their presence. However it is gratifying to note that many of the rescued women and children are undergoing the process of de-radicalization and rehabilitation in Yola, Adamawa state.

But there were those who escaped being rescued. They either fled Sambisa and some other camps or were not rescued or arrested, but who, after fleeing, found their ways into the larger communities or towns, where they now live among non-Boko Haram Nigerian. Such groups of sambisa escapees are considered to be dangerous to the communities where they are presently. And there are hundreds of such women and children living side by side with freed women, men and children. The danger they pose to the society emanates from the fact that they have not undergone the deradicalisation and rehabilitation process. Even though they are out of sambisa forest, their life style is still terror-like and they are still as deadly and dangerous as the life they live in sambisa forest. They could transfer this deadly and dangerous life style into other forms of criminality. Today, there are kidnappers, gun men who act as killers, armed rubbers and armed men or herders who plunder farmlands and ransack communities. It is possible that some of these women and children join these or other criminal gangs. It is also possible that they sell out their guns and other dangerous weapons. Lastly these run-away child-soldiers, may possibly be the nucleus of the emergence of another terrorist group. This was how the remnants of the almajirai followers of Maitatsine come together to form Boko Haram.

VII. CONCLUSION

Women and children like men play active roles in the wellbeing and active Islamic practices of their sects. The institution of almajirai is a part of the Islamic practice. The children (almajirai) are in the care of the Sheikh or sect leader. But among the group of Sheikhs or founders of Islamic sects are muslim radicals, fanatics, extremists and religious fundamentalists who introduce certain ideologies into Islam. Some of them were self-appointed Malams who may have some level of understanding of the basic teachings of the Qur'an but who give self-interpretation to issues of religion from their own ideological stand point.

The unsuspecting women and children follow their husbands and fathers to pledge their loyalty and obedience to such radical fundament Islamic leaders. They accept the Islamic injunction that is the leader that leads his followers to paradise after life on earth. With his basic believe, came the indoctrination, the welfare scheme and the generosity of the leaders. Thus, by the time violence broke out, it was too late for the women and children to begin to re think and re-examine themselves.

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