

Humanitarian Intervention: A Study of the Role of Nema in Nigerian Conflict

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Introduction

Human beings have basic needs, part of these needs are physical, like the need for food, water, health sanitation and hygiene, shelter. However, essential needs goes beyond these few elements because they cover the psychological sphere which include security or safety, protection and recognition etc. Commonly, these needs are naturally fulfilled through the community or through policies, public goods and services provided by the state. Compounding problems in developing countries like Nigeria are micro nationalism, religious and communal conflicts which pose great threat to peace, security and progress.

Nigeria experiences a numerous ethnic, political and religious violence such as conflict and crisis in Kaduna, Kano, plateau, Bauchi, Borno, Taraba, Benue, Delta, Ondo, Osun, and Ogun States. Recently, there is an increase in the activities of terrorism occasioned by religious sect called Boko Haram using improvised explosive device (IED) especially in the North East, North Central, and North Western States including the Federal Capital Territory. Similarly, there are also small armed militia group with their activities localized in the Niger delta region of the country which leads to humanitarian intervention.

Various public and private organizations, national and international partake in conflict resolution in all dimensions. In the case of Nigeria, the issue is the same. From 1999, the mandate to coordinate disaster management in all its ramifications in Nigeria is vested in the hand of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) based on its establishment.

The national emergency (NEMA) was established via Act 12 as amended by Act 50 of the 1999 Constitution to manage disaster in Nigeria. It has been tackling disaster related issues through the establishment of concrete structures with the mission to coordinate resource toward efficient and effective disaster prevention, response and community resilience to disaster in Nigeria.

Ethnicity and Its Dimension in Nigeria Society

Nigeria is clearly a prototype state in accommodation of ethnic and religious faultiness (Kwanja, 2009). Since independence, Nigeria has produced a catalogue of ethno-conflicts that resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damages (Salawu 2013).

Alemike offered a very broad description of ethnicity that captured its objectives as well as aspects of its subjective dimension. The concept of ethnicity refers to a social identity formal that rests upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology a belief common origin and a broadly agreed common history provide an inheritance of symbols, heroes' events values and hierarchies, and confirm social identities of both inside and outsiders. Ethnicity is a social construct it has to be understood within its historical context. Ethnicity constitutes a way in which people think of themselves and others. At the same time it also refers to sets of social relations willing which social groupings such as men, women, poor, rich, young or old all relate to each other. It thus also refers to specific power relations as the same time as it refers to cultural relations.

Ethnicity results from conditions of multiplicity of ethnic groups within a territory in which difference mobilized for political and economic interests in relation to other group. These conditions of politicized ethnicity may lead to ethnic nationalism where by an ethnic group may demand for a separate nation include using violent methods to advance its realization. (Gobadia & Adekunle, 2004). This may likely breed conflict.

Ethno-religious conflict means a situation in which relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and the other such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual, suspicion, and above all find a tendency towards violent confrontation (Salawu, 2010). Ethnic conflicts are conflicts arising from situations in which people from varying ethnic groups decide to show their differences in the pursuit of competing interest (Edlyne, 2006). Nigeria has had different degree of ethnic conflict, losing many lives and properties. Conflict refers to disputes, disagreements, quarrels, struggle, fights or war between individuals, groups and countries. In every nation, there is no complete agreement on how to share wealth, power and status among individuals and groups, and how to effect necessary changes and reforms. Therefore, different groups will have conflict with those of others. Conflict occurs when depended groups and individuals attempt to increase their

share of power and wealth or to modify the dominant value, norms, beliefs or ideology in a given society.

Religion and Conflict in Nigeria

Nigeria as argued above is a plural society with different types of religious belief. Misunderstanding in the practice of religion most often breeds conflict. In this regards, religious conflicts can be described as disagreement based on difference in faith and belief most conflicts referred to as religious in Nigeria may also be ethnically based as well. It covers both violence by religiously motivated individuals or religious institutions. Religious conflicts are recurring phenomenon affecting the security of many countries around the world particularly Nigeria. In a study conducted to investigate the causes of most violent conflicts, religions were found to be a crucial issue.

Thus, ethno-religious conflicts have increased and spread the level of security problem; killing of innocent lives, destruction of properties and increasing level of fear among the citizenry. Consequently, ethno-religious conflicts are a threat to the security of the country. It has presented many challenges that border on security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system in the country. What we are witnessing through these crises is a transfer of aggression from one aggrieved faction to innocent Nigerians. In other words, the crisis have weakened patriotism, commitment to national ideals and true nationhood, given rise to parochialism, ethnicity and other cleavages which “ethno-religious” jingoists exploit for their interest and advantage.

Roots of Conflict in Nigeria

The roots conflict of Nigeria must be traced back to the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 which was aimed at continuous subjugation of societal resources by British colonial masters, in which their ignore various factors that may lead to the conflict. These factors include religious, cultural and political, geographical and ethnic differences among various part of the country.

So much so that successive indigenous government after independence did not perform much better in spite of concerted nationalist efforts by some of them to propagate the principles of “unity in diversity”. Tribalism, nepotism and financial recklessness became the trademark of these governments. The elitist political class that evolved was so parochial that rational issues were pushed to the background for tribal and regional interest. Disagreement in the federal, the

house and brazen disagreement for the unity of the nation by the political class provided an opportunity for some military officers to take over power from the first republic politicians in 1966.

The recurring incidence of violence in religious and interethnic conflicts in some part of the country has become a major national problem in contemporary Nigerian society. Both religious conflicts and ethnic crises are frequent and devastated in the country that has threatening the existence of individuals and the nation at large.

Ukpabi (1989) observed that, in Nigeria, the political circumstances out of which conflicts might arise have never been lacking since the end of British colonial rule in 1960 respectively he noted that problems been encountered by the various groups in the country in their efforts to fashion a workable interaction between power and concert, freedom and obligation as well as between the nationalities themselves and the nation state to which they belong. In such situation he observed that, there would always be interest to defend or protect during which violent conflicts may not be avoided.

Besides the increasing religious and ethnicity violence which has been fuelled by the growth of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism have all represented potential threat to peace and stability. Okwueze (1995) observed that Nigeria is one of the countries where religion and ethnic conflict has wreaked much havoc on the advancement, unity and prosperity of her citizens and the development of the nation as a whole. He noted that between 1980 and 1995 no less than fourteen convulsive religious and ethnic conflicts had occurred in the country. Again, since 1995, more than twenty five religious and ethnic riots had taken place in the country.

Humanitarian Intervention

Intervention on the grounds of humanity was used to describe operations involving assistance. At the end of 1980's the term "right to intervene" was used to describe both operations carried out by individual states and action taken by international organizations and NGO's.

The human purpose of humanitarian intervention are the prevention of grenade and other massive murder of civilian population by their own state or other group, reducing of massive human rights abuses and maintaining regional and global security and stability. In the case of

genocide or any other result of that are refugees feeling their home country searching for safety. Based on this ground state agencies and non-governmental agencies strive to provide relief material for the internally displaced persons.

Humanitarian Intervention in Nigeria

Humanitarian interventions rise to tackle growing disasters on human life, which are caused by natural and human factors. National and international humanitarian organizations were created and charge with the responsibility of preventing and tackling such disasters on people's lives

Therefore, Nigeria became 86th member nation of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Nigerian Red Cross Society complements public authorities in the area of humanitarian interventions. The society had over 500,000 volunteers across the nation as well as the foremost first responder to emergencies in Nigeria.

Despite the special emphasis of principle of the NGOs, particularly Red Cross, the agency employs local capacities in carrying out its operations. Other governmental agencies do provide humanitarian relief to internally displaced persons affected by war, natural disaster and so forth, National Emergency Management Agency as a government agency worked with Red Cross and other similar organizations in different cases. NEMA is a government agency unlike UNHCR and Red Cross, in which the government expresses its response to emergency cases of disasters on people who live within the country. NEMA, in carrying out its duties, performs a humanitarian role of providing goods and services to people who are in urgent need of those services or goods.

UNHCR specifically deals with refugees. And it has been active in maintaining refugee's welfare after various political, social and religious crises in Nigeria. Its involvement in Nigeria also is in aiding refugees from other close African countries. For instance, on 17th June 2003, UNHCR office in Lagos, received a total number of 1,986 asylum seekers from Liberia, where internal conflict continue to intensify. The refugees were sheltered in Oru refugee camps jointly managed by the Nigerian Red Cross society, UNHCR and National Commission for Refugees (NCR). The Nigerian government through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and in particular, the National Commission for Refugee (NCR), has the responsibility for the overall co-ordination and the general management of the refugee camp.

The Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria is among the most intensive crises ever witnessed in Nigeria. Reports from NEMA said millions of people were affected and a quarter of a million displaced by insurgency in the North-East between January and March 2014 alone. UNHCR report that about 6,000 people mainly women, children and elderly people which were forced to seek safety in neighbouring Niger. Hundreds had fled to Cameroon and Chad. Among the people includes nationals of those countries.

Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for several attacks in the North East, particularly Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, that has killed thousands of people since 2009. The attacks worsened in 2014 despite a state of emergency in those three states. NEMA in collaboration with the Red Cross and State Emergency Management Agencies in affected states carried out a comprehensive multi-sector rapid assessment of humanitarian situation in the areas. NEMA had intervened through the provision of food and non-food items, water and medicaments, the needs of the affected population are on the increase.

In summary, the governmental response to disaster, whether natural or man-made is through its specialized agency called NEMA. Unlike other agencies like the NGOs, NEMA has the judicial power to get access to the disaster zones and provide relief material across Nigeria. It has been observed that there is need to do rigorous academic study on the impact of the humanitarian relief materials to the internally displaced persons.

Conclusion

Conflict in every human existence is inevitable, indestructible, and necessary and necessity, Conflict refers to disputes, disagreements, quarrels, struggle, fights and war between individuals, groups and countries. In every nation, there is no complete agreement on how to share wealth, power and status among individuals and groups, and how to effect necessary changes and reforms. Therefore, National Emergency Management Agency with the collaboration of Red Cross, has intervene via humanitarian channel enormously to the Nigerian conflict more especially with the Boko-haram insurgency in the northern part of the country. Thus, if NEMA can continuously perform their duties the way how their conducted in the Boko haram conflict to some other disasters like fire, epidemics, flooding and so forth, it will reduce human suffering as well as increasing nationally in character among the citizens. Furthermore, NEMA and international organization agencies have found it to be very difficult to have

holistic approach to provide relief materials to the people affected by the conflict trauma both in conflict and post conflict situation.

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