

## **Relevance Of Community Involvement on The Reintegration of Repentant Boko-Haram Members in Yobe State**

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### **Abstract**

This study analyses the relevance of community involvement on reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members in Yobe State, Nigeria with a view to Identify the level of community involvement in the reintegration process of repentant Boko-Haram Members, analyzing the relevance of community involvement in creating awareness and mobilization on the reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members in Yobe State. Qualitative method of data collection was employed in the collection of data through the interview technique. Findings revealed that; that there is low community involvement in overall reintegration program, although few Non-governmental organizations have engages in community dialogue to promote peace and facilitate the acceptance of repentant Boko-Haram members. The study therefore conclude that there's generally low community involvement in the reintegration process of repentant Boko-Haram Members in Yobe State. The study recommends the following; The government of Yobe state and Nigeria should as a matter of priority incorporate community residents in the empowerment packages to enjoyed by repentant Boko-Haram members, Policy makers should as a matter of urgency consider poverty alleviation and educational development their sole priority been the major source of conflict in the state and Nigeria at large, Local community leaders and Religious leaders whose preach and sermon is heard by thousands of community residents should be actively engaged in the reintegration process to facilitate easy community acceptance of the repentant.

***Keywords: Boko-Haram, Perception, Residents, Reintegration, repentant.***

## **1.0 Introduction**

Globally, Repentant Terrorism returnees are becoming a major source of concern to the world, especially with the fear that when they return, these criminally minded individuals can perpetuate crimes or other violent activities in their host communities. Countries of the world had in the past decade therefore developed numerous reintegration programs for violent extremist's offenders, (Van der Heid & Geenen, 2017). For instance, reintegration programs have been developed in Europe, Middle East and Southeast Asia. Each of these countries had a unique approach to promote disengagement from violent extremism and terror related offence. The disengagement process has been labelled using different terms in different countries, what is called re-integration in some countries could be labelled as Dis-engagement, reformation, rehabilitation, re-socialization or de-radicalization, in other countries, (Styszynski, 2015). The UK Home Office Report (2019), estimates that there about 259 offenders detained for terrorism and violent related offence in the U.K, 37% of them were released on bail, while another 34% were convicted which mean reintegration after the completion of their sentence. The International Center for Counter-Terrorism report (2016), estimate the number of foreign fighters from Europe at 3,922 of which majority of them were from Germany, France, United Kingdom, and Belgium, 30% of these foreign fighters returned home to reunite with their families which have led these countries to developed reintegration programs with a view to accommodate those returnees and minimize the risk of future re-radicalization, (Boutin, et. al 2016).

The Cold War aftermath changed the focus from international wars between countries to internal wars with deadly consequences for innocent civilians as occurred in African countries like

Liberia, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, Cameroon, Congo and Angola to mention a few. To avoid future reoccurrence of such wars, peace building measures such as reintegration, de-radicalization and disengagement were introduced to pave way for a swift transition from conflict to serenity, by way of mitigating the risks from ex-violent offenders as possible spoilers, (Githigaro, 2020). For instance, Reintegration program was developed in Somalia under the Ministry of Internal Security, since it was launched, the program saw the establishment of nine rehabilitation centres in various locations in south central Somalia, supported by international non-governmental organizations. The low-risk returnees are taken to rehabilitation centres where they were offered basic education, vocational and skills training, after this, the ex-offenders were move to their host communities to reunite with their families. In all this, security is also a major challenge to the success of this program, more often, ex-offenders who surrender to embrace the reintegration program were killed by the Al-shabab secret, al-Shabaab members fear betrayal by national securities, and there is also a threat of retaliation from host communities who are the victims of the atrocities of al-Shabaab. All these security challenges add to the difficulty for members of al-Shabaab to quit the organization, (Cragin, 2019).

Similarly, Nigeria have implemented some reintegration programs for ex-offenders which include 60 days amnesty window to Niger Delta Militants from August 6 to October 4, 2009, which had paved a way for peace, though many of the militants rejected the initiative, about 26,358 militants however accepted to surrender their weapons through the reintegration and disarmament program that collected grenades, guns, rocket, rifles and launchers. The reintegration and disarmament of these militants qualified them for a reinsertion benefit of 65,000 naira monthly

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stipend for a period of 5 years, the militant gone through demobilization and reintegration program to be reunite with their host communities. Nigeria was enjoying the bouts of peace following the reintegration of Niger Delta Militant, until the coming of Boko Haram. The report for Global Terrorism Index (2019), posit that Boko Haram is ranked fourth among deadliest terrorist groups in the globe. Boko-Haram is also responsible for over 30,000 deaths as a result of Bomb blast and other terrorism activities (Institute of Peace Economics, 2019). The group was also associated with the displacement of more than 2.6 million people and also known as the most dreadful insurgent group in Nigeria, (Chinonso, 2018).

Since the peak of Boko-Haram in 2015, it has suffered many losses due to the region's military campaign against the group, even though the group still remains active. They have been experiencing losses, many of its members have become disillusioned and are beginning to leave the group. It is estimated that around 8000 Boko Haram violent extremist offenders (VEOs) have surrendered and are ready to enter reintegration processes.

Previous Studies conducted by Bukarti, (2019) and Saskia, (2018), among others reveal that reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members have faces a serious resistance from the community. Researchers have currently taking interest to study how the success of reintegration program can be evaluated, and how adaptable it is in the context of community backlash. Since previous studies shows that the program has been seriously resisted by the community members it's become necessary to carry out this study with a view to assessing the relevance of Community involvement on the reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members in Yobe State.

## **2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

This section contains a review of some reintegration programs in Africa and Nigeria including a theoretical review:

### **2.1 Reintegration Programs in Africa**

A reconciliation and reintegration process has been used by African nations like South Africa (1998), Zimbabwe (1995), Sierra Leone (2000), Ghana (2001), Mozambique (1991), Rwanda (2001), and Liberia (2006) to help their societies transition from violence to peace. These procedures were required to address issues of severe community disintegration as well as to alter the unfavorable impressions, mistrust, and animosity that communities held against former soldiers. Through its Community Outreach Programme (COP), the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria (FEHN), assisted by OGIF, engaged several ex-militants in a proactive reconciliation with their communities as an illustration of this process. This program was created to further young people's transformations as they were reintegrated into various communities. The program had benefited the Okrika and Egbema villages in the states of Bayelsa and Rivers. In 2011, an official ceremony for reconciliation in Okrika brought together community residents, chiefs, and traditional leaders with ex-militant groups (Icelanders and Bush Boys). The procedure was comparable to the "Palaver Hut" method in Sierra Leone and the South African "Ubuntu" idea. After that, the ex-militants accepted the idea of admitting responsibility, the need to express regret and repentance, seek for forgiveness, make amends in the form of gifts, and teach nonviolence as a necessary step toward peaceful coexistence. Economic assistance to ex-combatants as they were reintegrated into their prewar society has always been the corner stone

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of reintegration programs. Even though huge sum was spent on the program generally, Violent criminal offenders are still increasing in some of these countries, due to a very poor targeting of the beneficiaries when it comes to providing economic assistance. For instance, the issue of reinsertion allowances for the repenting terrorist is very critical to the success of reintegration programs. Unlike the reinsertion process in Uganda, where every ex-combatant was paid equally, irrespective of age, rank, or years of service, (Colouris, 2019, U.N. 2020, Oluwaniyi, 2018, UNDP, 2020, & James, Norah, & Olufemi, 2019).

Moreover, African prisons were usually perceived to be overcrowded, brutal and poor. A significant number of prisons in Africa actually suffers from the aforementioned problems, it is less surprising that a very little attention was given to discussing what these prisons can do to bring about changes for the prisoners, with the intention of helping them to live a crime-free lives after their release. Reintegration and rehabilitation of prisoners is believe to be one of the key functions of prison system in Africa. Regional apparatus consider this to constitute an important aspects in the treatment of ex-offenders. Therefore it is very important to know what rehabilitative efforts occurred in African region and the impact these programs have had on reintegration of ex-offenders, (I.C.G, 2017, Oluwaniyi, 2018, U.N, 2020 & UNDP, 2020).

### **2.3 Reintegration Programs in Nigeria**

Nigeria like many other countries have had some reintegration programs, the first reintegration attempt in Nigeria was the Demobilization, Deradicalization and Reintegration (DDR) programme initiated by the Nigerian Government after the civil war with the aim to reintegrate ex-combatants back to their communities. After the civil war, part of the immediate demands posed

by President Gowon was to alleviate suffering for the masses and provide relief materials to people in the war-affected places. During that time, Gowon Military Government adopted Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs) as a comprehensive policy which was extended beyond Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration of ex-combatants. The '3Rs', was aiming to provide immediate relief to the affected parties, and to enable them rebuild their lives again. The then Military government had them with the funds and materials to rebuild the destroyed infrastructures. During this time, Nigeria had received donations from foreign nations and international Non-governmental organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Red Cross (Audu, 2013, Gbadeyan, Norah & Olufemi, 2019).

The Niger Delta amnesty programme was established by President Yar'Adua in June 2009. The program was the firsy Nigerian Government's attempt to rehabilitate ex-combatant. The Niger-Delta militants were indigenous minority group of the Delta region of Nigeria which comprised of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Edo States. The militia group emerged in the year 2000, as a consequence to deterioration of living condition for the people living in oil-rich States because of the civil war and other oil related activities. Oil spills had unavoidably damaged the environment of Niger-Delta and had affected the president's health which further deepen frustration in the community. Because of such discrimination the Niger Delta militant found a way of expressing their grievance to the state, which manifested in form violence such as kidnapping of foreign oil

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personnel, vandalization of pipeline and hijacking of ships (Club & Tapley, 2018, Bukarti, 2019, Uguru 2010, Ludovica 2015 & Beth, 2021).

However, the Niger-Delta Militant presidential amnesty afforded militants with a given 60-days ultimatum to surrender their weapons to the state, the time span last from 6<sup>th</sup>- August, 2009 to 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2009. At the end of program, 20,192 ex-militants have reportedly surrendered about 2,760 weapons, 3,155 magazines, 287,445 ammunitions, 763 explosives, 1,090 dynamite caps, and 18 gunboats to the Amnesty Committee. After the end of the Amnesty, other militants who reluctantly fail to participate in the program realized the lofty benefits enjoying by the successfully reintegrated militants. This further increased the total number of repentees to 6,166. The repented militants were provided with skills acquisition training to made them self-reliant after the program. They were also reported to enjoy monthly allowance of \$439. (Uguru 2010, Oluwaniyi 2022 & Bello, 2020).

While doing this, Nigerian government put in place some policies aimed at redistributing oil wealth to affected communities in the region. Although crimes such as the abduction of foreign nationals working for oil corporation continues, vandalization of pipelines and hijacking of oil ships minimally declines. Since the beginning of the amnesty program. 1,019 ex-militants of the Niger-Delta have travelled overseas to pursue their education and skill acquisition training. Which varies between six months and five years. Recently, some of them undergoes training in Philippines, Malaysia, U.S., South Africa, Poland, India, Moscow and Ghana, among other countries, (I.C.G, 2017, Uguru 2010, Anyadike,

2017, Agbiboa, 2011, Akinyetun, 2020, Aigbiboa, 2019 & Oluwaniyi 2022).

### **2.3.1 John Paul Lederach's Pyramid Model**

According to Lederach's pyramid model, which emphasizes reconciliation and strengthening a society's capacity for long-term peacebuilding, the goal is to restore broken connections (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). According to Lederach, the ability to reconcile these relationships holds the key to altering conflicts because conflicts are at their core the breakdown of relationships (Isike & Okeke-Uzodike, 2010). According to Lederach, peace-building entails the gradual conversion of a war system into a peace system. In the short, medium, and long terms, this necessitates positive changes in the interpersonal, structural, relational, and cultural dimensions of conflict (Miall, 2004). In order to address the need for a comprehensive and strategic approach to the transformation of deeply embedded conflicts as well as an integrated framework for establishing peace and sustainable reconciliation, Lederach offers a substantive and analytical framework.

According to Pillay (2006), he sees peacemaking as a structural process that enables conflict to be transformed at three different levels of leadership: top-level leadership (top-down approach), middle-level leadership (middle-out approach), and grassroots leadership (bottom-up approach). By describing "how the house of peace should be built" in war-torn civilizations, this technique aims to explain how peace should be built within the conflict-affected population (Lederach, 1997). This framework is illustrated in Fig.1.

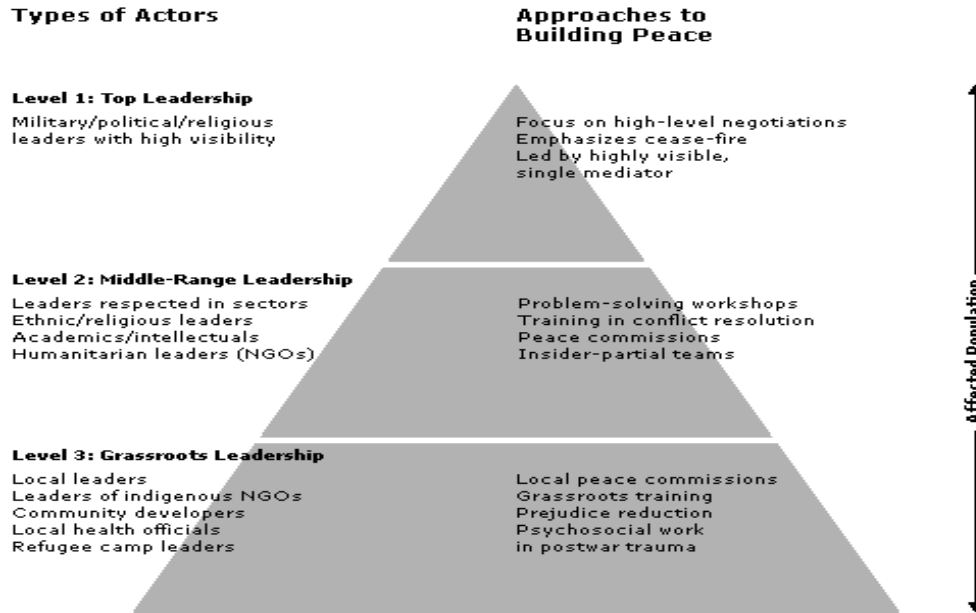


Figure 1 Peace-building Levels in Conflict Societies: Actors and Approaches to Peace Building

Source: Peace-building Levels in Conflict Societies: Actors and Approaches to Peace building (Lederach, 1997)

### 2.6.2 Relevance of Lederach Theory to the Study.

Reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members had rotated within the three levels of conflict transformation model provided by John Paul Lederach, at first, the military emphasize a cease fire, with the government providing a safe corridor for Boko-Haram members to repent and coming back to reunite with their families again and also providing them with the opportunity to eliminate their financial dependency on the terror group, thereby including education and empowerment packages in the reintegration scheme, this effort of the Government is further supported by religious leaders who were actively engage in creating massive awareness and enlightenment against the dangers of the Boko-Haram group, thereby disassociating the group from religion. Lederach refers to this as a Top-

level approach in his conflict transformation model.

This reintegration effort was taken forward by academicians, civil society organizations and managers of various organizations who devote their significant time to carryout workshops about the long term benefit of reintegration program which was a middle level approach in lederach theory of conflict transformation, even though this effort succeed in convincing a lot of Boko-Haram members to surrender, many others believe it was disappointment on the part of their group that motivate them to surrender, this effort had also failed to convince residence of the affected communities to accept the reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members.

The grassroots level approach is the implementation stage in lederach theory, in this stage, Refugee camp leaders offers refuge to the returning Boko-Haram Members with various

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Non-governmental organizations providing them with empowerment training, during this phase local and international health officers provide free medical aid to the returning Boko-Haram Members with a view to facilitating effective reintegration program, as this approach is an all-in-one approach, everybody will do his part, including community leaders and community residence who have to do the role of forgiveness and acceptance, this initiative was resisted by the community residence which had cause a set back to the reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members to reunite with their host communities.

### **3. Research Method**

This section contain the method of data collection for the research, population and sample size:

The study is a qualitative research. The population of the study includes the entire males and females residents of Yobe State.

A total sample of 9 respondents were selected from Yobe State using Purposive sampling technique, the selection of the respondents was because they are information rich, a pseudo code (R1-R9) was used to identify the respondents. The study included both primary and secondary data. Interview Technique was used to get the primary data, the primary information was transcribed, presented directly as quotes from the interviewees, and then analyzed. Textbooks, journal articles, newspaper stories, online resources, and monographs are a few examples of secondary data sources. The paper's introduction, literature review, and discussion parts all contain secondary data, as do other portions as well. Since the data was gathered qualitatively, it will also be analyzed in a qualitative manner.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

This section of the study contains views of the respondents and discussion of such views:

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On the relevance of community involvement, some respondents posits that:

*“I never come across this, where I lived  
I never heard a rumour for community  
involvement in reintegration process  
...” (R1 & R2).*

This finding corroborated with the findings of Colories, (2019) Who note communities have not been fully utilized within reintegration programs in the Lake Chad Basin region which has led to ineffective reintegration processes. Bukarti, (2019) is of the opinion that For security concerns, Operation Safe Corridor runs in secret, but the key to reinsertion is getting residents of the affected communities involved right away. This could be accomplished by inviting the affected local communities' political, religious, and traditional leaders to the camp so they can observe the situation firsthand and report back to their supporters. Of course, this should be carried out without jeopardizing the participants', experts', or the venue's safety and security.

R4, R5 and R6 added that:

*To my knowledge, community residents  
were not involve in the de-radicalization  
process of the repentant Boko-Haram  
members, community leaders and  
religious leaders were not been carried  
along... (R4, R5 & R6).*

This findings corroborated with the work of Ebiede, (2022) whose review highlights a perceived sense from the community that reintegration programmes are design devoid of government consultation with the community who are key stakeholders. This finding highlights similar concerns expressed within the literature. As Clubb and Tapley (2018) argue, the community's ideational relation to the state plays a significant role in shaping their perception toward the acceptance of former combatants.

Similarly, within the context of Colombia, Kaplan, and Nussio (2016) argue on the need to recognize the role of the community in reintegration and peace building as this determines the effectiveness of reintegration interventions.

R7 and R8

*“Where I am here is the based for religious scholars, but I have never seen anyone who is invited by the government for a community dialogue on reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram members..” (R7).*

This also corroborated with also corroborated with the study of Colouries (2019) which posit that The failure to include communities into formal reintegration processes means that the lack of community support can potentially derail the entire DDR program. However, as seen in the case studies, communities have played a more significant role informally in the reintegration of VEOs, increasing the effectiveness of this process.

R8 also views that:

*“...with the involvement of community leaders and religious leaders will go a long way in acceptance of the repentant Boko-Haram members through religious preach and sermon even if the acceptance is not fully, but gradually a mile stone maybe attended.” (R8).*

From the views of R8 it shows that there is agreement with the work of Seth (2011) where he shares the belief that Reintegration is likely to be successful only when tribal and other local leaders are involved, this include village or district heads including respected religious clerics. This claim was justified by Oluwaniyi, (2022) who specifically stated that Ex-militants

who return to such places without engaging in any sort of reconciliation are met with increased hostility from residents who are still troubled by the violence's memory. These painful memories make it difficult for them to live together, especially when the neighborhood witnesses criminals receiving significant financial rewards from the government.

R9 contend that:

*...no effort is made by the government to involve “community residents in the reintegration process even though I had few religious leaders preaching about reintegration, I have no idea whether is a cause of government or not” (R9).*

The views of R9 also corroborated with the study of Colouries (2019) which posit that the failure to include communities into formal reintegration processes means that the lack of community support can potentially derail the entire DDR program. However, this finding is slightly different from that of Colouries (2019, as seen in the responses of R9 the government doesn't make effort to involve community residents, which also means the finding is unique.

## 5.1 Conclusion

The study also concluded that there is low community involvement in overall reintegration program, although few Non-governmental organizations have engages in community dialogue to promote peace and facilitate the acceptance of repentant Boko-Haram members, there's also inadequate commitment from the government even when the resident were optimistic that the involvement of religious leaders and community leaders will go a long way in considering the acceptance of the repentant Boko-Haram Members.

## 5.2 Recommendations

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Local community leaders and Religious leaders whose preach and sermon is heard by thousands of community residents should be actively engaged in the reintegration process to facilitate easy community acceptance of the repentant.

Traditional institutions should continue to promote collaboration and peaceful conflict resolution between and among various ethnic and religious groups in their respective domains while remaining steadfast in their efforts to promote peace.

All hands must be on desk to ensure adequate community mobilization, sensitization and awareness to cut down the level of stigmatization experienced by the repentant Boko-Haram returnees in their host communities.

This study concentrate on the reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram members in Yobe State, future studies can be conducted on reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram members in Borno and Adamawa State. Since this research concentrate mainly on the relevance of community involvement on reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram Members, future studies can be conducted on the role of Non-governmental organizations on reintegration of repentant Boko-Haram members.

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