



APPLICATION OF PRACTICAL RELIGION EDUCATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: PANACEA FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PEACE BUILDING

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INTRODUCTION

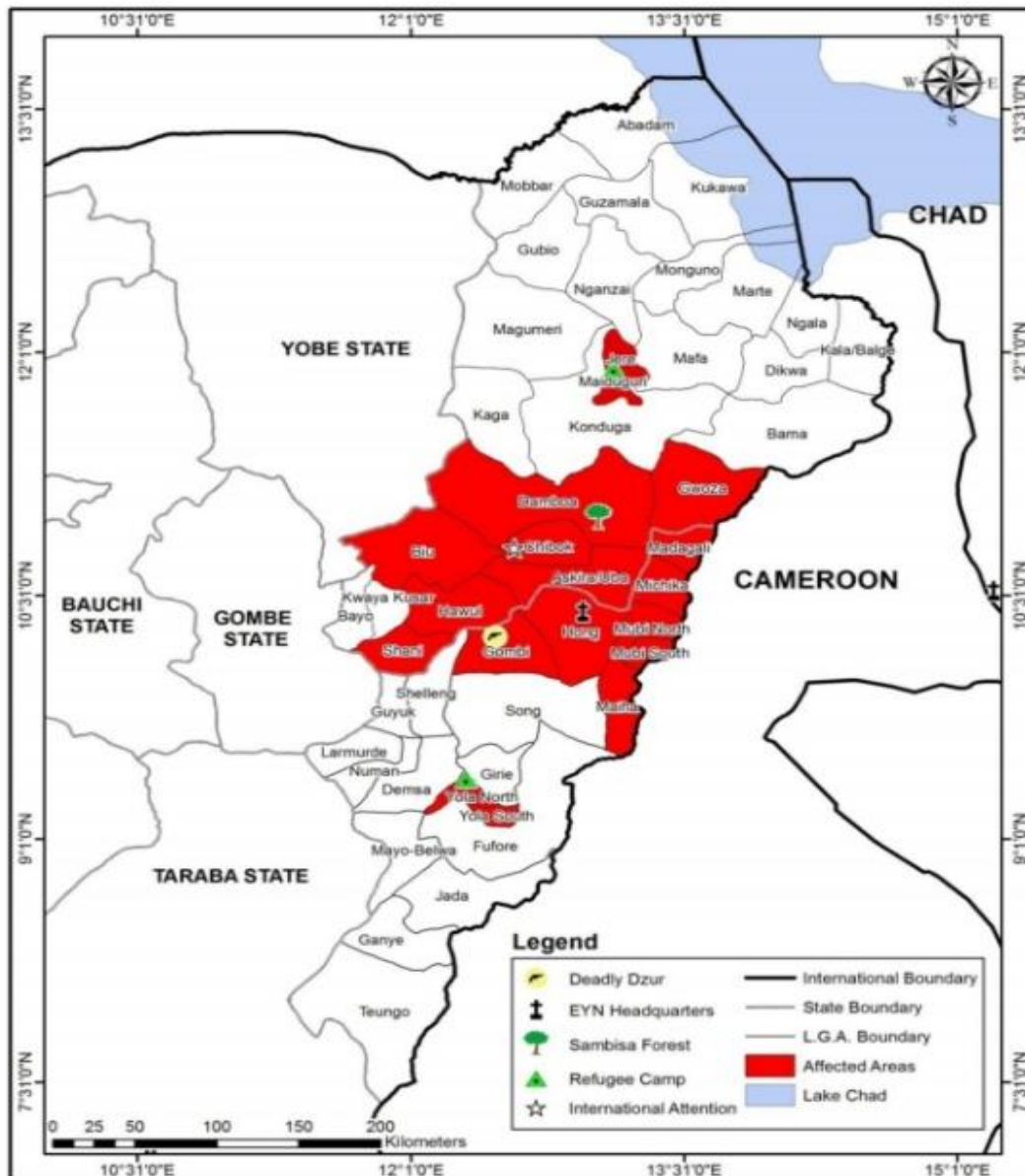
Religious extremism and fanaticism are major contributions to violent activities and crisis in Nigeria. Borno State is one of most affected States due to the activities of Boko Haram insurgency. This paper is put together as a result of a three (3) days peace seminar conducted at the College of Education Waka – Biu Borno State on 29th to 31st January, 2020. College of Education Waka-Biu is one of eight (8) tertiary institutions in Borno State. It is located Biu, Southern senatorial District of Borno State. Biu is about one hundred and seventy two (172) kilometers from Maiduguri the Borno State capital. The major road that links Biu to Maiduguri is closed due to the activities of Boko Haram because the road passes through the “Sambisa” forest.

The College of Education Waka-Biu was established in 1986. The college is a transformation of the then “Teachers College Waka-Biu” which was established by the Church of the Brethren Mission in 1957. The College of Education has a student population of about twelve thousand (12,000) with half Christians and half Muslims. The College has been peaceful without any record of religious intolerance. The tribes of the students and staff members are dominant Pabir, Bura, Margi, Kibaku, Gwoza, Kanakuru, Tera, Fulani, Hona, Kilba, Yungur, Michika, Lounguda Ga’anda etc.

The College of Education is a major higher institution in southern Borno State and it is bothered by Adamawa, Gombe, Yobe and part of Taraba State. The school is liked by parents and students due to its peaceful historical record, conducive environment and its affordability. It will interest the readers to know that the tuition fee for Borno indigenes is only seven thousand (N 7, 000) and non-indigene is fifteen (N 15,000) and naira only per session (Academic Year), probably it is one of the cheapest advanced institutions in Nigeria.

Biu is the only town in Nigeria that withstood and blocked Boko Haram from invading and extending to other towns from 2013-2014 when Boko Haram captured almost all parts of Borno, Yobe and parts of Adamawa States. The defence was enormous from the indigenes that sacrificed their lives to protect the town and secure a freedom of worship and education. Christians protected Muslims during prayers and Muslims did same for the Church. The cooperation and understanding was worth emulation for peaceful Nigeria. No wonder, the town is now blessed with Nigerian Army University which is a result of peace building and peaceful coexistence.

The Map of Northeast Nigeria Showing The Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency in the Geo-Political Zone



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2015)

Key

The red colour in the map shows the EYN predominant Churches in Borno and Adamawa States. Even though Boko Haram attacked almost all L.G. A of the two States, EYN Church is not more pronounced in uncoloured area



Statement of the Problem

Northeast Nigeria has suffered from religious extremism, fanaticism and insurgency more than any other geopolitical zone in Nigeria. Borno State in particular has suffered the hit more than any other state being the place that Boko Haram has its headquarters (in Sambisa forest). As a result of Boko Haram activities, the South Senatorial District of Borno State has suffered multiple attacks of the insurgency that has affected its social, economic, physical, psychological and moral life (see the list of the impact in my research). According to research findings, there is looming danger and terror if nothing is done to avert it. The children born to the Boko Haram and neglected by society, a large number of out-of-school children are those whom Boko Haram recruits for their activities. These groups of youths and those who regain freedom from Boko Haram constitute a major threat of the future peace and development of the state.

The problems in the communities of Southern Borno State are multi-dimensional. They include: illiteracy, object poverty, trauma, lack of shelter, violence, mistrust, hunger, and security. All the basic needs of human beings are lacking in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. On daily, basis, the threat of existence stares the people since the people cannot leave the area because they have nowhere to go and farm; and because farming is their only means of survival so they go to farms at the expense of their lives.

PEACE PROJECT CONDUCTED WITH THEIR SPONSORSHIP

The researcher has conducted six projects in Southern Borno State that are direct intervention of the masses who are victims of Boko Haram insurgency. The interventions cut across gender, religion, tribe and locations. Some of the interventions are from COFP while others are from partners in humanitarian services. They are:

1. Peace Project, a three (3) days Seminar sponsored by COFP for students and lecturers of COE Waka-Biu on 29-31st January, 2020.
2. COFP sponsored Corona Virus Lockdown Palliative for fifty (50) widows and orphans in Biu, Borno State in July, 2020.
3. Scholarships: Payment of 3 terms school fees, WAEC, NECO, uniform, books and sandals for forty one (41) orphans who are victims of Boko Haram in Borno and Adamawa State. This was sponsored by Initiative for Victims Education and Economic Development (IVEED) January, 2020. The researcher is a Board member of this nonprofit NGO that cares for orphans who are direct victims of crisis.
4. Scholarship: Payment of 3 terms, WAEC and NECO for sixty three (63) Orphans Victims of Borno Haram in Borno and Adamawa States. Sponsored by 1-VEED in January, 2021.
5. One Day Peace Seminar for five hundred (500) youths of Wamdeo, Askira/Uba Local Government Area, Borno State on the 1st January, 2021. This was self-sponsored.
6. Boko Haram Disaster Relief to severe victims of Boko Haram attacks on 5/01/2021 at Wamdeo, Borno State. Sponsored by COFP Partnership.

Project Impact

The impacts of the projects conducted in the afore-mentioned committees are numerous. The College of Education Waka-Biu requested for the seminar for her students on peace building. As a result of the Corona virus lockdown palliatives that they shared together, the widows of Christians and Muslims formed a peace club to see how they can help one another. The relationship between Christian Religion Studies and Islamic Studies Departments has been strengthened where the lecturers are writing papers on peace building for conferences, seminars and journal publications.

Furthermore, the impact has inspired the researcher to write many volumes of books and research papers on peace to spread the message of peace that is preached by COFP. In collaboration, the I-VEED is massively sponsoring the child-victims in secondary schools in Northern Nigeria.

Sustainability and Vision

As the result of being a member of COFP fellow and ambassador, most of the researcher's time has been used in peace building in and outside classroom and on the pulpits.

Vision:

By 2030, the teachers of religion in Northern Nigeria should be able to de-radicalize and teach peace without indoctrination for peaceful co-existence.

Evidences of Peace Building by Ambassador Yohanna Mamza in North East Nigeria



Cross section staff and students at College of Education Waka-Biu during three (3) days Peace Seminar.



Award of scholarship to orphans of victims of Boko Haram insurgency by I-VEED in Borno and Adamawa State, 2019/2020 session (3 treme fess, WAEC, NECO, books and uniforms for 41 students)



Peace seminar to five hundred (500) youths of Wamdeo in Askira/Uba LGA, Borno State on 1st January, 2021- self sponsored



Award of scholarship to orphans victims of Boko Haram Insurgency by I-VEED in Borno and Adamawa State, 2020/2021 session (3 tremes fess, WAEC, NECO, books and uniforms for 61 students)



Food Relief to widows in Biu During Corona Lockdown and Boko Haram Victims on 5/1/2021 in Askira/Uba, assisted by COFP



Need assessment in North East- Damages of roads by Boko Haram (Yola to Maiduguri)



Evacuation of the students of University of Jos during August 2021 Religious crisis sponsored by COFP/Ambassador Asibi



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