



## **EFFECTIVE AND SINCERE DIALOGUE: PATHWAYS TO VIOLENCE FREE SOCIETY**

**Very Rev. Abraham E. Ogah**

Treasurer, Christian Association of Nigeria, Borno State

Email: [revabraogah2009@gmail.com](mailto:revabraogah2009@gmail.com); Tel: 08103845046

### **INTRODUCTION**

Effective dialogue requires that all the participants have equal standing, that they listen with respect and empathy, and that ideas and assumptions are explored openly and without prejudice. Effective dialogue typically follows some basic ground rules: The focus is on common interests, not divisive ones.

Maiduguri, also called Yerwa or Yerwa-Maiduguri, capital and largest city of Borno State, northeastern Nigeria. It is located along the seasonal Ngadda (Alo) River, the waters of which disappear in the firki (“black cotton”) swamps of Lake Chad, northeast of the city.

Modern Maiduguri actually comprises the twin towns of Yerwa and Maiduguri. In 1907, Yerwa was founded on the site of the hamlet of Kalwa and was named by Shehu (“Sheikh” or “Sultan”) Bukar Garbai as the new traditional capital of the Kanuri people (replacing Kukawa, 80 miles [130 km] north-northeast of the former capital of the Bornu kingdom [see Kanem-Bornu]). Meanwhile, the market village of Maiduguri, just to the south, was selected by the British to replace nearby Mofoni (Maifoni, Mafoni) as their military headquarters and in 1908, they built a residency in what then became the capital of British Bornu. The combined city locally called Yerwa was divided into the urban district of Yerwa and the rural district of Maiduguri in 1957, but outside Borno both political units are now known simply as Maiduguri.

The arrival of the railway in 1964 reinforced Maiduguri’s importance as the chief commercial centre of northeastern Nigeria. Livestock (mainly cattle but also goats and sheep), cattle hides, goatskins and sheepskins, finished leather products, dried fish (brought from Lake Chad), and gum arabic are the city’s chief exports, and there is also local trade in sorghum, millet, corn (maize), peanuts (groundnuts), and rice. There is a large cattle ranch at nearby Gombole, and there is poultry farming in the surrounding countryside. The Monday market at Yerwa, a tradition brought from Kukawa, is the largest in the state.

Maiduguri’s population consists mainly of Muslim Kanuri and Shuwa peoples with an admixture of Christian Nigerians from the south. Since the mid-1960s the city has become an important industrial and educational centre for Borno State. Besides food-processing facilities, its industries manufacture leather goods, wooden and metal furniture, nails, and aluminum and steel structural products.

Educational facilities include the University of Maiduguri (1975), Ramat Polytechnic, Borno State College of Legal and Islamic Studies, and Kashim Ibrahim College of Education. The



university operates a teaching hospital, and there is also a general hospital in the city. The Lake Chad Journal Institute is located in Maiduguri.

The city is dominated by the palace and adjacent mosque of the Shehu of Bornu, an important traditional Muslim leader in Nigeria. The city lies astride the historic pilgrim route from Senegal to Mecca. It is the terminus for the main railway line linking northeastern Nigeria to Port Harcourt. Served by the main highway system, it is a hub for secondary highways serving the state. There is an airport located 5.5 miles (9 km) west of Maiduguri. Since 2009 regular activities in the city and surrounding areas have been disrupted by the presence of Boko Haram, an Islamic militant group known for committing acts of violence. It came as a result of bad Governance claiming that they wanted to bring sanity to the governance in Nigeria; but today opposite is the case as they go about killing the innocent citizens. The Population of Maiduguri according to 2016 estimation was 1,065,000 Urban Agglom.

### **Statement of Problem**

Borno State was known for her peace and hospitality hence the slogan 'HOME OF PEACE' but the peace the state and its environs was known for went gone sour between 2009 to date when Boko Haram insurgency surfaced. It started like a joke unfortunately; today it has become an international plague that is domiciled in Borno State and it is like it is insurmountable. With the coming of insurgency a lot of challenges came up ranging from developmental problem, suspicion, security, poverty, hunger, etc.

Developmental problem, such as infrastructural deficit due to the constantly renewed attacks by Boko Haram on both government infrastructure such as schools, police stations, churches and mosques, Communication facilities leading to so many dilapidation of the infrastructure. Although, the government is trying to fix things in Maiduguri metropolis, some rural communities are still battling with the infrastructural deficit. From January to date, Maiduguri and its environ have been on total blackout due to the activities of Boko Haram. They blew up some high tension tower thereby disconnect Maiduguri from national grid. After the first repair, it has occurred repeatedly as they are expanding their destructive activities which have imposed serious hardships on the resident of Maiduguri.

Suspicion, People are living with suspicion among one another not knowing who is living or sitting close to him/her. Some do not even want to get close to others. Muslims suspect Christians and Christians suspect Muslims. Unhealthy relationship with one another, no love for each other. Just recently, some Christian women used Kanuri attires for a Christian music, it almost caused crisis in Maiduguri. It was not because of that music album but it was because of the sour relationship on ground.

Security, Borno State has been blacklisted on the committee of nations as a volatile area and a home of Boko Haram and other insurgency, thereby affecting Maiduguri the Administrative headquarters of the state. There is no day that passes without one form of attack or the other on the citizens. People no longer going to the farms. This has resulted in the very high cost of living in Maiduguri leading to severe hunger and starvation, high level of malnutrition on the part of the children and this also leads to pockets of theft people experience daily in Maiduguri. People have fled their ancestral homes for safety in other locations which are alien to them and that is why Maiduguri the state headquarters in full of IDPs camps. Even at the camps, people



are not safe because hoodlums still invade the camps, kill the IDPs and getting some of the ladies pregnant and open doors for more suffering.

**Poverty:** any place where there are crises, there must be poverty not to talk of the place where insurgency has lasted for over ten years. People could not go to farm and those who are from the riverine areas like Baga and Gubio cannot stay and do their fishing business. Those who are in camps are only depending on government, humanitarian groups, religious groups and spirited individuals for donation of food and non-food items to them. What quantity of materials will they give to these people that can sustain them?

**Hunger:** many families cannot afford a meal a day let alone two to three square meal. This results in easy recruitment of young children into Boko Haram, ISWAP and other dangerous group(s) that terrorize the citizens. These insurgents promise their prey good life and they give them initial good money to entice them. The Maiduguri of yester-years where there was food stuff in plenty is no longer the Maiduguri of today because the hoodlums do not allow the farmers access to their farm land to cultivate in order for them to have food.

**Illiteracy:** despite the efforts of the government to bring education to the door steps of people and make education accessible and affordable for all irrespective of your financial status, some are giving free education, free uniform and other school materials, but since they cannot force people to learn, most children are still backward in education. Almajiris are still everywhere and such people are ready tools in the hands of the hoodlums to be used for the perpetration of their evil activities. These and many other problems have really dealt greatly with the area under study.

## **PROJECTS**

The programme was anchored on a platform of The Hope for Better Tomorrow Initiative, Borno State. The participants were drawn from academia, religious institutions, youths, women, students and different ethnic groups. It was held in Federal Government College hall where the acting principal and all the other principal officials of the school were personally present to welcome the participants and to declare the programme open. Sixty one (61) persons were in attendance apart from those from school, CAN and Muslims leader's representatives and other adhoc workers. In all, there were over eighty (80) participants. Two facilitators were drawn from both Christian and Muslim who dwelt extensively on tenets of Christian and Islamic religions for effective and sincere dialogue. It was a one day intensive programme, quite interesting, issue based, interactive, thought provoking programme.

The impact of this project is far reaching that people are even asking for certificate because of the scholarly way the professor and the Bishop presented their lectures. The project was widely spread as we were able to reach out to both women, youths, students, teachers, principals and religious leaders. The first time to have Muslim women came out in that number to participate in such a programme with their male counterpart in Maiduguri. The programme was able to catch the attention of so many people that they are asking for more even up till today. An interfaith dialogue platform was created for us to discuss issues of peace in Maiduguri which is very active till today. The management of the secondary school where the programme was held, stepped it down at Federal Government College Maiduguri.

The project was sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for peace COFP. The financial support which made the project successful came in on January, 29th 2020 and it helped in the execution of the project. The pictures/photographs of the project are attached here below:



**Group Photograph with Facilitators**



**Group Photograph with Participants**



**Cross Section of Participants Receiving Lecture**



**Very Rev. Abraham Ogah, the convener  
Delivering the welcome address.**



**The principal of the school  
Giving His welcome address**



**Cross section of participants**



**Group Photograph with the Representatives From CAN, JNI and School Management**



**Representative of CAN**

**Borne State Chairman**



**Representative of JNI**

**Borno State Chairman**

Around June, 2020, following the outbreak of deadly corona virus otherwise called COVID-19 which lead to the lockdown of many Countries Nigeria including. Most economic activities were shut down social activities grounded, movement restricted and many were indoor leading to severe hunger and malnutrition we cried to Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) and another project titled “COVID-19 palliative” was embarked upon within Maiduguri, in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council of Borno State. The project was sponsor by COFP 100%. The community and those who benefited from the project were full of Joy and overwhelmed by the show of Love to them at that critical time and they called on Government to emulate the gesture. The beneficiaries prayed for the Blessings of God on the Foundation and the founder. Attached below are some of the pictures/photographs:



**Palliative materials ready for distribution**





**COVID-19 Sensitization by Rev. Abraham Ogah**



**Shared materials ready for distribution**

## **PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY**

There are many different viewpoints on the concept of sustainability and on how it can be achieved. Dittmar, H. (2002), said, the word sustainability comes from sustainable + ity. And sustainable is, for instance, a composition of sustain + able. So if we start from the beginning, to <sustain> means “give support to”, “to hold up”, “to bear” or to “keep up”. Ritchie, M. (2002), posited that, for us to get the true meaning of sustainability, we should start with the adjective which is 'Sustainable'. It is something that is able to be sustained, i.e, something that is “bearable” and “capable of being continued at a certain level”. In the end, sustainability can perhaps be seen as the process by which something is kept at a certain level. Nonetheless, nowadays, because of the environmental and social problems societies around the world are facing, sustainability has been increasingly used in a specific way. Nowadays, sustainability is



usually defined as the processes and actions through which humankind avoids the depletion of natural resources, in order to keep an ecological balance that doesn't allow the quality of life of modern societies to decrease. McGinley, K. (2002).

The people are willing and are even yearning for more of the programme so effort should be made to hold the dialogue more regularly. An organization named 'The Hope for Better Tomorrow Initiative' was formed with the aim of sustaining the programme by the grace of God.

### **Needs Assessment**

Altschuld, and David (2010), said needs assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing needs, or "gaps" between current conditions and desired conditions or "wants". A needs assessment is a part of planning processes, often used for improvement in individuals, education/training, organizations, or communities. The discrepancy between the current condition and wanted condition must be measured to appropriately identify the need. The need can be a desire to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency. Clark, (2012), defines 'need' as an essential starting place for needs assessments. Needs assessments can help improve the quality of policy or programme decisions thus, leading to improvements in performance and the accomplishment of desired results Soriano (2015).. The results of a needs assessment will guide subsequent decisions including the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects and programmes that will lead to achievement desired objectives.

From the the above explanations, it must be pointed out that the needs of the community are immediate and long term. Some of their immediate needs are food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sleep.

If these needs are not satisfied the human body cannot function optimally. Government is overwhelmed by the number of IDP camps in the town, they have tried their best but they are overwhelmed as the needs surge every day. NGOs are trying but could not satisfy the people.

2. Other needs are security and safety People want to experience order, predictability and control in their lives. These include emotional security, financial security (e.g. employment, social welfare), law and order, freedom from fear, social stability, property, health and wellbeing. Some of these are both short (immediate) needs and long term needs.

### **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Insincerity in dialogue would cause disharmony in the community and affect the relationship among people. But if sincerity is ensured in any dialogue, it will not only be effective but lead to peaceful coexistence and harmonious living in the society. All humanitarian workers, peace builders and development agencies should have the of sincerity in handling any intervention in order to have achieve positive results



Base on the needs assessment, the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. Immediate provision of food material to support the community to cushion the shortage of food.
- ii. Skill acquisition programme should be organized for the community and its environs to teach them how to fish rather than giving them fish that will not last.
- iii. The foundation should solicit for support from international donors agencies, NGOs, good spirited individuals and other bodies to enable it support the members of the community finance.
- iv. The community should be assisted with Agricultural inputs such as improved seed, chemical/herbicide, fertilizers etc for improved yields.

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