

# The Effect of Conflict on the Education of the Nigerian Child: The Experience of Bogoro and Tafawa Balewa Local Government Areas of Bauchi State

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## ABSTRACT

Childhood education in Nigeria has witnessed a lot of boost and progress, but there have been some points in time and in some part of the country where armed conflict as a result of acrimony, religious and political unrest had unleashed terror on people. One facet remains constant, the devastating effects it bestows upon children and their right to education. This paper therefore explores the impact of conflict on children's education in Nigeria as well as the approaches and strategies employed in meeting the educational needs of children in such situations with a view to providing possible solution to that regard. A survey research method was used. Questionnaire and unstructured interview were used to generate data relating to the objective of the paper. The data was analyzed using applicable and relevant statistics, frequency and percentages displayed in tables.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Children Education

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict has been defined differently by different people, each person or group defines it based on his/her perspective. Most definitions seem to involve the following factors: that there are at least two independent groups, the groups interact with each other in some ways.

Conflict as defined by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2009), is a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument and consequently result in political, religious or ethnic violence; usually a period of fighting between two aggrieved

parties, who believed they have been treated unfairly. Adegbite and Musa-Atinuke (2013), defined it as an ongoing state of hostility between two or more groups of people. It is the pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups. Conflict occurs when one party perceives the action of another party is blocking the opportunity for the attainment of a particular goal. Eze (2004), wrote that conflict exists when two or more people engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals.

Rahim (2002), gave the causes of conflict as follows:

- Conflict may occur when a party holds behavioral preferences, the satisfaction which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preference.
- Conflict may occur when a party wants some mutually desirable resources that are in short supply, such that the want of all parties involved may not be satisfied fully.
- Conflict may occur when a party is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with his/her needs of interest.
- Conflict may occur when a party possess attitudes, values, skills and goals that are salient in directing his or her behavior but are perceived to be exclusive of the attitudes, values, skills and goals held by the other (s).
- Conflict occurs when two parties have partially exclusive behavioral preference regarding their joint actions.
- Conflict occurs when two parties are interdependent in the performance of functions or activities.

Education is the skill that enables an individual to think and execute. Skills that enables him or her to walk down the street of life and reach the desired destination. It is a process of learning and acquiring information. Chibiko (2009), described education as the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him /her developed physically, mentally , socially, emotionally, spiritually,

politically and economically. While on the other hand Ocho (2005) opined that, it as the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society. Education is one of the fundamental rights of individuals. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1949 stipulated that:

- Everyone has the right to education. This shall be free at least in the elementary and primary stages
- Elementary education shall be compulsory while technical education shall be made generally available and
- Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit

According to Fanara (2011), education serves much broader functions. It gives shape and structure to children's lives and can instill community values, promotes justice and respect for human rights and enhances peace, stability and interdependence. Lack of education by people in conflict affected areas has made them easy prey for recruitment by armed militias (Smith, 2011).

In the word of Ogungboye, Aiyedun and Buhari (2013), childhood education in Nigeria has witnessed a lot of boost and progress, but there have been some points in time and in some areas or states where acrimony and political unrest had unleashed terror on people.

The idea of this research is to examine the effect of conflict, not only in terms of deaths and casualties and economic costs borne by the people involved, but also on children's education in Nigeria.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

As conflict drags on, economic, social conditions and educational opportunities become more limited or even cease to exist. Fear and disruption make it extremely difficult to create an atmosphere conducive

for learning and the morale of both teachers and pupils is likely to be low. This study looks at the impact of conflict on the education of the Nigerian child.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research work is aimed at:

1. Examining the effect of conflict on child's education?
2. Looking at the effort of the government and the international community in protecting the education right of Nigerian child during conflict?
3. Looking at the alternative sites for classrooms when schools are closed as a result of conflict?

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the consequences of conflict on child's education?
2. What are the effort of the government and the international community in protecting the education right of Nigerian child during conflict?
3. Are there alternative sites for classrooms when schools are closed as a result of conflict?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Civil disturbances, contestations and attendant violence could be said to be the order of the day, since the return of the civil rule in Nigeria in May, 1999. The alarming rate at which community conflicts have been occurring in the country since then, could be a pointer to this assertion, according to Uwazuruike, (2003), Nigerians are passing through an era when they could hardly make up their minds as to just what sort of country they really aspire to erect.

Conflict in Bogoro and Tafawa –Balewa Local Government Area of Bauchi state has had a long history. The area was riddled with conflicts at time in 1991, 1995, 2001, and 2011. Muhammad (2011), reported in

weekly trust of Saturday, 13th August that the area has witnessed crisis of monumental proportion in 1948, 1959, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2011. Resulting in the loss of hundreds of lives while property worth billions of naira were destroyed. These are grievances for the creation of the Sayawa chiefdom in the area and marginalization from Bauchi State government and Bauchi emirate council.

Sani (2011), reported that the crisis emanated from 1931, at the time when none of today's major religions existed. Later, the Fulani and Jarawa, opted for Islam, while the Sayawa opted for Christianity. Years later, the Sayawa started agitating for chiefdom, which resulted in violence. The reason was that some of the tribes felt that their rights were being suppressed while others felt threatened if such rights were granted. It is still uncertain the number of people killed in the various crises in the area, but statistics have shown that they were in hundreds, mostly children and young people. Schools (public and private, primary and secondary) are closed down indefinitely any time there is a crisis.

What is less known or talked about is how violence denies millions of children across the world their right to education. Olatunji, (2011) noted that it appears that reporters focus on reporting the number of casualties of armed conflicts even before the cause of the conflicts. Rarely does the consequence of such conflicts on education get reported with any depth. For example, a journalist in Bauchi reported in one of the newspapers on the 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2011 that a total of 31 persons lost their lives in civil disturbances in Tafawa-Balewa Local Government Area of Bauchi State, while no fewer than 3600 persons were said to be displaced.

Also another journalist reported in Tribune Newspaper on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2011 that Bauchi state police commissioner, John Abakasanga, had in a press briefing told newsmen that renewed crisis in some village in Bogoro claimed 16 lives, when yet to be identified persons stormed the village.

using the cover of the night to attack the people. These reporters failed to report the consequence on children's education.

Smith (2011) write that when wars break out, international attention and media reporting invariable focus on the most immediate images of human suffering. Yet behind these images is a hidden crisis i.e education. He said, globally, armed conflict is destroying not just school infrastructure, but the hopes and ambition of generations of children. Armed conflict destroys the basic necessities of life: schools, health care, adequate shelter, water and food. That makes it difficult for communities to give children an environment that fosters healthy cognitive and social development.

The lingering crisis has caused immeasurable disruption of lives properties. These consequences are very grave indeed, as not only does education get interrupted as school gets destroyed and children as well as adults alike get caught in the conflagration. Schools that are spared are closed and turned to refugee camps for victims of the crisis. Some of the pupils and students who drop out of school may never go back and they become ready tools of havoc in the future conflict.

In the past, schools provided a safe haven for students during crisis as classes continued uninterrupted. Unfortunately nowadays, schools are not safe from attack in times of armed conflict (Fanara, 2011). Fanara further disclosed that in rural areas the school building may be the only substantial permanent structure, making it highly susceptible to shelling, closure or looting. Often, local teachers are prime targets because they are important community members or because they may hold strong political views. The destruction of education networks represents one of the greatest development setbacks for countries affected by armed conflict.

Eckert (2011), reported that, 42% of primary –school age children in the world live in countries that are affected by violent conflict. According to relief agencies, in today's era of combat, 85 to 95 percent of those harmed or killed by modern armed conflict are civilians. Of those, about 50 percent are children (Smith, 2011). Armed conflict affects all aspects of child development –physical, mental and emotional etc. such effects accumulate and interact with each other. Armed conflict destroys homes, separates families, splinters communities, breaks down trust among people and disrupts health and education services, undermining the very foundation of children's lives (Fanara, 2011). As bad as these experiences are, many children have witnessed their parents' torture, murder or rape, and have been threatened with death themselves. These have made life difficult for children to concentrate in school.

There is no policy in place protecting the right to education during conflict in any part of Nigeria. A staff of NEMA when asked whether there is a plan for disaster in Nigeria lamented that Nigeria does not plan for disasters, it wait until they occur. Education activity must be established as a priority component of all humanitarian assistance. When children have been forced to leave their homes and, are crowded into displaced persons camp, establishing schooling systems as soon as possible reassures everyone by signaling a degree of stability and a return to normal roles and relationship within the family and community.

Some Governments refuse to provide or to allow international, agencies to provide education activity for refugee children. The efforts of United Nations agencies and other organizations to meet the education service needs of children affected by conflict require significantly Increased (Fanara, 2011). Since schools are likely to be targets for attack, alternative sites for classrooms can be established. E.g classes can often be held under trees, in cavers or in camouflaged huts built from sticks and foliage in the refugee camp. Similar arrangements were made during

the height of the fighting in many places in the former Yugoslavia, where classes were held in the cellars of people's often by candlelight. Also Rwandan refugees at Ngara in Tanzania, children attended primary schools in tents on a shift basis. (UN report 2011).

Eckert, (2011) reported that from 1999-2008, there was violent conflicts in thirty five countries. Disturbing figures show that in time of conflict, attacks on schools are common and part of the strategy of the armed group. In 2009 alone in Afghanistan, there were 613 attacks on schools, nearly double the amount from the previous year. During the fighting and instability in Yemen in 2009 between government and rebel forces, 220 schools in total were destroyed. Threats of violence towards schools, and school age children are used as tactics to keep the population uneducated.

Over 28 million children out of school globally live in 35 countries are affected by armed conflict, which is one of the most serious bottleneck for reaching the goal of education for all (EFA) by 2015, a UN report shows. The crisis is having far-reaching humanitarian consequences throughout the countries. Lack of access to education for hundreds of children are all having a dangerous impact on the livelihoods of people.

Nigeria has had and still has too many conflicts with ethnic, religious and economic coloration that have had adverse effects on the educational systems. Children and education systems are often on the front line of violent conflict in Nigeria. Unfortunately, local Government Chairmen and Governors who should be chief security officers of their areas of jurisdiction are hardly there when conflict occur rather busy with other things.

Ensuring school attendance in conflict and post-conflict situation helps to teach peace both directly and indirectly. School attendance reduces the risk of children being recruited or re-recruited as child militia;



provides life-saving information on landmines, HIV/AIDS prevention, and post-disaster situation also provide children with both structure and stability, which can help them, overcome the trauma incurred by conflict, and displacement (Clifford 2011). Providing education in conflict and post-conflict as well as in post –disaster situation also works to build peace and security by giving children hope. Many countries have applied it and succeeded, it can be possible in Nigeria.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey research method was used. Questionnaire and unstructured interview were used to generate data relating to the objective of the paper. The data was analyzed using applicable and relevant statistics, frequency count and percentages displayed in tables and charts.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Effect of conflict on child's education

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	50	100%
No	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 1: above shows that 100% of the respondents were of the view that during conflict child's education in Nigeria suffers most. This is because during conflict schools are target to parties of the conflict and sometimes they are closed down and turned to a refugee camp. For instance, Government Girls Secondary School TafawaBalewa, the only girl school that admits more than half girl child from three (3) Local Government Areas in the region was closed down for over 4 years since 2011, by the Government because of conflict.

Table 2: Effort of the government and the international community in Protecting the education right of Nigerian child during conflict

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Government (1) Positive attitude (2) Negative attitude	0 50	0% 100%
International Community (1) Positive attitude (2) Negative attitude	10 40	20% 80%

Table 2 above indicates that Bauchi State Government does not have any positive attitude towards protecting child's education during conflict. This was confirmed by 100% of the respondents. The best it does is to close down the schools prone to attack during conflicts. Bauchi State government sees education in this situation as a luxury rather than necessity. The same table shows the skewed priorities of international agencies in their spending patterns where military spending far exceeds the spending on education. Six days military spending by some of the world's richest countries is enough to put all children into school.

Table 3: Alternative sites for classrooms when schools are closed as a result of conflict

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	0	0%
No	50	100%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 shows that there are no alternatives sites for classrooms when schools are closed as a result of conflict. Hundred (100%) response of the respondents attested to this fact, though the respondents are also in

support of not continuing with the education because of fear of attack on their children.

**Table 4: Government intervention on education in areas affected by armed conflict in Bogoro/Tafawa Balewa LGA**

S/n	Question	Respondents	Answer
1	What are the measures put in place to see that these children affected in conflict are catered for educationally?	Chairmen Bogoro/Tafawa Balewa LGA	We are more concern in bringing the situation under control
2	Have you tried contacting NGOs in your state on how they can help in this issue?	Chairmen Bogoro/Tafawa Balewa LGA	As I said to control the conflict is most important
3	These schools are directly under your supervision, what measures have you employed to see that these children have not missed out completely on their studies?	Education Councilor Bogoro/Tafawa Balewa LGA	We have being trying to see that the conflict is brought to a halt.
4	How have you tried to seek the help of NGOs in the state who are into Education to see how they can be of help in this case?	Education Councilor Bogoro/Tafawa Balewa LGA	As I have told you we are trying to bring the situation under control.

From the above table it can be concluded that children in these affected areas cannot boost of adequate education as their counterparts in safe zones where education goes on uninterrupted.

Thus, the Nigerian Government should imbibe the strategy of Yugoslavia where classes could be held in cellars of people by candle light or classes can be held under trees, in caves or in camouflaged huts

built from sticks and foliage in the refugee camp. The L.G.A working in their domain should come up with strategies that will help these younger children continue with their education even if it means providing this service for some hours. Materials can be drawn up that will help the children do most of the study on their own with little guidance from their adult parents or teachers within the camp. Alternatively children could attend classes in bukas (huts) on a shift basis.

## CONCLUSION

Education gives shape and structure to children's lives and instills community values, promotes justice and respect for human rights and enhances peace, stability and interdependence. Unfortunately, not even schools are safe from attack during conflict. The destruction of education networks represents one of the greatest setbacks for a country like Nigeria. Historically, those concerned with the situation of children during conflict have focused primarily on their physical vulnerability.

The need for the continued education for these children cannot be over emphasized because they are going to sit for the same common entrance examination with their peers in a peaceful area, this will affect their performance. The state government should look into this issue with an uttermost concern as these children are the future leaders of tomorrow. Borrowing a leaf from other countries like Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Tanzania will be of great help.

Also there should be a resettlement policy. This policy shall provide for the establishment of at least one resettlement camp in each state and the Federal Capital territory (FCT). The resettlement camps will provide displaced people, especially women and children with adequate security access, clean water and sanitation. There will be clinic center and school facilities which will enable the children have good medical care and to continue with their schooling activities. All sectors of society

must come together to build ethical frameworks for protecting the educational right of the Nigerian child during conflict.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Parties in conflict should refrain from destroying or attacking school infrastructures in order to minimize disruption of school curriculum.
2. All phases of emergency and reconstruction assistance programmes should take educational considerations into account.
3. All possible efforts should be made to maintain education system during conflicts.
4. Preparation should be made for sustaining education outside of formal school buildings.
5. As soon as camps of displaced persons are established during conflict, educational activities should take off.
6. Support for the re-establishment and continuing education must be a priority of NGOs and donor agencies during conflict.
7. There should be a policy for the establishment of at least one resettlement camp in each state and the Federal Capital Territory. The camp should provide all basic amenities including schooling facilities.

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