



Istifinus Tijjani
Postgraduate Student
Department of Economics
Adamawa State University. Mubi,
Nigeria.

Godwin Boniface (**Ph.D**)
Department of Economics
Adamawa State University. Mubi,
Nigeria.

Aliyu Alhaji Jibrilla, **PhD**
Economics Department
Adamawa State University, Mubi

Adamu Yahya, **PhD**
Department of Economics
Adamawa State University. Mubi,
Nigeria.

***Corresponding Author**

Istifinus Tijjani
Postgraduate Student
Department of Economics
Adamawa State University. Mubi,
Nigeria.

IMPACT OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY ON MIGRANTS' POVERTY LEVEL IN SOUTHERN BORNO, NIGERIA: A STUDY OF SOME SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the poverty levels of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Southern Borno, Nigeria, with a focus on selected Local Government Areas (LGAs). The research was informed by the challenges experienced by the IDPs over the long period of insurgency within the region with most of them losing their means of livelihood thereby, reinforcing their poverty level. Mixed method was deployed where a cross sectional survey was adopted to collect data for the quantitative data and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was used to collect qualitative data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. While as, thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data. The research reveals the profound socio-economic challenges faced by IDPs, including a significant reduction in income, with the average monthly income dropping from ₦103,426.81 (before displacement) to ₦55,650 (after displacement), highlighting severe economic vulnerability. The findings show an increased reliance on external support from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government agencies (NEDC, NEMA, SEMA), and faith-based organizations, as well as assistance from host and neighboring communities. Vulnerabilities related to climate change, household dependency, educational attainment, and limited adaptive capacity were also identified as major contributors to the poverty levels among IDPs. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, including economic support programs, vocational training, climate adaptation strategies, infrastructure development, and strengthened policy frameworks to mitigate the negative effects of displacement and improve the livelihoods of affected populations.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Terrorism remains a persistent threat across Africa, with Nigeria experiencing one of the continent's most severe insurgencies through Boko Haram since 2009. Concentrated in northeastern Nigeria, the conflict has devastated Borno State, particularly its southern LGAs such as Chibok, Askira Uba, Damboa, and Gwoza. Formerly sustained by subsistence farming, livestock rearing, and petty trade, these communities now face recurring attacks, abductions, and infrastructure destruction that

have displaced millions and crippled local economies (Nwokolo, 2020; Adegboyega & Adebayo, 2021). According to World Bank (2015; 2021) and UNHCR (2022) estimates, over 20,000 lives have been lost, 1.9 million people internally displaced, and infrastructure damage exceeds US\$9 billion. More than 80% of IDPs reside in Borno, exerting pressure on already strained host communities (Sydney & Onwuemele, 2019). Migrants in Southern Borno now struggle with food insecurity, limited shelter, scarce healthcare access, and heightened social tensions (Musa & Abdullahi, 2019). Loss of farmlands, livestock, and disrupted market systems has pushed many into unstable informal work or dependence on humanitarian aid (Ibekwe, 2019; Garba, 2022), while psychological trauma further undermines livelihood recovery (Ahmed, 2021). Although government and aid agencies provide relief, insecurity, donor fatigue, and logistical barriers constrain long-term effectiveness (Chidi & Nwosu, 2020). In response, this study investigates how Boko Haram-induced displacement has deepened poverty among migrants in Biu, Hawul, Chibok, and Askira Uba LGAs, examining their socio-economic conditions, coping mechanisms, and the adequacy of existing interventions.

Despite ongoing humanitarian efforts, migrants in Southern Borno remain trapped in chronic poverty due to displacement-driven loss of livelihoods, socio-economic exclusion, and limited recovery pathways. Existing interventions lack context-specific data to inform sustainable solutions, necessitating empirical inquiry into how the insurgency continues to affect income, welfare, and resilience among displaced populations. The research objectives guiding this study are designed to ensure a comprehensive and effective investigation of the socio-economic impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency on migrants in Southern Borno. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how Boko Haram activities have affected the income levels of migrants within the selected areas, assess the broader effects of migration on their livelihoods, and identify as well as analyze the coping strategies adopted by internally displaced persons (IDPs) to enhance their economic resilience and overall well-being.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Clarification

This section clarifies key concepts central to the study terrorism, insurgency, and insecurity drawing from various scholarly definitions.

Terrorism lacks a universally agreed definition, as scholars emphasize different dimensions. Schmid (2022) views it as repeated violent actions by individuals or groups for political or criminal purposes, though his definition omits religious extremism. Uche (2021) defines terrorism as planned violence aimed at destabilizing authority and identifies its forms as state, domestic, and international terrorism. Eku (2018) further explains that state terrorism is government-led coercion, domestic terrorism occurs within national borders, while international terrorism crosses boundaries. Agencies like the FBI (2022) and UN (1992) describe terrorism as premeditated violence targeting civilians to create fear and influence political outcomes. Hoffman (2008) and Stern (2020) emphasize terror as the deliberate use of fear to achieve change. Common tactics include suicide bombings, hijackings, kidnappings, arson, improvised explosives, and media propaganda (Okoli & Iortyer, 2014). From these views, terrorism can be broadly understood as violent, coercive action—often ideologically or religiously motivated—carried out outside legitimate warfare to intimidate populations and destabilize systems.

Insurgency is similarly defined as armed rebellion against an established authority. Mackinlay (2002) and Carrol (2012) describe it as a movement seeking to overthrow government by mobilizing public sympathy, often in weak or divided states. Fearon and Laitin (2001) stress its guerrilla warfare nature and dependence on difficult terrains, external support, or local grievances. Gompert & Gordon (2008) and Abolurin (2011) define it as organized attempts to replace existing political order through subversion and violence. Bard O’Neil (1990) highlights that insurgencies use political tools such as propaganda, protests, and armed struggle to delegitimize ruling authorities. Overall, insurgency involves internal armed resistance driven by political, religious, or socio-economic motives.

Insecurity, as the opposite of security, refers to the absence of protection from threats. While security implies safety of life, property, livelihood, and psychological well-being (Akin, 2008; Oguriley et al., 2011), insecurity denotes exposure to risk, instability, or fear. In essence, it represents the breakdown of societal conditions necessary for peaceful and productive living.

Empirical Review

The Boko Haram insurgency has profoundly affected economic, social, psychological, and infrastructural conditions in Northeast Nigeria, particularly in Borno State. Studies consistently show that displacement has led to income loss, asset destruction, and increased dependence on aid. Bello and Bakare (2022) highlight the gendered impacts of insurgency, noting that women face greater poverty due to widowhood

and limited livelihood options. Abubakar (2021) links disrupted education and vocational training to long-term unemployment among youth, while Ezech (2019) shows that trauma and depression hinder economic productivity among IDPs. Yusuf (2020) finds that although poverty alleviation interventions exist, corruption and inadequate funding limit their effectiveness. Aliyu and Kime (2018) emphasize that displaced households lose access to assets and social services, resulting in heavy reliance on humanitarian support—findings echoed by Adeoye (2017), who attributes regional economic stagnation to destroyed infrastructure and disrupted trade.

In agriculture-dependent communities, multiple studies confirm severe livelihood disruptions. Babagana et al. (2018) and Abubakar et al. (2017) report that crop and livestock production nearly collapsed between 2012 and 2016, forcing farmers into exile and dependency on aid. Similar conclusions are drawn by Jara and Bunu (2021), who documented drastic declines in staple crop yields during peak insurgency in Adamawa. Agri et al. (2019) and Tari et al. (2016) further demonstrate that insurgency reduces agricultural productivity and exacerbates food insecurity, though most of these studies rely on descriptive statistics or secondary data without triangulation. More rigorous inferential analyses by Usman (2019) and Ojo et al. (2018) confirm significant declines in farm output using t-tests and regression models, though qualitative perspectives remain limited. Studies by Madu (2019) and Adewuyi & Michael (2020) reinforce these findings but often suffer from small sample sizes and weak methodological depth.

Beyond immediate conflict zones, effects extend to non-conflict areas. Onwusiribe et al. (2015) show that reduced food supply from the Northeast has triggered price inflation in Southern Nigeria. Adebisi et al. (2017) also report that national agricultural GDP dropped significantly during the insurgency period. Drawing from Gurr's conflict theory, these patterns illustrate how prolonged insecurity produces structural poverty, reinforced by displacement, lost assets, psychological trauma, and weak institutional responses.

Overall, existing literature establishes that the insurgency has deepened poverty among migrants through economic disruption, social dislocation, psychological stress, and aid dependency. However, many studies are limited by narrow geographic scope, reliance on descriptive statistics, or lack of mixed-method validation highlighting the need for more comprehensive, context-specific analysis in Southern Borno.

Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory, originally developed by Karl Marx and expanded by C. Wright Mills, argues that social conflicts arise from inequalities in the distribution of resources, power, and opportunities. In the context of the Boko Haram insurgency, this theory provides a compelling explanation for both the root causes of insurgency and its outcomes on migrant poverty. Long-standing socio-economic marginalization, high unemployment, unequal access to education, and perceived political exclusion in Northeast Nigeria created fertile ground for the rise of Boko Haram. As Liolio (2013) explains, insurgent groups exploit these inequalities by promising social justice and basic welfare to the impoverished, thus recruiting easily from vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, the insurgency itself reinforces inequalities: it destroys livelihoods, displaces communities, and limits access to social services, pushing migrants deeper into poverty. From a Conflict Theory perspective, both the emergence and perpetuation of the crisis reflect systemic struggles between dominant power structures and marginalized groups. Therefore, this theory not only explains why insurgency occurs, but also why its effects disproportionately burden the poor and displaced

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design for this study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative (using Focus Group Discussions FGDs, Key Informant Interviews KIIs and direct observation) methods to comprehensively investigate the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on migrant poverty in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Southern Borno. This approach ensures a robust analysis by triangulating data from multiple sources, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Sources and Method of Data Collection

Data collection technique was done via quantitative Methods which is purely a survey process using well-structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaires will be used to collect data on socio-economic status, livelihood activities, and access to services. This allows for the collection of standardized data from a large

sample, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of findings. It was implemented via the support of enumerators who will administer the questionnaires through face-to-face interviews to ensure high response rates and accuracy.

Population of the Study

The study targets Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in four Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Southern Borno State: Chibok, Askira-Uba, Damboa, and Gwoza. These areas were selected due to their high exposure to insurgent attacks and large concentrations of displaced populations. Chibok is predominantly agrarian and hosts both formal and informal IDP camps. Askira-Uba, sharing borders with Adamawa State, also has multiple settlements for displaced families, with agriculture severely disrupted. Damboa, known for its mixed farming and trading population, has experienced extensive attacks leading to widespread displacement. Gwoza, located near the Cameroon border with mountainous terrain, has faced some of the most intense insurgency and accommodates several makeshift IDP camps.

According to UNHCR (2020) and NRC (2020), estimated IDP populations across the LGAs are: Chibok (35,000-40,000), Askira-Uba (30,000–35,000), Damboa (45,000–50,000), and Gwoza (50,000–55,000), totaling approximately 160,000–180,000 individuals. The diverse geography and demographics of these areas provide a comprehensive representation of displacement realities in Southern Borno. Existing humanitarian reports also offer useful baseline data for sampling and analysis. Focusing on these LGAs enables a deeper understanding of the socio-economic challenges of IDPs and supports the development of targeted policy and intervention strategies.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The Taro Yamane formula, introduced by the Japanese statistician Taro Yamane in 1967 in his book *"Statistics: An Introductory Analysis"*, is a widely used method for determining appropriate sample size from a known population. The formula simplifies complex sampling procedures by providing a quick and reliable way to calculate the minimum number of respondents required to achieve statistically valid results at a given confidence level.

The formula is stated as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where:

- **n** = sample size,
- **N** = total population,
- **e** = level of precision or allowable margin of error (usually 0.05 for 95% confidence).

The Taro Yamane technique is particularly valuable in survey research, social sciences, and administrative studies, where researchers often face large or scattered populations but require cost-effective and time-efficient sampling. It eliminates guesswork in selecting sample sizes and ensures representativeness without the need for advanced statistical computation.

Techniques of Analysis

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including the Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI), were computed using software such as SPSS

or STATA to identify trends, relationships, and significant differences within the data. In addition, qualitative data from in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were subjected to thematic analysis, where responses were coded to extract recurring themes. This combination of statistical and thematic analysis ensured a comprehensive understanding of both measurable patterns and lived experiences of migrants.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Socio-economic Attributes of the Respondents at the IDPs Camp in Southern Borno

Variable	Observation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Income Level of IDPs Now	383	55,650	6.28874	16420	93450
Average Amount Spent by IDPs	383	54,125.511	17.0884	20,000	88,000
Average Income of IDPs before	383	103,426.81	567228.63	80000	420000
Family size of Household	383	7.60602	4.23133	4	19
Age Categories of IDPs	383	28.5	11.23	21	61
Educational Level of Household	383	3.351573	1.260923	1	5

Source: Outcome of Field Survey December, 2024. Computed Using STATA

Table 4.1 compares the socio-economic conditions of IDPs in Southern Borno before and after displacement. The average monthly income dropped sharply from ₦103,426.81 (\$62.68) to ₦55,650 (\$34.20), reflecting a major loss of financial stability. Before displacement, income levels varied widely, but post-displacement incomes became more uniform at lower levels, signaling greater economic vulnerability. This decline aligns with the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), indicating heightened deprivation in living standards, access to resources, and opportunities. Large household sizes further increase dependency burdens, while most IDPs—despite being in their productive age—struggle to regain economic footing. Educational attainment is moderate (mean score 3.35/5), suggesting basic awareness yet limited capacity to secure decent employment or manage essential needs like water and sanitation. Key vulnerability indicators such as access to food, water, shelter, health services, and exposure to conflict were

analyzed using Human Capital Index (HCI) components. Adaptive capacity was assessed through the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, examining natural, human, social, and financial assets. The aggregated Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI) results are presented in Table 4.3.1. The overall displacement has pushed IDPs into a precarious survival state where incomes barely match expenditures, and resilience depends heavily on limited resources and humanitarian support.

Table 4.2: Normalized Indices of Exposure, Sensitivity and Adaptive Capacity Across the Study Areas

Major Components	Combined				Normalized Level
Normalized Exposure	0.79	0.78	0/77	0.81	Very High
Normalized Sensitivity	0.34	0.33	0.22	0.48	Moderate
Normalized Adaptive Capacity	0.35	0.32	0..34	0.38	Moderate
Average (LVI)	0.49	0.48	0.44	0.55	Moderate

Source: Outcome of Field Survey December, 2024. Computed Using STATA

The vulnerability indices across the study areas ranged from 0.49 to 0.55, indicating a moderate overall impact. A sample t-test showed a significant difference in mean LVI-IPCC ($p < 0.01$). Exposure to climate variability and extreme weather events was notably high, particularly in Gwoza (0.81) and Damboa (0.77), both situated closer to the Sahara Desert and therefore more affected by drought and desert encroachment. This emphasizes the heavy reliance of households on rain-fed agriculture, making them highly climate-vulnerable.

The sensitivity index, which covers food, health, water, infrastructure, and conflict, showed moderate vulnerability (0.22-0.48). Askira-Uba recorded the highest sensitivity, while Chibok had the lowest. Water scarcity and related conflicts were particularly severe across all LGAs in the past decade. Gwoza exhibited the highest vulnerability to essential services like health, food, transportation, and financial access, while Chibok also showed considerable stress due to prolonged insecurity limiting infrastructure access. Regarding adaptive capacity (education, skills, natural resources, social networks, and financial assets), the overall index stood at 0.35. Askira-Uba showed the highest adaptive capacity (0.38), attributed to better

access to education, vocational skills, land, and financial services. Natural and financial capital particularly access to farmland and informal financial support played a key role in resilience strategies. However, current coping mechanisms mostly compensate rather than fully offset the effects of conflict-induced hardship.

Table 4.3: Presentation of LVI Based on the Five Key Components namely: Physical, Natural, Human, Financial and Social Capitals across the Study Areas

LVI Indicators/ Study Areas	Natural Capital			Human Capital				Financial Capital	Physical Capital		Social Capital			Overall LVI	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
Combined Component Average	-0.16	0.32	0.69	0.16	0.34	0.36	-.08	0.17	=0.78	0.76	0.57	0.45	-.54	0.64	0.21
Askira-Uba Component Average	0.07	0.28	0.55	0.13	0.18	0.13	-.09	0.35	-.78	0.81	0.16	0.32	-.45	0.61	0.16
Chibok Component Average	-0.06	0.37	0.34	0.22	0.18	0.43	0.07	0.24	=.77	0.71	0.34	0.34	-.40	0.62	0.19
Gwaza Component Average	-0.12	0.35	0.59	0.26	0.35	0.38	0.22	0.33	-.81	0.78	0.22	0.38	-.61	0.65	0.21
Weight	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	

Source: Outcome of Field Survey December, 2024. Computed Using STATA

Table 4.3 presents the composite Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI) across key components natural, human, financial, physical, and social capital. The LVI-IPCC ranges from -1 to 1, with higher values indicating greater vulnerability. Overall results show low vulnerability across locations ($LVI < 0.50$), with Gwoza being the most vulnerable (0.21), followed by Chibok (0.19) and Askira-Uba (0.16). Natural capital is weakest in Askira-Uba (0.30), where households have the least access to agricultural land (77.5%) and face higher impacts from climate hazards such as desertification and drought. Firewood scarcity is also widely reported. Human capital vulnerability is highest in Gwoza (0.30), due to poor access to water, food, health services, and education, followed by Chibok (0.27), while Askira-Uba shows far lower vulnerability (0.09).

Financial capital shows Askira-Uba again as most vulnerable (0.35), largely due to high debt prevalence (55.33%), despite relatively better savings rates compared to Chibok, which has the lowest financial inclusion. Social capital is weakest in Chibok (0.24), as more households report limited support networks, whereas Gwoza benefits from stronger communal assistance.

Table 4.4: Copping Strategies Adopted by the IDPs in Southern Borno State=Nigeria

S/N	Key Factors	Explanation	Frequency of Citation
1.	Relying mostly on Donors	IDPs reported relying mostly on donors and development partners whom mostly have NGOs who provide them with relief materials	*****
2.	Relying mostly on Government	Government Agency such as the North-East Development (NEDC) Commission., NIMA and SEMA were also reported to have been providing supports such as foods and agricultural inputs	*****
3.	Assistance from faith-based organization	Religious organization such as assistances coming from churches and mosques in terms of cash, clothes and toiletries	****
4.	Assistance from host and neighboring communities	Members of the host and neighboring communities often assist IDPs by leasing farmland mostly for free or at a negligible price per farming season	****
5.	IDPs hired o work in farmlands	IDPs and their family members both adults and children are being hired to work in farmlands especially during planting and harvest seasons at stipulated prices	***
6.	Engage in Income generating activities	Most IDPs as part of their coping strategies embarked on income generating activities such as firewood fetching, farming, water and food vending and petty trading in order to earn income	***

Source: Outcome of Field Survey December, 2024. Computed Using STATA

Focus Group Discussions revealed that IDPs heavily depend on external support to survive. The most frequently cited coping strategy was reliance on donors, particularly NGOs that supply essential relief materials. Government aid mainly from NEDC, NEMA, and SEMA was also widely acknowledged, providing food and agricultural inputs, reflecting a dual dependency on both NGOs and state institutions. Faith-based organizations such as churches and mosques offer supplementary support through cash, clothing, and toiletries, reinforcing social and communal solidarity. Host and neighboring communities also

assist by granting access to farmland, demonstrating strong local cooperation. Beyond aid, IDPs engage in seasonal agricultural labor and small-scale income activities like firewood collection, vending, and petty trading. While these livelihood efforts show resilience, they often remain unstable and insufficient. Overall, the coping strategies are multi-layered but dominated by external assistance, indicating that IDPs' survival still largely depends on aid rather than sustainable self-reliance. Strengthening capacity-building interventions is therefore essential to reduce long-term dependency.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals severe socio-economic disruptions among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Southern Borno, marked by a significant decline in income levels from ₦103,426.81 to ₦55,650 monthly leading to heightened multidimensional poverty. Household pressures stemming from large family sizes, youthful demographics, and moderate educational attainment further constrain livelihood recovery prospects. Climate change stressors, particularly in Gwoza and Askira-Uba, exacerbate vulnerabilities, while limited access to food, water, health facilities, and physical infrastructure contributes to moderate sensitivity levels. Although adaptive capacity varies across locations, with Askira-Uba demonstrating relatively higher resilience due to better educational and vocational profiles, the majority of IDPs remain dependent on humanitarian assistance from NGOs, government agencies, faith-based institutions, and host communities. Nevertheless, IDPs exhibit agency through engagement in subsistence farming and informal income activities, reflecting resilience within constrained economic environments.

Displacement has resulted in substantial livelihood erosion and heightened economic precarity among IDPs. While existing coping mechanisms demonstrate some degree of resilience, current adaptive capacities remain insufficient to offset sustained economic and climatic pressures. Targeted support is required to transition IDPs from dependency to long-term livelihood stability.

Recommendations

- i. Promote income stabilization through structured livelihood programmes, microfinance schemes, and enterprise support.
- ii. Scale up education and vocational training to enhance employability and diversify income sources.
- iii. Strengthen climate adaptation mechanisms through resilient agricultural practices and environmental risk mitigation.
- iv. Expand access to essential services such as healthcare, potable water, and transportation infrastructure.
- v. Institutionalize comprehensive policy frameworks that address the multidimensional nature of IDP vulnerability.

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