

**POLICY BRIEF ON**

**PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES  
Of NON-VIOLENT RESOLUTION of INSURGENCY  
IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA**



**CENTRE FOR INFORMATION  
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## **Introduction**

The Insurgency by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram has lasted for more than eleven years now. During this period, 37,530 people have been killed, more than 2 million displaced internally, and created 244,000 refugees as a result of the insurgency.<sup>1</sup> Several communities have been completely destroyed and travel constrained in the region. In fact, up until 2016, the insurgents controlled several local government areas in Borno State. Moreover, the insurgency disrupted economic activities in many parts of the northeast, particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States.

There have been various efforts by the government, international community and other actors to bring the insurgency to an end. The Federal Government has deployed two complementary strategies, a military onslaught on the insurgents and a soft strategy which focuses on winning the minds, especially of young people from the insurgents as well as de-radicalization and reintegration of repentant former Boko Haram members.

There is a simple assumption that there are only two parties to the conflict. This assumption makes it difficult to see the interest and fears of other actors that are not visibly seen in the conflict arena but active behind the scene. Even within the Boko Haram influence, it is easy to assume that there is a homogenous movement with the same vision and goals. There are various insurgents with allegiances to different factional leaders; there are their supporters, profiteers and even associated criminals. All these are part of the conflict complex. A more nuanced understanding of the conflict complex and the positioning of different actors (seen and unseen) within conflict complex map and what interests they have in the continuation or otherwise of the conflict is needed. We need to identify the factors that make the conflict protracted and what can be done to address these factors in such a way that the drivers of the conflict can be undermined and broken. We need to understand what interests each of these actors represent in shaping a post-conflict era. We need to know what they fear to lose if the conflict is ended and what can be done about these fears and how to address the post conflict dynamics of reconciliation and justice.

### **1. Research Questions**

It was therefore important to undertake a research aimed at strategic generation of ideas that government can implement in addressing the conflict to bring it to an end. The research was meant to provide answers to the following questions:

1. In each state, what is the state of the conflicts?
2. What are the positions of government, non-state armed groups, religious and community leaders, on dialogue and reconciliation as option for resolution?
3. Which actors can best promote dialogue and reconciliation?
4. What is the best way to approach them?
5. What are the competing demands of major actors and how feasible are these demands?
6. What are the risks of non-violent resolution and possible mitigation strategies?
7. Which actors and approaches should be engaged in resolutions initiatives?

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html>

## **2. Methodology**

This document is the outcome of an action and policy-oriented research meant to assist government and other stakeholders that are involved in exploring options for the resolution of the conflict. The research focused basically at exploring the prospects and possibilities as well as the challenges of dialogue and negotiation as an option to ending or creating the conditions for ending the insurgency. It was conducted in the three most affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe as well in Kano to allow us to see if there were lessons to learn from the way the conflict was addressed in that state.

The research team deployed three key methods. First, the research team undertook an extensive desk review to have better grounded understanding of the complexity of the conflict as well assess efforts aimed at finding solution to the crisis, the methods deployed, the results achieved, the challenges faced and why these strategies have not been successful. The second method was key informants' interviews with relevant stakeholders in these four states, seeking answers to probing questions. The key informants interviewed included government officials, religious and community leaders, youth, military personnel, other security officials, women, armed non-state actors, victims, former or repentant insurgents, Internally displaced persons (IDPs), etc. Overall, 75 people were interviewed across the states. The third was focused group discussions (FGDs) with representatives of selected groups of stakeholders. These included religious and community leaders, youth, military personnel, other security officials, women, armed non-state actors, victims, former or repentant insurgents, internally displaced persons (IDPs). A total of `20 FGDs were conducted in the four states, with over 200 participants. Both the KIIs and the FGDs were directed at interrogating key questions connected to the issues of dialogue and negotiation.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The major findings of the study are presented according to the main research questions as follows:

### **4.1 The Current State of the conflict**

There is no doubt that the military has succeeded in containing and rolling back the insurgents as many territories previously in the hands of the insurgents have been recovered and the insurgents flushed out of many of those places. They have, as government and military officials keep saying, technically degraded the insurgents. The onslaught has also contributed to the divisions that have occurred within the Boko Haram. Major towns in the region such as Maiduguri, Bama and Mubi among others have seen a process of restoration of normalcy, even though there are still pockets of attacks.

However, the insurgency is far from being defeated. The end of the conflict is still a possibility, not a reality at the moment. In spite of military successes recorded against the Boko Haram insurgents, the conflict has continued to linger with spell of attacks. This stage of the crisis is unsettling and more insidious given that many of the insurgents that have been flushed out have somehow become embedded in communities, which makes it easier for them to spring surprising attacks. These sporadic attacks have made it difficult to resettle displaced people and restore normalcy in the areas and communities deeply affected by the insurgency.

Attacks, although with less frequency, still occur with human causality and destruction. Resettlement in a number of communities has been impossible as the insurgents have either direct control of these communities or they control the roads to these communities. Economic activities, without which normalization cannot occur, are still not possible in some places. In some cases, the Boko Haram insurgents have strategic control of some of the economic resources and activities. For instance, in the Bama and Lake Chad axis, they control fishing and fishing trade. They were able to create new fish markets in Kusiri market in Northern Cameroon and another in Kinchandi in Niger Republic, thus effectively neutralizing the biggest fish market in West Africa, the Baga Fish Market. They have also redirected fish traders from Kano and Jigawa States to alternative markets in Niger, thus squeezing out Maiduguri of commercial activities. They have continued to abduct humanitarian aid workers, villagers and others. They have continued to attack communities, killing many more people including civilians and soldiers, blocking highways, making inter-city travel, especially in Borno State dangerous. For example, on November 1, the town of Chibok was attacked by the insurgents who killed 12 people and abducted seven others, in addition to burning several houses and looting food stores. Earlier in October, they had attacked a group of soldiers in Doska, Dambao LGA, killing seven of them. But most audacious attacks were on the convoy of the Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum. The first was on July 19, 2020 when his convey was attacked in Baga town where he had visited. Several people were either killed or wounded in the Governor's Convoy. Again, on September 26, 2020, his convoy was attacked a second time on its way to the same Baga town.

The divisions within the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad have, instead of weakening the insurgency, opened up new fronts of engagement for the military, thus further stretching their forces. In spite of the number of insurgents killed, detained or those who have repented, the various factions of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad have continued to recruit, meaning that their recruiting grounds have not be destructed.

But bringing the insurgency to an end and a closure is imperative for Nigeria. How do we hasten the process of bringing the insurgency to an end? It is clear that military action alone cannot end the conflict. That means that military action will have to be complemented with a broader non-kinetic approach to winning the battle. Finding a solution to it will require a deeper understanding of the current state of the crisis, unearthing the factors that frame the continuing conflict and developing a framework within which a solution can come.

There is a simple assumption that there are only two parties to the conflict. This assumption makes it difficult to see the interest and fears of other actors that are not visible in the conflict arena but active behind the scene. Even within the Boko Haram, it is easy to assume that there is a homogenous movement with the same vision and goal. But in fact, there are various insurgents with allegiances to different factional leaders; there are supporters, profiteers and even associated criminals. All these are part of the conflict complex. A more nuanced understanding of the conflict and the position of different actors (seen and unseen) within the conflict complex map and what interests they have in the continuation or otherwise of the conflict is needed. We need to identify the factors that make the conflict resilient and what can be done to address these factors in such a way that the resilience of the conflict can be undermined and broken. We need

to understand what interests each of these actors represents in shaping a post-conflict era. We need to know what they fear to lose if the conflict is ended and what can be done about these fears and how to address the post conflict dynamics of reconciliation and justice.

The nature of the conflict has changed both due to the military offensive against the insurgents as well as the internal dynamics of factionalization among the insurgents themselves. At the height of the conflict, there was a single central organization and authority within the Boko Haram structure. With factionalization that set in around 2016, there is now not one single central authority and leadership, but, competing factions, sometime at war among themselves, at times cooperating with each other in attacking their targets. With this break up leadership, there are also now possibly other unallied groups who act on their own and are more or less independent of any of the factions at least at the level of command. This context has also given opportunity for criminals to appropriate a franchise without any link to any of the factions of the insurgents, operating and acting against targets and making it appear as if these were Boko Haram attacks.

Although territorially the insurgents are pushed to small rural areas, nevertheless, some of them are still embedded within communities and working with those in the formations to coordinate actions. Those embedded within the communities are responsible for generating information and intelligence gathering, identification of soft targets, handling logistics such as food supply, movement of ammunition, and other supplies that the insurgents need.

There is a decline in large scale attacks, even as the insurgents' capacity to launch minor incessant attacks on various locations and highways continue unabated and it has been observed that the frequency of attacks has recently increased. There is also a decline in the frequency of suicides and IEDs attacks, and disruption of their supply chains. However, rural areas remain relatively insecure. In addition, the Boko Haram has control of upper Borno North in local governments such as Abadan and the Lake Chad area. They are embedded in rural communities along Maiduguri- Damaturu Highway, and in Tarmuwa LGA of Yobe State as well as in Kaga Local Government of Bornu State. Boko Haram is still in control of most of Madagali local government area except Gulak the local government headquarters and a few other towns like Bebel, Vagirik, Vokolos, Vorkotok, Visik which are considered as relatively safe. Many towns like Gubla, Sukur, Daurawa, Kamburu, Mazawa, Vengo, Borkoto, Hidik, Yibango, Makshe, Humshe, Jaje, Gatha, Chakama, Mandaka, Waga, Barngwaza, Gubla etc. are considered as no-go areas because the insurgents control those areas

#### **4.2 Assessment of the Government efforts to win the battle**

The military offensive embarked upon from 2015 along with the effort of the Multinational Joint Force against the insurgents has been uneven. At the beginning it recorded successes, not only in halting the advance of the insurgents but also retook territories that were in the control of the Boko Haram. Virtually all the areas in Yobe were retaken by the military, much of the areas of central Borno occupied by Boko Haram were purged of the insurgents and similarly, they were pushed out of occupied areas in Adamawa State. In partnership with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), the insurgents were flushed out of Maiduguri and most of urban areas of North east. Those pushed out of the cities and urban centres moved to rural areas where they camped

and are operating from there, usually attacking communities for food, medication and money. The result was that the insurgents are holed up in isolated patches such as in the northern fringe of Borno and around the Lake Chad area, where the ISWAP operates, in the Sambisa forest and in the border region between Borno and Adamawa States where the Shekau faction controls as well as in the areas around Kaga LGA in Borno and Tarmuwa LGA in Yobe State along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway.

The strategy of the military at that time was to take the battle to the insurgents as a result of which the military created many small units that were dispatched across large terrain of operation of the Boko Haram insurgents. With the collapse of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), the military power appeared weakened and the insurgents exploited this, attacking these small units, killing soldiers and taking over their weapons, ammunition and equipment. This weakened the morale of the soldiers leading to a change in strategy. In July, 2019, the President announced that the military was changing its strategy of engaging the insurgents. Subsequently, in August, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), speaking at the COAS combined second and third quarter conference in Abuja explained what the new strategy was essentially about creating what they termed super camps. The super camps entail the concentration of weapons, equipment and personnel in small number of large military formations. All the previous small units were thus disbanded and withdrawn and the personnel were posted to one of the super camps. While the military explained this as responding to change in the war, it was clear that this was a move to protect as well as safeguard itself against the taking away of military equipment and ammunition by the insurgents. Lt. Gen Buratai revealed that “so far, 20 Super Camps have been established in the northeast with more platforms deployed to support the initiative/strategy”.

Unfortunately, this created a new problem. With only a few super camps, many of the areas became totally with no military presence and thus became exposed to attacks by the insurgents. It was this that the insurgent groups capitalized upon and mounted a number of new attacks. For example, when they attacked both Magumeri and Gubio on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2019, these areas had no military cover and the insurgents operated for many hours, looting and burning property. The success in this emboldened the insurgents who began a series of more daring frequent small size attacks. The most popularized was the attack at Auno, along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway in which over 30 people were killed, and large number of people abducted. The most audacious was the attack on Biu LGA on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 2019 where BH overran two villages but was repelled before gaining access to the town itself. However, they launched a second attack on same Biu within 24hours. They also launched a deadly attack on Garkida in Adamawa State.

The general perception from the discussion with stakeholders is that the military successes that were recorded in the 2015/2016 are now been rolled back and that the insurgents seem to be gaining grounds. While the military has repeatedly said it had “degraded” the capacity of the insurgents, the insurgents have proved resilient in confronting the military. As it is now, there are clear signs of stalemate and majority of respondents across categories are convinced that military action alone cannot defeat the insurgents or bring the conflict to a closure.



### **4.3 Dialogue and reconciliation as option for resolution**

From the survey, respondents believe that the following can help to promote dialogue and reconciliation:

1. **Community and Religious Leaders:** A broad consensus in the findings indicate traditional and religious bodies play a central role in dialogue because of their historical roles in conflict resolution as more trustworthy and acceptable to all stakeholders
2. **Community members are ambivalent about negotiations:** While they understand the place of negotiation in finding lasting peace, they feel too aggrieved as to easily forgive the insurgents but nonetheless, believe there cannot be a sustainable peace without the involvement of the military in peace negotiations
3. **Military:** The military does not consider dialogue and negotiation as an option. The military considers its role as to fight and win the war and not to negotiate or dialogue with Boko Haram. They do not see the need to dialogue with terrorists.
4. **Governments:** The Federal Government has severally said it was willing to negotiate and indeed, a number of times has negotiated with the insurgents to seek the release of some abducted people. However, the message about willingness to dialogue with the insurgents is feeble and appears contradictory. This contradictory stand is attributable to the lack of a trusted mediator which is acceptable to the leadership of the insurgents. The state governments while not opposed to dialogue and negotiation think that responsibility for that lies with the Federal Government.
5. **Youth and other non-state actor combatants such as the CJTF:** The CJTF and vigilante both indicate willingness to support dialogue with BH if that will bring an end to the conflict, although in Adamawa, they appeared to be skeptical about dialogue and reconciliation with the insurgents.
6. **Elders, including ethnocultural groups such as the Borno Elders:** Most respondents among this category of stakeholders agree that dialogue is an unavoidable process that must be undertaken if the final goal is to end the crises and obtain sustainable peace. **The Insurgents:** The insurgents are no longer a homogenous group. They are divided into factions, and even within the factions, along different hierarchies. Respondents think that ISWAP appears more willing to negotiate than the JAS as indicated by ISWAP's tendency to announce abductions or capture of civilians. But within the factions, there is a hierarchy with the top leaders and others who are ideologically committed and not interested in dialogue while the opportunists and the foot soldiers who are at the lower rungs of the hierarchy are amenable to dialogues.
7. **Women and girls:** As victims, they feel the need for retributive justice to take its cause so that a closure could be brought to the pains they endured. This group is not predisposed to dialogue.

#### **4.4 Agency for promoting of dialogue and reconciliation**

Respondents believe that there are four groups of people who are best placed to promote dialogue and reconciliation. These are:

1. Religious and traditional leaders: As these are respected, they can be relied upon to help with the campaign to not only address the negative perception of the population about dialogue and negotiation. They should also enlighten the public that negotiation and dialogue are not to placate the insurgents. They will be listened to because they are respected and trusted by their communities. They are seen as custodians of religious knowledge, mentors and role models. They exert influence on their followers and command loyalty, respect and followership. They are a dependable medium of information dissemination through weekly sermons and daily preaching. With respect to religious leaders, a selection could be made from Friday Mosque Imams as they have influence with their congregations and also a wide network that could enable them to reach out to insurgents. In general, the imam from the Izala sect from which the Boko Haram sect from would be more acceptable to the insurgents in terms getting them to the negotiating table. For traditional rulers, the lower end (that is mai anuguwas, ward heads, etc) are either too compromised in the eyes of the citizens or too feeble to make impact. On the other hand, the top such as the Emirs are far removed as to have means to reach out to the insurgents, the middle level such as district heads should have the agency in getting their citizens to listen as well mobilize networks from within their communities to reach out to the insurgents. Farmers and people in the rural areas have better chance of reaching out to the insurgents.
2. NGOs/INGOs/Humanitarian Organizations: These can help to reach both potential parties as well as talk to the parties that are either ambivalent or are outrightly opposed to dialogue. A number of INGOs are particularly considered by the NSAGs as neutral and reliable as they were involved in the past negotiations for the release of the abducted “Chibok” and “Dapchi” school girls which is seen by most respondents to a larger extent, as successful.
3. Youths and Civilian JTF: Over the period, these have acquired influence and prestige among youth. They are an influential voice within the communities. They can be relied upon to promote dialogue among members of the communities. Youth will play an important role in convincing the skeptical population about the importance of dialogue and negotiation in finding sustainable peace.
4. Government: Ultimately, government has not only the resources but also the responsibility for working to ensure the restoration of peace. It has influence on the military without which respondents think there can be no dialogue.

#### **4.5 Stakeholder engagement approaches**

Regarding best approach of the engaging the actors, the study found that:

1. The people and organizations that will promote dialogues are not adversaries in this case, in which case, it is easy to approach them. However, government which should be the one to make the approach must be clear about what it wants from these groups.

2. An approach can be made by convening stakeholders' consultative meetings to discuss the possibilities and challenges of dialogue as a possible option for bringing the conflict to closure. All the groups should be identified and invited. These meetings should then discuss the subject matter and arrive at their own conclusions before government takes further action. Once the meetings agree through consensus on dialogue, it then discusses on who should promote and set up a committee for this purpose.
3. As part of the preparation, government should establish a dialogue and reconciliation committee and co-opt repentant Boko Haram members into the committee. In addition, negotiations with ISWAP can only be achieved through the involvement of traditional/religious leaders and excluding the military and other security agencies

#### **4.6 Feasibility of competing demands of major actors**

There are basically four competing sets of demands that would require tradeoffs and balancing. These are:

1. Communities are demanding for Justice/accountability and the need to bring the leadership of the insurgents to justice: The Insurgents have committed, and indeed are still committing atrocities for which natural justice requires that they be made to account. Those who have lost their loved ones and those who have suffered emotional, psychological, physical and other forms of torture in the hands of the insurgents or as a result of the activities of the insurgents will want those who perpetrated these crimes to be brought to justice. On the other hand, dialogue and negotiation will at once seem to legitimize what the insurgents have done. It will imply some form of amnesty. In this respect, it is important that as part of the Dialogue and Negotiation Framework, there is a firm post-conflict Justice Mechanism that should be arrived at through an inclusive consultation process.
2. Short term versus Long term Peace: Military action would bring short term victory to specific communities and would appeal to the public sense of justice that the insurgents have been adequately dealt with. However, this short term victory cannot guarantee long term peace as both history and reality of experiences with the Boko Haram show that insurgency is hardly ever defeated militarily. Thus, while they can suffer defeats, they could still hold residual power to inflict violence on the society. A long-term peace on the other hand has to be negotiated. This may require a cease fire with no guarantee that the other side will respect all the terms of the cease fire.
3. Resources for IDPs and Resettlement and reconstruction or for payoff to negotiation and meeting negotiation conditionalities: It is clear that dialogue and negotiation will have to come at a cost. That cost may mean diverting some needed resources for the welfare and safety of IDPs as well for reconstruction and resettlement to go into servicing the conditionalities for dialogue and negotiation. How do we strike the balance? How will the Negotiation Framework deal with the perception that resource is being used to reintegrate killers while victims are not adequately cared for?
4. The political agenda of the insurgents: Although there is no coherent political agenda within the wider population of the insurgents, the ideological layer of the insurgents has a

vague idea for the establishment of an Islamic state in the region. Such an idea clashes with the inviolability of the borders of Nigeria and the principle of secularity that guides the unity of the country. This demand cannot be met by the country and cannot be a point of negotiation. It will be a difficult point.

#### **4.7 Risks of promoting dialogue**

The study identified some risks that have to be anticipated and mitigation strategies proposed in prompting dialogue with the insurgents. These include:

1. Dialogue is largely seen by the population as rewarding insurgency. The notion that people who have committed atrocities could be invited for dialogue, is one that the people who lost loved ones would find hard to swallow.  
**Mitigation:** Conduct an effective and sustained public enlightenment and education to make the people appreciate the need for peace and price required for peace.
2. Most are not even willing to accept and live with de-radicalized insurgents in same communities where the atrocities took place. This has the risks of pushing repentant and surrendered former insurgents to return to the insurgent groups.  
**Mitigation:** It is important to involve all to understand that ultimately peace is more important than taking back our own pound of flesh. We need to consider all, the insurgents inclusive, as victims. This would require sustained stakeholder engagement.
3. In the current stage of the conflict, there are many factions of the insurgents. Will negotiation be with multiple actors or will it be a series of parallel dialogues with different factions? This presents a series of unmanageable scenarios as well as the fact that there is no guarantee that internal conflicts within the factions will undermine negotiation process.  
**Mitigation:** A diligent study of the factions of the insurgents to proceed the articulation of the dialogue strategy. The study should be made to evaluate the various factions, their relative strengths, their leadership and what areas they control or are operating in as well as their links with external actors and their dispositions to dialogue as well as what they can bring to the table.
4. Also following from the fractionalization is the mushrooming of independent groups which are not under the leadership of any of the factional leaders. While claiming to belong to some faction, they act independently and without authorization. The leaderships of the factions have no control on this criminal fringe. Such groups would create a problem to negotiation.  
**Mitigation:** Intelligence work must be done to understand the interface between criminals operating under the cover of insurgency and the operation of the insurgents and draw a line between the two.
5. The insurgents may demand for some amnesty as precondition for dialogue and negotiation. There is no guarantee that if those they want released and granted amnesty that they will not renege and refuse to negotiate.

**Mitigation:** Amnesty should not be a one-off precondition for the negotiation, instead, it should be built along, on the basis of milestones and outcome. Each step or stage in the negotiation should have appropriate amnesty attached to it.

6. Interest groups associated with the war economy in the region will work to frustrate dialogue.

**Mitigation:** Government must find strategies to deal with corruption in the counter-insurgency efforts

7. The military leadership seems to be opposed to dialogue and negotiation even as soldiers themselves, are war weary and fatigued, and welcome dialogue. The risk is that if not properly taken on board, the military may take actions that can undermine dialogue efforts.

**Mitigation:** The Commander in Chief should play his role once the government is committed to negotiation and rein in any dissenting voice and deal with any infraction to the negotiation process.

8. Insurgents may see an opportunity in dialogue to extract additional demands from government. In addition, there are elements of possible betrayal, vengeance, threat to life and personal safety.

**Mitigation:** The safety of informants and negotiators must be paramount as part of the Negotiation Framework Document

9. People who may provide entry point to the leadership of Boko Haram will be reluctant to do so for fear of being branded or even identified as Boko Haram supporters. There are also those who expressed concern over the possibility of being stigmatized by community members.

**Mitigation:** Adequate public enlightenment and protection mechanism will address this.

#### **4.8 Reaching out to the Stakeholders**

The general perception is that dialogue has to be as broadly inclusive as possible. In this sense, virtually all stakeholders have a role to play. These include:

1. Communities: in addition to direct contact through state governments, the media should be deployed here to mount sustained enlightenment around the need for negotiation.
2. Repentant insurgents: government agencies responsible for their rehabilitation as well as development partners and CSOs can be relied upon.
3. Professional negotiators: Governments, development partners and media contacts as well as community leaders should be deployed for this purpose.
4. The army: The Legislature at the National Level should engage the army as part of their oversight function with a view to getting them to accept the imperative of dialogue and negotiate with the insurgents
5. Armed non-state actors: State Governments, which have been supporting and regulating these groups are best placed to reach out to these stakeholders.

6. Youth groups: State governments acting through their ministries for youth development and working with CSOs and development partners working on youth issues can make the approach.
7. Women groups: Women can be reached through local women associations as well other CSOs and development partners working on women and peace issues
8. Religious and community leaders: these can be reached using a variety of means. Governments can lead but CSOs can also make independent approach. Approach by government can be in the form of consultative meetings while CSOs can reach them through sensitization and peace meetings
9. Local Political Leadership: can be accessed through state governments in the three states
10. Leaders of Insurgents: The insurgents can be approached through the NGOs and in fact, Government has already used this medium to secure the release of some abductees

#### **4.9 Pre-conditions and steps for Negotiation**

Dialogue especially over matters that have led to the killing of many people will be delicate, painful and slow. For this reason, adequate preparation must be made and the buy-in of different stakeholders must be established. The following steps are suggested as pre-conditions:

1. Government engages communities to understand and appreciate the need for dialogues as critical to lasting peace
2. Government needs to deploy resources and demonstrate results in the resettlement of IDPs as many respondents argued that a central element to defeating the insurgents is the return of IDPs to their original homes because it will enable the military to move further away and occupy more space thereby squeezing the insurgents into a tight position.
3. The military should fine-tune its military strategy to ensure that there is adequate military cover and protection for both rural and urban communities against attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents as attacks will undermine the confidence of communities in any dialogue.
4. Government has to find ways to address the excesses and arbitrariness of the military which make citizens to not want to cooperate with them. In particular, without engendering a better civil-military relation, communities are not likely to contribute effectively in undercutting the recruitment base of the insurgents.
5. Effective measures must be in place to address corruption and self-serving interests that have become embedded in the counter-insurgency architecture of the government
6. It is important for the process to be transparent, coordinated and context-sensitive while simultaneously empowering local communities to strengthen their participation
7. It is important to understand the diversity and positions of the various stakeholders, of victims and perpetrators and identify where the red line lies and what happens to those who cross the red line.
8. Government must find a way to deal with corruption (both perceived and real) in the war against the insurgents which undermines the morale of soldiers and the confidence of the communities in the capacity of the military to protect them.

9. There should be transparent monitoring of the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant insurgents to both ensure that they do not relapse and win the confidence of communities that rehabilitation is actually not a negative.
10. Dialogue should be carried out with an open mind, utmost privacy and security of the people involved and all agreements reached should be honoured by both the government and the insurgents
11. Finally, an element that will push the insurgents to the path of dialogue is depleting their number through surrender as well as making it difficult for them to recruit new members. In this sense both efforts to win more surrenders should be pursued while strategies to undercut further recruitment through enticement or forceful abduction must be in place

#### **4.10 The proposed dialogue process**

As a first stage, community members drawn from various groups and supported by government engage in a community healing and counselling process which prepares them to understand and accept the wider version of the dialogue that encompasses both victims and perpetrators. The role of traditional and religious leaders in facilitating this phase is critical to the success and sustainability of the wider dialogue process.

Negotiation must be multi-layered, deployed at various levels and in stages. It is proposed that the negotiation would take the layering form as follows:

- a “thin” version (a simple agreement between former enemies to live together and use other means than violence to resolve conflicts);
- a “thicker” version (where former enemies agree to not only live together in peace, but also interact in areas of common interest with mutual respect for each other)
- An even thicker version of reconciliation would involve a process of mutual forgiveness and healing

At each level, the Negotiation and Dialogue Framework of government must be explicit as to what are the expectations in terms of what level of peace can be achieved, what forms of transactions should take place and what challenges to anticipate therefore proposed mitigating strategies.

#### **Conclusion**

There are a few contextual differences across the three states which have helped in shaping attitudes that are positively disposed to dialogue and negotiation. The traditional rulers in Adamawa are willing and ready for reconciliation while those of Bornu and Yobe have made it clear that they do not want reconciliation. There is also the fact that whereas Boko Haram activities were/are more wide spread covering large number of communities in Bornu State while in Adamawa State, it was limited to a few communities in three or so local governments. Yobe falls somewhere in between. Additionally, there have been more abduction of people by the insurgents in Bornu than in the two other states. All these have created a more hardened feeling

against the insurgents in Bomu than in the two others states, making people generally to think negatively about engaging in dialogue and negotiation with the insurgents. Not only that, they are also unwilling to have repentant Boko Haram elements in their communities, a fact that has seen the success of the operation safe corridor relatively more successful in Adamawa than in Borno State. There is also the fact that while Yobe tends to be more religiously homogeneous, in Borno State there have been sustained operations in minority Christian communities as well as among new converts to Islam, a fact that tends to complicate matters. This is even more obvious in Adamawa where the operations have been in areas of mixed religious communities, with the result that often, Boko Haram operations have contributed in creating disunity and undermined collective community action. Nevertheless, these differences are not fundamental as to either make negotiations in some places possible and impossible in others or even to result in markedly different outcomes.