

SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT ON DISPLACED FAMILIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The frequent internal security challenges in Nigeria have in no small measure affected all her institutions. The worst hit is the family institution with a current estimate of over 3.3 million internally displaced persons in Nigeria according to a joint report by the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (2016). This paper examined the socio-economic effects of internal displacement on displaced families. It is an evaluative study analyzed from relational/vengeance and functionalist theoretical model. Data utilized are secondary, sourced mainly from journals, textbooks, the internet, etc. The study found that the internal displacement challenge is telling heavily in all facets of the family institution in Nigeria; and therefore recommends, arrest and prosecution of crises driven agents, effective and efficient welfare package for all internally displaced families, formulating and implementing honest and achievable programmes to addressing cases of absolute poverty and unemployment in Nigeria among other as measures to addressing the lingering challenges of insecurity and internal displacement in Nigeria.

Key Concepts: Socio-Economic, Internal Displacement and Displaced Families

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has been hit by several internal crises eruptions after her independence on 1st October, 1960 with endemic consequences on her citizens. The country was rocked by one crisis after another since then. First the Nigerian census crisis of 1963 – 1964, which

shocked the nation to her very foundation, then the federal election crisis of 1964, which was followed by the western Nigeria election crisis of 1965, the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970 which again threatened to split the country as it seems (Achebe, 2012; Alubo, 2012). From 29th May, 1999 after her return to civil rule, internal security crises eruptions in the country assumed a completely new dimension affecting the entire social system of Nigeria. In a simple language, the last nineteen years plus of democratic rule, the level of poverty, unemployment, and inequality and divers killings have steadily increased (Ucha, 2010). Parallel to this development is the corresponding explosion in crime, especially its urban and rural variants which includes prostitution, drug peddling, armed robbery, kidnappings, human trafficking, militia, thuggery, hooliganism, youth violence, and the worst of all - terrorism.

As it stand today, large scale crises and ethnic / religious conflicts have indeed led to displacement and forced mass movement of people in Nigeria, exacerbating the problems of poverty, exclusion and growing mistrust among different groups in our society. According to the Economist (2001) over 80 major eruptions were recorded in various sections of the country in the first 55 months of civilian rule by December 2003. Ethnic and inter-communal conflicts have become so pervasive that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected. More telling still, more than 600 people were killed in civil unrest since 1999. Again, more than 2000 people died in Kaduna clashes in 2000, and over 1500 died in Jos crisis, a city in the centre of Nigeria in 2001 (Imobighe, 2003 P. 14). The height of all these violence is the Boko Haram extreme violence activities across the country, destroying several lives and properties as well as displacing millions of people from their original places of residents. Boko Haram attacks have

increased during the first two months of 2014, with almost daily killings, bombings, thefts, and the destruction of schools, homes, and businesses in northeastern Nigerian villages. These assaults have led to the deaths of thousands of people, the abduction of women and girls, and the mass displacement of families.

Earlier report emanating from various media sources placed the number of internally displaced persons across the country between 1.4 to 2 million with Benue state hosting about four hundred and eighty (480,000), Abuja-FCT five hundred and fifty thousand (550,000), Akwa-Ibom two hundred and ten thousand (210,000); Kebbi fifty thousand (50,000); Cross River one hundred and twenty thousand (120,000), Ebonyi between seventy to eighty thousand (70,000 - 80,000); plateau and Bauchi two hundred and ninety five thousand (295,000); Taraba, two hundred and fifty-one thousand (251,000), Gombe, ninety-nine thousand (99,000), Edo two hundred and sixty thousand (260,000) and Borno fifteen thousand (15,000) (IDMC, 2014).

Internal security crisis of any nature can threatens the quality of life, human rights, social, economic and political stability and sustainable development in any nation around the world. The corresponding result of this phenomenon has always been an unimaginable displacement of families from their original place of aboard, displacement of human pride, material loss, and of course, a creation of a disordered society to the extent that appropriate government authorities or cooperate bodies would have to act in their capacities to contend with the prevailing warring situations especially the grave consequences it posed to the viable human institution- the family (families) in the affected areas.

CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS/LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-economic is the combination of both social and economic conditions. Economic deals with the production, distribution or management of wealth or pertaining to the financial matters of a country, or in this context household-family. Jain, (2012) further expands our understandings as he stressed that this sector comprises: primary, secondary and tertiary sector. The primary sector refers to the part of the economy that deals with production of raw materials such as crude oil, timber, grain or cotton. The secondary sector is made up of mills and factories, turning or transforming raw materials into manufactured or finish goods, like fuel, lumber, flour, or fabric while the tertiary sector refers to services rather than goods, and includes distribution of manufactured goods, food and hospitality services, banking, sales and professional services like: architects, physicians, and attorneys. Although, the economy of an emerging nation like Nigeria is still dominated with primary products such as agricultural produce as well as mineral both of which are exported raw without any refining (Alubo, 2012). All the affected areas rely on agriculture as their main economic activity. As true with agriculture in Nigeria, its labour intensive nature means that mass departure could only impede such activities. The various crises especially the activities of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria impede the basic economic source of thousands and thousands of families. The social aspect on the other hand deals with society or its organization or public welfare. In this context, the health, socialization and the psychological characteristics of the family make up the social aspect.

Whereas 'refugee' has an authoritative definition under the (1951) Refugee Convention, there is no legal definition of internally displaced persons in any form. However, a United

Nations report, (2015) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement defined the concept as forcing one out of his/her usual place of resident. It is internal because the forces moved families from their usual or original dwelling places to other areas though within the borders of their country and not outside her territory. In a more clear tone, internally displaced people are people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. It is very difficult to get accurate figures for IDPs because populations are not constant. IDPs may be returning home while others are fleeing, others may periodically return to IDP camps to take advantage of humanitarian aid. But according to a recent report released by the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegians Refugee Council (NRC) (2016), with 3.3 million persons displaced by various conflicts, Nigeria has Africa's largest population of displaced persons today. According to the report 470,500 individuals were displaced in 2013 alone. On a global scale, Nigeria is only ranked behind Syria with 6.5 million IDPs and Colombia with 5.7 million IDPs. The report further hanged the unprecedented rise in IDPs in Nigeria to increased number of Boko Haram attacks, heavy-handed counter insurgency operations, and inter-communal violence. Clashes between farmers and herdsmen over grazing lands in state such as Benue, Taraba, Zamfara and parts of Kaduna have left more than 1000 people dead since last December Human Right Watch (HRW) (2016). The violence has been almost on a daily basis. In April (2016), National Emergency Management (NEMA) were said to set up eleven (11) camps for over one

hundred thousand (100,000) people displaced in eight local government areas in Benue state alone. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) (2018) Displacement Tracking Matrix shows the situation has not improve for the better, as a five per cent increment was observed on the rate of displaced persons from December 2017 to February 2018, followed by a six per cent increase from February to April. Report of the tracking matrix also shows that, 27 per cent of these displaced persons are children under five (5) years, 54 per cent are women while 46 per cent are men; and the largest IDP populations are located in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The fact that these displaced persons or individuals did not fall from the blues or just found themselves existing, makes them part and parcel of a family that the various crises eruptions has gravely affected in all facets and dimensions. In the light of this assertion, what is a family?

Families, is the plural word for family, meaning more than one family. Giddens (2001) conceptualized family as a group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of the children. The family is the first human contact between the new born and the rest of society. It is within the family that the most of the childhood socialization takes place. Cultural norms, values and behaviours are taught in the family. The family is the most critical agent of socialization because values and norms learnt tend to stick for the rest of life. Dobson, (2004) and Schaefer, (2004) both agree that the family as a social institution exist in all cultures; it is considered the most viable of human social institution as it ensure the continuity of any known human institution in the world. Five thousand years of recorded history have come and gone, yet every civilization in the history of the world has been built upon it. It has been the bedrock of culture and society's survival in Asia, Africa,

Europe, North America, South America, Australia and even Antarctica. To put it more succinctly, the institution of the family represent the very foundation of human social order. Everything of value rest on it; institutions, governments, religion, etc. and welfare of children are all dependent on its stability. When it is therefore attacked by whatever means, weakened or undermined as a result of these various crises eruptions in the country today, the entire super-structure (society at large) begins to wobble. Attacks since the beginning of 2014 by Boko Haram, the militant Islamist group, in over 40 villages in northeastern Nigeria, have displaced thousands of families. Families forced to flee their homes are dispersed throughout Nigeria, where they face serious problems in accessing food, water, shelter, and other basic rights and necessities of life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RELATIVE /VENGEANCE AND FUNCTIONALISM MODEL

The study developed the relational/vengeance and functionalist model to examine the phenomenon. The model therefore emerged from the combination of the strengths of the two perspectives. Relational theory attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, (religious) and historical relationships between such groups. The belief is that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways. Thus, a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination, (Faleti, 2006). The differences in value invariably create the “We” and ‘Others’ dichotomy: The fact that ‘others’ are perceived as different makes us feel they are entitled to less or are inferior by reason of values. This disrupts the flow of

communication between us and them and to that extent, twists perceptions that we have about each other. Okereke (2013) notes that sect members “attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perceptions of the local population; in some communities, where it existed, the sect and its members were described as terrorists and persons with psychiatric challenges”. This holds true for other clashes and violence eruptions in the country on the bases of such identified divisions. The cogency of the relational/vengeance perspective is such that for a long time, it remained the plausible explanation for the terror campaign by Boko Haram and other internal crises as the “we” and “others” psychology grows, and have become a major factor in the citizens’ resolve to avenge its members through the violent campaign which signifies existence of division within the ethnic lines, all widen the scope of crises and continuous violence targets, often blur the line between the “We” and ‘Others”. Mbiti (1969) expression captured the tenets of this model too when he stressed that ‘the individual is conscious of himself in terms of I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.

Exploring the strength of the functionalist perspective to this study kick start with how the theory emphasizes the way that the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. It sees society as a vast network of connected parts, each of which helps to maintain the system as a whole. According to the approach, if an aspect of social life does not contribute functionally to a society’s stability, survival or continuous existence – if it does not serve some identifiably useful function or promote value consensus among members of society; and such function can be adopted and performed by another institution. It is upon this tenet that this theory proved relevant for this study; the various crises that occur as a result of the identified division and history of hatred that often

triggered violence impede the family and political institutions from performing her core functions for the general survival of the entire institution-Nigeria which is a dysfunction on their part. Such dysfunctions have been adopted by other institutions like: religion, non-governmental organization for the continuous existence of the system hence her relevance for this study.

The analogy between society and organization as emphasized by this theoretical approach focuses attention on the homeostatic nature of the social systems: social system work to maintain equilibrium and to return to it after external shocks disturb the balance among social institutions. Such social equilibrium is achieved, most importantly, through the socialization of the society into the basic values and norms of that society, so that consensus is reached.

ASSESSING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECT OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT ON DISPLACED FAMILIES

The nature of life in camps is highly boredom for displaced families. Waking up and having nothing to do except to just sit is killing most displaced persons gradually. For most of them who were mostly farmers and therefore used to active lives, their present condition is obviously devastating. Pressed for food always without money, most of the displaced persons do whatever was possible to obtain a meal. The deprivations have led to a thriving system in which displaced persons trade sex for food. Sexual activities are tense affairs for both outsiders and the displaced themselves. There are persistent stories of youths' sexual escapades emanating from various displaced persons camps within the country; parents explained these as way of filling idea time. As available evidences shows, parents either encourage or turned a blind eye to the sexual activities of their

daughters because of the expected material rewards. In this way the traditional values of chastity and purity at marriage for women have been ignored for the exigencies of survival (UNHCR, 2013).

The situation has been further aggravated by the obvious lack of privacy in a context where thousand find themselves crammed into the perimeter of a primary school, a church or a clinic creating intense health challenges among the families due to the degraded living conditions of the affected families. Perhaps more alarming than the numbers of IDPs is the poor conditions under which most of them lives. A large majority of Nigeria's as currently captured by the IDMC and NRC (2016) report 3.3 million displaced persons are housed in overcrowded camps across the country. These camps are mainly school facilities and empty government buildings with few basic amenities are supervised by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Displacement rendered families increasingly vulnerable to impoverishment and abuse by undermining their community support systems and their ability to meet their most basic needs.

The strong family bond has been severely disrupted by these crises and displacement challenges as several members were killed. In this process widows and widowed found themselves in new environments, many times without any economic means of survival, breadwinners, schools for their wards, and family cohesion.

Human Rights Watch has documented in several reports and news releases that Boko Haram attacks since 2009 have killed thousands of people and that the government in its response to the violence has carried out arbitrary mass arrests. The government has

detained without trial scores of young men and boys, many of whom have forcibly disappeared.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COMBATING CASES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED FAMILIES IN NIGERIA

Successive governments have responded in various ways each time there is renewal of hostilities and violence eruptions in Nigeria. These include the dispatching of Mobile police and soldiers to intervene and embark on peace enforcement missions. Also panel of inquiry were often set up to look into the remote and immediate causes of the conflicts and make recommendations to the government.

The formulations of programmes to address cases of unemployment and poverty, establishment of National Emergency Management (NEMA) which deals with medical recovery and relief in emergency responses includes: food, water, medical care, protection against abuse and violation of rights, as well as temporary shelter and basic sanitation. Government responses also include collaborative initiatives with neighboring states and involvement of civil society and international development partners. Government has also strengthened community representation. This move was intended to accommodate diversity and build a more inclusive political system.

Following a request for assistance by the Government of Nigeria, a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) was constituted as of July 2012, chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and comprised of all UN agencies, and international and national NGOs. The team works in close coordination with the Government of Nigeria, through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), assisted by the Emergency Preparedness and

Response Working Group (EPRWG) on a technical level. In June, the United Nations System in Nigeria set up a Task Team to develop an Integrated Support Package (ISP) for the north east, including interventions focusing mainly on the Chibok community, but also designed to cater for the immediate and long-term needs of the affected populations in North East Nigeria. The Task Team's priorities in Nigeria are the provision of food and non-food items, the strengthening of health services and early recovery support. The HCT has put in place nine sector working groups, of which the Protection Sector Working Group (PSWG) is chaired by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and co-led by UNHCR.

However, the proper operation of these agencies and the implementation of the recommendation of various commissions set up, has always been hampered by the same political polarization that drives the conflicts and crisis themselves hence the lingering of crises and ever increasing number of displaced families in Nigeria. As Alubo, (2012) rightly captured, 'government's response consistently scorches the flame but do not extinguish the fire'.

CONCLUSION

Internal crises of whatever variant pose enormous threat to the Nigeria state. It is a challenge both to the nature and character of the state and her institutions. The ubiquity of its occurrence and humanitarian crisis its unleashed will be too burdensome for our planned development, cooperate existence and future survival if the phenomenon is not adequately and permanent put to rest. Internal displacement remains a pressing issue in Nigeria today. While some significant displacement crises have attenuated due to the cessation of hostilities and tens of thousands of IDPs have been able to return to their

original places of residence, over three million more in various camps in Nigeria remain in a precarious situation and new situations of internal displacement continue to occur. A great deal therefore remains to be done to address IDPs' protection and assistance needs, to find durable solutions to their plight and to prevent further displacement from taking place.

RECOMMENDATION

For most people the solution is straight forward, to start with: if you commit a crime, you should be brought to book. On this note, our government must hold people responsible for their crime and persecute them accordingly if found guilty. As the Nobel Laureate, Soyinka cited in Oguamanam (2016) clearly stated, "For every crime, there is a punishment, for every violation, there must be restitution. In a country such as Nigeria, where there are no easy fixes, we must also examine the issues of accountability which has to be a strong component in our fight against any form of future violence and crises that can lead to such mass displacement of our citizens.

Again, we must drop every form of ethnic and religious hatred upheavals and accept our difference and live together as one entity. It is crystals clear that we need to fight this new enemy with everything at our disposal. Most importantly, we need to identify leaders with the right kind of character, education, and background. Someone who understands what is at stake – where Nigeria had been, and, where it needed to go to lead us in this new era of our existence. For the second time in our short history we had to face the disturbing fact that Nigeria – as Achebe, (2012) will put it, needed to liberate herself anew, this time not from a foreign powers but from ourselves and our inherited hatred for one another. Alternative ways of resolving matters should be considered instead of toeing

the path of vengeance and violence. The simple truth is, violence of any kind can only begets further violence. Dialogue, tolerance and understanding must be embraced as sure means to achieving peaceful co-existence among the people of differing faiths, belief systems, backgrounds, ethnics among others.

Furthermore, The Nigerian government must tackle the problems of endemic poverty and the ever increasing rate of youth unemployment especially its graduate variant. Since the inception of democratic rule in 1999 to date, there has not been any viable industry or any policy framework marshalling out appropriate plans to carry the youths along. This trend makes them vulnerable to crime and any crisis upheaval as they are easily manipulated and recruited by politicians and other crises driven agents.

Finally, the federal government should also, if it has not done so, designate an authority or body to coordinate activities to protect and assist internally displaced people. The federal government should assign responsibilities to appropriate agencies for protection and assistance, and for cooperating with relevant international organizations or agencies, and nongovernmental groups, in accordance with article 3(2) (b) of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) convention.

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