UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL REALITIES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF NIGERIA (FCT), ABUJA

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Abstract

This article examines the social realities of forcibly displaced persons in Nigeria, with a focus on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria, Abuja. Internally displaced persons are individuals who have been forced from their homes or habitual places of residence and, unlike refugees, have not crossed the borders of their country. They remain under the primary protection of their governments and often seek refuge in their own countries. This study draws on secondary data sources and primary data collected from two IDPs campsites, arguing that most IDPs in the FCT, displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency live in makeshift and inhumane informal settlements in the peri-urban areas of Abuja City. These settlements also host the urban poor and other economic migrants in the country's capital, occasionally leading to conflicts between them. The paper calls for the government to recognise the presence and condition of IDPs in the FCT and to work with relevant organisations to provide durable solutions to ensure that displaced persons can once again become productive members of society.

Keywords: *Internally Displaced Persons; internal displacement; Abuja; Social realities; Peri-Urban; Urban; Vulnerability theory; Livelihood theory.*

Introduction

The challenges of internal displacement, rapid transformation of urban and peri-urban areas, and proliferation of informal settlements have undoubtedly taken the front burner in global and policy debates in recent times (World Bank & UNHCR, 2011). As Nunez-Ferrera (2020) argues, displacement and other forms of migration have long contributed to urbanization, as cities, towns, and peri-urban centers offer opportunities for livelihood and security. These designation routes may serve as temporary or long-lasting solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) who may never wish to return to their places of origin, even when the cause of their flight has long been over or addressed.

As most internally displaced persons have moved to cities and peri-urban centres, there is significant research on the living conditions and social realities of forced migrants and IDPs in these urban areas, as well as the implications for policy and practice (for example, see Adepoju, 2011; Itumo and Nwobashi, 2016; Askederin, Omole, and Shonibare, 2021; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). However, the present study is concerned with understanding the peculiarities and specificities of some of these social realities, which have hindered IDPs' ability to regain their livelihoods and their integration into the communities in which they seek shelter. A literature search reveals a plethora of material on displacement, forced migration, refugee studies, and urbanisation, with rich information on IDPs in urban areas by academics and scholars. However, the majority of these studies are found in grey literature comprising the United Nations/World Bank and international NGO reports, policy/advocacy papers, and analyses, in addition to newspaper articles and editorials. This study is a modest attempt to add to the scholarly debate on forced migration in Nigeria, with specific attention paid to IDPs in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, Abuja. This is because, as studies have shown, most displaced persons tend to locate to urban settlements because these places offer the surest hope of overcoming their vulnerabilities.

This study uses primary data generated from IDPs at two camps, Durumi Area 1 and New Kuchingoro, situated approximately 10 km from the Central Business District of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, complemented by secondary data sources. These findings can be easily generalised to understand the socio-conditions of displaced populations across Africa and globally. The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The first part highlights the methodological approach and theoretical framework of the study. The second section provides conceptual clarification of the key terms that formed the core of this study and a brief review of the relevant literature. The next section looks at internal displacement, causes, and urbanisation in Nigeria, while the final section presents discussions of the findings from IDPs in understanding their socio-realities and some recommendations.

Methodology

This study utilised three methods of data collection: qualitative interviews, non-participant observation, and a review of extant scholarly literature.

Observation and interviews

Qualitative interviews with internally displaced persons were conducted at two campsites in Abuja, Durumi Area 1 and New Kuchingoro. These camps were selected because they account for the largest IDP settlement in the FCT, and are safe and accessible. Twenty IDPs (13 women and seven men) were interviewed to explore questions revolving around their lived experiences. IDPs were selected using a purposive sampling technique in collaboration with the camp leaders. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by the principal researcher, during April and May 2022 using an interview guide. Consent was sought from the interviewees prior to the interviews, and they also had the right to decline their response to any question and end the interview sessions whenever they wanted.

Non-participant observations were also employed by the researchers during the same period, mainly through transect walks around camps with intermittent non-intrusive unstructured discussions with food vendors, traders, and business people within the vicinity.

Secondary Data

Secondary data sources include a wide range of journals, books, periodicals, reports, official bulletins, and the internet. While acknowledging the enormous amount of grey literature on the topic, these were corroborated by relevant scholarly works. This paper presents a case study approach but notes that findings from this can be used for a general understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Ethical Concerns

The interviews and observations were conducted with permission from the camp's leadership. The interviewees were informed days ahead of the interview and their consent was reaffirmed prior to the start of the individual interview sessions. As already noted, interviewees had the privilege of declining to respond to any question that they were uncomfortable with.

Theoretical Framework – Vulnerability Theory and Livelihood Theory

This paper considers two theories, vulnerability theory and livelihood theory, to explain the state of IDPs in Nigeria with a special focus on those in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and how some of these IDPs have been able to address their vulnerable state by mingling with host communities and seeking livelihood opportunities outside the camp to ensure their survival in the face of non-official recognition of their presence from the state and lack of support from humanitarian organisations.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2017) notes that vulnerability is the susceptibility of an individual (or group) to the physical, social, economic, and environmental factors that negatively impact them. Vulnerability is seen as a consequence of an external factor acting against the desire of the individual and is often seen in a negative light. Vulnerability theory, while arguing for an increased role by the state in addressing this issue, situates its argument within the logic that, for the government to do so effectively, demands that this stereotype conceptualisation must give way to recognise the universality of vulnerability. Only when vulnerability is freed from its limited and negative association can it become a powerful conceptual tool that the government can use to engineer a richer guarantee of equality (Fineman, 2008 p. 9).

The theory of vulnerability was first articulated by the foremost legal scholar, Martha Fineman, in an article titled "The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition, published in the *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* in 2008. The theory is a reaction and critique of the liberal conception of formal equality, an ideal that borders the liberal and neo-liberal conception of man as an autonomous and independent adult who sees himself in a world that is defined by the individual and not societal responsibility (Fineman, 2008). In this legally constructed world, the 'state' responsibility towards its citizen is extremely restricted as it defines its role strictly as one that exist to protect humans from discrimination and to ensure that everyone is treated the same under the law. This role of the government or state in Fineman's view cannot bring about substantive equality or equality that ensures that everyone is equally benefiting from or disadvantaged by state policies or laws. Rather, 'formal equality' under the law while tending to address discrimination, by seeing all persons as equal, fails to address the conditions that lead to discrimination. An expansive state role therefore will go beyond the legal trappings of 'all humans are equal' to create policies that recognises the peculiarities and vulnerability of particular persons or group.

Another issue Fineman has with formal equality is its inability to correct the disparities that exist among groups in society, especially in economic and social terms. Formal equality may even tend to entrench and validate existing institutional arrangements and processes that cause inequality (Fineman 2008, p.3). As the state 'withdraw' to take on more specific roles due to the impact of globalisation which has increased the relevance of multinational corporations, especially as the state continue to be de-emphasised, what we have seen is that the state has been prevented in the words of Fineman "[from acting] as the principal monitor or guarantor of an equal society" (p. 9).

Hence, as noted by McCluskey (2021), the theory, "by changing the legal subject to the inherently vulnerable human…provides distinct ontological grounds for *state* affirmative public responsibility' (p. 1). However, as Kohn (2015) observed, Fineman vulnerability theory is based on the proposition that vulnerability is inherently a feature of all humans from birth. If this is the case,

then the state has a duty to ensure that "all people have equal access to the societal institutions that distribute resources" (Kohn, 2015, p. 3). Thus, five main components can be deduced from Fineman's theory of vulnerability as analysed by Rich (2018). These are:

a. The replacement of the liberal subject by the vulnerable subject
b. Vulnerability as a universal and constant factor
c. The state's role in mitigating vulnerability
d. The belief in substantive equality over formal equality, and lastly
e. An expansive and increased role for the state if it must address the issue of vulnerability.

While vulnerability theory focuses on the role of states in addressing vulnerabilities in society it is important to note that especially in the case of IDPs, they suffer from states' inability to address their precarious conditions. This has led to displaced people seeking ways to survive in light of this reality.

The livelihood theory by Jacobsen (2014) shows that, when faced with difficult situations, displaced persons strive to re-establish their livelihoods through various means, including but not limited to, seeking solutions outside the camp-like settings they find themselves in. The concept of livelihood often implies the means of obtaining the basic necessities of life such as shelter, clothing, and food. However, as Jacobsen (2014) asserts, livelihood entails not only the material things mentioned above, but also includes non-materials like "health, education, skills, experience, and social capital" (p. 100). Camps offer very little of these, especially with limited support from the government and humanitarian organisations. Therefore, to achieve a sustainable livelihood, IDPs often resort to self-help by seeking opportunities outside official camps.

Vulnerability theory and IDPs livelihood experience in Nigeria

The conditions and plight of internally displaced people are creating challenges in modern times. However, although the vulnerability of these people has been a source of public knowledge, they have not received the needed support from the state. In fact, refugees; those who find safe haven in countries other than their own, fare more favourably than internally displaced persons in spite of the fact that they are regarded as "probably the largest group of vulnerable people in the world." (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, p.4). Faced with the possibility and actual cases of rape, malnutrition, health crises, inconsistent humanitarian support (Ajayi, 2020), denied basic human rights, and a lack of physical security (Fielden, 2008), the condition of displaced people is further compounded by the lack of attention they receive from the state. Although The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention explicitly provide protection, Fielden (2008) notes that the vulnerability of internally displaced persons is further aggravated, primarily because of the definition of sovereignty and international jurisdiction. For instance, how does the international community perceive its status, especially in relation to how and when it should be involved?

The implication is that little attention has been paid to the precarious condition of IDPs, even by international donors and foreign governments who prefers "to focus initiatives on more visible and attainable targets" (Fielden, 2008, p. 1).

Ajayi (2020) writes that the Nigerian government response over the years has not been able to address the susceptible people because of the incoherence in policies targeting them. For example, while there are well drawn-out policies on "migration crisis of mass emigration" the federal government position on IDPs is less clear. Even subnational responses to displacement are heavily deficient, as their resources are stretched thin, owing to the influx of IDPs orchestrated by continuing conflicts. Reduced government attention to the plight of IDPs has resulted in situations where they now have to seek opportunities outside camps to survive. This has led to the proliferation of IDPs in peri-urban centres in proximity to Abuja, the seat of power. While vulnerability theory turns our attention to the state and how, seeing the legal subject more as the vulnerable subject, their circumstances noted, and proactive policies enacted to address their plight, the livelihood thesis on forced migration reorients our focus on the various ways and methods utilised by IDPs to survive or to borrow the exact phrase used by Okeke-Ihejirika et al (2020), "to cross-articulate efforts of IDPs to overcome" (p. 1) their problems and challenges.

Literature Review

Some thoughts on Displacement and IDPs

Displacement

In general, displacement refers to the movement of an object from its original position. However, when used in the social sciences, it often refers to human displacement. Kirbyshire, et al., (2017) acknowledged various interdisciplinary connotations broadly defined displacement as situations in which people are forced to leave their homes due to sudden shocks or stresses, including armed conflict, civil unrest, or natural or man-made disasters. Therefore, displacement can occur within or across national borders. Recently, there has been a surge in displaced people seeking refuge within their national borders, and statistics shows that 71.1 million have been internally displaced by the end of 2022 (IDMC, Grid Report, 2023).

For Hammar (2014), displacement is an act, experience, or effect of some form of dislocation, removal, or confinement (p. 4). She argues that there has never been a time in history when the effects of violent conquests or occupations, closures, or enslavement, dispossession, or forced removal have not been experienced. However, she admitted that displacement, as a concept of study, is a much shorter form of provenance. Displacement as an operational concept gained prominence, particularly within the humanitarian field, after the Second World War as humanitarians became concerned with the mass dislocation of peoples and communities brought about by the war. These concerns are not unrelated to the belief that forced displacement has particular implications on a country's economy, since youths, considered an active part of a country's productive forces, are those most often affected in the process.

This is the situation in Northeast Nigeria, where the forced migration of youth has seriously affected the region's economy and productive forces (Itumo and Nwobashi, 2016).

Scholars in the field of migration studies acknowledge that there are multiple causes of displacement. However, the displacement and migration lines can sometimes be blurred. For instance, Kirbyshire (2017) state that migration, to some degree, is seen as the voluntary movement of persons or groups of persons within or across a country's boundaries due to multiple drivers, such as family reunification or search for greener pastures, or through shocks and stresses, such as conflicts and disasters. Displacement, on the other hand, and to a larger degree, is a forced or compelled movement for reasons of safety and security. This distinction places both concepts along the continuum of coercion and choice. Put succinctly, while migration could be a matter of choice, much as a matter of coercion, displacement is very often the result of coercion driven primarily through conflicts, disaster and/or development-induced projects.

Conflicts or armed violence can be caused by disputes over certain scarce or natural resources, and unsustainable human activities can even trigger natural disasters, which in turn could lead to forced migration or displacement. A good example of such a case is the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria, where the conflict between the Nigerian government and militant groups revolved around the ownership of crude oil and the unsustainable exploitation of this resource by oil multinational companies. The crisis has also negatively impacted the environment (there are cases of destruction of oil installations and pipeline vandalization), which invariably affects the land and waterways and the livelihood of those living in the area. Thus people struck from both sides have had to flee their original homes for shelter in urban areas.

Of the 59.1 million persons displaced by the end of 2022, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2023), natural disasters account for approximately 8.7 million. Addressing environmental issues will help reduce the likelihood of many human-induced natural disasters that can aid in combatting human displacement. In this article, however, I will refer to displacement through the lens of forced migration, which entails coercion to move or flee for safety and security brought about by conflict and armed violence rather than natural disasters, or development-induced displacement.

Internal displacement/internally displaced persons (IDPs)

The concept of and attention to the issue of internal displacement has gained prominence since the end of the Cold War. Although initially confronted in the 1980s, the problem of people suffering from this kind of forced migration, that is, those displaced within the boundaries of their countries as against people (refugees) who are displaced across international borders, has grown astronomically (Weiss & Korn, 2006). Kalin (2014) noted that although internal displacement has long been a reality since the advent of nation-states and agreements on international boundaries, it only became a concern to the international community after the Cold War, when it became possible to

address issues that were previously looked upon as the exclusive purview of the state's internal affairs. Although various understandings of who IDPs are abound, the most widely recognised definition of internally displaced persons is derived from the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which describes IDPs as follows:

> Persons or groups of persons 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 (Kalin, 2014, p. 163).

The above definition, though part of the legally binding 2009 Africa Convention on the Protection and Assistance for Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention, is not universally and legally binding, and thus does not confer any special status similar to that of refugees (Kalin, 2014). Rather, countries are called upon to uphold entitlements for all citizens enjoyed through guarantees enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law. This does not rule out the possibility of administrative measures such as registration at the domestic level to identify those who are displaced and need special assistance. However, the absence or lack of such registration would not deprive IDPs of their entitlements under human rights and humanitarian laws (Ladan, 2001).

Internal displacement and urbanization in Nigeria

It is commonly believed that people displaced from rural areas have a better chance of survival in urban communities, and this is often the case in Nigeria, where many displaced individuals from the northeast region have sought refuge in Abuja and surrounding areas, though the majority of these forced migrations do not result in people settling directly in cities, rather they end up in peri-urban areas. These areas, which lack a standardized definition, are characterized by a mixture of socioeconomic structures, land uses, and functions (Karg, et al., 2019) and are situated between the urban core and rural landscape. Traditionally, these areas have been viewed from a planning perspective as grounds for urban sprawl.

Peri-urban areas, as described by Avis (2016), are those that immediately border an urban area, situated between the suburbs and the countryside. However, in developing countries, these areas often experience chaotic urban sprawl, deviating from the socio-economic change and spatial restructuring commonly observed in industrial or post-industrial countries. Most studies on internal displacement and urbanisation tend to equate urbanism with cities, presenting a Euro-American-centric perspective (Jansen, 2018) and leading to

a form of blindness in our understanding of urban displacement and the ability to characterize social realities for displaced persons in rapidly transforming urban centres (Landau, 2014).

In 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that in 2014, 54% of the global population lived in urban areas. As the world became more urbanized, displacement also occurred. It is therefore unsurprising that the displaced population followed suit. In the 21st century, urban and peri-urban areas in Nigeria have become destinations for internally displaced persons, as enclosed camps are no longer viable long-term solutions due to the increasingly intractable nature of contemporary displacements (IDMC, 2018). The movement of people due to displacement and migration has led to urbanization in Nigeria, particularly noticeable among IDPs displaced by Boko Haram. As a result, three distinct displacement patterns have been identified. Some people have moved to the southern part of the country as economic migrants, while others have fled from rural areas to urban areas within Nigeria. Additionally, a secondary displacement occurs when both IDPs and host communities have their resources depleted (Onifade & Osinowo, 2019, p. 7).

Internal displacement in Nigeria is due to a multitude of factors, including endemic poverty, religious and communal violence, farmer-herder conflict, and natural and man-made disasters. More recently, the primary cause of internal displacement has been the insurgency of the Islamist group Boko Haram. The conflict between farmers and herders has also become a source of concern. Boko Haram's attacks against the Nigerian state, particularly in the northeastern region, have resulted in an increase in the number of IDPs, many of whom have relocated to areas near capital cities, including Abuja. The hazardous activities of Boko Haram insurgency have led to a significant increase in displacement in northeastern and other regions of Nigeria, as reported by Alobo and Obaji (2016). Boko Haram's violent attacks against civilians, such as bombings, mass shootings, suicide attacks, and the destruction of properties, have caused the displacement of millions of people within Nigeria and to neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon (IDMC, 2021). This was further confirmed by the respondents during fieldwork interviews.

> … that was the day I left. What happened was that Boko Haram came to our village. They scattered everywhere. They came in with guns, bombs, and so on. We ran away to Cameroon. Our local government area has a border with Cameroon. There was overcrowding in the camp in Cameroon. Everybody has to run through Cameroon. If you decide to run through any other route in Nigeria, Boko Haram attacks you. I could remember we spent a week trekking to Cameroon (key informant interview 2, New Kuchingoro IDP camp, April 2022).

According to Onifade and Osinowo (2019), since 2009, over 1.9 million people have been forced to leave their homes, particularly from the northeast, with many seeking refuge in cities such as Abuja and Maiduguri. These cities and peri-urban centres are seen as sanctuaries of safety and security, offering livelihood opportunities, freedom, and anonymity to those who have been displaced. However, camps, which are often seen as a temporary measure, can also be a source of entrenched poverty due to protracted crises. This is because camps are premised on the assumption that the crisis will eventually end, and humanitarian aid is often not enough to address the needs of those who have been displaced for an extended period of time. As a result, camps can become susceptible to capture by any of the conflict actors who may exploit the vulnerable state of those living there. Peri-urban areas, where many IDPs from the northeast have taken refuge, are characterized by informal settlements, informal economies, and homes to the urban poor. This is true of the IDPs in Durumi and the New Kuchigoro Campsites in Abuja. These camps and their surrounding areas are systematically isolated from Abuja's main service roads and estates, and the living conditions in these areas are in stark contrast to the luxurious mansions that are commonly found in the area.

The gradual shift of populations from rural to urban areas in Nigeria due to the search for better living conditions, known as urbanization, has been widely observed. However, the prolonged conflicts and violence in the country have led to the sudden increase in population in many cities, such as Lagos and Abuja, due to the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Many IDPs initially headed to major cities for safety and security, but they were unable to survive there due to the high cost of living or the unwillingness of government authorities and communities to welcome them. As a result, they settled in informal settlements in close proximity to the cities, where the majority of the poor reside. They set up camps and compete with the urban poor for jobs and resources, which could potentially disrupt the social dynamics of these areas. IDMC 2019 report on urban displacement in the 21st century highlighted that urban and peri-urban cities present a solution for protracted displacement, particularly for IDPs who are unwilling or unable to return to their places of origin. The report emphasized that access to livelihood, informal labour markets, social networks, and other factors are significant pull factors that influence IDPs' decision to move to urban areas. However, their integration into the poor urban population can be conflicted. It is also challenging for humanitarian and government organizations to reach them with assistance.

IDPs in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria- Abuja

The Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, Abuja, serves as the seat of political power, housing the Presidency, National Assembly, Federal Ministries, and the headquarters of most international organizations and the

diplomatic community. As the first planned city, Abuja was established in 1991, following Decree No. 6 of 1976, and carved out of the present-day states of Nasarawa, Kogi, and Niger. Over the years, people have migrated to the city in search of better opportunities. However, the high cost of housing in the city has made it difficult for many migrants to reside there, resulting in an influx of people to areas near the city, such as Mpape, Mararaba, Nyanya, Lugbe, and Kubwa, where they can afford some form of accommodation and livelihood. Some continue to commute for work daily between the city and their outskirt residences.[1]

The rapid urbanization of areas outside Abuja city has resulted in several challenges for the urban poor who now inhabit these places. This is because these areas were never planned to accommodate a large number of people, and years of government neglect have led to the proliferation of slums in these areas which increases pressure on relatively poor infrastructure and services. Additionally, the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) caused by Boko Haram from the Northeast of the country has further exacerbated the situation, with many IDPs setting up makeshift accommodations in these areas. According to Adewale (2016), Abuja, the seat of power, is saturated daily with an influx of IDPs from the frontline states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. Many of these IDPs come to Abuja with the intention of taking shelter with their relatives, but soon realize that their presence places a heavy strain on their hosts. As a result, they are often pushed into congested spaces, informal settlements, and camps, largely in peri-urban areas.

IDPs in New Kunchingoro and Durumi, Area 1 camp-sites in Abuja

The National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) reported that Abuja had 31,029 IDPs by the end of 2021. The Durumi–Area 1 IDP camp site had a population of about 3,220 people, while New Kuchingoro had a population of about 1,127, according to information collected from both campsite leaderships complemented with documents from FCT Emergency Management Authority (FEMA). IDPs began arriving at these campsites in 2014/2015 at the beginning of the peak of the insurgency in the northeast of the country. Although some IDPs have left the camps to seek livelihood opportunities in neighbouring Nasarawa state, many remain in these two campsites. The IDPs in these camps live in shelters made from plastic bags, sheets, and plywood that are not up to the minimum standards for humanitarian shelter according to the SPHERE standard. During the heavy

[1] In 2015, a joint Humanitarian and FCT Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Protection Monitoring Report identified seven IDP locations in the Federal Capital Territory, including the New Kuchingoro Camp-like site, Kuje Area, Durumi Area 1 camp-like site, Wassa settlement, Jikwoyi (including Karu, Orozo, and Mararaba Loko host communities), Waru, Yimitu, and Zhindyina host communities, and Karamajiji and Wuye. (See, Mohammed, 2017, p.10; UNHCR, NHRC, & FEMA, 2015).

rain of the rainy season, these shelters often flood, contributing to water-borne diseases and deterioration of the IDPs' health conditions.

Other factors involved in the terrible conditions of the IDP camp sites according to Onifade and Osinowo (2019) where they note an example of an IDP camp in Dagba village of Area 1 of Abuja.

> The IDP camp is positioned at the extreme end of the road. The path that leads to the camp is difficult to navigate and the camp is surrounded by bushes. In fact, the topography of the area is intimidating for those visiting the area for the first time, aside from one yet-to-be-completed structure where clothes were being used as window covers, the rest of the IDPs were living in makeshift tents (p. 7).

The findings from the field interviews conducted by the author with IDPs respondents in both camps were consistent with the above observation. IDPs reported that the official non-recognition of their displaced state by the government, extreme hunger and poverty were the main challenges affecting them. They stated that although they received occasional support from good-hearted individuals and non-governmental organisations in the form of food items, this support was irregular and insufficient to meet the needs of the entire population (Interviews with IDPs, April & May 2022). According to Ba-Ana-Itenebe (2021), a significant portion of IDPs in both camps were farmers prior to their displacement, with little to no additional livelihood skills. This lack of access to land for farming in their current place of displacement makes survival and taking care of themselves and their families extremely difficult. Furthermore, IDPs face numerous barriers to health, education, and markets. Respondents reported constant disagreements over the use of public resources and infrastructure, such as community secondary schools and health facilities.

Furthermore, there is only one clinic that services both camps, managed by a local non-governmental organisation, with one nurse to handle cases, one day in one camp and the other camp another day. The clinic only provides treatment for common diseases, such as malaria, and has a limited number of drugs. A traditional midwife is sometimes present to aid in deliveries, but some women have died due to complications during delivery, being unable to access proper health facilities outside the camp because they could not pay the required fees. Additionally, IDPs do not have access to government hospitals, as they are expected to pay fees that they cannot afford (Interviews with IDPs, April & May 2022).

The plight of displaced people in these campsites is dire, despite the significant media attention paid to their situation since they arrived. As early as March 2018, an Aljazeera report highlighted the dire living conditions of thousands of displaced people in Nigeria's capital, who had fled armed group

violence in the northeast and were completely neglected by the government and international humanitarian partners. According to Desai (2018), protracted displacement and urban planning in Abuja is a time bomb, with people fleeing towns in the northeast often considering Abuja as the safest destination, but joining the urban poor to live in risky areas with a continued threat of eviction.

Another critical reality faced by IDPs in these campsites is the threat of security agencies, who routinely arrest and confiscate their motorcycles used for commercial transportation, requesting bribes or threatening eviction by the government and host communities. IDPs report that the government has refused to officially recognise their presence in Abuja and has only promised support when they return to their places of origin in the northeast, which remain insecure to this day. Their emphasis on the level of insecurity was further buttressed by one IDP interviewee who noted that:

> "The government wants us to go back to our homes in the Northeast. Meanwhile if the President has to travel to the Northeast, he will send a battalion of soldiers to secure the area with military helicopters flying everywhere, while he spends only thirty minutes there" (Interview with IDPs, May 2022).

On the other hand, host communities are persistently pressuring IDPs to leave, as they would like to sell the land they occupy to other individuals who are willing to pay for it. This circumstance, along with the intermittent provision of humanitarian aid to IDPs, has frequently caused conflict between IDPs and host communities, resulting in violence. IDPs who wish to relocate to their places of origin or another location to restart their lives do not have the resources to do so. This situation accurately reflects the current social realities of IDPs in Abuja, and the Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated their situation. This is in contrast with the IDPs in the northeast of the country who receive favourable support from government and international humanitarian organisations (see, Mohammed, 2022). Majority of the IDPs interviewed noted that through communication channels available to them, they have come to understand that their relatives who are in camp in cities in the Northeast had more government and humanitarian support when compared to their situation in Abuja. In Urban areas, IDPs are apt to seek livelihood outside camp settings and these act as pull factors leading to their choice of relocating from camp life in the Northeast even though studies show that they have more government attention in camps in places like Borno. (Mohammed, 2022; Roberts and Lawanson, 2023, p. 3)

Additionally, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), whose mandate was expanded by the Federal Government of Nigeria to cover issues relating to internally displaced persons and the Coordination of Migration and Development in 2002 and 2009, respectively, has not been forthcoming in terms of sustained assistance and

support to IDPs in Abuja. Their support has largely focused only on camps in the northeast region. Also, FEMA, which had initially supported the IDPs in their early months of arrival at these campsites have ceased support.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ongoing global discourse surrounding the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has garnered significant attention at both the national and international levels. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the influx of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa into Europe, and the increasing number of internal conflicts in many African countries have resulted in displacement, attracting such attention. Refugees are protected by long-standing international protection instruments, whereas IDPs are mainly protected by non-universal non-binding guidelines outlined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast has resulted in a large number of displaced persons seeking refuge in urban centres such as Abuja. However, the living conditions of these displaced individuals have often been neglected, and their presence is rarely recognized. IDPs live in makeshift shelters and informal settlements in deplorable environments with poor security. These settlements are overcrowded, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks and limiting access to potable water and food. The government's indifference towards their plight is further exacerbated by irregular or inadequate humanitarian assistance, and the constant directive for them to return to their insecure place of origin. However, some IDPs have resorted to seeking livelihoods outside of camps by moving away from Abuja and setting up businesses, working in construction, or farming. This situation has made it difficult to identify, assess and support these IDPs.

This study proposes that the government, through the FCT Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), officially recognizes the plight of displaced persons in Abuja affected by the Boko Haram insurgency and engages with them to understand their needs, efforts, and human rights challenges. It is recommended that the government collaborate with relevant humanitarian and development agencies to devise and implement a comprehensive roadmap for achieving durable solutions. These solutions may include local integration, resettlement elsewhere, or returning to places of origin. The study found that while IDPs in Abuja are generally hesitant to return to the northeast, their ultimate goal is to do so. Thus, it is crucial for the government to address security concerns to ensure that IDPs feel safe and confident when they return to the northeast.

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