

Chapter 62

Internally Displaced Persons and Emergency Management in Nigeria: Management of Internally Displaced Persons Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are men, women, and children who are uprooted from their ancestral homes as victims of natural disaster or manmade occurrences for reasons often beyond their control and comprehension. The Boko-Haram insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria has caused over two million Nigerians to be internally displaced. The crisis has created management problems for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) due to paucity of funds. Secondary data and human needs theory were used for the analysis. The incessant use of improvised electronic devices has created a security lacuna in the IDPs camps, which have become targets for terrorists. The concomitant is confidence deficit between the IDPs and NEMA resulting in accusations of neglect and corruption. The chapter concludes that the failure to manage IDPs is tantamount to human rights abuse and security lapse.

INTRODUCTION

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, thousands of people have been killed in recurring inter-communal clashes and politically motivated violence that have also caused large waves of displacement. Clashes over natural resources in the country's oil-rich Niger-Delta and the displacement they caused have declined significantly since the government granted an amnesty to militant groups in 2009. However, ethno-religious conflicts have been on the rise especially in Southern Kaduna and the ubiquitous herds-men have been on the rampage killing and maiming farmers in a bid to graze their cattle in both the South-east and North-central states especially Agatu in Benue state.

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Many of these conflicts are politically, ethnic and religiously motivated. For instance, the conflict over Sharia law in Kaduna in 2000 and the 2001 clashes in Jos, the capital of Plateau State, which led to the displacement of thousands of people. Also, the victory of former President Goodluck Jonathan in the April 2011 election fuelled violence, having religious and ethnic undertones, which led to the displacement of around 65,000 people (Campbell, 2014). Violence between nomadic herdsmen who are seen as settlers and Christian farmers, who are seen as indigenous citizens, led at least 40,000 people in the Middle Belt region, to flee from their homes in 2012.

Information on the military and humanitarian situation in all three states in the north was scarce, as the government suspended mobile phone networks in an attempt to disrupt communication between the militants. This made information about the displaced people in these states inaccessible but as at 18 June, 2013, more than 9,000 people had fled the north-east to neighbouring countries like Cameroun, Niger and Chad.

In the context of mass poverty, unemployment and inadequate law enforcement, Boko-haram has gained support by playing on people's frustrations and using religion to further its ends by recruiting many young men and women into its fold resulting in the sacking of many villages and more displacements. In addition, forced evictions have forced more than two million urban Nigerians, mainly slum dwellers and other marginalized people to be forcibly evicted from their homes since 2000, most notably in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt. Evictions are sanctioned by state governments and carried out in the name of security and urban renewal, but they have taken place without adequate consultation, notice, compensation or offers of alternative accommodation resulting in displacement (IDMC, 2014).

Internally displaced persons face a range of threats to their physical safety and restrictions to their freedom of movement as shown by the May, 2013 military crackdown in three north-eastern states. A preliminary UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessment mission to Gombe State found that IDPs were forced to pay fees to pass through checkpoints. The fact that IDPs do not carry ID cards when on the move can complicate their flight further, even though most Nigerians do not have such documents. The chapter interrogates the phenomenon of internally displaced persons in Nigeria and the effectiveness of NEMA in managing this national crisis. It equally aims at suggesting ameliorative measures to ensure that IDPs are managed in line with global best practices.

Definitional Issues of Internally Displaced Persons and NEMA

Any attempt at defining the term 'internally displaced persons' throws up a number of complex, inter-related issues. One of the principal difficulties encountered in establishing a more systematic approach to the plight of internally displaced persons is the debatable nature of the concept itself. If there is to be a special legal regime for IDP's, then its beneficiaries would have to be clearly defined and identified. Any definition would have to avoid the twin pitfalls of being overly all-encompassing or constricted. The former case tends to employ the concept in relation to all those people who have moved within their own country for reasons that are not entirely voluntary (Mooney, 2005). This includes, for example, changes of residence induced by environmental and industrial disasters, as well as the forcible relocation and population distribution programme which governments often employ to counter security threats and to implement large-scale development projects. In this case, practically anyone would qualify as an IDP. Thus the definition of internal displacement generally excludes from its scope those situations in which people are obliged to move as a result of environmental disasters, development projects and infrastructural

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