Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria: Implications for Counselling and the Role of Key Stakeholders

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ABSTRACT
This paper focuses on the challenges of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria and considers the implications for counselling and the role of key stakeholders in alleviating the plight of these persons. The paper identifies the grave challenges faced by the displaced persons, points out the importance of counselling as part of measures to assist IDPs and the role of key stakeholders such as civil society organisations (CSO) and Educational Intuitions; governmental and non-governmental organizations. Thus, the challenges facing IDPs needs a collaborative effort in ameliorating their plight.

Keywords: Internally Displaced Persons, Stakeholders, Counselling and Roles

INTRODUCTION
The problem of displaced persons has in recent years become a global concern with its implications (Ladan, 2001). It is on record that the total number of displaced persons is currently estimated around fifty million worldwide, with the majority of these people in Africa and Asia (Olobo & Obaji, 2016). Displacement across the country in Nigeria is as a result of communal violence, internal armed conflicts and natural disasters such as flood.

In any conflict situation and particularly those with ethnic or religious underpinnings, the humanitarian needs are immense and the means to satisfy those needs within the conflict area are severely limited. Internally displaced civilian populations move from one place to another seeking safety and protection inside their own country. Forced population movements resulting in mass exoduses constitute by their very nature infringements on international human rights and humanitarian law. In Nigeria, conflicts arising from the activities of Boko Haram in the North East and Fulani herdsmen have resulted in high threats to lives and properties, death of thousands displacements of millions of people.

Contrary to the expectation of the world population, the new world order has been characterized by more unstable and turbulent conflict situations, unhealthy power politics, destructive ethnic insurgencies, national rivalries, religious bigotry, government hypocrisy and endemic poverty, manufactured by globalization.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
At present, there is no internationally agreed definition of who is an internally displaced person but the United Nations (UN) working definition of IDPs is. Displaced persons under international law are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to have cause to leave their homes or place of habitual residence in particular, as a result of or in order to avoid the effect of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and they must have either remain within their own national borders (as internally displaced persons) or they must have crossed an internationally recognized state border (as refugees), (Ladan, 2006). Hence displaced persons are of two categories: Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

According to Oduwole and Adebayo (2013) the convention relating to the status of refugees (CRSR) of 1951 defines the term “refugee” as applying to any person who
“...as a result of events occurring before 1st January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his (or her) nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is willing to avail himself (or herself) of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being made outside the country of his (or her) former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it...” (pp. 252 – 3).

In comparison to the CRSR of 1951, according to Ladan (2004) the OAU convention (1969) governing the specific aspects of refugee problem in Africa gives a broader definition of the term “refugee”, taking account of most of the root causes of the refugee problem. The second paragraph of article 1 of the OAU convention state that:

“the term “refugee” shall also apply to every person, who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part of the whole of his (or her) country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his (or her) place of habitual residence in order to seek refugee in another place outside his (or her) country of origin or nationality”.

Under the Cartagena Declaration, the term “refugee” is defined as including “Persons who have fled their countries because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order” (UNHCR, 1995).

On the other hand, internally displaced persons (IDPs), as a result of situations of armed conflicts (or the threat thereof) and mass violations of human rights, as well as floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters, the number of people fleeing their homes has increased dramatically over recent years. There are also deep-seated factors underlying this phenomenon of mass displacement. For example, Under-development, poverty, in equal distribution of wealth, unemployment, ethnic tensions, political and economic subjugation of minorities, intolerance, absence of democratic procedures, and many other factors have been cited as causes. Where such people, in fear of persecution, seek refuge in other countries, their interests are protected by the refugee convention of 1951 and the 1967; protocol relating to the statute of refugees. If those persons are victims of armed conflict situations, they are entitled to protection under the Geneva Convention of 1949 and their additional protocols of 1977. In general, human rights law offers protection to all persons without any adverse distinction. However, where such people and displaced within their own country, specific problems as the rights and protection arise (Deng, 1994).

Under the following working definition of “Internally Displaced persons” (IDPs), which was developed by the special Rapporteur on IDPs as there is at present no specific international legislation devoted to that issue, displaced persons are deemed as:

“Persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence suddenly or unexpectedly as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border” (OCHA, 2003; UN, 2004).

In this paper, IDPs is defined as persons who have been displaced by natural disaster or conflicts from their homes and traditional support structure and have not crossed the border of their countries. They are victims of various kinds of injustices, violent confrontations perpetrated by their own government or others against them. Internally Displaced persons also known as IDP's are mostly victims of the inhumanity of man against man. They are victims of various kind of injustices or violence confrontations, perpetrated by either their own government against them or by others, such as, communal clashes, terrorism, riots, religious conflicts, natural disasters and so on.

It is on record that, the expectation of the global population, resulting from the abrupt liquidation of the cold war consequent on the collapse of the soviet union towards the tail end of 1980's were dashed. Many people across the world that thought that the new world order would bring a desired peace to the entire world, enabling acculturation of development attitude to the world through the
magical framework of integration and mutual aspiration of world state-actors soon realized that, the new world order is not circled around the pursuit of peace and development, but the continuation of hostility in another dimension (Hamzat, 2016).

Contrary to the expectation of the world population, the new world order has been characterized by more unstable and turbulent conflict situation, unhealthy power politics, destructive ethnic insurgencies, national rivalries, religious bigotry, government hypocrisy and endemic poverty, manufactured by globalization. Terrorism on the other hand has assumed a new dimension with its characteristic innovative contradictions, which has posed a greater threat to the world peace and security. What a new world disorder.

The IDPs are physically, psychologically and socially displaced as they have to relocate to refugees’ camp. Statistics on IDPs in Nigeria revealed that an overwhelming majority of women and children constitute the IDPs. The population is composed of 53% women and 47% men (DTM 2016). Women and children remain the most vulnerable to sexual and gender based violence. There have been reported cases of rape, sexual harassment, forced marriage, infant marriage, sexual diseases and uncontrolled birth occasioning high infant and maternal mortality. Furthermore, because some of the IDPs integrate with other family members in various locations data about them is not easy to get. All these factors make it nearly impossible to obtain an accurate number of displaced persons in Nigeria.

IDPs are caused by several factors, according to a strategic conflict assessment carried out by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in 2002, the return to democracy and the competition for the new political opportunities had led to increased violence. Local competition for resources has often been aggravated by “Inter-elite” rivalries over privileges such as political and public service appointments, oversight of projects and admission into schools (IPCR 2002). In addition, the interplay between the tripodal ethnic structure and communal patterns of inequalities, closely linked to this is the issue of natural disasters such as flooding or soil erosion. Other causative factors identified in literature include: religious violence and displacement due to communal conflicts over land and boarders and militancy in North East and in the Southern Nigeria.

Challenges facing the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria
The challenges of internally displaced persons either overtly or covertly has a tremendous negative effect on Nigerians and inimical to development. The following are some of the challenges faced by IDPs in Nigeria (Azam, 2009)

a. **Insecurity**: Women and girls are been raped on daily basis as a result of insecurity in the camps. Youths indulge in hard drugs, smoking and other criminal activities.

b. **Trauma and Bitterness**: The IDPs are traumatized and frustrated because of the situation they find themselves. Most of these IDPs live in bitterness due to painful separation from their spouses, families and loved ones.

c. **Hunger and Starvation**: It is said that a hungry man is an angry man and because of the level of hunger and starvation faced by the IDPs you see them protesting and demonstrating with their children at the camps.

d. **Acute Malnutrition**: When one is not feeding well, it has an effect on one’s health such as changing the colour of one’s hair, eyes and teeth which may result to death. It is discovered that people give them only one type of food item i.e. carbohydrate which affects them not to have a balanced diet.

e. **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**: This is also another challenge that the IDPs are facing, they have unprotected sex which result to all kinds of STDs like HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea, syphilis etc. They also suffer from hypertension, diabetes and other diseases due to lack of medical health facilities.

f. **Education**: The IDPs are facing the challenge of educating their children or family members because they are always in transit or floating. More to that there are no provisions by government in this regard.

g. **Rights of IDPs**: There is insufficient understanding of the rights of IDPs as set out in the UN guiding principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention. These rights include the right to life, freedom of movement, association, dignity of human person, personal liberty, right to private and family life etc.
h. **Shelter/Accommodation:** The most common shelter used by IDPs in Nigeria are schools, tents, bunkhouses, churches, mosques, town halls, abandoned and uncompleted buildings. How can human beings live in these places comfortably?

i. **Waste Management and Electricity:** There is often no proper waste management and electricity for the IDPs. This explains the regularity of hygiene based epidemic in camps and total darkness in camps.

j. **Lack of Good Water:** Because of the overcrowded nature of camps, it becomes difficult for the IDPs to access good water for cooking and sanitation facilities.

**Implications of the challenges for Counselling**

Addressing the challenges of IDPs is primary the responsibility of government, however, it has implication for counselling. Counselling generally is a helping process to address individuals, groups and societal problems- emotionally, mentally, psychologically, socially and economically. In fact apart from food, shelter, clothing and physical wellbeing, a very important need of IDPs is counselling service. The sudden experiences of homelessness, loss of loved ones, properties, living in insecure states etc creates series of psychological problems such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), insomnia, depression, hallucinations, eating disorders among others and attendant effects that if counselling is not provided some of them may become psychotic or attempt suicide. Therefore, the challenges of IDPs pose a lot of implications for counselling (Bookings Institutions, 2005):

a. Considering the challenges confronting displaced persons and vulnerability of women and children, there is a need for counselling to accelerate effort in collaborating with other stakeholders in recovering and rehabilitating these displaced persons at the shortest possible time.

b. By way of socio-economic integration, the present situation of IDPs especially women and children need assessment to determine their need. The IDPs need to be equipped and prepared by means of vocational counselling for skill acquisition and training. This is to prepare them to survive physically, mentally, socially and economically while in camp and when they leave the camps (Kasali, 2016).

c. It behoves on counselling to educate IDPs in camps on their sexual behaviours including the dangers of unprotected sex to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

d. Through the use of appropriate therapies in counselling those that are traumatized will regain themselves and will be healed emotionally to move on with their lives.

e. In the area of counselling for tolerance in diversity the IDPs will be helped to respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all people should be actively promoted.

f. The challenges of IDPs call for counselling in the area of independence, fear of violence, oppression or injustice and promote equality of rights, opportunities and solidarity.

**The Role of Stakeholders in Tackling the Challenges of IDPs in Nigeria**

The key stakeholders here are the individuals, civil society organisations, educational institutions, government and international organisations (NGO); The stakeholders have roles to play in the challenges facing the IDPs by responding to the situation (Alobo & Abaji, 2016). These roles area as follows:

a. **The Role of Individuals:**

   The Individuals have roles to play. These include:

   1. The role to love the IDPs and care for them because they are human beings and fellow citizens, we need to embrace them, go close to them, pray, cry and play with them. Make them feel loved and give them the sense of belonging.

   2. Individuals can provide the IDPs with gift items like clothes, shoes, food items, toys for the children, cream, perfumes and so on. We have to sacrifice our money and buy them good gifts.

   3. The individuals can extend their hands of care through provision of food, clothing, shelter that will heal the emotional effects of what they have been through. We need to restore their dignity, and through love and care
4. Individuals may also provide shelter/accommodation to the IDPs.

b. **Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**
   In addition to the individual roles, the CSO can assist the IDPs
   The scope of activities for civil society groups for displaced persons may include the following:
   1. Civil society organizations (CSOs) can play the role of monitoring situations of forcible displacement in the state, in order to ensure that it does not amount to arbitrary displacement by states.
   2. The civil organizations can assist the victims to obtain a legal remedy, including compensation.
   3. CSOs can advocate for legal or policy frameworks to address gaps related to durable solutions.
   4. They can assist displaced persons with skills and the creation of livelihood opportunities, to enable them to start rebuilding their lives.
   5. They can also contribute to peace-building activities aimed at ensuring good relations between the displaced persons and the local communities where they intend to settle permanently (Falabi, 2014).

c. **Role of Educational Institutions**
   1. Educational institutions have a role of providing quality education as a key factor in countering the risk of radicalisation among youths. This is premised on the grounds that youths who have received even a little education are more inclined to view unreasonable violence negatively and are less susceptible to ideological brainwashing by extremist groups (Martin-Rayo, 2013)
   2. Efforts to provide adequate protection and assistance to internally displaced persons must be based on accurate information about their number (reflecting the number of children, women and men in different age groups) in all locations such as camps, cities, rural settings. Educational institutions could embark on research to provide data on numbers and state of affairs of IDPs in the country to give adequate guidance for intervention.

d. **The Role of Government**
   Addressing the problems of IDPs is primarily the responsibility of the government. This requires the taking of concrete steps to prevent arbitrary displacement, protect and assist the IDPs and find durable solutions to their problems. The role of government according to Bookings (2005) includes:
   1. Government has the responsibility to prevent overt conditions on their territory that might compel population to flee.
   2. Raising national awareness for recognized problems and addressing same.
   3. Adequate medical care should be given to IDPs especially to their pregnant, nursing mothers and children. Their children should be immunized to avoid being affected by vulnerable diseases.
   4. The IDPs also need to be empowered; government should provide them with vocational training and skill acquisition so that they don’t stay idle while in camp.
   5. Government should provide IDPs with adequate security; make sure that their lives are being secured before sending them back to their homes. Also the camp they live should be guarded by the security armed forces to make sure that further attacks both internally and externally are prevented.
   6. The IDPs should not only be provided with carbohydrate food. Well balanced diet should be given to them so that they will not be malnourished.
   7. While the IDPs are still in camp, they need to be educated on pre-marital sex and the dangers of unprotected sex to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.
   8. Good shelters should be provided for them to avoid effects of cold. Also good source of water should be made available for them to prevent water born diseases.
   9. The government should provide a national legal framework to develop laws to uphold the rights of IDPs.
10. The role of government is also to collect data so as to obtain credible information needed on the numbers, location and conditions of IDPs in order to design effective policies and programmes.

11. Government should provide for the education of the children while the period of displacement lasts and even after for children who become orphans with no one to care for them.

12. To provide training programmes for government officials including camp administrators, military and police exposing them to the rights and needs of the displaced and their own official duties to protect and assist them.

13. Participation of IDPs in Decision Making: Engaging displaced persons in consultation and building upon their skills. The participation of women can reduce their vulnerability to sexual harassment and violence.

14. Government owes it as a duty to establish conditions to allow IDPs to return voluntarily, in safety and dignity, to their places of habitual residence.

15. Allocation of adequate resources to the extent they can, to address situations of internal displacement.

16. Cooperation with international, regional and local organizations in providing assistance to IDPs.

c. The Role of Non Governmental International Organisations (NGOs):

The international actors here are the international free donors and humanitarian agencies that help in preventing displacement and providing protection and assistance to those displaced. Their roles in helping IDPs are thus:

1. In line with the United Nation’s guiding principles on Internal Displacement of 1998 and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa, they should help in preventing displacement and providing protection and assistance to those displaced.

2. They should actively play role of providing funding from the Commonwealth of Nations and gifts to countries that are in dear need of such assistance.

3. International actors have the role to engage indigenous researchers and NGOs dedicated to advancement of women and children to collate and analyse data to generate comprehensive result for proper intervention.

4. As part of their role, they should provide a comprehensive humanitarian support and training programme to equip IDPs with skills for better livelihoods.

5. The provision of health facilities and services to the IDPs. The World Health Organization (WHO) has the role to intervene in cases like this so as to remedy and help the situation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the challenges of Internal Displacement remain a pressing issue in Nigeria. While some significant displacement crises have subsided due to the cessation of hostilities and tens of thousands of IDPs have been able to return to their original place of residence, over a million more in the country remain in a precarious situations and new situations of internal displacement continues to occur. A great deal therefore remain 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.

Based on the reviews made, it is observed that embracing and assisting the IDPs by giving them shelter and basic needs such as food, cloth, water and so on will help them. Apart from these basic needs supplies, the IDPs need to be counselled, and equipped with skills to overcome the emotional trauma that is usually associated with such dehumanising experiences. This requires intervention of different agencies, government and non-governmental bodies.

The interplay of Prompt Intervention, Constructive Vibrant Institutions embedded in the value of good governance, social welfare and functional institutions engendering nation building and true dividends of democratic governance for the people should be ensured. Also, the government should address the root courses and challenges of displaced persons and Internal conflicts by taking appropriate measures with respect to the resolution of conflicts, the promotion of Peace and reconciliation and respect for human rights.
It must be pointed out that all of us are potential IDPs unless the government, religious institutions, groups and individuals rise up against the incessant occurrence of theses unfortunate dehumanising killings and dislodgement bonafide citizens of our beloved nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS
There is no doubt that to prevent internal displacement, protect the displaced during dislodgment, and find long lasting solutions for them once the cause of dislocation no longer exists requires respect for human rights and in armed conflict situations, the protective rules of international humanitarian law. As a result the following recommendations are made:

1. The greatest good that will be done to displaced persons in Nigeria is not only to protect, eliminate them but to introduce counselling to all IDPs who will counsel them in all areas of living like appointment, marriage, family and social areas.
2. The fundamental human rights of all citizens should be maintained at all times. Agreed that the environment may be engulfed in violence, it is no ground to violate the rights of people. Adequate steps must be taken to alleviate the plight of IDPs.
3. Government should ensure that where relief materials are sent to IDPs those materials should not be diverted for other use.
4. Adequate security mechanism should be put in place at the camp sites to relax the apprehensive minds of the IDPs while there.
5. It is imperative to speedily recover and rehabilitate men, women and children in these camps to facilitate proper integration of IDPs back into the various social structures, thereby eliminating tendencies of social vices.
6. The House Committee on IDPs and the National Assembly as a whole should embark on legislative processes that will lead to the domestication of African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. This treaty reinforces the state’s Primary responsibility to protect the rights and well-being of people forced out of their homes due to conflict, violence, disaster and human rights abuse.

REFERENCES