



Effects Of Poverty And Disparity On Education Among Children In Benue Internally Displaced Persons' Camps: (2011 – 2018)

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ABSTRACT

Today, intense attention is focused on the welfare of children globally. This is particularly the case in areas of conflict, fragile peace and relative underdevelopment. It is understandable with the growing realization of the place of children in sustainable development and global peace. It is also fashionable to measure development in terms of the welfare of children and vulnerable persons in the society. This has resulted in the growing and universal call to address issues of poverty to close gaps of social disparities which form part of the attributes of societies of today's world. Incidences of poverty and disparity are particularly prevalent in the developing countries like Nigeria, and in such instances, children are especially at risk. It is of immense interest to planners to inquire into the nature, causes and impacts of poverty on children from these nations as a basis for designing intervention strategies. This paper examined the nature, causes and effects of poverty among children in Nigeria focusing on Children in IDP Camps in the relatively agrarian and rural state of Benue. The paper adopted qualitative-descriptive approaches to source and analyze data from secondary sources and observation. It relied on humanism theory to address issues around the key pillars of child wellbeing, as such, provided answers to the raised questions: what is the nature of poverty in the Benue IDP Camps? What are the factors responsible for poverty as peculiar to children in Benue IDP Camps? How are the incidences of poverty affecting the survival, growth and development of children in the Benue IDP Camps? What are the implications of the observed disparities for sustainable development of the study state and the country? Recommendations are made on limiting the impacts of poverty and social disparity on children in Nigeria particularly those found in exposed and vulnerable communities like IDP Camps.

Keywords: Children, Child-wellbeing, Disparity, IDP Camp, Poverty

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that global agenda for 2030 (SDGs) is under threat among countries in the developing world, and this is particularly the case in Nigeria. This is because critical elements that should serve as drivers of sustainability have been experiencing increasing poverty, with its negative impact, owing largely to the poor state of child welfare in most societies. The situation is made worse for children and women in communities suffering from negative effects of protracted crises. This is especially the case within the Benue valley and Northeastern region of Nigeria that have come under intense pressure from internal strife. This position is supported by global views (SC, 2018) when they revealed that an estimated 1 in 6 children of the world live in contexts that are fragile with high chance of egregious violation of

their rights to basic attributes of life important for their development. In Nigeria for instance, as at March 2018, it is estimated that 80,450 children are displaced, along with their parents, in Benue State alone. This is as a result of protracted crises that have continued to ravage their communities.

The most worrying aspect of this scenario in Nigeria is that, there seems to be no hope of rolling back the undesirable incidence anytime soon. Therefore, the big question begging for answer is if children in fragile context in Nigeria should be considered as elements of sacrificed generation that have to be left behind in the scheme of things in optimizing human capitals? Obviously, the result for a country like Nigeria, if nothing is done urgently, will be to continue to lag behind nations that have taken care of their future (SDGs). The situation therefore is one that is seeking for humanitarian actions that target children living in the fragile contexts.

It is a known fact too that, poverty is a common feature among majority of Nigerians (Chimobi, 2010). However, the magnitude and impact varies from communities to communities and from groups to groups. The effects are believed to revolve around deprivations from access to education, health, socialization among other indicators. These effects of poverty are more felt by those living in areas considered to be ravaged by fragility and continuous cases of emergencies, especially among the children of victims of displacements. Although in cases like this, there are consensuses as to who is supposed to provide immediate responses (i.e. the government), it is well known that states in developing countries are usually unable to shoulder the burden alone. The situation calls for collaborations and partnership between and among various bodies. But to effectively handle the problem, there is need to establish a clear understanding of the nature and effects of poverty that are peculiar to children in emergency scenarios in order to determine its implications for attaining sustainable development.

Given the above, this paper seeks to reveal to planners and interventionist the nature, causes and effects of poverty among children in Nigeria, with reference to those living in the IDP camps in the relatively agrarian and rural state of Benue, which has continued to experience protracted communal crises and farmer-herder clashes. Flowing from this, the paper seeks to explore the nature of poverty inherent in the Benue IDP camps. It will seek to provide answers to key questions such as: How are the incidences of poverty affecting the survival, growth and development of children in Benue IDP camps? What are the implications of the observed disparities for sustainable development in the Benue Valley and, by extension in Nigeria?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the theory of humanism as postulated by Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's first republican president and was formally endorsed as the official national philosophy and ideology of Zambia by the United National Independence Party (UNIP), the party then in government. The term humanism was obviously not coined by Kaunda. It had been used by other scholars before him in a variety of contexts. According to Holmes and Bickers (1983), the beginnings of humanism are normally associated with Petrarch (1307-74) one of the foremost of the 14th century.

The theory is a philosophy and political ideology rooted in traditional African religion and culture. It is a values-based theory that focuses on the centrality of the individual human being (common man). It seeks to create a society that places the human person at the Centre of all activities; social, economic and political. It is global and non-discriminatory in outlook and scope. Kaunda's motivation for proposing this ideology appears to have been the desire to break free from the colonial past and to create a national identity centered on values which he considered true to the African heritage.

Humanism, as a theory applied to all spheres of public life during Kaunda's reign as president. Kaunda intended it to provide the moral basis for all human activity in the country; political, economic and social. In a sense, the theory was meant to be the social cement that held together and inspired the nation. He argues that it is human beings who are and who should be the center of all activities. This is because human beings are the highest of all God's creatures. Further, he argues, 'African society has always been Man-centered' (Kaunda, 1988). That humanism would fight against any form of class distinction among

people and seeks to create an egalitarian society in which individuals had equal rights, opportunities and dignity. This humanism would be the foundation of his socialism (Kaunda, 1966).

Tenets of the Theory of Humanism

Among the central tenets of Kaunda theory of Humanism highlighted by Kaunda (1988) are the following:

- ☞ **The human person at the center:** the human person is not defined according to his colour, nation, religion, creed, political leanings, material contribution or any matter.
- ☞ **The dignity of the human person:** Humanism teaches us to be considerate to our fellow human beings in all we say and do.
- ☞ **Non-exploitation of Man by Man,** Humanism abhors every form of exploitation of human beings.
- ☞ **Equal Opportunities for all** - Humanism seeks to create an egalitarian society, that is, a society in which there is equal opportunity for self-development for all.
- ☞ **Hard Work and Self-Reliance** - Humanism declares that a willingness to work hard is of prime importance; without it nothing can be done anywhere.
- ☞ **Working Together** - The national productivity drive must involve a communal approach to all development programmes. This calls for a community and team-spirit.
- ☞ **The Extended Family** - under the extended family system no old person is thrown to the dogs or to the institutions like old people's homes.
- ☞ **Loyalty and Patriotism** - only in dedication and loyalty can unity subsist.

Applying the theory of humanism to this study one effect of poverty and disparity on education among children in Benue internally displaced persons' camps is seen from the human angle; the theory will help the framework of the government institutions such as education, health, socio-political and economic, saddled with the responsibility to better the lot of the vulnerable children. The theory helps to understand in the paper that there should not be any disparity to the education of the poor children in IDP camp in Benue state as the situation they found themselves is not in their own making. Thus, as the theory explains, the institutions in charge of the IDP camps must be considerate to abhor every form of exploitation of these poor children in the IDP camps to make sure they equally have access to quality education like any other child in the society. As we are made to understand by humanism of a just and egalitarian society, that is, a society in which there is equal opportunity for self-development for all children.

Based on this, the theory has deemed it fit to help explain the rescue of the vulnerable children from its state of poverty so that child to a large extent can gain his/her unique worth and dignity by eliminating disparity and creating an atmosphere for quality education to the children in IDP camps in Benue State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The paper design is based on qualitative-descriptive approach, which accesses and analyzes data from secondary sources and field survey. Therefore, the major sources of data for this paper are from journals, articles and internet materials. These are aided by and supplemented with primary data from covert observations made within the IDP camps.

Hence, discussions and analysis of data relied on descriptive method of content analysis to examine the existing conditions such as the current attributes and effects of the phenomenon of poverty among children living within the IDP camps. Consequently, the study is limited to the seven (7) officially recognized IDP camps in Benue State. There are, the Daudu, Tse-Ginde, Gbajimba, Abagena/Agan, Anyiin, Abeda and UgbaIDP camps. These camps are all situated in three Local Government Areas (Guma, Makurdi and Logo) of Benue State.

REVIEW OF LITERATURES

What is Poverty?

Poverty is one social menace that has continued to generate global attention from different quarters. This is because the phenomenon is a multidimensional social problem with wide ranging indicators (UNICEF, 2015). Thus, while some try to conceptualise it through definitions, others prefer a descriptive approach to measure the phenomenon or the extent of the problem. Hence, there is no uniform approach to defining, identifying and measuring poverty; rather, several approaches exist to that effect (UNICEF, 2015). UNICEF (2015), express that these approaches includes the monetary, the human rights-based, the basic needs and capacity approaches. Notwithstanding any of the approaches adopted, there is global consensus as to what poverty represent. This view considers poverty as a phenomenon that implies pronounced deprivations ranging from material deprivations measured by income and consumption to non-material deprivations involving lack of health care and access to education, and deprivation of human rights including capabilities that a person has in relation to substantive freedom people enjoy that lead to the life they desire (Sen, 1999). To Sen therefore, poverty is a symbol of denial that can result in coercion of peoples' life to a condition that is not desirable and lack of free will and choices (Sen, 1999).

The World Bank (2001) on their part consider poverty as a phenomenon that results out of economic, political and social processes that interact with each other and frequently reinforce each other in ways that exacerbate deprivations in the life of poor people. Thus the World Bank defines poverty thus:

“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So poverty is a call to action -- for the poor and the wealthy alike -- a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities.”https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/esic/overview/content/what_is_poverty.html

One thing is central in this explanation of poverty when compared to the position of Sen (1999). The two views pinned down understanding of what poverty is from the perspective of denial; thus, it is an indicator of deprivations that people experience in the society. Beyond deprivations however, the World Bank went further to reveal elements that result to poverty (World Bank, 2001). They observed that poverty is an outcome of interactions that abound in societies. Therefore, the nature and manner in which these interactions play out could make or mare condition of lives in the societies where people lives.

United Nations (1995) also presents a global perspective to the meaning of poverty. To the world body, poverty is about more than lack of money and assets. Thus, it is a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information (United Nations, 1995). In essence, poverty is beyond income to include access to social services.

As could be seen from the above explanations and even the ones that are not reviewed here, poverty springs from inaccessibility, otherwise denial or absence of access to basic ingredients of life for survival and development. But then, what does poverty represent when related to children; what is child poverty?

What is Disparity?

Disparity could be explained as inequality or difference in some respect; i.e. lack of equality...between the rich and poor (Collins, 1995). According to the Dictionary of Vocabulary, disparity is the condition of being unequal, and a noticeable difference. Explaining further, disparity is usually referred to as a difference that is unfair, likened to a situation of economic inequalities among ethnic groups, between men and women. Relating disparity to the condition of the child IDPs in the Benue camps, it is that of life

inequality compared to their life before they experienced displacement from their homes and communities.

By implication, it could be said that, poverty and disparity are two sides of one coin. This is because, for anyone side to be experiencing deprivation, otherwise denial to basic necessities of life thereby not being able to lead normal life like people without cases of deprivation, such a person could be said to be socially unequal and different.

Child Poverty

In any discussions on poverty, it must be realized that, poverty portends a different thing for children compared to how it affects adults. Hence, UNICEF (2016) rather than defining child poverty, operationalize it to involve deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed for children to survive, develop and thrive, thereby leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of the society. In fact, what this operationalization of poverty among children reveals is such that, when related to children, it connotes any form of obstruction, denial and lack in access to all the resources required to guarantee that children optimize to the fullest, their life potentials in all ramifications. Another dimension from this has to do with equality. Thus, inequality is also an aspect of poverty among children as it creates room for disparities in the society.

Relaying on the above explanation by UNICEF (2016), Kurukulasuriya and Engilbersdottir (2012) further express that, poverty impacts more acutely on children than on adults, as they are more vulnerable to the immediate and long term effects of deprivations, and are less able to address or change their situations. Children are also more greatly at risk of exploitation and other failures to meet and protect their rights. Therefore, poverty also represents inability to control, address and change situations of deprivations on self, thereby living one vulnerable to the devastating effects of the conditions. Obviously, children are more unable to rollback vulnerability to denials and lack in access to necessary resources.

Invariably, aside deprivations, inability to change and restrict the negative effects of denial are other aspects of poverty, especially among children. In fact, it breeds inequality and limits one from fully optimizing and achieving their potentials in life.

The Nature and Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

The Nature of Poverty

According to UNDP (2005), majority of Nigerian citizens are barely surviving, with 70.2 percent living below USD1 a day. Africa Economic Outlook (2005) reiterated this by revealing that poverty has been a phenomenon on the increase in Nigeria from an average of 27 percent in 1980s to over 70 percent within the last two decades. A report of national survey conducted by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the incidence of poverty is more prevalent in the Northern region than it is in the southern savanna at 60 percent; with rural dwellers suffering it the most (FRN, 2009). The diagram in the below picture prove to this.



Figure 1: How Number of Extremely Poor Nigerians Grew Since 1980 to Date

A close observation of the above diagram jointly sourced from National Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank could help us understand the position of the UNDP (2005) and that of Africa Economic Outlook (2005) on the subject matter of the nature of poverty in Nigeria. As the diagram reveals, poverty in Nigeria has increased in tandem with increase in population. As at 1980 when the population of the country was put at 68.45million, the number of poor people was put at 4.24million representing 6.2 percent of the population. In the years that followed (1985), the incidence doubled to 12.1 percent (10.12million) while the population increased to 83.61million. The situation and trend has remained the same through the years up to 2018. So, poverty has always been on the increase despite claims (and efforts) through various policies and programs targeted at rolling back the trend.

Explaining further the nature of poverty in Nigeria, especially among children, Gordon, et al (2003) described it as a spreading phenomenon that revolves around poor health care, lack of access to quality education, food shortage and malnutrition, insecurity and absolute lack of social care. He further opines that, the nature of poverty in Nigeria is such that, it is found, not just in the rural areas alone, but also in urban settlements.

Adeoti and Popoola (2012) lend voice to discussion on the nature of poverty in Nigeria by saying that, inhabitants of the country, children inclusive, mostly have access to rivers and surface water only, but with no access to safe drinkable water, modern toilets, limited access to immunizations and medical advice, living in dwellings with more than five people per room, less access to news and media and low school attendance.

From the above explanations, the nature of poverty in Nigeria is such that, the phenomenon is found in both rural and urban societies, and involves both adults and children. By implication, amidst riches and affluence, there exist squalor, slums and shortages. Thus, alongside modernity and advancement, deprivations and abuses of all kind exist among the people; with children believed to be the worst hit. In fact, poverty in Nigeria is cyclical, as its effects reacts in chain-like fashion. Hence, at no time has the incidence of poverty in the country abated.

Causes of Poverty

There cannot be a phenomenon, whether good or bad, without cause; circumstances that brought it into existence and/or has led to its persistence. Thus, the incidences of poverty in Nigeria can be linked to certain remote or immediate factors as causes. From various literatures, many factors such as unemployment, monolithic economy, corruption, inequality among others have been advanced as reasons why poverty has persisted and increased over time in the country (Adeoti and Popoola, 2012). To this paper however, the concern is on how factors such as insecurity, as a result of protracted crises (cultural, ethno-religious and communal) and cases of emergencies contribute to increasing state of poverty in Nigeria, especially among children in fragile context like those in the IDP camps in Benue state.

Insecurity as the Major Cause of Poverty in Fragile Context

As observed from the Concise Oxford Dictionary (Tenth Edition), insecurity could be explained to connote a state of being insecure resulting in loss of confidence, assurance or assuming a feeling of not been protected or exposed or lack of safety from undesirable conditions. A state of insecurity therefore represents complete absence of peace, freedom, liberty and normalcy. If these are what constitutes insecurity, then, it will be safe to say that the factor has been a common feature of most communities in Nigeria, especially within the Benue Valley and North-Eastern region for over a decade. A pertinent question at this point will be; how is insecurity contributing to poverty in Nigeria, especially to children in IDP camps in Benue State?

To answer the above poser, we must realise from the above connotation of insecurity as something that renders victims in a state of loss of freedom and limitation of choice about life. Of course, any one limited by circumstances beyond his or her control, as the current condition of children in the IDP camps in Benue State reveals, will most certainly suffer high amount of deprivations and destitution with negative impact on all aspects of life. This is so because, victims are very likely to lose homes and comfort zones that would otherwise enable them to live normal life. In a polity where people with full freedom and liberty are greatly falling casualties of poverty, it can be imagined what the situation of persons who have become victims of displacement due to insecurity will be. Of course, they will be more prone to effects of the other causes of poverty that are known. For instance, a child who is a victim of violence will suffer in double fold, from effects of unemployment, corruption, inequality and inaccessibility to social cares. This is the case of the people (children) displaced from their home and communities as a result of perennial crises and violence that has been the case in Benue State.

So, unabated incidences of crises and violence contribute more to the poverty of children living the IDP camps in Benue State than the other factors. This is because it aggravates the magnitude of the effects of the other causes beyond what would have been the case if they had remained in their various homes and villages. The position is shared in a UN Statement in June 1998 that:

Poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (Chimobi, 2010).

If the above statement truly represents poverty, then it is a phenomenon that will be worse for children in the Benue IDP camps; those camps being ab-initio created by insecurity in their communities. Because, someone ravaged by protracted crises will not be in any capacity to seek participation in communal activities (i.e. go to school) or be considered to be worthy of credit or retain an ability to seek provisions of proper health care. In fact, as the statement reveals, individuals (i.e. children in Benue IDP camps) ravaged by fragility and living in a state of susceptibility to violence will certainly be powerless and excluded or denied any form of life that can be attributed to being normal. Therefore, insecurity is

considered by this paper to be the major cause of poverty, especially to its victims than any other factors in any society.

Composition of IDPs Living in Camps within Benue State

Based on information gathered through covert field observations conducted by authors of this paper, IDP camps arose in Benue state as result of protracted crises and farmer-herder’s clashes. They are susceptible to poverty and are composed of men, women (i.e. Single/Married women, pregnant and nursing mothers), aged and disabled persons along with children. The seven (7) officially recognized IDP camps have the following populations.

Table 1: Number of Displaced Person in Group A Camps; Guma Local Government Area

Population of IDPs	Daudu Camp	Tse-Ginde Camp	Gbajimba Camp
Women (non pregnant)	8,024	6,431	8,649
Pregnant Women	304	532	349
Nursing Mothers	226	581	131
Men	5,149	4,476	5,977
Children	10,871	10,021	9,393
Male Children	6,527	4,468	2,941
Female Children	4,344	5,553	6,452
Aged	82	241	480
Disabled Persons	41	167	68
Total	24,044	20,928	24,019

Source: Benue SEMA, 2018 (Official Camps Recognized by Government)

Table 2: Number of Displaced Person in Group B Camps; Makurdi Local Government Area

Population of IDPs	Abagena/Agan Camp
Women	12,041
Pregnant Women	492
Nursing Mothers	616
Men	6,362
Children	16,583
Male Children	8,773
Female Children	7,810
Aged	258
Disabled Persons	234
Total	34,986

Source: Benue SEMA, 2018 (Official Camps Recognized by Government)

Table 3: Number of Displaced Person in Group C Camps; Logo Local Government Area

Population of IDPs	Anyiin Camp	Abeda Camp	Ugba Camp
Women	9,342	3,419	8,765
Pregnant Women	582	104	79
Nursing Mothers	776	165	271
Men	1,030	2,671	6,284
Children	19,283	6,730	7,569
Male Children	9,438	3,688	5,312
Female Children	9,845	1,677	2,623
Aged	1,337	96	331
Disabled Persons	664	38	35
Total	35,655	12,820	22,618

Source: Benue SEMA, 2018 (Official Camps Recognized by Government)

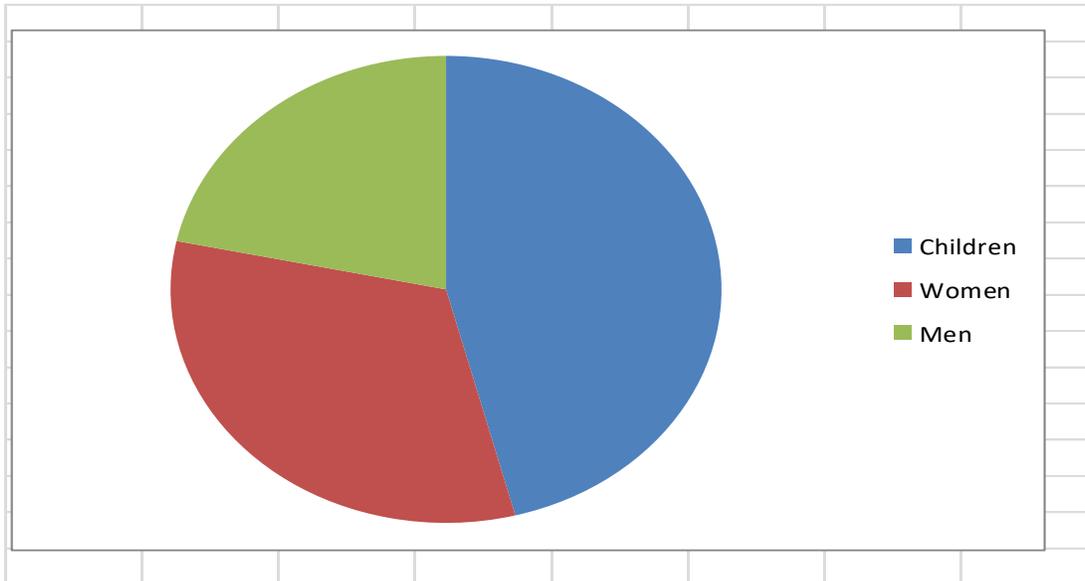
Table 4: Summary of Persons in the Benue IDP Camps

IDPs	Population	Percentage
Total Number of Women Displaced	56,671	32%
Total Number of Men Displaced	37,949	22%
Total Number of Children Displaced	80,450	46%
Total Number of Persons Displaced	175,070	100%

Source: Benue SEMA, 2018 (Official Camps Recognized by Government)

Looking at the above tables representing composition of IDPs in the various camps in Benue state, it is quiet revealing that the population of children displaced are far ahead at 46 percent when compared to those of the adults (i.e. 32 percent for women and 22 percent for men).The situation only passes one message; children are certainly the largest victims of any negative effect of displacement such as poverty and disparity in these camps. Therefore, children suffer more from deprivation and denial of the right to education, health, nutrition, protection and socialization. This scenario is better relayed in the below chart, indicating in colours, the composition of IDPs in Benue state as recognize by government.

Figure 2: Pie Chart Displaying Percentage of Displaced Persons



Source: Benue SEMA, 2018(Official Camps Recognized by Government)

The above statistics therefore indicated that, whatever the effects of displacements occasioned by the protracted crises and clashes around the Benue valley might be (i.e. poverty or otherwise), children are likely to suffer more than other members of the population of the displaced persons. This is obvious from the pie chart above because, their population in blue colour represent 46 percent of the total number of displaced persons across the 7 IDP camps in Benue State.

DISCUSSION

Effects of Poverty on Children within Fragile Context of IDPs in Benue State

In most societies where poverty is prevalent, children especially among those whose ages range from 0 to 15 years, as already indicated, are considered the most vulnerable and as such, are mostly affected by its incidence (Adeoti and Popoola, 2012). There are so many ways poverty can negatively affect the lives of its victims generally. To children, UNICEF (2015) came up with five (5) pillars of child wellbeing; areas in which poverty can affect the lives of children. These pillars represent health, social protection, education, nutrition, and child protection. So, how does poverty affect the life of children on the basis of these pillars? This paper takes a look at the effects of poverty on one of the critical pillar; child education

in the Benue IDP camps. But before then, how does nutritional and health care status of children impact on their development; only healthy people seek development and optimization.

Health and Nutrition

Among the factors that determine someone's health status, nutrition is number one and the most cardinal indicator. This is because nutrition reflects individual access to good food supply and intake. And this is one area where the lives of children are being degraded and undermined globally. According to UNICEF (2015), malnutrition is associated with more than half of all child deaths worldwide. And undernourished children are more likely to die from common childhood ailments, and those who survive have recurring sicknesses and faltering growth and development. In Nigeria, UNICEF reported that about 7 million children are born annually (Mohammed, 2018). In the same online media outfit, the chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), EzeDuruiheoma confirm the UNICEF position by saying that total annual birth in Nigeria is equal to the total population of Rwanda (Naij.com). And Mohammed (2018) expressed further that available records indicated that, almost two-third of the world's children under the age of one live in countries where fathers are not legally entitled to any paid job that will allow them feed their families, children inclusive (NAN, 2018). This condition is said to be found in 92 countries which lack national policies ensuring that new father's get adequate paid time off to attend to their newborn; Nigeria ranked high here.

Obviously, most of the children in Nigeria are suffering from malnutrition and poor health condition made worse by persistent incidence of violence resulting in lots of children experiencing displacement along with parents. In the paper's area of study, Benue state, 94, 620 men and women are said to be displaced along with 80,450 children from various communities within the Benue Valley. It is observed that these children are essentially living on poorly provided feeding with support from public spirited individuals through food handouts with limited enrichment in nutrient required by a normal child to develop. Although, this paper cannot verify if there is any incidence to indicate whether children within the Benue IDP camps have suffered death as a result of devastating effects of malnutrition, but report from camps in the north-east zone (Bama IDP camp specifically) indicated that 33 children died of malnutrition between 2nd and 15th of August (MSF, 2018 in Olatunji, 2018). Invariably, children are said to be facing acute effects of poverty resulting in heightening cases of disease and malnutrition among children in various IDP camps in Nigeria. What this scenario suggests is that, the case of children in the IDP camps in Benue state may not be different.

Education

One of the critical tools for human capital development lays in citizen's access to education. In Nigeria, successive governments have been making efforts to ensure that every child of school age is guaranteed access to education, at least at basic level. National laws and policies are in place, with established programmes directed towards educational development for all citizens. These could be found in the country's 1999 constitution, Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act (2004), Child Right Act, 2003, National Child Policy of 2007, National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (2007) and National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2015). These national laws and policies were aimed at keying into universal access to basic education and the achievement of primary education by the world's children as a cardinal focus of the MDGs and World Fit for Children (UNICEF, 2015). This is because education is seen globally as a vital prerequisite for combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazard and exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and influencing population growth (UNICEF, 2015). The implication of the above laws and policies is that, there is global realisation that education is a tool that makes lot of difference to the survival, growth and development of children.

Implications for Children in IDP Camps in Benue State

However, there are economic, socio-cultural and geographical dimensions to education of children in Nigeria with significant impact on the development of the child. One of such is the context in which the child lives. This brings to question, the environment in which the laws and policies are to take effect. For

instance, the Child Rights Act of 2003 in Nigeria seeks to protect children and secure their basic rights including the right to education (UNICEF, 2015). In the event of poverty occasioned by persistent crises as in Benue communities, the life of children displaced along with those of their families will be significantly disrupted and many aspects of their lives interrupted at the same time, including that of access to education, health care and feeding. The situation for children living in fragile context such as those of the IDP camps in Benue state is made worse by incidence of exploitation, harmful labour and abuse all as a result of displacement and inland migrations from comfort zones to fragile environment. Of course, the result will be that of deprivation from almost all the necessary ingredients of child survival, growth and development. From field observation, it is the view of this paper that, this case is very applicable to 80,450 children scattered all over the IDP camps in Benue state. In fact, a visits to the IDP camps, revealed that only children in the Abagena camp have access to education as there is evident of two class room block built in the camp for that purpose (Benue SEMA, 2018). However, the two class room blocks are inadequate for the educational needs of the IDPs (Benue SEMA, 2018). The situation is not different for their health needs; only one clinic exists to this effect and operated by the state government and Doctors without Borders.

Invariably, the state of insecurity in communities affected by protracted crises leading to displacement from homes and comfort zones has left many children (i.e. 80,450) deprived of their right to functional and quality education and as such socially unequal compared to children living in relatively peacefully societies. In fact, poverty occasioned by insecurity in many Benue communities, is causing serious deprivation of the right of the children and denying them opportunities to grow, survive and develop along with their peers in other societies where insecurity is not being experienced.

Implications for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Without much stress, this paper is of the view that, the above painted effects of poverty on the lives of child IDPs in Benue state and their likes in the other zones of the country, portends a dim prospect for the realization of sustainable development goal in Nigeria. This is because, the SDGs, like the life of children, are about the future of the world. The reason is borne out of the fact that, sustainable development goes beyond just growth to include, constantly meeting the requirements for growth in order to make it long lasting (Jhingan, 1997). At the same time, the needs of the people ought to be met as a reflection of the progress in economic and social status. It is therefore the view of the world that, development should be about opportunities for people to come together to advocate for positive change built on values of solidarity, human dignity, care for creations and participation (SC, 2015).

Goal four of SDGs suggests access to quality education for all; of course, as seen already, children in the IDP camps are left behind on this. Even goals two and ten (freedom from hunger and reducing inequality) in addition to goal one (ending poverty) are meant to be delivered to all regardless of where and who is involve. Further, SC (2015) revealed that action towards achieving the sustainable development goals should always have the poorest and marginalized people at heart, so that no indicator of the goals (i.e. education) is considered to have been met unless met for all people, whoever and wherever they are.

Owing to the condition of children, including those of their families, in the IDP camps in Benue state, poverty being creation of protracted crises leaves much to be tackled if Nigeria must match along with other countries of the world in their quest to meet the SDGs timeline of 2030. Therefore, there is need to ensure better fortune for all citizens through sustained opportunities and active participation in all aspect of life.

CONCLUSION

The condition of children in the IDP camps in Benue state is better described as that of persons living in abject poverty, which has resulted in them being socially separated from the rest of the society. The condition has continued to deprive them of access to all basic necessities of life; education, health, nutrition, socialization and protection needed for their survival, growth and development. Hence, full human capital development and optimization as the most critical ingredient of attaining SDGs is rooted wrongly and poorly handled. It is therefore the conclusion of this paper that, the future of 80,450 children

is too important to the growth and development of Nigeria to be left unattended to or left to waste away; steps must be taken to roll back the effects of poverty in which they are currently and to prevent further occurrence of what lead to their present condition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper therefore recommends that the government of the affected states where these incidences of violence has persisted (i.e. Benue and Nassarawa State) should through collaboration with Federal Agencies (i.e. Security Agencies, NHRC, NEMA and NRC) seek partnership with International Humanitarian Organisations like UNICEF, UNESCO and its likes to first of all prevent reoccurrence of crises among communities that has become a recurring decimal in the region. This is because, insecurity as the main cause of poverty among children in IDP camps as identified by this paper must first of all be put to a halt before considering any effort at tackling the effects (i.e. access to education) of poverty they currently face.

To do this, government must involve the residents of the affected communities through their representatives (i.e. traditional, youths and women organisations) to interface with government agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (i.e. Local and Foreign) to midwife and render support to workable solution that will ensure tensions are reduced and violent are prevented. In the same vain, the incidence of poverty, occasioned by the state of insecurity can thereafter be tackled by first of all resettling the IDPs back to their communities and comfort zones. It is there that articles that could cushion the negative impacts of poverty be administered to make significant impact that could roll back poverty and prevent reoccurrence. Again, this should be pursued through joint efforts among governments, community representatives and NGOs.

In the interim, efforts of the State and Federal Governments should be channeled, through budgetary allocations in line with UNESCO recommendations, towards rebuilding schools and remobilizing teachers and teaching aids in the affected communities before people (along with children) are relocated back to their various communities. However, such efforts should be replicated in all the other camps with adequate schooling requirements commensurate to the educational needs of the children in the camps. The state government and federal agencies in education should come in this regard in collaboration with donor agencies.

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